One Vision One Voice

Anti-Black Racism Principles for Researchers and Database Designers

One of the ways in which the child welfare system perpetuates anti-Black racism is through biased data collection and research methods. Further, these methods often do not include input from the community affected by the research nor account for White supremacy as a key force shaping the design and conclusions of the research itself. To address the specific problem of anti-Black racism in data collection and research, One Vision One Voice (OVOV) has developed a set of principles to guide researchers and database designers on how to best collect quantitative data from African Canadian children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system.

The principles explicitly acknowledge the role that White supremacy has played — and continues to play — in Canada's public institutions, including education, criminal justice, health care, and child welfare. As a system pervading our culture, White supremacy has not only disadvantaged Black Canadians (and advantaged White Canadians, by design), but also created unconscious bias about the capacity of Black people to be "good" parents. What is especially problematic is that this bias influences individuals making important decisions about African Canadian children, youth, and families involved with child welfare. Collectively, these decisions have led to poorer outcomes and tangible harm for the African Canadian community. In short, research methods, research design, and data collection are not immune from the impact of White supremacy.

The following recommendations for researchers and database designers to eradicate anti-Black racism in quantitative data collection will help to achieve the OVOV goal of improving service delivery to and outcomes for African Canadian children, youth, and families.

Core Principles

1. **Acknowledge that White supremacy is the institutionalized process that benefits White people at the expense of people of colour (Matias & Grosland, 2016).** Researchers, database designers, data collectors, and all staff at an organization operate in a White supremacist system. Therefore, data creation, collection, and analysis will not be bias-free but related to White supremacist origins (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008). As a result, numbers are not neutral and statistics are not colour blind (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018; Sablan, 2018). For example, White supremacy operates when researchers and database designers do not challenge the normative definition of "good parenting," which has been defined largely from a White middle-class perspective (Adjei, et al., 2017; Swift, 1995).

2. **Acknowledge that White supremacy operates by lending support to deficit theories regarding African Canadians and removing racism from discussion using tools, models, and techniques that intentionally erase racism as a central factor in daily life (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018).** For example, White supremacy operates in education when Black male student suspension rates, which are higher than those for White male students, are analyzed without acknowledging the existence of anti-Black racism as a factor that may contribute to the suspension rates (see Yull & Wilson, 2018).

3. **Acknowledge that racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks ("race"), which unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities and unfairly advantages other individuals and communities (Jones, 2018).** Acknowledge race and racism as a social construction that sustains White supremacy, privileging different groups in how data is collected and understood (Mertens 2007).

4. **Acknowledge that statistics are socially constructed through a design process that includes decisions about which data should (and should not) be collected, what kinds of questions should be asked, how information should be collected and analyzed, and which findings should be shared publicly (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018).** Look "behind the numbers" to understand how findings have been generated and identify the racist logics that may have shaped conclusions (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018). For example, when a data collector has incomplete information about a parent, evidence suggest that the collector may use race as a "proxy" for poverty, regardless of a parent's socioeconomic status (Berger, McDaniel, & Paxson, 2005).

5. **Critically examine personal views regarding African Canadians (Thomas, Madison, Rockcliffe, DeLaine, & Lowe, 2018).** Most individuals harbor stereotypes that often unknowingly affect their perceptions of others (Thomas, Madison, Rockcliffe, DeLaine, & Lowe, 2018). Evaluators must protect their work against biasing factors (House, 2017).

6. **Challenge dominant ideology (Cabrera, 2018).** Challenge White privilege and refute claims of objectivity, meritocracy, colour blindness, and race neutrality. Acknowledge that there is no such thing as objective research or database design, expose deficit-informed research, and do not further the interests of dominant groups (Cabrera, 2018). Established knowledge within a discipline can be re-evaluated using anti-racist modes of analysis (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). Ask: How is racism operating here? Who sets the agenda? Who is benefitting? Who is being disadvantaged? How are African Canadian voices incorporated into this process? (Came & Griffith, 2017)

7. **Ensure that the data collected to address racial inequity does not bolster support for the very policies that perpetuate racial inequity (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018).** Note that individuals are motivated to maintain the status quo and will take evidence of what is (such as racial disparity in criminal justice) and justify it as how things should be (Kay et al., 2009). For example, some researchers (see Wilbanks, 1987) state that the disproportionality and disparity of outcomes in policing for Black individuals is attributable to higher involvement in criminal acts rather than anti-Black racism in the criminal justice system.

