The Institutional Organization of Black Female Child Protection Workers’ (Re)construction of their Role as Carers in Child Protection: An Institutional Ethnographic Inquiry

by

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Abstract

This institutional ethnographic study explores the coordinated processes that organize Black female child protection workers’ (re)construction of their role as carers in the Ontario child protection system. This examination occurs within the backdrop of colonialism and shifting and unequal power relations in Canada. Absent from social work research is an understanding of the complex sequences of actions in every day child protection activities that authorize colonial ideologies and practices and the impact of Black female child protection workers’ negotiation of this context on their well-being. This study’s informant sample includes 9 Black female child protection workers currently employed at a child protection institution in Ontario. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. The findings revealed colonialism in the child protection system is maintained through institutional patterns of exclusion and acts of dissimulation in the institutional discourse and practice. In response, Black female child protection workers resist colonial practices through their injection of acts of caring into their work. At the same time, their constant experiences of structural violence lead to institutional trauma. This research highlights a contradiction within the social work framework; the overt
espousal of human rights and social justice as ethical priorities, while covertly maintaining colonialism in the child protection system, specifically towards Black female child protection workers and their communities. The findings advance social work knowledge by offering a way to identify the existence and the impact of the colonial context on Black female child protection workers as well as map out the sequences of actions or inactions that embed colonial ideologies and practices in the child protection system.
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Prologue

The lived realities and material conditions of Black women arise out of their multiple intersecting and interlocking social locations (i.e., race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and so on) as well as their social roles as mothers, daughters, extended family members, wives, and so on (Collins, 2000). An examination of all of these complex experiences is beyond the scope and depth of my research study. As such, I limit my investigation and analysis to Black women’s lived experiences that are located at the intersection of their race and gender and in the role of child protection worker. This restriction means that my study can only be understood as one of many interpretations of Black female lived experiences in Canada.

Oppression involves the hindrance of the development and exercise of peoples’ capacities to reach their potential through self expression, choice, opportunity, and access to resources through mechanisms of oppression such as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 1990). According to Young (1990), oppression is the consequence of structural processes that systematically produce and reproduce conscious and unconscious assumptions, stereotypes, biases, and hierarchies about different groups in major economic, political, and cultural institutions. Despite her definition of oppression, Young (1990) purports that it is not possible to specifically define oppression using a set of criteria, as oppression is an intricate experience that cannot be quantified in terms of gravity or importance and oppression is shaped by the diverse, intersecting, and complex lived experiences of various groups. The purpose of my study is not to declare the lived realities of Black women as the most oppressed amongst women or any other marginalized group, but to establish a point of entry into a broader power analysis which deconstructs their unique and complex existence as one of many that are worthy of exploration and attention.

On a personal level, I connect directly with the purpose of my research. I am a Black woman, a mother, and a former child protection worker. I share with you my journey towards transformation through my stages of acting out and acting up in response to my experiences of institutional oppression. The following ‘acting out’ experiences have led me to complete this research study:

Acting out was a point of entry into my transformation process. Identifying when my world felt ruptured began with vocalizing my evolving definition of self that coexisted with the tensions that stemmed from my experiences of racism and sexism. Vigorously and unabashedly announcing my pain and expressing my feelings was a part of my process of self protection from
my transgressors. This process was linked to my hope that just once my transgressors would think about my space in relation to their space, think about my experience in relation to their experience, and question how spaces are taken up and interpreted and how relations are not always equal. Although not always effective, acting out was synonymous with the unstoppable release of magma from a volcano when constant the pressure of additional magma became too much to hold down. For me, acting out was eruption. It was my first warning that there was a cumulative problem and that I needed to find a way to transcend the insidious foundation of this problem. The eruption was so intense and all encompassing that I became addicted to its release and its expression of aggression. This aggression served to keep transgressors at bay. However, it simultaneously blinded me from moving forward past this experience. I was stagnant and immobile. Like a volcanic eruption, my release flowed from me, but I was not changing, moving, progressing, or resisting. I was only releasing. My negative energy was set free, but to what end. Exasperated, I knew that there had to be more than just erupting. The initial relief of the release had begun to drain all of my energy, both negative and positive. I felt burned out as a mother, as a student, and as me. This was my signal that acting out was hindering my progress and was destroying me. After considerable reflection, I began to realize that the eruptions have been occurring since I was a little girl. The damage of remaining in the acting out stage for an extended period of time was beginning to show in my constant anger, hypervigilance, distrust, impatience, and exhaustion. I knew that something had to change, but I did not know how to start the process. I questioned how to move to the next phase of my life in a way that is rejuvenating, healing, and fulfilling. My habits were deeply ingrained. My support systems were sparse. My energy was depleted. Despite this, I knew that transformation was necessary. How could I resist transgression without losing myself in the process? How can transformation be a positive and life preserving experience? While acting out was necessary to signal the cumulative impact of my experiences of racism and sexism, staying too long in this stage became harmful and prevented my movement towards transformation.

Thanks to the care that I received from great friends, I decided to change my resistance strategy to ‘acting up’. This stage includes self-care and caring for others as an act of resistance. My research study represents my stance on how to actively resist institutional oppression in a healthy way. As part of my personal evolution, I conceptualize caring as a collective and individual enterprise and as a decolonizing act of resistance. I am learning to express my self-reflexive accounts of my experience in a manner that is healing and rejuvenating. I choose to be
purposeful (as opposed to reactive) and responsible (as opposed to entitled) in my expression and management of my pain while at the same time staying in and being aware of my relation to others. Thus, the energy that I give to others is positive and this directly influences the type of energy that others will reciprocate. This practice enables me to be in relation to others and to work towards managing my pain in ways that heal me while not re/injuring others. In this space, I display a radical acceptance of my discomfort, hurt, and anticipation that arises out of the presence of risk and vulnerability in a colonial environment. In this space, healthy connections begin to form as I move from aggressively fighting against spirit murder, exclusion, hatred, death energy, and injury to soul and spirit cleansing, rejuvenation, and wholeness. In short, it is the process of my open and unapologetic deconstruction and reconstruction of self that moves me forward towards transformation. My positive and rejuvenating energy represents my ‘presence’ which ruptures the colonizing and negative space. I am continuously in the process of ‘acting up’ through regular and healthy connections with others, healthy expressions of emotion, improved pain management, engagement with self-reflexivity, and moving on while not forgetting. In this way, I transcend my pain so that I am in a better and healthier place and I share and generate this positive space with others. My internal transformation process is necessary for my healthy participation in collective caring. Ultimately, my research arises out of my ‘acting out’ and ‘acting up’ experiences as a Black woman and a former child protection worker in the Canadian colonial context. I complete my dissertation as an act of caring towards Black communities and a resistance response to colonialism.
1 Chapter One - Situating the Problem

