



A longitudinal jurisdictional study of Black children reported to child protection services in Quebec, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Empirical research is needed to better understand the overrepresentation faced by Black children receiving child protection services in Canada. This article examines rates of disparity using secondary longitudinal clinical-administrative data provided by a child protection agency in Quebec for a subsample of Black, White, and other visible minority children over a ten-year span. It calculates rates per 1000, a population disparity index (PDI), and a decision-based index (DDI) to determine representation by ethno-racial group across decision-points within the child protection system. Results reveal that while representing 9% of the general population in 2011, Black children represented 24% of children receiving child protection services for the corresponding year. When compared to White children, Black children's protection reports were five times more likely to be screened in, substantiated, and brought to court. Black children were also five times more likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement. In contrast, other visible minority child protection reports were approximately two times more likely to be screened in than White children protection reports. After which, other visible minority rates of disparity gradually decreased across decision points. These findings demonstrate the need for a jurisdictional analysis when conducting research on service disparities and support an argument for disproportionate need as a factor affecting disparate outcomes.

1. Introduction

The overrepresentation experienced by Black children and families within child protection systems in North America has been studied by scholars for over the past three decades. Black children continue to be overrepresented in child welfare reports, investigations, and foster care entries (Courtney, Barth, Berrick, & Brooks, 1996; Dunbar & Barth, 2008; Foster, Hillemeier, & Bai, 2011; Lavergne, Dufour, Sarmiento, & Descôteaux, 2009; Putnam-Hornstein, Needell, King, & Johnson-Motoyama, 2013; Rambally, 1995; Sedlak, McPherson, & Das, 2010). There are several competing explanations for overrepresentation that can be grouped into three primary causes: (1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of need when compared to other children, (2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs, and (3) Black children experience racial bias that stems from the discriminatory practice of professionals and organizational practices (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke, Harden, Jenkins, & Ruehrdanz, 2010; Hill, 2004; Rivaux et al., 2008). Research has demonstrated evidence that all three causes have a

negative impact on outcomes for these children, making difficult our ability to accurately identify under what circumstances and under what conditions they influence outcomes for Black children. More than likely, their overrepresentation is a result of all three reasons interplaying in a way that compounds their deleterious effects (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008).

Within Canada, while we are able to speak to a generalized racialization of child welfare services (i.e., overrepresentation of First Nations children), there are few studies that have sufficiently explored this phenomenon for Black children. Studies on pathways of overrepresentation for First Nations children indicate that they face a disproportionate presence of risk factors resulting in their overrepresentation within the child protection system and increased service disparities throughout involvement (e.g., substantiation, on-going services, or placement; Sinha, Trocmé, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2013; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). These risk factors result from hardships arising from a distinctive historical context that is not applicable to Black families. While substantive research exists on the overrepresentation of Black children in the United States, the

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generalizability of these findings to Canada is subject to considerable limitations. Canada's universal healthcare system and extensive network of public social services provide a different political landscape (Pylypchuk & Sarpong, 2013). Furthermore, the diaspora histories of Black Canadians are significantly different than for Black Americans (Attewell, Kasinitz, & Dunn, 2010).

This is the first Canadian study to use longitudinal clinical administrative data with census data to examine these racial disparities. It seeks to determine the level of representation and disparity faced by Black children receiving child protection services between 2002 and 2013 from a child protection agency in Montreal mandated to provide service to the Anglophone population. In Quebec, the English-speaking population is recognized as an official language minority (Government of Canada, 2013). Quebec Anglophones experience higher rates of unemployment and are more likely to live below the low-income cutoff than the Francophone majority (Institut National de Santé du Québec, 2012). This disparity is greater when data is disaggregated geographically, with higher gaps reported for the Montreal census metropolitan area (CMA). By conducting a jurisdictional analysis, we hope to provide a more accurate measure of disparity in a manner that may not be fully reflected in aggregated data and that will account for the social vulnerability experienced by a specific subgroup of the Black population.

1.1. Defining overrepresentation and disparity

The terms overrepresentation, disproportionality, and disparity are often used interchangeably in the literature on child protection systems. The "overrepresentation" of Black families refers to Black children representing higher than average proportions of children receiving protection services. This concept is referred to as "disproportionality" and is commonly calculated by determining a rate per 1,000 (Shaw, Putnam-Hornstein, Magruder, & Needell, 2008). This condition occurs when the proportion of an ethno-racial group in a target population (e.g., child protection) differs from the proportion of people of the same group in a reference population (e.g., general child population). The term "disparity" refers to the comparison of one ethno-racial group's representation to another ethno-racial group's representation where both groups have experienced the same event; a disparity index (DI) is calculated as a measure of this concept (Shaw et al., 2008) and is also commonly referred to as a population disparity index (PDI). Disparity occurs when the ratio between the two groups is not equal to one. The concept of disparity has also been used in reference to unequal outcomes experienced by one ethno-racial group when compared to another. Under this definition, unequal service outcomes within the child protection system would be explained by differential treatment between groups. By calculating a decision-based disparity index (DDI), we are able to describe disparity *within* the child protection system (Derezotes, Richardson, King, Kleinschmit-Rembert, & Pratt, 2008; Fluke, Yuan, Hedderson, & Curtis, 2003; Harris & Hackett, 2008).

1.2. Overrepresentation of Black children in the United States

Within the United States, Black children continue to be overrepresented in child welfare reports, investigations, and foster care entries (Courtney et al., 1996; Dunbar & Barth, 2008; Foster et al., 2011; Putnam-Hornstein et al., 2013; Sedlak et al., 2010). A number of studies have determined rates of overrepresentation to be driven by an increased number of referrals to the child protection system (Fluke et al., 2003; Morton, Ocasio, & Simmel, 2011). There is considerable evidence that maltreatment occurs disproportionately among poor families (Drake, Lee, & Jonson-Reid, 2009; Pelton, 2015). Given that Black American families have been found to be more than twice as likely as White families to live in poverty (Cooper, 2001; Jargowsky, 2015), and to spend longer periods of time in poverty (Corcoran, 2001), examination of both race and socioeconomic status is required to fully

understand the source of disparities (Dettlaff et al., 2011). While a significant number of studies have found no effect for race after controlling for poverty (Bartholet, 2009; Drake et al., 2011), other studies have conducted similar analyses and have concluded that race alone accounts for disparities (Hill, 2004; Lu et al., 2004; Rivaux et al., 2008). This variability may be a result of methodological limitations in researchers' ability to measure, control for, and analyze poverty, racial bias, and discrimination. Furthermore, given poverty in itself does not provide a mechanism for maltreatment, increased attention has been given to geographical context and neighborhood effects on racial differences (Coulton, Crampton, Irwin, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2007; Freisthler & Maguire-Jack, 2015). Drake and Rank (2009) found that despite having similar socio-economic characteristics to Black children, Latino children were underrepresented in the child protection system. The authors cited Black children's increased likelihood to reside in socio-economically segregated neighborhoods isolated from resources as a potential cause for this difference. Thus, attempting to understand disparity within the child protection system requires controlling for various factors in order to isolate the effect of race.

