



A Scoping Review of Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Maltreatment Reporting by School Personnel and Police Officers



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Introduction

- The disproportionate representation of Black children and their families within the child welfare system is concerning and warrants further dialogue
- Black children’s representation in child welfare is higher than their representation in the general population (Lavergne et al., 2008; Bonnie et al., 2022)
- Black children experience uneven treatment or outcomes at various stages of child welfare decision-making (e.g., initial report, investigation, substantiation, and placement in out-of-home care) when compared to White families (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2020; Bonnie et al., 2022; Noorishad et al., 2023)
- With teachers being a significant referral source to child welfare systems (Children’s Bureau 2022; Fallon et al., 2020), this is a plausible contributing source of overrepresentation of Black children
- Police are mandated reporters and are in a unique position to be exposed to children who may need protection. Multiple sources identify that police are the primary source of reports that relate to IPV (Black et al., 2020; Nikolova et al., 2021; Mohamud et al., 2021).

Methods

- Followed Arksey and O’Malley’s (2006) five step methodology
- Adhered to the scoping review recommendations of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) & PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews reporting guidelines
- Search strategy focused on locating published articles that included: child welfare referrals or reporting, race, education and disproportionality or disparity

Three stage search strategy

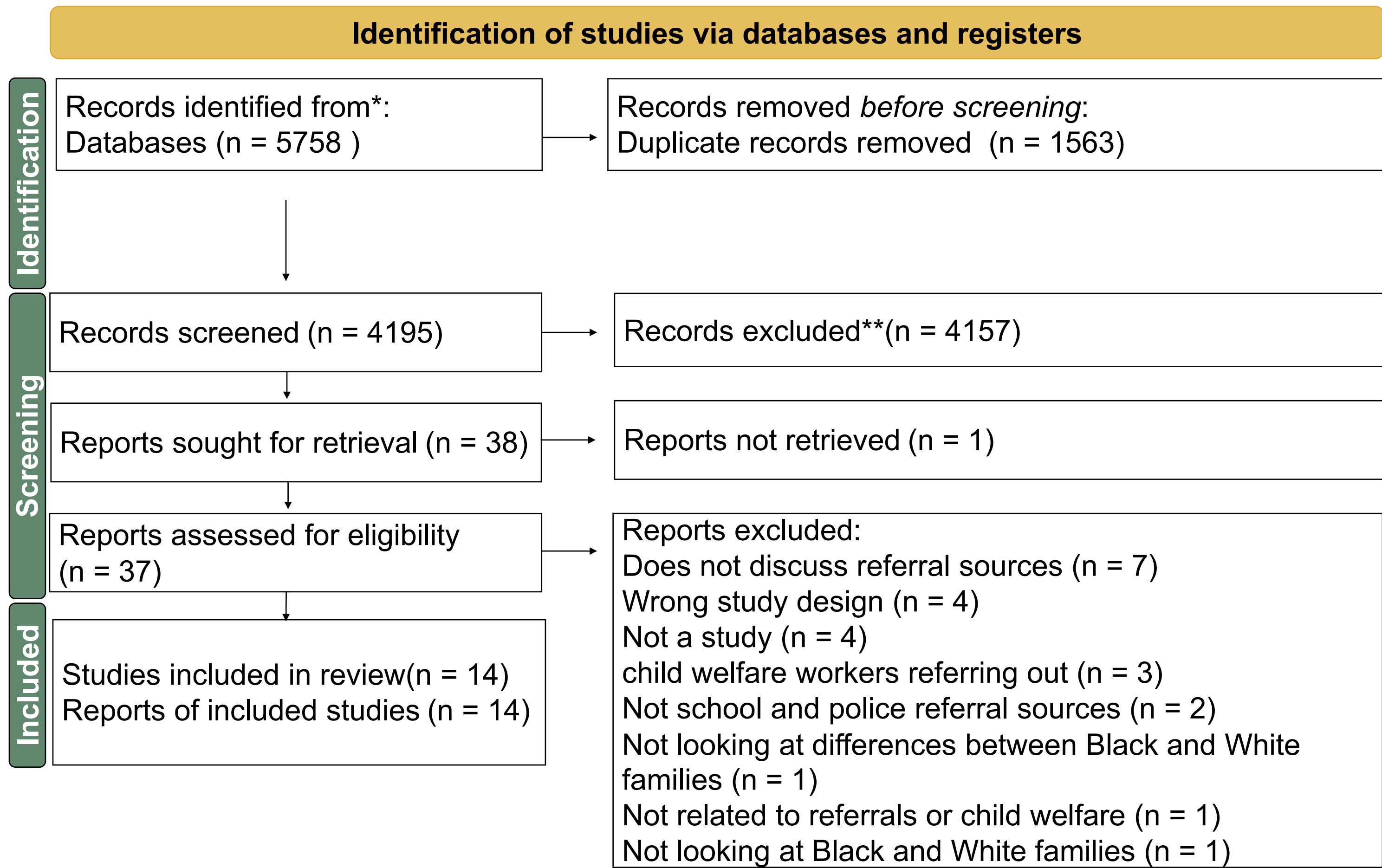
1. An initial limited search in Social Work Abstracts and Social Services Abstracts was conducted in January 2023
2. A full search followed, searching Criminal Justice Abstracts, ERIC (Proquest), PsychINFO (ProQuest), Scopus, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts
3. Hand/manual search

Studies were exported in RIS format to Covidence, a screening and extraction tool

- Duplicates were removed
- Titles and abstracts were screened by two independent reviewers
- Potentially relevant sources were retrieved in full and input into Covidence
- Full text of selected citations assessed in detail against the inclusion/exclusion criteria by two independent reviewers
- Any disagreements that arose between the reviewers at each stage of the selection process were resolved through discussion, or with an additional reviewer

Results

Figure 2 – PRISMA



Objectives and Research Questions

Aim: The study aims to understand and identify gaps in the current knowledge base, ultimately informing efforts to address Black children's overrepresentation in the child welfare system through various reporting stages and decision-making levels.