1.1. Thesis Organization

This study examines how the child protection institution in Ontario organizes Black female child protection workers’ (CPWs) (re)construction of their role as carers. It focuses on the institutional sequences of actions that result in the institutional coordination of Black women in this role. Black female child protection workers are the chosen informants for this study as Black people are the third largest racial community in Ontario and Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006b; Statistics Canada, 2006c). As well, the institutional oppression of Black people is an ongoing problem in Canada, with the experience being particularly acute and chronic for Black women (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Galabuzi, 2006). In addition, the complex work experiences of Black female CPWs are excluded from child protection research which lacks a theoretical framework to capture how they negotiate their unique lived experiences of exclusion and conditional yet unequal inclusion in child protection. Exclusion is the practice of erasure and silencing of particular bodies within ongoing power struggles amongst individuals, communities and institutions, while conditional yet unequal inclusion represents the contingent and unstable nature of social relations between entities, where any position on the continuum between dominance and non-dominance is neither given nor secure. The lived experiences of Black female CPWs bring forward the tensions of institutional racism and sexism that arise from being institutionally coordinated. This study does not focus on any specific Black community in Ontario, but rather, it articulates the generalities and specificities of their lived experience(s). As such, the term ‘Black’ encompasses the wide ranging communities of African descent, including those with cultural heritage in the United States of America, the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, South America, and Africa. As a condition of employment in child protection, all Black female CPWs in this investigation are English speaking.

The term ‘(re)construct’ represents the simultaneous ways in which Black female CPWs engage in power relations by continuously constituting and re-constituting themselves within the Ontario child protection system. This ongoing (re)construction is a practice of self-definition that extends beyond dominant Eurocentric norms regarding their race and gender.

The institutional organization of Black female CPWs’ experiences are situated in their power struggles with White communities in Canada. The term ‘White’ refers to communities of European and Caucasian descent. This distinction is important as the construction of White
English Canadian privilege is based upon its normalization of the superiority and supremacy of White European and Caucasian cultures, ideologies, and practices over other groups, cultures and communities (Coleman, 2009).

The terms ‘child protection’ and ‘child welfare’ differ in meaning and orientation to child safety and support to families. The current child protection model narrowly focuses on the child, reflects a rigid and restrictive adherence to legislative rules, encompasses a reactionary problem solving approach, and emphasizes the individual’s responsibility for child safety; the child welfare model, on the other hand, has a broader focus on the safety of the child within the framework of family support and preservation, professional discretionary decision-making, inclusion of multiple perspectives, efforts to understand how the broader structural systems impact the family, and a strength-based community oriented preventative practice (Khoo, Hyvönen, & Nygren, 2002; Parton, 2009). As Canada, and more specifically Ontario, struggles in its early attempts to transition from child protection to child welfare praxis, the term child protection is utilized in this study as it has yet to reach its goal in terms of ideological and practice changes.

Chapter One situates and contextualizes the institutional organization of Black female CPWs within the landscape of ongoing power struggles in Canada, and more specifically to the institutional racism and sexism in Ontario’s child protection system through a review of the relevant studies in the existing literature. The material conditions of Black female CPWs’ experiences are couched in the historical context of Canada’s nation-building scheme which has continued to be supported by the social work profession, particularly in the field of child protection. This examination illuminates how Black female CPWs negotiate their experiences and observations of racial and gendered structural oppressions while working in a caring role and how the colonial policies and practices in Ontario’s child protection system impacts their overall well-being and child protection practice.

The second chapter outlines the development of a critical transformational approach (CTA) representing the theoretical framework for this study. Black feminist thought (BFT), postmodernist perspectives (PP), Foucault’s notion of governmentality (FNG) and an Indigenous approach to decolonization (IAD) inform this framework by accounting for the fluid spaces and contingencies in power and resistance struggles, the varied and hidden processes of the institutional organization of caring work, and the specificities and generalities of Black women’s experiences of institutional racism and sexism. In addition, the concept of institutional trauma is
drawn upon to better understand the negotiations of Black female CPWs in contested terrains in child protection that are heavily laden with colonial practices and structural violence that result in caring becoming an oppressive practice (Clarke, 2012; Clarke, 2011; Gordon & Pon, 2011; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011).

Chapter Three outlines the method and design of this study. It employs Institutional Ethnography (IE) as the method of inquiry that is congruent with the underpinnings of the critical transformational approach which is informed by BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD.

The findings of this study are shared in Chapter Four. This chapter addresses the findings of a review of Ontario’s child protection agencies’ public statements, annual reports, and policies regarding decolonization. It analyzes the presence and absence of this institutional text as a public declaration of child protection practice commitment, transparency, and accountability. In addition, this chapter brings forth the Black female CPWs’ reports of sequences of actions and inactions in their work revealing the overt and covert institutional processes that organize them. Together with the institutional text, the Black female CPWs’ sequences of work actions are understood as institutionally organized activities called acts of dissimulation which are formed based up a combination of acts of commission and acts of omission. Acts of commission involve the institutional authorization to carry out a sequence of outward activities necessary for the performance of regulated institutional work. Acts of omission are the institutional authorization to neglect particular sequences of actions of work to support certain institutional outcomes. Lastly, acts of dissimulation entail the institutional support of sequential activities that, under false pretenses, conceal the true motives and ideologies of the institution. The Black female CPWs outline how they negotiate these institutionally coordinated sequences of actions and the impact of such negotiation on their well-being and child protection practice. This researcher selects specific institutional discourse and practices in order to highlight various sequences of actions and inactions that inform or are informed by particular ideologies and practices. In no way is the selected institutional discourse and practices an exhaustive representation of all possible discourses and practices relating to decolonization; rather they represent a point of entry into a way of understanding accounts of child protection work that is institutionally focused (McCoy, 2005). IE methodology is utilized to identify concrete institutional discourses and practices that initiate and lead to congruent sequences of actions and inactions within the child protection institution.
Chapter Five consolidates the findings of this study and existing literature to illustrate how Black female CPWs’ oppressive experiences are organized by child protection institutional discourse and how it affects their (re)construction of their role as carers with the context of unstable power relations and resistance struggles. It analyzes how institutionally organized oppressive practices towards and around Black female CPWs produce and reproduce their institutional trauma as well as create spaces for their acts of resistance and resilience. The challenges in mapping the constancy and fluidity of colonialism are also outlined.