More recently, relying on the preceding decision point to provide the denominator for the DDI in decision-based analyses has promoted a better measure of racial bias within the child protection system. Morton and colleagues (2011) calculated decision-based disparity indices for substantiation and foster-care entry using all open cases at the previous decision point (i.e. investigation and substantiation). They found that rates of disparity actually decreased as Black American children moved across the system, serving to return population-based disparity values closer to 1 for every decision point after investigation. Thus, while Black American children may have higher rates of substantiation and placement past the point of investigation, this is primarily the result of their disproportionate representation during investigation. Investigation thus becomes a significant gateway for later decisions that further affect substantiation and placement disparities (Dettlaff et al., 2011).

1.3. Overrepresentation of Black children in a Canadian context

Only a few studies have captured the representation of Black Canadians within the child protection system (King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009; Sarmiento & Lavergne, 2017). While a First Nations component was conducted as part of the 2008 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, a similar study does not exist for Black Canadians. Rather, each Canadian province has been left to determine whether documenting disproportionality and disparity data is relevant to their provincial child protection mandate. The two Canadian provinces that have attempted to better understand the representation of Black children within child protection systems are Ontario and Quebec. These provinces have the highest population of Black children across Canada, with the bulk of them residing in urban communities (Statistics Canada, 2019). In Ontario, a cross-sectional analysis conducted by a Toronto child welfare agency in 2015 found that Black children were five times more likely than White children to be reported for maltreatment, transferred to on-going services and placed in out-of-home care when compared to White children (Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 2015). Data from the Ontario Incidence Study – 2013 (OIS-2013) found smaller rates of disparity, but suggested that Black children were more likely to be investigated (PDI: 1.41), have a substantiated investigation (PDI:1.64), be transferred to ongoing-services (PDI: 1.49), and experience placement (PDI: 1.57) when compared to White children (King et al., 2017). Examination of their data using a decision-based analysis to determine differences within the child protection system diminished the magnitude of these disparities from substantiation (DDI: 1.16), transfer to ongoing-services (DDI: 1.06) and placement (DDI:1.05). Of interest is the significant difference between the findings of the OIS-2013 and those of the Toronto child welfare agency study, which suggests important methodological considerations

for provincial versus jurisdiction-specific research. Despite differences in the reported levels of disparity, both of these studies indicate that Black children are more likely than White children to be investigated for maltreatment concerns.

In Quebec, a cross-sectional study conducted on Black children and other visible minorities used data from 2003 to compare rates of representation from each cultural group to all other children within the child protection system. Findings revealed that Black children were more likely to be investigated (PDI: 1.96), receive a substantiated investigation (PDI: 1.77), and experience placement (PDI: 1.40) than White children in the context of all children. They also found that other visible minorities were less likely to be reported (PDI: 0.72), have a substantiated investigation (PDI: 0.61) and experience placement (PDI: 0.44) than White children in the context of all children. A comparison of the Ontario and Quebec studies is of interest given that, in Ontario, rates of disparity for Black children appear to be relatively consistent across decision points, whereas in Quebec they gradually decrease. This may be a result of comparing Black children to all children, or provincial particularities that allow Black children to exit the child protection system across decision points at a greater rate. In addition, both studies were cross-sectional in nature, which may account for differences due to the inability to account for trends over time.

1.4. Theoretical models of overrepresentation

Several theoretical models have been proposed to explain the overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Drake et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010). Generally, these models suggest three primary reasons for overrepresentation as portrayed by Fig. 1: (1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of need when compared to other children, (2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs, and (3) Black children experience racial bias that stems from the discriminatory practice (e.g., reporting and decision-making) of professionals or institutions (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010). The first reason suggests that Black families experience a greater degree of risk factors than families of other backgrounds, in the form of unemployment, teen parenthood, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, and mental

illness (Boyd, 2014; Fluke et al., 2010). These risk factors make Black families more prone to poverty, which is considered to be a driving force of child maltreatment. The second reason stems from a lack of community services and other protective factors among Black families to address social conditions preventing entry into the child protection system (Barth, 2005). The third reason suggests that bias and discrimination within the child protection system result in Black children experiencing referral bias because of their increased exposure to public social services (Derezotes et al., 2008) and systemic racism from biased policies, practices, procedures, and privileges that disadvantage Black children (Boyd, 2014), thus increasing their representation in the child protection system. Attempting to isolate each of these reasons is difficult, pointing to the complexity of challenges faced by Black families as a result of structural and systemic racism at both individual and societal levels. More than likely, a “multiplicative model” that takes into consideration all three reasons for overrepresentation and disparity, is required.

1.5. Critical race theory and the overrepresentation of Black children

Critical race theory (CRT) would situate the persistent and pervasive nature of Black children’s overrepresentation and disparity in child protection systems as a product of them being Black. Under this perspective, structures governing political, economic, and social domains serve to maintain the status quo, where Whites are privileged and people of color are socially constructed as “others.” In this way, inequalities in the form of education, health, employment, and areas of well-being are maintained through the cumulative effect of race-based social stratification that disadvantages Blacks (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). A child protection system that fails to acknowledge the dominant role race has historically played and continues to play, will treat “racism as ordinary,” allowing for its perpetuation as part of the usual way of conducting business (Kolivski, Goodkind, & Shook, 2017). CRT posits that racism has become almost unrecognizable, making it difficult to cure and address. Thus, any attempt to “isolate” race methodologically is futile given how ingrained racism is in society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