Explicit Recommendations

1. **Use community-based participatory research (CBPR).** CBPR is characterized by a partnership between community members, representatives from community-based organizations, social service agencies, and academic researchers. All members contribute their expertise and share decision-making and ownership. Acknowledge that community partners have knowledge and skills that improve the quality of research and database design, and they can enhance the cultural appropriateness of

tools and clarify findings by placing them in a community context (Israel, et al., 2006). For example, the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP) is a long-established participatory research partnership between the Kanien'kehá:ka community of Kahnawà:ke (Quebec) and university-based researchers. All research is overseen by the community advisory board and follows the KSDPP Code of Research Ethics — jointly developed principles emphasizing community self-determination and the Kanien'kehá:ka worldview. Thus, KSDPP assures that all research addresses community-identified needs and combines scientific rigour with Kanien'kehá:ka traditional values and decision-making (Salsberg, et al., 2018).

2. **Ensure appropriate participation of the African Canadian community in all stages of the research and database design process (Mir, et al., 2013).** Appropriate participation should first be defined by the African Canadian community, then promoted by researchers, database designers, and statutory agencies and resourced by funding bodies (Mir, et al., 2013). Items for data collection should be reviewed by expert reviewers, including academics with expertise in equity, anti-racism, anti-Black racism, and anti-colonialism and community leaders with expertise in African Canadian culture (Sablan, 2018). This type of review by cultural community leaders is essential for culturally responsive quantitative data collection (Padilla, 2004). For example, OVOV has created an African Canadian Provincial Advisory Council (PAC) made up of African Canadian community members. OVOV used feedback from the PAC to create the OVOV Organizational Anti-Black Racism Needs Assessment.

3. **Review extant literature to explore studies employing alternative methodologies on the data being collected (Bal & Trainor, 2016).** For example, Perna (2006) uses a conceptual model of quantitative data collection that seeks to examine micro-, meso-, and macro-level structural contexts that may contribute to disparities.

4. **Pay attention to the ways in which African Canadians intersect with other identities to understand how and why these other identities may be relevant (Mir, et al., 2013).** Discuss structural racism as the totality of the ways in which societies foster racial inequity via mutually reinforcing inequitable systems (e.g., housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, criminal justice, etc.) and identities (e.g., sexual orientation, religion, etc.), which in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources reflected in history, culture, and interconnected institutions (Bailey et al., 2017). Realize that racism does not operate separately from each of these factors and identities, but operates through and between them simultaneously (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018). However, do not divert from race. The practice of asserting that other factors besides race, such as gender or class, are the predominant determining factors behind a given racial inequity promotes an either/or instead of a both/and framework. Using a both/and framework offers an important sociological and historical perspective, rather than a single factor or non-racial analysis (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018). For example, when examining incarceration rates, reframe the question from "What's more important: race, gender, or class?" to "How can we examine unique constellations of race, gender, class, and social location as categories of experience in a given sociohistorical and political economic context?" (López, Erwin, Binder, & Chavez, 2018).

5. **Determine who owns and has access to the data (James, et al., 2014).** Consult with African Canadian community members, representatives from community-based organizations, social service agencies, and academic researchers to determine access to data. This includes requests from the research community, including academic institutions, governmental, and for-profit and non-profit institutions. (James, et al., 2014). For example, the Immigrant Identity Project made available 159 interviews from first- and second-generation immigrants in the northeastern United States. These interviews are available for analysis and scrutiny in the original language in which they were conducted (Massey & Sanchez-R, 2010). Another example is the First Nations Principles of OCAP™ (ownership, control, access, and possession), which means that First Nations own, protect, and control how their information is used.

6. **Determine who "gets the last word."** When research includes community members, representatives from community-based organizations, social service agencies, and academic researchers, each stakeholder may have different views on specific aspects of the research, such as data interpretation, storage, and dissemination. A determination should be may stating whose voice is centred for key decisions.

7. **Use quantitative data to highlight institutional perpetuations of racism (Stage & Wells, 2014).** Investigate issues from a systemic perspective ("Is there an institution or a practice at work that has race-based consequences?") rather than an individual perspective ("Is this person a racist?"). The simultaneous ubiquity and hidden nature of racism means individuals must be especially vigilant in looking for traces of racism, regardless of whether it seems to be there upon first inspection (Atkin, 2018). One way to highlight the role of institutions in perpetuating racial inequity may be to demonstrate how disparities can be attenuated by changing policy (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018). For example, Blind Removal Meetings can be used to facilitate unbiased decision-making (See Pryce et al., 2018).