Chapter Six presents the conclusion of this study and support for the importance of challenging structural violence and institutional oppression by first gaining an understanding of the known and unknown institutional organization processes embedded in Ontario’s child protection institution. Re-establishing and re-activating caring practices in the child protection institution is outlined as a means of transforming child protection practice and governance. The implications for social work as well as the limitations of this study and directions for future research are outlined. As a point of entry into an ongoing discussion, the study reports the implications of its findings for institutional child protection governance processes and the structural development that supports and protects the overall well-being of its workers, in particular Black female CPWs.

1.2. Black Female Child Protection Workers – Negotiating the Colonial Present

The ongoing Canadian colonial context continues to perpetuate a complicated landscape for Black female CPWs to navigate (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Government of Canada, 2015; Government of Canada, 2014; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017; Sudbury, 2005). The prevalence of reported child abuse and neglect has been rising across Canada (Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin & Neves, 2005). The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (2013) report that in 2012-2013, 44 Children’s Aid Societies and 6 Aboriginal organizations in Ontario received more than 165,000 calls, conducted over 80,000 investigations, and provided care services to nearly 25,000 children and youth. The increasing child protection caseloads necessitate high quality child protection workers in Canada who are representative of the diverse populations being served. In order to hire and retain high quality CPWs, it is necessary to research CPWs’ skills, qualifications and needs, as well as ways the child protection system can
support them more effectively and efficiently while also increasing their productivity and job satisfaction.

Despite the increasing demand for quality CPWs from a variety of intersecting social locations, Black female CPWs continue to be excluded in CPW research (Barth et. al, 2008). According to Gosine & Pon (2011), there has been limited social work research dedicated to the experiences of racialized child protection workers. Several social work research studies regarding child protection workers’ experiences neglect to examine the institutional organization of Black female CPWs complex experiences of unequal power dynamics (Anderson, 2000; Barth et. al, 2008; Browne, Verticchio, Shlonsky & Thabane, 2010; Fazioli-Bundy et. al., 2009; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Križ & Skivenes, 2010; Landsman, 2001; Levesque, 2000; Lovell & Thompson, 1995; Regehr et al., 2004; Stokes & Schmidt, 2011; Um & Harrison, 1998). Ruling of institutional regimes, such as child protection, relies on specialized knowledge that is used to organize and generate knowledge useful for ruling practice (Campbell & Manicom, 1995). Black female CPWs must exist within the child protection institutional discourse, conceptual topographies, and practices that construct and organize them as conditionally yet unequally included social workers (Montigny, 1995). Dumbrill (2003) argues that historically, child protection has been resistant to the anti-oppression perspective because child protection systems are rooted “in the efforts of society’s privileged to control those they perceive as a threat to their dominance” (p. 101). Current child protection practices and the needs of the marginalized have been formulated from a “location of dominance” and thereby perpetuate the ideal of the Eurocentric, two-parent, heterosexual and able-bodied family (Dumbrill, 2003, p. 107). In other words, the ruling relations perpetuate institutional discourse that maintains Eurocentric dominant normative truths underlying the negative ideologies and theories about Black women across institutions. Black female CPWs are consequently silenced and made invisible by the normative institutional discourse that not only regulates them, but also speaks for them.

At the same time, Black female CPWs witness, resist and participate in a child protection system that is structurally violent to Black communities. The exclusion of non-White people began with the White communities’ ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples, particularly through overrepresentation of Indigenous families in the child protection system (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, & Larrivée, 2008; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). Of the approximately 76,000 children and youth living in out-of-home care in Canada during 2000 to 2002, about 40% were
Indigenous (Farris- Manning & Zandstra, 2003); nonetheless, Indigenous children constitute only 5% of the children in Canada (Trocmé et al., 2004).

This same pattern of overrepresentation in the foster care system exists for Black children in Canada, Britain and the United States (US). As a colony of Britain, British notions of colonialism are entrenched throughout Canadian institutions (Coleman, 2006) and for the same reason parallel the values of the United States with respect to the development of welfare state and industrial relations (Schröder, 2013). Several research studies indicate that institutional racism has led to the overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system through biased reporting, assessments and other child protection decision making practices (Fontes, 2002; Harris & Hackett, 2008; Lane et al., 2002; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011; Roberts, 2002). In Canada, the overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system is reflected at all stages of intervention (Breton, Dufour, and Lavergne, 2012; Clarke, 2012; Clarke, 2011; Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, and Larivée, 2008). In the 2006 Census, the City of Toronto’s Black population was 8% while the Ontario Association of Children Aid's Societies’ report “Black youth represented 65% of youth in group care” (The Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable, 2009, p.8; City of Toronto, 1998–2010). Similarly, historical streams of research in the United States demonstrate that African American children 1) enter the child protection system in increased numbers; 2) remain in the child protection system longer than White children; 3) do not receive as many in-home-support services as White children; and 4) have a disproportionate amount of negative experiences in the child protection system (Gould, 1991; Mech 1985). At the end of 1990, the child population in the US comprised of 75% White children with 39.3 % in foster care compared to 15% African American children with 40.4% in foster care (Groze et. al., 1994; Tatara, 1993). This finding of overrepresentation of Black children in foster care is replicated in studies in Britain (Barn, 1990; Fitzherbert, 1967; Gibbons et al., 1995). Recent Canadian research suggests that two in five Black children will be involved in the child protection system and one in ten Black children will be placed in foster care (Magruder & Shaw, 2008; Wells, Merritt, & Briggs, 2009).