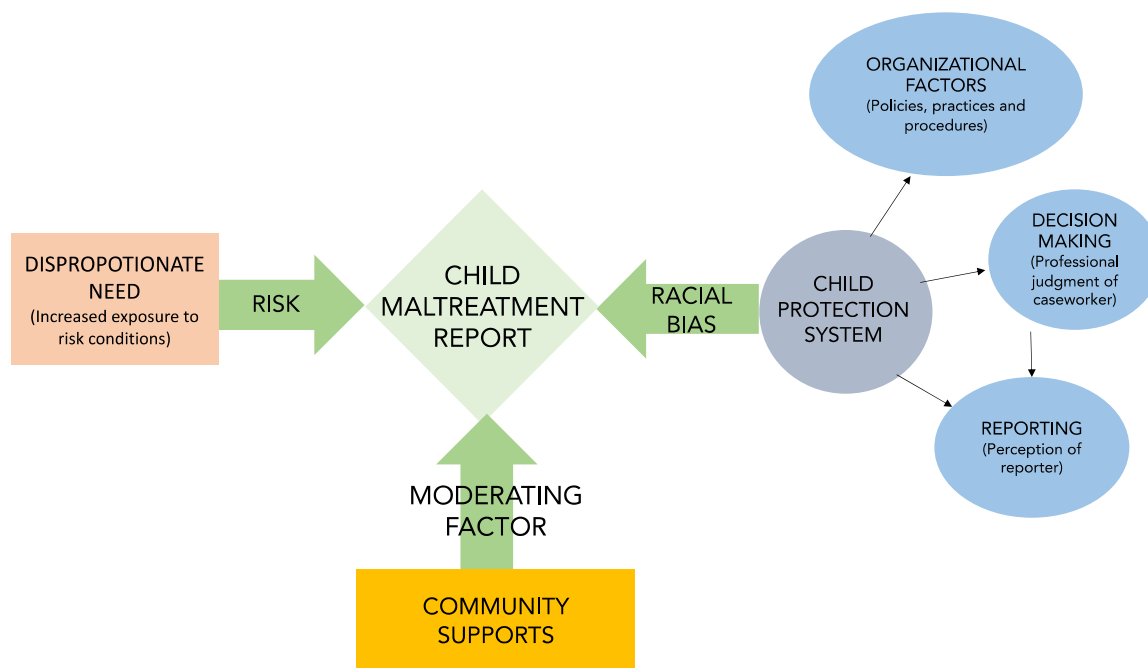


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of overrepresentation within the child protection system.

1.6. The current study

This study seeks to determine the representation of Black children receiving child protection services from a child protection agency in Montreal throughout a 10 year-period. By carrying out a jurisdictional analysis, we are better able to understand the disparity experienced by Anglophone Black children residing in Quebec. Lower levels of aggregation provide better estimates of true disparities that exist within the child welfare system (Ards, Myers, Malkis, Sugrue, & Zhou, 2003). This study is the first to account for the added social vulnerability faced by Anglophone Black children in a majority Francophone province.

While a number of cross-sectional studies have been conducted in Canada, this methodology tends to over-represent children receiving long-term services and underrepresent children having a more short-term experience (Esposito et al., 2016). This is potentially problematic when studying Black children, as American scholars have demonstrated that they face longer stays compared to other children (Hill, 2005). Determining the level of representation of Black children through the use of longitudinal cohorts begins to address the knowledge gap in Canada by providing a more accurate portrait of the target population served and how their service disparity changes over time.

Finally, previous studies have relied on socio-economic characteristics as defined through clinical administrative data completed by caseworkers within the child protection system. This study begins to understand the contributing causes of overrepresentation in greater depth by examining parental exposure to risk conditions at the population level through census data.

2. Methods

The study consisted of a secondary analysis based on two different datasets: (1) a clinical administrative dataset derived from the local child protection agency and (2) a census dataset from 2001 (Statistics Canada. (2001), 2001), 2006 (Statistics Canada. (2006), 2006), and 2011 (Statistics Canada. (2011), 2011; see Table 1). The 2011 census is referred to as the National Household Survey (NHS). The use of population data eliminated the necessity of inferential statistics given that Statistics Canada data represents the entire population. The clinical administrative dataset included anonymous, longitudinal child protection data from the agency mandated to provide services for Anglophone families residing in Montreal. The agency dataset provided information on services received by the child in addition to a number of other covariates. Two groups of children were tracked based on their shared child protection service experience between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2014: a service cohort that had a child protection report screened in by the child protection agency (children under 15) and a recurrence cohort (children under 17) that was tracked one year following case closure. Data from the service cohort included whether the report was screened in, whether maltreatment allegations were substantiated, if a court-order was obtained, and whether the child was placed in out-of-home placement. The recurrence cohort indicated children for whom a child protection decision was substantiated within a year following case closure.

To estimate the rates per 1,000 that were later used to obtain population-based disparity indexes of child protection involvement, data

from the 2001 and 2006 Census and the 2011 NHS was filtered to select children who resided in the subsample's corresponding CMA. A race variable was created that grouped Black, other visible minority, and White children into age groups that corresponded with each of the respective cohorts tracked by the agency dataset. The group for other visible minorities included any racial category other than White, Black, or First Nations (e.g., South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Latin America, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, or Japanese). Each of the Census and NHS cycles was matched to the corresponding calendar year of each cohort (i.e., for service and recurrence) within the agency dataset. Data from the 2001 Census was matched with 2002 data for the child protection agency (given there was no data generated in 2001), data from the 2006 Census was matched with 2006 agency data, and data from the 2011 NHS was matched with 2011 data. Similar matching between Census and agency data was performed for the recurrence cohort, and case characteristics were derived from the agency data. In addition to obtaining general child population counts by racial group for each of the Census and NHS years, socio-economic characteristics corresponding to our subsample and the respective White and other visible minority categories were obtained for adult primary respondents who identified having at least one child in their census family.

3. Sample

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

A service cohort, consisting of children for whom an investigation was screened in, was followed for a 36-month period after the child maltreatment report was transferred for further evaluation. To ensure that all children could be tracked for the full 36-month period, the cohort was limited to children under the age of 15. A separate recurrence cohort of children under the age of 17 who received child protection services and had their child protection case closed was followed for a period of 12 months, to determine whether there was a subsequent re-report with a substantiation decision. Between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2013, a total of 4,382 children had their cases closed by the child protection agency. To calculate disparity indices of service and recurrence cohorts, census data was stratified by age group, race, and year. Population counts from the 2001 Census were used to match 2002

Table 1
List of variables.

Dataset		Variables
Clinical Administrative	Service Cohort	Race; screened in; substantiated; court; placement; referral source; maltreatment type; child age
	Recurrence Cohort	Race; case closure; recurrence
Census	2001, 2006, NHS 2011	Disparity indices
		Race, child age; CMA
		Socio-economic characteristics
		Age of mother; parenting status; median income; education level; employment status; migration

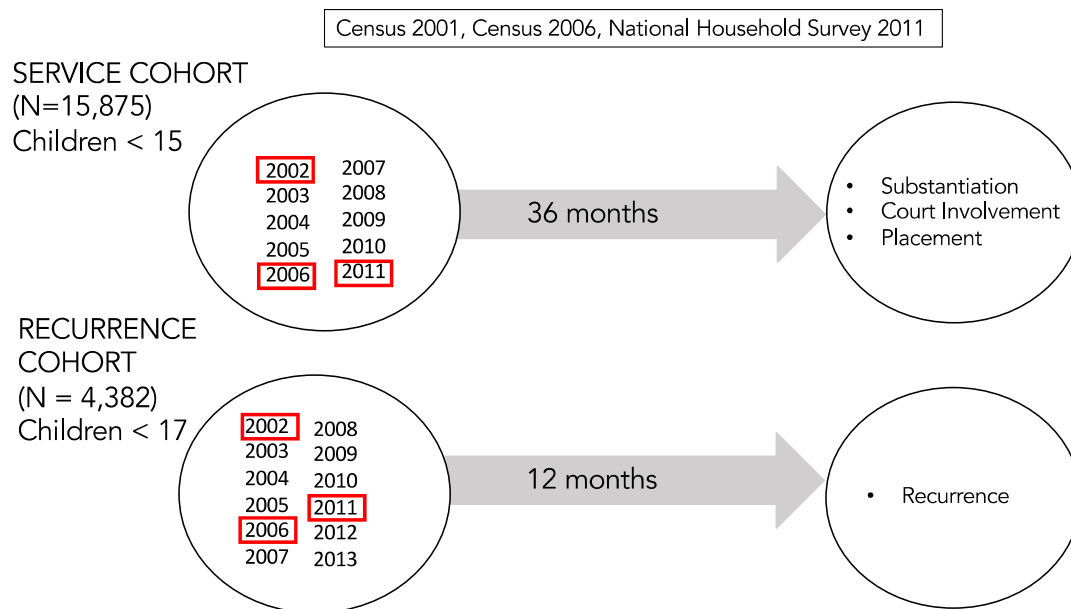


Fig. 2. Service and recurrence cohorts.

child protection counts, given that the child protection agency only began to collect data in 2002. Fig. 2 provides a visual representation of both cohorts and of the years used to calculate the disparity indices.

