THE IMPORTANCE OF
BLACK CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Black youth suicide rates are rising faster than any other racial or ethnic group. (Calhoun, 2023)

Black children between the ages of 5 and 12 are twice as likely to die by suicide compared to their white peers. (Calhoun, 2023)

Early childhood environment must consider the experiences of the Black diaspora to foster an environment where families feel that their children's identity is fully included. (Hall & Berman, 2022, p. 76)

THESE CHALLENGES IMPACT OUR DAILY LIVES...

Barriers
- Lack of Afrocentric programs that cater to Black children (Fante-Coleman, 2020)
- It is expensive for Black families to access care (Fante-Coleman, 2020)
- Wait times for free services are extremely long (Fante-Coleman, 2020)
- Conventional perceptions of parental involvement exclude Black families and deprive them of essential services, (Love et al., 2021)

Stigma
- "It is a huge taboo topic in the Black community due to colonialism and historic healthcare bias against Black people" (Meza et.al, 2022)
- "Systemic racism: Programs are more catered to white communities compared to Black communities" (Meza et.al, 2022)

CULTURAL PRIDE AND RESILIENCE

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Engagement with family, friends, and cultural organizations strengthens resilience. Highlighting community events like Tropicana Black Mental Health Week in Toronto, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural celebration.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Participating in traditions like Kwanzaa celebrations, African dance classes, and storytelling sessions promotes healing, connection, and cultural preservation.

POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

Seeing successful Black individuals in various fields, such as sports, entertainment, and academia, inspires confidence and determination.

SYSTEMIC RACISM IN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

LACK OF REPRESENTATION

Mental health services often favor white communities, resulting in unequal access for Black children

Based on a 2018 survey of 328 Black Canadians:

60% said they would be **more willing** to use mental health services if the mental health professional were Black (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2021).

95.1% felt that the **underutilization** of mental health services by Black Canadian residents was an issue that needed to be addressed (Windsor-Essex Ontario Health Team,2024).

Mental health resources frequently lack diversity and fail to address the unique needs of Black individuals.

Nearly **66% of Black** individuals reported **depressive symptoms** in a 12-month period, a rate nearly six times greater than the rest of the population (Cénat et al., 2021).

HEALTHCARE BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION

Black children may experience bias and discrimination within healthcare settings, including mental health services and lack of affordability.

One out of every five children in Canada who need mental healthcare are unable to access it (Adolescent Research Review, 2020)

Among adults with any mental illness, **Black (39%)**, Hispanic (36%), and Asian (25%) adults were **less likely** than White (52%) adults to receive mental health services as of 2021", (Hill et al., 2023).

Ways In Which Racism Can Present it's self in Therapy:

- Tell you your feelings or experiences aren't real
- They deny race
- Don't consider culture norms or expectation
- Resist conversations about race and privilege (Mental Health America, 2023).

IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION!
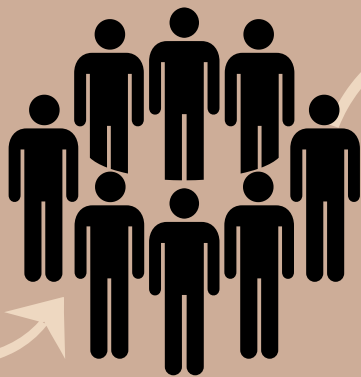
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT) explains how systemic racism is still present in current Black children's lives and how it affects their mental health during their early years. (Bei, Z., & Knowler, H. (2022)

Black children:

- Face severe forms of racism and injustice which causes **depression**, **suicide** and **anxiety**.

- Experience barriers such as access to Black professional mental health workers, unwarranted policing, **unequal access** to quality education.

- Are more likely to face **discrimination** within societal structures compared to their white counterparts which overall affects the development of a Black child's mental health.

ETHNIC RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

Ethnic Race Socialization explores how families prepare their children for biases and discusses the implications of Race and Ethnicity, (Doucet et. al, 2016).

- Working-class families tended to advocate for equality, whereas middle-class families were more inclined to talk about ERS, relate the two, and share their experiences of racism (Doucet et al., 2016).

- In relation to Black children's mental health, since families are aware of the disparities that currently exist it is more than **crucial** for mental health practitioners to center their interventions on **cultural inclusivity and equity.** (Doucet et al., 2016).

DISABILITY CRITICAL RACE THEORY (DISCRIT)

Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) explains;

- Racism and ableism combine to punish Black families unfairly in schooling
- It demonstrates that society frequently perceives White families as "normal" and Black families as "deficient. (Love et al., 2021)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND INITIATIVES

The R.I.T.E.S Program for Black and African Canadian Youth
Offers: Access to a range of clinical mental health programs, and supports the Empowerment of Black and African Canadian Children, youth, and their families.

RiseUp by Kids Help Phone:
Offers: Free Bilingual E-Mental Health support services for Black youth which is built in collaboration with Black community partners.

Delta Family Resource Centre:
Offers: Experienced culturally relevant family counselors who provide a range of free one-on-one and group counseling, as well as support for residents from Black and racialized communities.

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