Of concern is how Black female CPWs reconcile their own experiences of institutional racism and sexism, and the structural oppression experienced by their communities’ in the child protection system with their employment as CPWs within the same institutionally oppressive system. The following experience of a Black female CPW depicts her negotiations of this colonial context in her work:
I have a mom that I've been working with now for over 3 years. I have been able to identify that I am too close. My supervisor has identified it. I'm very protective of this young mom, one, because I see the potential in her. She's a young Black woman. She doesn't have anyone. [Second], I've been with her for 3 years, so as time goes on, I become more protective of her. I have been in meetings where we've discussed decisions, and I feel like I've had to kind of fight for her, and I think I am doing that because she's a young Black mom. My fight was really not to have this child removed. She has been removed ...she [the child] has been out of mom's care for over a year now. I have done things for this family that I don't do for other families. I've offered to do things for this mom that I don't offer to do for other families, and it's because I feel kind of a level of responsibility as a Black woman towards this young Black woman. I feel like, if she had a non-Black worker, it would have looked so much different. I had court papers to do recently, and there was information that the lawyer wanted in there that I can't say for sure he wanted in there because she was a young Black woman. I didn't want it in there because I just didn't feel it was part of the story that needed to be in Black and White, and I was conscious that it was going to be read by many and maybe shared. And so again, there was that protective of not having that information in because I felt what I had written was enough.

I think it [my protectiveness of this mother] comes from the fact that I know that there is a larger percentage of Black youth in care in our country, Black youth. The only other group that it's more than us are Aboriginal youth. I look at the circumstances, and sometimes, other groups, it's just a little bit easier. For this particular mom, it's just not...sometimes I feel like I'm not what she got.

I think she is aware that I do more from her than is within my job, because she has said it. So I think she's aware of it, and I sometimes remind her, ‘I don't do this for anybody else. I'm not doing this. But I do it for you.’

I'm hoping that in moments when she feels she can't do it, she'll remember countless conversations that her [sic] and I have had, and she'll remember being told, ‘You have potential. You can do it. You can do it. You just have to stick to it, you need a plan, but you can do anything you want.’ I'm hoping that times will come, she'll remember that. I try to talk to her about different life lessons that I had the benefit of learning because of my environment, right? So talking to her about money, talking to her about relationships with men, what you look for, what you don't stand for, what you don't allow, hoping that, at some point when she's in those situations, it might not be the first and second but maybe the fourth time, she'll remember some conversation that we had.

... when [the child] came into care, [My worry] reduced just because I didn't have that constant worry of where they were. Mom's issues had to do with
maintaining stable housing... because I'm doing access visits, I'm seeing her every week and how she's doing...

...Finally, she has a lawyer. She hasn't had a lawyer. She has now one who is a Black woman who has really lit a fire under her.

...I had a period where I had to evaluate and take a step back. So I took a step back and just kind of let her make own her decisions…

This Black female CPW’s narrative illustrates the complicated process of how she uses her role as a child protection worker to help a Black mother transcend the negative normative discourses and practices in the child protection system. It further outlines the worker’s method of resistance through her own CPW normalization process and her communication of positive messages to the Black community about their self-worth and identity. It is critical to understand the ways in which the child protection institution’s organizational processes shape the work environment and influence the responses and sequences of actions of Black CPWs in their child protection responsibilities. In relation to the above excerpt, the question is how the institution of child protection organizes this Black CPW’s heightened level of protectiveness and caring in her work with Black female clients. Equally important is the cost of caring to Black female CPWs when they must constantly resist, re-define and reconcile the contradictions that separate their own internally defined self-images as Black women with their objectification as “the Other” (Collins, 1990).

1.3. Nation Building – Being Black and Belonging in Canada

In order to contextualize Black female CPWs’ lived experiences within Ontario, it is necessary to explicate how the exclusion and conditional yet unequal inclusion of the Black community in Canada arises directly from colonial nation building practices, laws, and policies. Building a nation is based upon hegemonic and socially ordered notions of belonging or not belonging to the nation (Hage, 2000). Nation building is premised on a view of nationalism that privileges one's own position within the nation as dominant and simultaneously dictating a hierarchical classification of bodies on a spectrum of belongingness. It is the belief in one's power to ascribe national belonging, and thus national rights, to self and others in a way that expresses the possession or organization of citizenship and space (Hage, 2000). In Canada, dominant ideologies and discourses of belonging and not belonging have shaped the organization
of citizenship that marks the membership of people within the nation on a continuum that ranges from deserving to undeserving, preferred to non-preferred, and worthy to unworthy (Thobani, 2007). Such colonial practices were first executed through the colonization of Indigenous peoples by European settler communities through systemic policies of exclusion, genocide, and segregation (Blackstock et al., 2006; Blackstock, 2015). This pattern of colonization is illustrated in the many acts of oppression towards racialized communities as a part of Canada’s nation building project as delineated by Galabuzi (2006):

> Among other factors, [racial discrimination] explains the denial of civil and political rights to Japanese Canadians in British Columbia during World War II, the imposition of the head tax on Chinese immigrants, the denial of landing for the *Komagata Maru*, a ship carrying South Asians off the coast of Vancouver at the turn of the century, the race riots in Nova Scotia in the late 1800s, the segregation of African Canadians in the educational system in Ontario until the 1960s, the treatment of nurses from racialized groups in the 1970s and 1980s, the denial of employment opportunities for racialized peoples, the documented overrepresentation of racialized group members in the prison systems in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Ontario, persistent differential access to services such as housing, health care, social assistance, recreational facilities, imposition of limits on access to property and differential treatment in the criminal justice system. (p.38)