4. Variables

4.1. Characteristics of the reported child protection allegations

In addition to ethno-racial background, information regarding each child protection report was also obtained. This included the source of the report and whether the reporting individual was a professional or non-professional. Non-professional sources consisted of individuals who had personal knowledge of the allegations, such as family members and neighbors. Professionals were individuals who reported allegations in the context of their employment, including employees of community health services, child protection agency staff, school staff, police, hospital staff, and professionals in the private sector. Information on the child's age was grouped into three categories: 0–5 years old, 6–11 years old, and 12–17 years old. Information on the primary maltreatment type (i.e., the nature of the reported allegations) was grouped into six broad categories: (1) neglect, including physical neglect, medical neglect, school neglect, and material deprivation; (2) physical abuse, including the risk of physical abuse; (3) sexual abuse, including the risk of sexual abuse; (4) psychological and emotional abuse, including rejection, denigration, exposure to intimate partner violence, and exploitation; (5) parents' high-risk lifestyle, which represented cases in which a parent's lifestyle could result in a failure to supervise or protect the child, including abandonment due to parental absence and refusal to assure child care and risk of neglect; and (6) behavioral problems, such as harming behavior, violence toward self and others, child substance abuse, school behavior problems, running away, and destruction of property.

4.2. Characteristics of service received within the child protection agency

From the service cohort, information was obtained at various decision points within the child protection system. Screened-in cases are reports determined to warrant further evaluation by a caseworker, given the intake worker's concerns regarding the veracity of the allegations and their inability to fully assess the situation. The presence of substantiation indicates all children whose allegations of maltreatment

were confirmed following investigation. This often confirms that the child will receive on-going services provided by the child protection agency. When families are in disagreement with the decision and do not acknowledge the child protection concerns, court measures are sought. Judicialization counts all children for whom final protective judicial measures were sought and issued within 36 months of the initial screened-in report. Placement refers to situations where a child is placed in "out-of-home care." Out-of-home care is defined as any placement lasting longer than 72 h following initial investigation. Placements are only considered if they last longer than 72 h in order to control for respite placements and/or emergency placements, which are not part of child's long-term plan. Placement also refers to children placed in accredited settings (foster and residential care) or kinship care within 36 months of the initial screened-in report. From the recurrence cohort, case closure refers to cases for whom on-going services within the child protection system came to an end. Recurrence indicates the presence of a substantiated child protection report within a year following case closure.

4.3. Socio-economic characteristics at the population level

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

5. Analysis

5.1. Rate per 1,000, population-based, and decision-based disparities

Three types of measures of disparity were calculated: (a) the rate per 1,000, (b) a population-based disparity index score, and (c) a decision-based disparity score. The rate per 1,000 children for each ethno-racial group was used to measure racial representation. The population-based disparity index was calculated using the representation of each ethno-racial group experiencing the child protection event to their corresponding representation in the general population. This is known as an unconditional disparity, given that the denominator used across all service decision points is population-based. Each ethno-racial group's respective rate per 1,000 was calculated by dividing their count of child protection involvement across each service/decision point (screened in, substantiated, court ordered, placed, and recurrence) by their count in the general child population and multiplying the results by 1,000. The formula for the rate per 1,000 Black children involved in the child protection system is:

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

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

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

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

A similar PDI was calculated to compare the rate of other visible minority children involved in the child protection system to that of White children, by replacing "Black" with "other visible minority" in the formula above.

The decision-based disparity index (DDI) measured conditional disparity given the denominator used across all specific decision points for each of the ethno-racial ratios is their respective population within the child protection system. The DDI can be calculated at any particular stage or decision point of interest by obtaining the count of that stage in the system and dividing it by the previous stage of child protection involvement for one ethno-racial group and then dividing that ratio by the similar ratio for another ethno-racial group of interest. For example, the formula for DDI comparing Black and White disparity is:

$$\text{Decision Based Index (DDI)} = \frac{\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{Bblack}} / \text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{Ablack}}}{\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{Bwhite}} / \text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{Awhite}}}$$

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

6. Results

6.1. Population-based disparities across service trajectory

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for White, Black, other visible minority, and unidentified children within the child protection agency across the various service points. A rate per 1,000 and population data (PDI) is computed using respective general population data

from each of the census years, with exception of the unidentified group. As disparities affecting First Nations communities were out of scope for this study, totals for each of the "All" categories exclude First Nations children from the count in both the general population and the child protection sample. Generally, the Black population with children under 15 years of age increased by 15% between 2002 and 2011 (see Table 2). A 36% increase was observed for other visible minorities, while a decrease of 11% was observed for White children within the general population. When compared to their representation in the general child population, Black children were overrepresented within the child protection agency across all three years of data collection. In 2011, Black children represented 9% of children from the general population aged 15 and under but 24% of screened-in child protection reports. A similar overrepresentation occurred in 2006 (9% of the general child population versus 20% of child protection screened-in reports) and 2002 (8% of the general child population in 2001 versus 20% of screened-in child protection reports from 2002). Other visible minority children represented 16% of the general child population in 2001 and 21% of screened-in reports in 2002, signifying a slight overrepresentation. However, for the remaining census cycles other visible minority children were underrepresented, both in 2006 (18% of the general child population versus 17% of child protection screened-in reports) and 2011 (22% of the general child population versus 18% of child protection screened-in reports). White children under 15 years of age were underrepresented in the child protection system across all three points of data collection.

The rate per 1,000 for each of our ethno-racial groups is displayed in Table 2 using the general child population for 2001 (corresponding to 2002 within the child protection sample), 2006 and 2011, and corresponding proportions within the child protection agency for each decision point. In 2011, 19.6 out of every 1,000 Black children in the general population received screened-in reports, 5.9 out of every 1,000 other visible minority children in the general population received screened-in reports, and 3.5 out of every 1,000 White children in the general population received screened-in reports. Fig. 3 portrays the rate per 1,000 for each ethno-racial group across each of the three points of data collection 2002, 2006, and 2011. The rate per 1,000 for Black and White children has remained relatively consistent over time, whereas rates for other visible minority children are decreasing.