Objectives:

- I. To gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of research evidence on child maltreatment reports that come from school authorities and police officers
- II. Identify and present how the outcome of these reports may differ for Black and White children

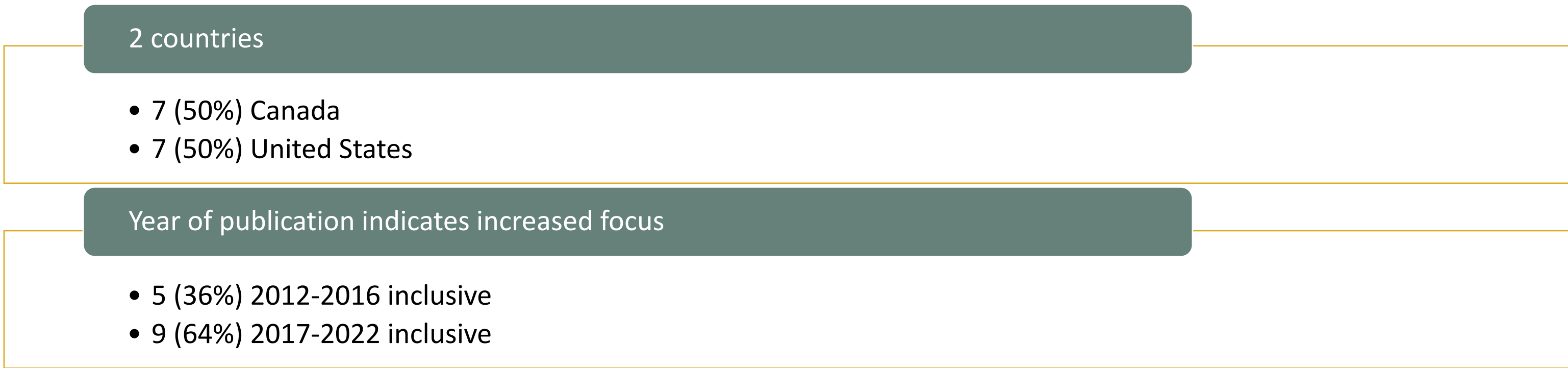
Research Questions:

1. What type of child maltreatment are school personnel and police officers more likely to report to child welfare authorities, and do they differ for Black and White children?
2. What is the outcome of child maltreatment reports made by school personnel and police officers that involves Black and White families (i.e., investigated, substantiated, placement in out-of-home care)?
3. Did the rate of Black children's disparate representation increase/decrease/stay the same after the reporting stage?

Data extraction tool was tested and refined by two authors with ten articles

Data were extracted by two independent reviewers

Data were charted and sorted by themes guided by a critical thematic analysis approach



- **School staff are the highest referral source** in U.S. (Krase, 2015)
- Most common referral reasons from school:
 - Physical abuse (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2021; Clarke, 2012; King et al., 2017; Tillman et al., 2015)
 - Neglect (Clarke, 2012; Skrypek et al., 2017)
- Schools were a greater source of physical abuse referrals for Black children than White children (74.0% vs. 61.7%, $\chi^2 = 522.93$, $p < 0.001$) but school reports of physical abuse allegations involving Black children that were transferred to ongoing services were lower when compared to White children (36.4% vs. 47.1%, $\chi^2 = 5.71$, $p = 0.017$) (King et al., 2017)
- **Police are more likely to be involved in times of emergency**, such as criminal matters or situations involving substance misuse (Skrypek et al., 2017)
- Police disproportionately report physical abuse and neglect for Black children and families (Clarke, 2012).
- **Black children are disproportionately reported for several reasons:**
 - Oversurveillance (Clarke, 2012)
 - Racism, stereotypes and assumptions (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2022; Cenat et al., 2021; Clarke 2012; King et al., 2017; Thurston & Miyamoto, 2020)
 - Poverty (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2022; Cenat et al., 2021, Clarke, 2012; Marshall et al., 2014)
 - Lack of cultural sensitivity (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2022; Cenat et al., 2021)
- **As compared to White children, Black children are more likely to be investigated, substantiated, transferred to ongoing services and placed in out-of-home care** (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2020; King et al., 2017)

Conclusions

- Broadly, this scoping review has shown that both school personnel and police account for a large percentage of reports made about Black families, however this is at least in part due to their level of exposure to children who may need protection
- Contributing factors to overrepresentation include but are not limited to cultural differences, racism and bias in and out of the child welfare system, and poverty (Thurston and Miyamoto, 2020; Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2022; King et al., 2017)
- This research should inform training and orientation for all reporting sources (Krase, 2013; Tillman et al., 2015), approaches targeted for local regions, the positioning of mandatory reporters (Krase, 2015), the importance of diversity amongst staff (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2022; Cénat et al., 2021), redistribution of resources and structural change (Antwi-Boasiako et al., 2020; Cénat et al., 2021; Clarke, 2012; Krase, 2013)
- Suggestions for future research include developing further understanding of how the decision to contact CAS is made by school personnel and police officers

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