Further evidence of colonization is found in the institutional racism against Black slaves who were transported from Africa, the Caribbean and the United States to Canada, at the request of the Canadian leadership, or were emancipated from American colonies to Canada from the seventeenth to the twentieth century (Lampkin, 1985; Mensah, 2002). Many Black communities settled in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, the Maritimes, Ontario, and New France (Mensah, 2002). While imported Black slaves continued to experience subjugation in Canada, Black slaves who were emancipated from American colonies to Canada were actively and routinely denied the promised equal treatment from White Canadians (Lampkin, 1985). Sixty percent of Black Loyalists received no land and from those who did, only five hundred received one acre lots at the edge of White townships (Krauter & Davis, 1978). Furthermore, Boyko (1998) asserts that a White family who desired a Black family’s land could take it without compensating the Black land owner. Black settlers in Canada also experienced treacherous and blatant acts of institutional racism and sexism at the hands of White Canadians through: 1) the frequent reneging on promises for government land grants and provisions to Black Loyalists; 2) the provision of minimal plots of land that were unsuitable for farming; 3) the defaulting on
agreed to payments or provision of food and clothing in exchange for their indentured services; 4) the exploitation of their labour (e.g. tenant farmers, sharecroppers, casual labourer or domestic servants) by White Canadians; 5) the exclusion from living in the same areas as White communities; 6) the denial of title ownership to land; and 7) the lack of freedom to sell their allotments (Mensah, 2002; Tremaine, 1952).

The organization of citizenship and space is requisite to colonial nation building in Canada. Citizenship is often understood as being synonymous with full human status, civility and recognition as a valuable member of the community, and protection by the state (Thobani, 2007). It encompasses the permissibility and liberty to move through the nation space and borders with unquestioned ease and acceptance. For Black people, there has been a persistent assumption that migration or travel nullifies these boundaries and invalidates their belonging to the Canadian national identity (Ahmed, 2000; Thobani, 2007). More specifically, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, the Canadian prairie governments, business establishments, and ordinary citizens advocated for the exclusion of Black communities from the region through petitions and town council resolutions banning Black immigration and creating strict segregation and deportation of Black settlers back to the United States (Boyko, 1998). To further prevent the influx of additional Black immigrants into Western Canada and the Prairies, members of Black communities were subjected to stringent medical inspections and denial of travel on railroads or increased railroad fares (Boyko, 1998). Assumed to not belong to a nation, the notion of Black communities being strangers is, therefore, produced as a transient object whose temporary existence is measured in terms of his/her familiarity or similarity to the subject, that is, White communities (Ahmed, 2000).

The presence or absence of Black communities as strangers helps to distinguish the boundaries of belonging in the Canadian nation. In relation to the subject, the stranger could be objectified as not belonging to the nation through exclusionary practices based on difference (Ahmed, 2000). The social demarcation of spaces of belonging and being are based upon a) stereotyping the stranger as a threat to shared spaces; and b) the differentiation between oneself and others (i.e. the stranger) as a way of determining who belongs to the nation (Anderson, 1990). There are several instances where colonial practices organized Black communities through exclusion from the nation. First, Black people in Nova Scotia were ostracized from major cities to enclaves in the outskirts of the province where they developed Black settlements such as Birchtown, Africville, Tracadie, and Shelburne (Elgersman, 1999). Second, in 1850, the
Ontario Legislature passed a law that prohibited Black children from attending public school and sought to have the Council of Township or the city’s board of public trustees to create segregated schools for Black children (Carty, 1994). Third, the official birth and death registers for Black communities in Canada did not exist until the latter part of the nineteenth century (Bristow et al., 1994). Fourth, in places like Nova Scotia, there is little evidence in literature and discourse that people of African descent have lived in Canada since the early seventeenth century (Hamilton, 1994). Lastly, White Canadian politicians expressed their desire to keep Canada White (Thobani, 2007); for example, Robert Borden, Opposition Leader for the Conservative Party in the early 1900’s, asserted that the "Conservative party stands for a White Canada" (Walker, 1984, p. 9).

To this end, the dominant members of Canada have attempted to define Black communities as the stranger and, subsequently, produced arbitrary boundaries to maintain the stranger as foreign to the Canadian nation (Ahmed, 2000).

As a method of implementing conditional yet unequal inclusion in Canada, legislation supported forcing many Black communities into slavery (Galabuzi, 2006). In the late eighteenth century, Lord John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada (Ontario), aspired to legally abolish slavery in Canada (Elgersman, 1999); however, many Canadian slaveholders argued for their right to have slave property and forced a compromise that led to the passing of the Canadian Statute of 1793 (Elgersman, 1999). Riddell (1919) outlines the compromised position in this Statute:

‘An Act to prevent the further introduction of slaves and to limit the terms of contracts for servitude within this province,’ had four basic tenets. First, and most dramatically, it provided that any Blacks entering the colony after the law's passage would be free. At the same time, none of the Blacks who were enslaved at the time were freed by this legislation. Any persons born into slavery after the passage of the statute would be freed at the age of twenty-five, and, finally, if any of these same persons gave birth before reaching their twenty-fifth birthday, their children would be considered free at birth. (p. 373-377)

The 1793 Statute implicitly separated free Black children from their enslaved caregivers or forced Black children to remain enslaved with their caregivers. The institutionally oppressive circumstances of Black communities prevented Black caregivers from protecting their free children from being re-captured by slaveholders and re-sold into slavery. Black caregivers were further oppressed by not having their own or their children's birth records to prove their status, thus removing the means to ensure their children's freedom under this Canadian statute. The
contradictions emanating from this Statute demonstrate dissimulation practices that further entrenched the dominant ideas of civility towards Black communities in Canada.

The idea of civility not only made it a mode of internal management and self-definition, because it distinguished the civil from the uncivil, but also made it a mode of external management because it gave civil subjects a mandate for managing the circumstances of those perceived as uncivil (Coleman, 2006). Civility is the visible and invisible codification, socialization and violent practices that propagate the overarching homogenous sensibilities of the dominant social order (Goldberg, 2009). This civility project outwardly purported an ideal image of civility that promoted free and full inclusion and equal respect, while covertly enacting Eurocentric normativity and civility as a way for ‘Othered’ groups to gain the respect that characterizes the civil group (Coleman, 2006). To promote belonging to the Canadian nation, Black women were overtly reconstituted as ‘new Black subjects’ who were deemed civil and deserving of the same respect and equality as other members of the civil group; secretly, however, the dominant discourse of race and gender about Black women remained unchanged and Black women were expected to discipline their conduct in order to participate in the civil group.