When comparing the average rate of disparity between each of the visible minority categories and the White population across all three points of data collection (2002, 2006, and 2011) Black children's disparity was consistently above 5, and this from the time the report was screened in to when the report was brought to court. Regarding placement, Black children's disparity compared to White children was highest in 2002 (PDI = 7.5) and lowest in 2011 (PDI = 4.9). Other visible minority children's rate of disparity compared to White children ranged from 2.7 to

0.9 across 2002–2011. For each year of data collection, the rates of disparity for other visible minority children at decision points further along in their service trajectory gradually decrease compared to White children. In 2011, other visible minority children's disparity compared to White children fell below one (PDI = 0.9), suggesting that other visible minority children were less likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement. Table 2 also displays the percentage change, using the N from the child protection agency population to calculate change from one decision point to the next for each of the ethno-racial categories. Unidentified children, followed by other visible minority children, are shown to exit the child protection agency at a faster rate than Black and White children.

In order to obtain the PDI for the recurrence cohort, new general child population data had to be collected for children between 0 and 17 years of age. Table 3 presents the proportions by ethno-racial group of cases that were closed and re-reported with substantiated maltreatment within one year following case closure by the child protection agency. Prior to 2011, the rate of disparity for Black children was 9.2 in

Table 2
Representation by ethno-racial group and service point for children receiving CPS in 2002, 2006, and 2011.

	General Population < 15		Screened In				Substantiated				Court				Placement					
	N	%	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	% change	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	% change	N	%	Rate Per 1000	PDI
2002*																				
All**	113,540	100	912	100	8.0	-	523	100	4.6	-	-43%	345	100	3.0	-	-33%	198	100	1.7	-
White	86,395	76	316	35	3.7	-	195	37	2.3	-	-38%	145	42	1.7	-	-26%	73	37	0.8	-
Black	8860	8	180	20	20.3	5.8	118	23	13.3	5.8	-34%	75	22	8.5	5.0	-36%	53	27	6.0	7.5
Other VM	18,285	16	188	21	10.3	2.5	106	20	5.8	2.5	-44%	66	19	3.6	2.1	-38%	30	15	1.6	2.0
Unidentified	-	-	228	25	-	-	104	20	-	-	-54%	59	17	-	-	-28%	42	21	-	-
2006																				
All**	114,250	100	850	100	7.4	-	408	100	3.6	-	-52%	296	100	2.6	-	-26%	179	100	1.6	-
White	83,520	73	247	29	3.0	-	132	32	1.6	-	-47%	120	41	1.4	-	-9%	85	47	1.0	-
Black	9955	9	170	20	17.1	6.6	106	26	10.6	6.6	-38%	81	27	8.1	5.8	-24%	51	28	5.1	5.1
Other VM	20,775	18	145	17	7.0	2.7	89	22	4.3	2.7	-39%	62	21	3.0	2.1	-30%	28	16	1.3	1.3
Unidentified	-	-	288	34	-	-	81	20	-	-	-72%	33	11	-	-	-54%	15	8	-	-
2011																				
All**	111,765	100	818	100	7.3	-	344	100	3.1	-	-58%	234	100	2.1	-	-30%	122	100	1.1	-
White	76,655	69	272	33	3.5	-	124	36	1.6	-	-54%	92	39	1.2	-	-26%	57	47	0.7	-
Black	10,195	9	200	24	19.6	5.4	88	26	8.6	5.4	-56%	69	29	6.8	5.7	-22%	35	29	3.4	4.9
Other VM	24,915	22	147	18	5.9	1.5	59	17	2.4	1.5	-60%	35	15	1.4	1.2	-41%	15	12	0.6	0.9
Unidentified	-	-	199	24	-	-	73	21	-	-	-63%	38	16	-	-	-60%	15	12	-	-

* Population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census.

** Does not include First Nations children.

2002 and 6.3 in 2006, suggesting that Black children were approximately 9 and 6 times, respectively, more likely than White children to have their child protection case closed following on-going services in each of those years. However, examination of rates of disparity at recurrence for each of the corresponding years indicates that Black children were about 12 times more likely than White children to have a subsequent maltreatment report substantiated within a year following case closure, for both 2002 and 2006. In 2011, Black children's rates of disparity at closure and recurrence more closely resemble what was found in Table 2 across decision points. Rates of disparity between other visible minority children and White children ranged from 2.9 to 1.7 for case closure and 3.5 to 1.0 for recurrence across 2002 and 2011, with disparity gradually diminishing from 2002 to 2011 (see Table 3).

Table 4 provides the rate per 1,000 of various case characteristics of the child protection report for each of the census years, by ethno-racial group. A population disparity index was calculated to compare each of

the visible minority groups to White children. Black children, like all other ethno-racial groups, were more likely to be reported to the child protection agency by a professional. Dividing the rate per 1,000 by referral source *within* each of the ethno-racial groups allows us to determine that Black children were, on average, 7 times more likely to be reported by a professional than a non-professional, other visible minority children were 11 times more likely and White children were 4 times more likely to be reported by a professional.

The age distribution for White children appeared relatively similar across all three reported points of data collection. Generally, for both Black and other visible minority children, a higher proportion of children between 0 and 5 and 6–11 received services from the child protection agency. The disparity between Black and White children in the proportion of children aged 0–5 ranged from 6.6 to 7.9 across 2002–2011.

Concerns about neglect were the primary reason for investigation

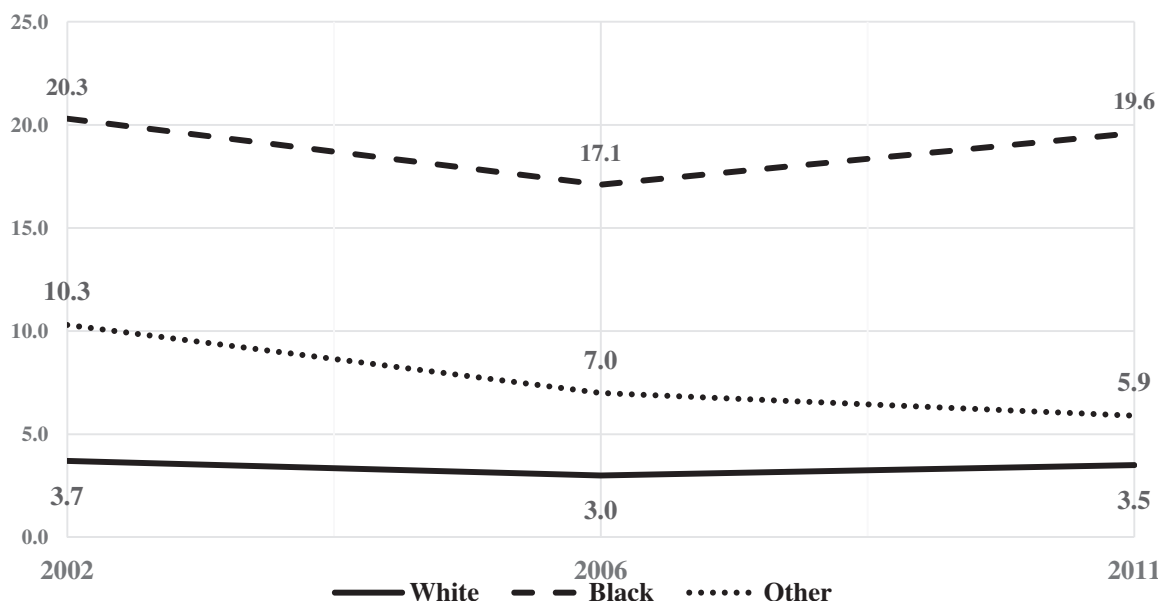


Fig. 3. Rate per 1,000 of screened-in child protection reports by ethno-racial group 2002–2011.

