**Study Information**

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

**Border(ing) Practices: Systemic Racism, Immigration & Child Welfare** is a collaborative research project at the University of Toronto and the University of Victoria working in partnership with child welfare, immigration, and gender-based violence service providers and advocates.

This research aims to understand how immigration policies, in concert with systemic racism, shape child welfare policies and practices with children, youth and families in Ontario and British Columbia.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Canada has a reputation for "welcoming" immigrants, as nearly a quarter (23%) of the population immigrated to Canada. Although Canada continues to accept many permanent residents, an increasing number of immigrants have a precarious legal status as temporary workers, students, refugees, or undocumented residents. Most immigrants today who originate in countries in Asia or Africa also experience systemic racism during their settlement process. Consequently, recent immigrants have higher rates of poverty, limited access to services, struggle with family separation, or are ineligible for health and social services due to their legal status.

While child welfare (CW) services are paying closer attention to racial disparities among Indigenous and Black children involved in the CW system, systemic racism within Canada's immigration system and its impacts on child welfare practices remain poorly understood.

**WHAT WE ARE DOING**

Using an intersectionality-based research design, this research aims to:

1. Explore how child welfare service providers and community-based advocates support immigrants involved with the child welfare system.
2. Develop evidence-based policy recommendations for federal immigration and provincial child welfare ministries towards promoting migrant rights and child and family well-being.
3. Foster knowledge exchange among service providers and immigrants directly impacted by involvement in the child protection system towards improving anti-racist practices and equitable outcomes for immigrants.

**RESEARCH GOALS (MAY TO AUG 2023)**

* **Complete Phase I Research data collection** with child welfare service providers in BC.
* **Host consultations with community** groups to inform our approach to connecting with and learning from immigrants who have been directly involved in the child protection system.

**OUTREACH/DISSEMINATION GOALS FOR 2023**

* ***Facilitate webinars, presentations, and workshops*** on critical service navigation for racialized immigrants with precarious status.
* ***Develop and share research reports from interviews*** with services providers & advocates.
* ***Host a Legal Advocacy Forum on immigration and child welfare policy options***, to be held in the Fall of 2023

**WHAT WE ARE LEARNING**

**PROJECT FUNDING**

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***Preliminary Observations***

* Child welfare (CW) intervention with immigrants with precarious status is an emerging area of policy and practice in Canada. However, CW workers' capacity to support immigrants who have a precarious status remains limited & inconsistent.
* Efforts to resolve immigration concerns usually concentrate on aiding children in "care" with pending applications for permanent residence. Parental/guardian immigration concerns often go unaddressed by CW services, despite the impact immigration status has on family well-being.
* While Ontario and British Columbia CW organizations have implemented anti-racism and cultural safety initiatives, they often overlook the intersection of immigration status and racism. This oversight can perpetuate systemic inequities and put immigrants at risk of losing parental rights due to legal status concerns.

***Implications***

* Some CW organizations have dedicated resources to support families with unresolved immigration concerns, which can result in the following:
  1. a child obtaining permanent resident status;
  2. connecting non-status immigrants to vital resources (e.g., mental health care)
* However, involvement with the CW system can increase surveillance of family life which can prompt additional efforts to detect suspected abuse or neglect and increase the risk of immigration enforcement.
* Efforts to educate newcomer families on acceptable parenting practices frequently perpetuate racist and assimilationist attitudes.