<u>**Undergraduate Student Summer Research Fellowship (USSRF): 2024**</u>

Faculty supervisor: Dr. Joseph Kangmennaang

Mobilizing Black resources to promote early learning and childcare equity in Kingston Ontario: A community-based participatory GIS approach.

The intersection of race/ethnicity, poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic have elevated the risk of poor developmental outcomes for Black and other racialized children in Canada. The design of the current early learning and childcare (e.g., programs' end times; location of programs; prenatal care, quality preschool) often does not consider specific and unique needs of Black and vulnerable parents. Consequently, these systems do not help or meet the needs of Black Canadians and contribute to the widening racial opportunity and achievement gaps in Canada. For instance, Black high school students are the most likely to be streamed into special education and applied programs and are the least likely to enroll in college and university compared to White and other racialized students. The Covid-19 pandemic has also exposed several ways in which early learning and childcare shaped by neo-liberal market policies has become inequitable, with many vulnerable and racialized communities disproportionately affected. The Covid-19 pandemic may further widen the racial opportunity and achievement gaps. To optimally support Black children's health and wellbeing and to address the anti-Black racial gaps in opportunity and achievement, communities must provide a comprehensive, well-coordinated system of care that reflects the multiple contexts within which Black children are embedded.

Our **overall objective** is to work with Black communities and caregivers to identify and mobilize resources to promote childcare equity in a transparent and collaborative manner. Working with local stakeholders, we will use equity-based principles and data to identify accessibility gaps and co-develop actionable strategies for change. The project will achieve the overall objective by addressing the following **3**

Objectives:
1. Conduct an accessibility and hotspot analysis of childcare access and utilization among Black Canadian families in Kingston and London Ontario. To identify service gaps, and underserved neighborhoods and communities, we will map the childcare landscape, overlaid with sociodemographic and transportation data and assess the spatial distribution of services and accessibility barriers.
2. Engage Black Canadian parents and community stakeholders to identify and examine pathways for mobilizing and using local coping resources to promote childcare equity. To amplify Black voices, we will conduct public participatory GIS (PPGIS; a mapping technique to capture and use non-experts' spatial knowledge to identify social and cultural landscapes) and focus groups discussions with low-income Black Canadian parents and community stakeholders.
3. Understand how in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated uncertain policy environment, marginalized and racialized Canadians are accessing childcare.

Key roles/ responsibilities and learning outcomes.

1. Support with transcribing, analyzing and presentation of project results.
2. Help identify relevant stakeholders in the childcare ecosystem in London and Kingston Ontario

3. Help organize stakeholder consultations and knowledge dissemination with Black communities and stakeholders in Kingston and London Ontario
4. Help conduct literature review, help organize focus group interviews and support with data cleaning

By the end of the fellowship period, the student should be able to conduct literature review, justify a research project, conduct interviews, and analyze qualitative data. The student will also develop presentation and knowledge dissemination skills.