Table 3
Case closure and recurrence by ethno-racial group.

	General population < 17		Case Closure				Recurrence			
	N	%	N	%	Rate per1000	PDI	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI
2002*	128,870	100	551	100	4.3	–	88	100	0.7	–
All**										
White	98,400	76	109	29	1.1	–	21	24	0.2	–
Black	10,015	8	101	18	10.1	9.2	24	27	2.4	12.0
Other VM	20,455	16	54	10	2.6	2.9	15	17	0.7	3.5
Unidentified	–	–	287	52	–	–	28	32	–	–
2006										
All**	131,380	100	499	100	3.8	–	65	100	0.5	–
White	97,040	74	145	29	1.5	–	24	37	0.2	–
Black	11,130	8	106	21	9.5	6.3	28	43	2.5	12.5
Other VM	23,210	18	93	19	4.0	2.7	9	14	0.4	2.0
Unidentified	–	–	162	32	–	–	4	6	–	–
2011										
All**	129,990	100	419	100	3.2	–	42	100	0.3	–
White	89,420	69	162	39	1.8	–	20	48	0.2	–
Black	11,655	9	110	26	9.4	5.2	12	29	1.0	5.0
Other VM	28,910	22	86	21	3.0	1.7	7	17	0.2	1.0
Unidentified	–	–	61	15	1	–	3	7	–	–

* Population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census.

** Does not include First Nations children.

across all ethno-racial groups, with the exception of 2011, where Black children had a higher rate of children reported for physical abuse than neglect. When comparing disparity of maltreatment types between each visible minority group and White children, a higher than expected disparity for allegations concerning physical abuse was observed. The disparity between Black and White children in the proportion of children reported for physical abuse ranged from 8.2 to 11.0 across 2002–2011.

The disparity between other visible minority and White children in the proportion of children reported for physical abuse went from 5.0 in 2002 and 2006 to 2.0 in 2011.

6.2. Decision based disparities across service trajectory

Examination of decision-based disparities (DDI) using of a conditional denominator (N from the child protection population) compared the average DDI across all three points of data collection with the respective PDI (see Fig. 4). The DDI for Black children at substantiation was slightly above 1, and at placement it was slightly below 1, indicating no real difference in decision-making within the child protection agency between Black and White children. For other visible minority children, the DDI at substantiation was 1, indicating no difference in decision-making between White and other visible minority children with respect to substantiating a maltreatment report. At placement, the decision-based disparity between White and other visible minority children was 0.6, suggesting that other visible minority children are 40% less likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement at this decision point.

6.3. Socio-demographic characteristics at the population level

Table 5 presents proportions of various socio-demographic characteristics by ethno-racial group (excluding unidentified and First Nations children) across all three cycles of census data (i.e., the 2001 and 2006 Census and the NHS 2011) for the adult population, filtering for at least one child in the census family. Generally, across all three census cycles, Black families more often included young mothers, between age 18–25 years of age. Black single-parent families made up three times the proportion of all Black families than did single-parent families in White and other visible minority communities. Black and other visible minority families reported lower income across all three Census cycles.

In 2011, White families earned 66% more income than Black families. Other visible minority respondents were more educated than Black and White respondents: they had higher proportions of parents attending university studies across all three Census cycles. Black respondents had the lowest educational attainment, with lower proportions of their population having attended university studies and the highest proportions observed in college and trade programs. White families had higher proportions of their respondents holding full-time employment, compared to both Black and other visible minority respondents. Finally, migration patterns indicated that the majority of other visible minorities and Black respondents were first-generation Canadians, although this proportion was higher for other visible minority respondents (average of 88% across all three census cycles) than Black respondents (average of 67% across all three census cycles).

7. Discussion

7.1. Summary of main findings

The findings in the current study indicate that Black children served by an Anglophone child protection agency in Montreal were over-represented when compared to their representation in the general population throughout the 2002–2011 period. Furthermore, given their representation in the general population, Black children were more likely than White children to have their child protection reports screened in by the child protection agency. This disparity progressed and remained consistent across the various service points of substantiation, court, and placement. By comparison, other visible minority children's child protection service representation was for the most part proportionate with their presence in the general population for this same period. While they faced disparate outcomes compared to White children, this disparity was less pronounced than for Black children and gradually decreased across the various service decision points including case closure and recurrence. Black children were more likely than White children to have their cases closed following on-going services and more likely to have a substantiated maltreatment report a year following case closure.

While the population-disparate representation of Black children remained consistent across service decision points, decision-based disparity (DDI) calculations indicate that decision-making within the child protection system regarding substantiation and placement occurred at

Table 4
Rates of screened-in reports involving White, Black, and other visible minority children by investigation characteristics for 2002, 2006, and 2011.

	White		Black		Other VM	
	Rate per 1,000	Rate per 1,000	PDI	Rate per 1,000	PDI	Rate per 1,000
2002						
<i>Referral Source</i>						
Professional	2.7	16.5	6.1	8.7	3.2	
Non-Professional	0.7	2.7	3.9	1.4	2.0	
<i>Child Age</i>						
0–5	1.1	7.4	6.6	2.7	2.4	
6–11	1.4	7.6	5.6	4.7	3.4	
12–17	1.2	5.3	4.5	2.8	2.4	
<i>Primary Maltreatment Type</i>						
Neglect	2.3	12.1	5.3	6.1	2.7	
Physical Abuse	0.6	4.9	8.2	3.0	5.0	
Sexual Abuse	0.1	0.6	6.0	0.5	5.0	
Emotional Maltreatment	–	–	–	–	–	
Behavioural Problems	0.5	1.8	3.3	0.6	1.1	
2006						
<i>Referral Source</i>						
Professional	2.2	14.9	6.8	6.4	2.9	
Non-Professional	0.7	1.8	2.6	0.3	0.4	
<i>Child Age</i>						
0–5	0.7	5.5	7.9	1.5	2.2	
6–11	1.2	6.8	5.6	3.0	2.5	
12–17	1.0	4.7	4.5	2.4	2.3	
<i>Primary Maltreatment Type</i>						
Neglect	2.0	10.9	5.5	4.4	2.2	
Physical Abuse	0.3	3.3	11.0	1.5	5.0	
Sexual Abuse	0.2	0.3	1.5	0.3	1.5	
Emotional Maltreatment	–	–	–	–	–	
Behavioural Problems	0.4	2.2	5.3	0.7	1.7	
2011						
<i>Referral Source</i>						
Professional	2.9	16.8	5.8	5.1	1.8	
Non-Professional	0.6	2.4	4.0	0.7	1.2	
<i>Child Age</i>						
0–5	1.0	6.7	6.7	2.2	2.2	
6–11	1.4	7.2	5.1	2.0	1.4	
12–17	1.1	5.8	5.1	1.7	1.5	
<i>Primary Maltreatment Type</i>						
Neglect	1.6	6.0	3.8	1.4	0.9	
Physical Abuse	0.7	7.6	10.9	1.4	2.0	
Sexual Abuse	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.4	1.5	
Emotional Maltreatment	0.7	4.4	6.3	2.3	3.3	
Behavioural Problems	0.3	1.3	4.9	0.4	1.4	