During this period of enslavement, Black women in Canada were forced into the role of the caregiver of White children as a condition of their inclusion (Carty, 1994). The devaluation of Black womanhood was made visible by their exploitation as field labourers and domestic household workers (i.e. maids, nurses, cooks, seamstresses, washer women, and nannies) (Galabuzi, 2006; Tremaine, 1952). This contradictory positioning as being inferior and subhuman, while also being placed in important role of caring for children, demonstrates the complexity underlying Black women’s conditional yet unequal inclusion in Canada. Although caring for children has consistently been deemed to be the work of women, Black women did not enjoy the same privileges as White women who were stereotyped as carers of children (Harding, 1988). While White women experienced gender oppression in their role as carers, they maintained their White privilege, whereas Black women experienced interlocking oppressions of institutional racism and sexism in caring for White children and their families (Carty, 1994; hooks, 1981). In this context, the inclusion of Black women into the Canadian nation was permitted, but only on condition of their ongoing subjugation, exploitation, and marginalization and their usefulness in maintaining the established colonialism in Canada.
More recently, the perpetuation of the practice of civility is reflected in the expectation of Black women to perform caring and protective institutional work, while simultaneously being subjected to the ruling relations’ oppressive ideologies and actions within the same institutional settings, including institutions like the police force and fire departments. In a study of African American experiences with gendered racism in the workplace, Wingfield (2007) contends that gendered racism in the professional workplace often meant that Black women were expected to conform to stereotypical and co-opted images of the modern mammy. In particular, Black female police officers experience a pervasive pattern of racial and sexual discrimination within the police institution as evidenced by the expression of negative racial and gender stereotypes about their intelligence, reliability, competence and qualifications for management positions by White men and women and Black men (Martin, 1994; Pogrebin, Dodge & Chatman, 2000). Similarly, in their study of African American and White women firefighters, Yoder and Berendsen (2001) found that African American female firefighters experience a series of unfavourable treatment involving insufficient instruction, co-worker hostility, silence, exclusion, punitive and hyper-supervision, lack of support and stereotyping, as well as fewer opportunities to work with same-race women and differential treatment.

As Black women working in caring and protection roles must constantly battle the perceptions of peers that they are not good enough to be on the force, in addition to being subjected to both negative racial and gender stereotypes, they must continually prove themselves to be worthwhile employees. Consequently, Black women may assume a more intimidating and assertive role in order to be taken seriously and to evade further experiences of institutional racism and sexism (Wingfield, 2007). Harris-Lacewell (2001) encapsulates this problem as follows:

“In many ways the strong Black woman is an affirming symbol. She has a superhuman capacity for facing the challenges imposed by her race, sex, and class. She is a comfort to Black men, a role model for Black children, and a champion of her community. She offers hope to individuals who often face difficult life circumstances. These images can be crucial to building and maintaining a positive image of Blackness in a society that often seeks to negate and to vilify it. But there are dangers to allowing the mythical symbol of the strong Black woman to remain unchallenged at the center of understandings of Black womanhood.” (p. 2)
In an effort to circumvent or surpass institutional racism and sexism, Black women in Canada and the United States push themselves beyond healthy limits and as a result, they have difficulty setting protective boundaries that would eliminate certain forms of stress from their lives. Generations of Black women have been so desperate to demonstrate they are not lazy that they became compulsive about work (hooks, 2005). There are deadly and tragic consequences for Black women who extend themselves beyond capacity. According to hooks (2005):

Stress is a hidden killer underlying all the major health problems Black women face. Over-burdened and over-extended, we are trying to do more than we can, confront more than we could possibly cope with in several lifetimes, we end up feeling that our lives are out of control, that we can only “keep a hold on life” by managing and controlling. Ironically, stress usually manifests itself most harmfully when things are out of control, yet many Black women try to cope by attempting to assert and maintain control, which of course intensifies stress. We feel that we can no longer assert meaningful, transformative agency in our lives, when we are doing too much, when we experience an ongoing impending sense of doom, constant anxiety and worry and stress has invaded our lives and taken over. (p. 39)

Much of this life threatening stress experienced by Black women is directly related to the systems of domination which disrupt their capacity to fully exercise self-determination and the way in which the myth of the “strong Black woman” is internalized and perpetuated so that they believe they are built to deal with all types of hardships without breaking down physically or mentally. In caring for others, Black women often neglect to care for themselves and live a life of positive well-being, truthfulness and healing (Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Thomas Bernard, 2017; Etowa, Keddy, Egeymi, & Eghan, 2007; hooks, 2005). By assuming superhuman qualities and denying their own vulnerability and need for interconnectedness and acceptance, Black women also reject their genuine emotional needs as members of humanity (Etowa et. al., 2017).

The absence of adequate and healthy healing processes and a structural avenue to combat the institutional racism and sexism experienced by Black women exposes them to a variety of mental and/or physical health problems. Black women in America are identified as the most over-weight female group in this nation, have the highest numbers of people suffering from AIDS, and also reflect higher rates of diseases such as depression, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, lupus and breast cancer (Carter, 2007; Etowa, Thomas Bernard, Oyinsan, & Clow, 2007). Research studies on Black Canadian women (Veenstra & Patterson, 2016), African, Caribbean, and Black women (Logie, James, Tharao, & Loutfy, 2013), on Black Nova Scotian
women (Thomas Bernard, 2003), and Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Caribbean women in Britain (Karlsen & Nazroo 2002) highlight the cumulative effects of systemic racism and sexism in the lives of these women, putting them at the same increased risk of a host of chronic diseases and other health and mental health problems as their American counterparts. Congruent with the strong Black woman myth, the inability or unwillingness of Black women to disclose their mental health struggles and/or physical illnesses could lead to these conditions becoming increasingly acute (Beagan, Etowa, & Bernard, 2012, as cited in Etowa et. al., 2017, p. 391; Kisley, Terashima, & Langille, 2008, as cited in Etowa et. al., 2017, p. 392). In turn, this trauma may impair their self-regulation and mask their participation in the normalization processes established by both the ruling relations and themselves (Baer & Maschi, 2003).