8. **List racism as a modifiable risk factor for outcomes regarding African Canadians.** To dismantle racism, it has to be named. The role of racism in perpetuating racial inequity should be taken as given, and more attention must be given to exploring its forms and the means by which it can be addressed. Omitting important risk factors, such as discrimination or race-related stress, can lead to an overinflation of the importance of the risk factors that are included in research (Markwick, Ansari, Clinch, & McNeil, 2018). For example, the Index of Race-Related Stress for Adolescents (IRRSA) is a 32-item instrument designed to measure race-related stress, where subjects indicate which racist events they or family members have experienced in their lifetimes and their appraisal of these events. The IRRSA is a valid instrument for use with African American adolescents (Atkins, 2014).

9. **Address the strengths and assets of the African Canadian community (Sablan, 2018).** Also see Cultural Strength-Based Coping Assets (Murry, Butler-Barnes, Mayo-Gamble, & Inniss-Thompson, 2018). For example, Black extrafamilial members such as kin (e.g., grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins) and fictive kin (e.g., spiritual/religious leaders, teachers, family friends) networks — who play a more prominent role in parenting children relative to their role in White families — can be a strength in a child's emotional and behavioural development (Womack, Wilson, Taraban, Shaw, & Dishion, 2018). These family members may minimize the

loss of a caregiver following a relationship dissolution or offer a residence of stability for children who are growing up in chronically moving families (Womack, Wilson, Taraban, Shaw, & Dishion, 2018).

10. **Offer context. To contextualize is to convey that racial disparities are not natural or due to fixed stereotypical traits (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018).** Include relevant quantitative examples of the experiences of African Canadians or Black individuals. For example, according to the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety, 27% of Black individuals in Canada reported that they had experienced discrimination compared with 12% of White individuals (Simpson, 2018). Or, according to Statistics Canada 2017 data, Black people are the most common targets of hate crimes based on race or ethnicity and account for 19% of all hate crimes across Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2018).

11. **Involve validation techniques to ensure that data collection tools, especially those developed as diagnostic or quality of life measures, operate similarly across participants, regardless of race (Bal & Trainor, 2016; Lewis-Fernández, 2013).** Explicitly state limitations of measurements or the lack of availability of norm-referenced tools for use with African Canadians (Bal & Trainor, 2016). For example, a study of the Pediatric Symptoms Checklist-17 (PSC-17), a behavioural health measure, examined whether the PSC-17 could be used with children and youth in the child welfare system. The authors noted racial differences in the results of internalizing and externalizing behaviours and analyzed the findings through a critical lens. The authors stated that measures may be culturally biased, reporters may be biased in their interpretation of Black youth's behaviours, and the hegemonic dominance of White culture may constrain Black youths' freedom to express internalizing problems (Jacobson, Pullmann, Parker, & Kerns, 2018).

12. **State whether or not interviewers/data collectors were of the same race as participants and stratify results based on these findings (Lewis-Fernández, 2013).** U.S. research states that an estimated 44% to 70% of White Americans show evidence of implicit negative attitudes toward African Americans (Nosek, Hawkins, & Frazier, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2015). Therefore, data collection by White data collectors on African Canadians may be impacted by anti-Black racism.

13. **Include individual characteristics and the contextualized institutional dimensions and relational positions among and between the database designers, researchers, institutions, and African Canadian children, youth, and families (Bal & Trainor, 2016).** For example, López, Erwin, Binder, & Chavez (2018) examined the historical context of the U.S. state in which their research was being done, the site where the study was being conducted, and positionality. They state that while New Mexico had been a U.S. territory since 1848, it only became a state in 1912, when a critical mass of White settlers had populated the state. While over 60% of students are racial and ethnic minorities and 60% are woman, 75% of the faculty is White and under 50% are women. The author goes on to mention that he self-identifies as White, comes from an upper middle-class suburb north of Seattle, Washington, which was nearly all White and Asian, and went to a private high school with almost no students of colour.

14. **Determine dissemination of results (Schulz, Israel, Selig, Bayer, & Griffin, 1998).** Researchers must consult with partners prior to submission of any materials for publication, acknowledging the contributions of participants and, as appropriate,

developing coauthored publications (Schulz, Israel, Selig, Bayer, & Griffin, 1998). Researchers should work with all members to ensure research findings are constructive and meaningful for community change (Lantz, Israel, & Schulz, 2006). For example, Schulz et al. (1998) shared results with neighbourhood residents through presentations at block club meetings, presentations at local police precinct meetings, and a half-day "retreat" with social service agency workers and steering committee members.

15. **Include questionnaires/surveys/scales used to gather data (Reyes, 2018).** This allows readers to evaluate the wording of interview questions regarding any biases. Readers can also see what kinds of questions were asked and how these compare to the claims made by the researcher from study participants' answers (Reyes, 2018).

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