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

similar rates for both Black and other visible minority children when compared to White children. Black children were slightly more likely than White children to have their investigation concerns substantiated, while no racial differences were observed between White and other visible minority children. However, the likelihood of placement was lower for both Black and other visible minority children when compared to White children. These findings suggest that rates of disparity in decision-making are maintained across all of the ethno-cultural groups studied, indicating that for the most part race is not a driving force in these decisions. While this may seem reassuring, it is also problematic given that analysis of socio-economic demographic profiles indicates that Black families are not parenting under the same contexts as other groups and face additional hardship that is not being taken into consideration in decision-making.

These findings are largely consistent with other studies conducted in the United States and Canada, and any discrepancies may be related to our use of use of longitudinal rather than cross-sectional data (King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009). However, within this study, population-based disparity indexes for Black children were higher than previously reported in the United States and in Ontario (King et al., 2017; Sedlak et al., 2010). This may be caused by their use of aggregated data combining geographically dispersed areas where Black children are unevenly distributed (Ards et al., 2003). Rates of disparity within the United States have been shown to vary by jurisdiction, and in some areas population-based indices have been reported as high as 8 (Hill, 2007). With regards to the 2013 Ontario Incidence Study results (King et al., 2017), they used a representative sample of all of Ontario that combined both urban and rural settings. This may contribute to their lower reported population-based index. The findings from this study more closely resemble those reported by the Toronto Children’s Aid Society (Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, 2015), which used data from a metropole with a high percentage of Black children. Lastly, in comparing these findings to the previous study conducted in Quebec (Lavergne et al., 2009), the rates of overrepresentation and disparity are higher in the present study, most likely due to differences in methodology. Rates of disparity in the previous Quebec study compared Black children to all children receiving services within the child protection system, whereas the current study compared Black children to White children. Furthermore, this study examined data from a sample that faces additional social vulnerability because of their status as a linguistic minority. Consideration for how this additional vulnerability influenced findings is warranted.

Regarding exit from the child protection system, our findings regarding case closure are largely similar to what was found by Sarmiento

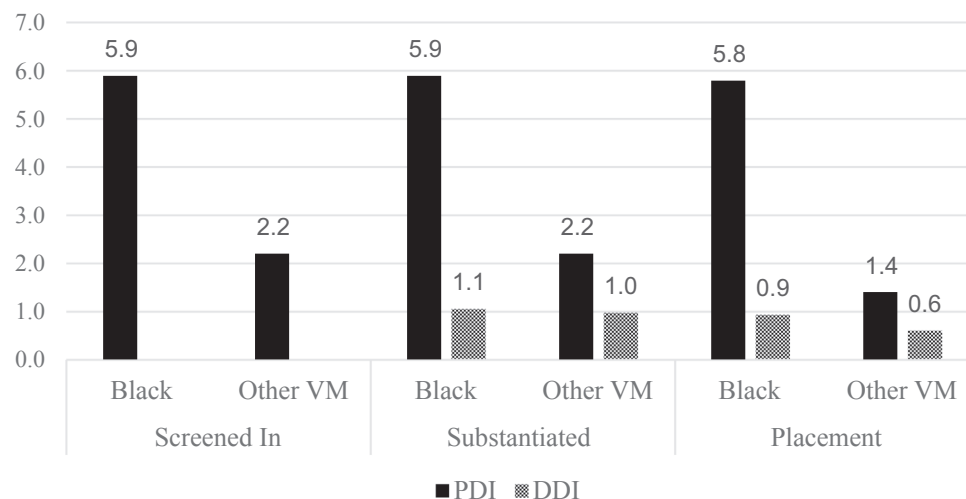


Fig. 4. Average Population (PDI)* and Decision Based (DDI)* Disparities: 2002, 2006, and 2011. *Average disparity indices were calculated by summing the PDI and DDI for each point of data collection and dividing by three.

Table 5
Socio-economic characteristic by ethno-racial group* across Census cycles.

	Census 2001				Census 2006				National Household Survey 2011			
	White	Black	Other VM	White	Black	Other VM	White	Black	Other VM	White	Black	Other VM
	N = 201,480(73%)	N = 15,170 (6%)	N = 56,825(21%)	N = 208,305(70%)	N = 16,505(6%)	N = 72,555(24%)	N = 207,730(67%)	N = 18,330(6%)	N = 83,775(27%)			
<i>Age of Mother</i>												
18-25	14%	17%	14%	15%	16%	14%	16%	16%	16%	16%	12%	12%
26-30	8%	10%	12%	7%	12%	11%	6%	11%	11%	11%	10%	10%
31 and up	78%	73%	74%	78%	72%	74%	78%	73%	77%	73%	77%	77%
<i>Parenting Status</i>												
Two parent	82%	61%	87%	82%	57%	86%	82%	53%	86%	53%	86%	86%
Lone parent	18%	39%	13%	18%	43%	14%	18%	47%	14%	47%	14%	14%
Median Income	\$68,785.29	\$41,573.75	\$41,009.02	\$80,272.88	\$47,253.04	\$46,191.14	\$90,793.31	\$54,651.05	\$56,832.16	\$54,651.05	\$56,832.16	\$56,832.16
<i>Education Level</i>												
No diploma	20%	26%	24%	11%	17%	13%	9%	17%	12%	17%	12%	12%
High School	27%	32%	25%	35%	29%	25%	24%	28%	24%	28%	24%	24%
College/Trade	28%	31%	21%	32%	36%	20%	32%	36%	21%	36%	21%	21%
University	25%	11%	29%	32%	18%	42%	34%	19%	43%	19%	43%	43%
<i>Employment Status</i>												
Unemployed	22%	27%	32%	19%	29%	31%	20%	31%	30%	31%	30%	30%
Full time	63%	55%	57%	63%	54%	56%	63%	52%	56%	52%	56%	56%
Part-time	16%	17%	11%	17%	17%	13%	17%	16%	13%	16%	13%	13%
<i>Migration</i>												
First generation	27%	70%	90%	25%	68%	88%	24%	63%	87%	63%	87%	87%
Second generation	37%	23%	9%	39%	26%	12%	41%	30%	13%	30%	13%	13%
Third generation +	36%	7%	1%	36%	6%	1%	35%	7%	1%	7%	1%	1%

*Does not include First Nations children.

and Lavergne (2017) when they compared Black children with White children reported to the child protection system in Montreal, Quebec and found that a higher proportion of Black children's cases were closed at than White and other visible minority children. Our study adds to these findings by demonstrating that, following case closure, these children subsequently had higher rates of recurrence compared to White and other visible minority children (as indicated by a subsequent maltreatment report) a year following their case closure).