1.4. Origins of Child Protection in Ontario

Although the overall care of children is typically the primary responsibility of their parents or other caregivers, governmental or socially-mandated intervention is required when the needs, safety, and well-being of children are unable to be met by their guardians. The Constitution Act (1982) delegates the legislative and operational authority and mandate over child protection systems to each provincial or territorial government. In Ontario, the Child and Family Services Act governs all child protection services while the Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds and oversees all Children’s Aid Societies within the province (OACAS, 2014). The primary focus of these systems is to ensure the best interests, safety, and well-being of children.

The dire circumstances of many children in the eighteenth century were impacted by the exclusionary societal values and unsanitary procedures of that time period. Most notably, society’s disapproval of unwed mothers and illegitimate children, and the consequent lack of support for and ostracization of these mothers, contributed to the abandonment of their children to institutions (Neff, 2012). Increased rates of neglect were also attributed to common unsafe ideologies and practices surrounding hygiene, sterilization of culinary equipment and safe food storage as well as social issues related to classism, socioeconomic status, access to healthy foods and education, and a complete lack of legislative oversight and inspection of children’s homes (Neff, 2012).

In response, the Ontario government provided for the care and protection of neglected, destitute, abandoned, and delinquent children in children’s homes and orphanages that were
government funded charitable organizations and/or volunteer-led initiatives/committees (Neff, 2014; Neff, 2012; Neff, 2009).

In 1891, J.J. Kelso founded the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, the first child protection agency in Ontario (Jones & Rutman, 1981). As principal and superintendent under this Act, J.J. Kelso advocated for improved living conditions of disadvantaged children within their homes, keeping families together and placement of children into foster homes over institutional facilities (Neff, 2009). The Ontario government subsequently introduced the first child protection legislation under the Children’s Protection Act in 1893.

In recognizing the need for caring work, the Canadian government established the Department of Health on June 6, 1919 under the British North American Act (1867). Each province had jurisdiction over Public Health Nursing branches within their respective provincial borders. As of 1920, the Department of Public Health Nursing and the Superintendent of Neglected, Dependent and Delinquent Children presided over the division of child welfare as legislated under the Constitution Act and the Neglected, Dependent and Delinquent Children’s Act respectively. Structural aspects of social problems were ignored, and thus social workers helped children and families through the utilization of interventions rooted in psychological and sociological theories to classify, judge, assess and monitor levels of risk and corresponding corrective behaviours/mitigating factors (Parton, 2009).

Despite the best efforts to protect children, the child protection system has struggled to balance child safety and family support with anti-oppressive practice, transparency and collaboration with families. The first Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) was enacted in 1984 to provincially regulate all privately run non-profit Children’s Aid Societies (CAS), replacing a collection of legislation passed in 1921, 1954, and 1965. The purpose of this CFSA was to focus on the consideration of all parties’ rights, the provision of family support services, the weighing of ‘protection’ and ‘best interests’, and the use of least intrusive intervention (Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin & Copp, 2002). However, despite these legislative goals, families and children were subjected to constant surveillance and intrusive child protection interventions (Swift & Parada, 2004). Child protection agencies experienced public scrutiny following a series of child deaths in the 1990s due to caregiver abuse and/ or neglect in open child protection cases (Swift & Parada, 2004; Trocmé et al., 2002). The resulting high profile coroner’s inquests into these child deaths led to a taskforce review of the CFSA in 1998 (Hatton, Campbell, Colantoni, Ferron, Huyer, MacMillan, Ortiz, & Trocmé, 1998) and whose recommendations precipitated the enactment of
the Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Welfare Reform) 1999 (Bill 6) on March 31, 2000. The consequent revisions in the CFSA included: 1) the clarification of the paramount purpose of the CFSA to promote the safety, well-being, and best interests of children; 2) the explicit inclusion of child neglect; 3) a framework for intervention for “risk of likely harm” cases; 4) a 12-month deadline for permanency decisions for children in foster care under the age of six; 5) a clarification of the duty to report requirement; and 6) the inclusion of a mandatory review of the Act at minimum every five years (Trocmé et al., 2002). While this was a step in the right direction, the CFSA amendment and enactment process was flawed in that there was little consultation with various stakeholders and almost no challenge to the amendments (Swift & Parada, 2004).

In the early twenty-first century, child abuse and neglect concerns in Canada continued to rise sharply, with child protection investigation rates almost doubling from 135,261 in 1998 to 235,315 in 2003, and remaining stable in 2008 at 235,842 (Trocmé et al., 2010). To a large extent, the heightened figures are attributed to changes in reporting and investigation practices and better awareness of the harmful effects of parenting methods (Trocmé, Fallon & MacLaurin, 2011). The rising rates of child protection investigations have also been impacted by the simultaneous influence of expanded child protection mandates, which included a two-tier system of traditional child protection investigations for higher risk cases and voluntary services for lower risk services (Merkel-Holguin, Kaplan & Kwak, 2006); a heightened focus on child neglect (Gilbert et al., 2009); a better understanding of the impact of intimate partner violence on children’s mental health and emotional well-being (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008); and an increased study of the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method (Durant & Ensom, 2012; Larzelere & Kuhn, 2005). On the other hand, the dramatic rise in child protection investigations is also attributed to the pervasive institutional racism and sexism within the child protection system and actively resulting in the overrepresentation of Black children (Clarke, 2012; Clarke, 2011) and Indigenous children in Ontario and Canada (Blackstock, 2015; Blackstock et al., 2006; Trocmé et al., 2010). The soaring child maltreatment rates along with oppressive child protection practices demonstrated an evidentiary need for improved services through legislative changes.