7.2. Role of case characteristics and socio-demographic profiles

In attempting to understand how case characteristics may account for disparate outcomes for Black children, findings from this study indicate that Black children are more likely to be reported by professionals, younger in age, and face concerns of neglect and physical abuse. The higher proportion of professional reporters can be explained by two phenomena: (1) Black children are more "visible" because of vulnerability related to social problems that bring them to the attention of professionally mandated reporters (Barth, 2005) or (2) professionally mandated reporters are biased and hold standards which are prejudicial against Black families and which influence their decision to report (Rubin, 1992). The findings from our study do not suggest biased reporting due to racial prejudice of the reporter, given that rates of overrepresentation remained consistent beyond referral. Allegations without credible concerns would presumably result in a decrease in rates of overrepresentation across service points, as the child protection system screens out these cases.

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

Examination of socio-demographic characteristics at the population level corroborates exposure to risk conditions and economic hardship, as evidenced by higher proportions of lone-parent families, higher income disparity, lower levels of education, and higher rates of unemployment when compared to White children (and, to a lesser extent, to other visible minority children). While Black children's level of disparity at the population level does not compare to their disparity within the child protection system, a cumulative risk framework suggests that individual risk factors at the population level may interact in ways that increases the potential for negative outcomes (Appleyard, Egeland, van Dulmen, and Alan Sroufe, 2005). Furthermore, differences in rates of disparity within the child protection system for Black and other visible minority children may partly be explained by differences in their socio-demographic characteristics. Other visible minority children have lower proportions of lone-parent families than both Black and White populations, in addition to having higher levels of education. These protective factors may help mitigate some of the potential risks for maltreatment and for reporting as well. Also, most other visible minority children have parents who are first-generation Canadians. This may contribute to lower rates of representation within the child protection system, due to less frequent disclosure of child maltreatment

and language barriers to accessing and utilizing health and social services (Humphreys, Atkar, & Baldwin, 1999; Kim & Keefe, 2010). Studies have also suggested that cultural perceptions may result in under-reporting, with professionals being less likely to report maltreatment because of their perceptions of cultural norms (Maguire-Jack, Lanier, Johnson-Motoyama, Welch, & Dineen, 2015).

7.3. Argument for disproportionate need and its implications

The findings in this study suggest that our sample of Black children were exposed to risk conditions at the population level that differentiated them from other ethno-racial groups. Their increased exposure to risk conditions most probably contribute to their overrepresentation within the child protection agency. Once these children came to the attention of the child protection system, their exposure to risk conditions was carried forward across decision points. Even after case closure, these families were more likely than other ethno-racial groups to be screened back in and have the investigation substantiated. While determining correlation between economic hardship and overrepresentation was beyond the scope of this paper, it gives cause for concern about the inequitable social and economic conditions under which Black families are expected to parent. This highlights the need for a better understanding of the social system Black children and families operate in and whether child protection systems are best suited to respond in this context. In the present study, Black children's increased rates of case closure and increased rates of recurrence demonstrate how, for these children, the child protection system is a revolving door. CRT would argue that a "race neutral" child protection system fails to address the systemic discrimination that these children and families experience within society and that its current operation and conceptualization was not designed for Black families.

In December 2017, the Ontario government released its Anti-Black Racism Strategy (Government of Ontario, 2017), seeking to eliminate disparity in outcomes for Black Ontarians by 2024. The strategy acknowledges that Black Ontarians are subject to systemic barriers that impact public policies, decision-making, and services. Their definition of systemic racism includes institutions and systems that create and maintain racial inequity as a result of hidden biases in policies, practices, and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others. Within this framework, the resulting objectives include the imperatives to create sustainable change across systems, to increase system capacity and competency within government and its institutions, and simultaneously to increase Black community engagement and capacity through building stronger community relationships. The findings in this study support the need for systemic change and for community strategies to provide support to Black families, which face structural barriers in their ability to parent their children. Building social capital within marginalized communities and increasing the accessibility of family support services are key strategies to reduce child maltreatment and the overrepresentation of minority communities.

8. Limitations

Despite use of a jurisdictional analysis to provide a more true representation of disparity, our sample is most likely to contain many cultural, linguistic, traditional, and socio-economic differences among families, which warrant consideration. In addition, ethno-racial identity was determined by the caseworker in the child protection data. We are unable to control for how caseworkers labeled children whose one parent was Black and other was White or an other visible minority. Our ethno-racial groups are based solely on the ethnicity given to the child by the caseworker, without consideration of their parents. In addition, missing information on ethno-racial identity prevents us from having an accurate rate per 1,000 for each of the ethno-racial groups. We are also unable to account for situations of maltreatment that are not reported to the child protection system, and the impacts of this for

underrepresentation of the other ethno-racial groups. Lastly our findings are not generalizable to the entire Black population in Quebec given that an Anglophone sub-population was specified.

9. Conclusion

While researchers in the United States have managed to develop extensive findings on the existence of racial disproportionality and disparity, their attempts to explain why these disparities exist have yielded mixed results. This is partly due to their methodological inability to isolate race and how it is constructed and operationalized within society. Additionally, use of aggregated data may actually minimize the full extent of overrepresentation and disparity by masking jurisdictional differences, hindering the accurate identification of explanatory factors so that appropriate responses can be developed. The results from this study indicate that over a 10 year period, Anglophone Black children residing in Quebec have been screened into the child protection system at disparate rates and these rates are maintained throughout their involvement within the child protection system. Prior to this jurisdictional analysis, rates of overrepresentation and disparity of Black Anglophone children were believed to be similar to those of all Black children in Montreal, Quebec. Meanwhile, other visible minority children's rates of disparity have diminished over time. These findings mirror sociodemographic data at the population level, suggesting that Black families face a disproportionate level of need in comparison to other ethno-racial groups.

Collaborating with community organizations is one way for child protection systems to improve their response to Black children and families. Community collaborations may help decrease disproportionality and disparity by providing the support services needed to address the structural barriers, inequitable service access, and systemic factors that influence the child protection system's response (Daro & Dodge, 2009). By partnering with communities, child protection systems can help support the infrastructure needed to expand their capacity, improve coordination of services, and build the community resiliency required to improve outcomes for Black children.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work and preparation of this manuscript.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105219>.

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