In 2004, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services in Ontario appointed a team of multidisciplinary child protection experts to the Child Welfare Secretariat to evaluate, develop and revise policies and propose legislative amendments based on a thorough investigation of
child protection practices (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2007). Following the examination of several child protection models and extensive consultation with different communities, in 2006, the Child Welfare Secretariat created the Differential Response Model and also updated the *Ontario Child Protection Standards* (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2007). In addition, the *CFSA* was amended under Bill 210 in 2006 with a focus on permanent kinship or kith placements as an alternative to short and long term provincial care. These transformations resulted in decreased investigation rates, from 87,674 in 2011 to 81,469 in 2014, reduced number of children in care from 26,221 in 2009 to 23,341 in 2014, and a plateau of ongoing cases from 47,925 in 2012 to 47,890 in 2014 (OACAS, 2014). Overall, the updated *Ontario Child Protection Standards* reflected an effort to move towards less intrusive ways to reduce risks and assist families through the provision of education, connections to and with community resources, and addressing pre-existing social needs (i.e., inadequate housing, newcomer settlement issues, etc.), as well as establishing a minimum level of performance expectations and accountability for CPWs, supervisors and Children’s Aid Societies.

In 2013, in an effort to further improve the child welfare system, the Child Welfare Secretariat in Ontario, the Ontario Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare and a Working Group of several child protection organizational and community stakeholders conducted a review of the *Ontario Child Protection Standards* with the goal of promoting positive outcomes in the safety, permanency and well-being of children, while also enhancing accountability for decision-making and meeting the child protection performance expectations of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This review ultimately led to several amendments to the *CFSA* between 2014-2017 and the revised *Ontario Child Protection Standards* (2016), which focused on permanency planning, spending less time completing administrative duties that do not lead to child safety and more time on family and children engagement, and a reduction of redundant standards (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2016).

Nonetheless, although the changes to the *CFSA* and the *Ontario Child Protection Standards* improved the legislative and operational mechanisms within the child protection system, they were ineffective in mitigating the ongoing effects of colonization on Indigenous and Black communities. To this day, the overrepresentation of Indigenous (OACAS, 2014; Blackstock, 2015) and Black children and families (Clarke, 2012) at every stage of the child protection system, most acutely in the foster care system, remains prevalent. Furthermore, the institutional power structures governing the rules and regulations in the child protection system
continue to shape the relationship between CPWs and parents. Barriers to effective change within child protection system include insufficient funding for the social support infrastructures needed to eliminate structural oppression and violence, an absence of analysis of power dynamics in child protection, and the continued application of a Eurocentric and colonialist approach to child protection service delivery.


Understanding the institutional organization of Black female CPWs necessitates an explanation of the general landscape of child protection work. The term ‘general’ encompasses the everyday work activities that all child protection workers, regardless of their social location(s), are required to complete during the course of their day. As expounded in section 1.4, the Child and Family Services Act (Ontario), the Ontario Child Protection Standards (2016), the Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual (2007), and the Ontario Child Welfare Eligibility Spectrum (2013) have embedded within them the general organization of child protection work activities. While the work activities are structured in these written texts, the real nature of the everyday child protection work is often varied and complex due to its dependence on the familial and individual needs of each family member as well as on the decision-making of the child protection worker and supervisor. During informant interviews, Black female CPWs discussed the diverse and numerous expectations, roles and responsibilities in their general child protection work as outlined in the following excerpt:

“The normal office hours are usually nine to five. I do not adhere to that at all. That’s largely because in meeting with them…they primarily want to meet after school. That means usually there are a lot of evening appointments.

... it's not a typical day. It could range from home visits, to…reviewing your plan of service and any particular goals that you want to discuss that particular day...to school meetings, meeting with the principal, social worker, an educational meeting just to talk about the child's academic progress, and how the society can assist or support the child and family through that. You can also have court involvement…through family court with the family where there was a child protection application brought before the court so that we can address what the concerns are.

...you have supervision with your supervisor, which is scheduled once per month, usually, on average. That will take an average of two hours, depends on
how long your supervision goes. Basically, you review all your cases, and for us, our average number is 21, which includes family and child-in-care cases. Then you have meetings, whether it's permanency meetings, or if you have a child in care, you talk about what the permanent plan is going to be, whether they'll remain with the family…or remain in care. You may have what they call signs of safety meetings, where if you have a child with a family…to discuss maybe other resources that might be able to support your plan of service with the family. There's no typical day; it's a range of what you basically scheduled for that particular day.

I do my case notes in my actual visits...for an average two-hour home visit, I’m doing ten to twelve pages of case notes handwritten.

...there are some times that I'll come home and do case notes, and I’ll do that if my schedule for the following day I can't see any time to get those case notes done. So, for instance, say I have a day where I've seen 3 families, and the following day, if I have a team meeting in the morning, I have another meeting after, and then I have another 3 appointments, like there's no place for me to case note these other 3. And so, if I wait until the end of the following day, now I have 6. So sometimes I will come home and I will do case notes.

There have been times where I've had court documents to do, and I've done them on the weekend. There have been times when we have mandatory training to do and I haven't been able to fit it into my regular day, and so I've done it at home on a weekend or after work when I come home. Also, we have to do our mileage, and, although they want you to do that at the office, often time, there's no time to do it, so I typically do it at home.

We have recordings that we have to do, and our recordings are usually done every 6 months…

…basically, there's four assessments [aka recordings]. The plan of service, then you have your risk assessment, which talks about the different areas of whether the family's had past involvement in child welfare, if there's been past abuse by the child care giver. You know, if there's some sort of issues with the child's development, things that would kind of spark the risk factors, so the risks and the needs of what the families are. Then you have the family, child, and strengths and needs assessment, which talks about…issues dealing with education for the children, alcohol, substance use, mental health, probably, may be a factor within the scope of the file. Then you have your ongoing assessment, which talks about…factors that we looked with these previous assessments, what are we going to be looking at moving forward, and are they still in need of our service.”
The norms of child protection work are essential to note as they constitute a major component of Black female CPWs’ role and which they must navigate in conjunction with their specific negotiations within the colonial context.

1.6. Moving Forward – Social Change in Social Work

The complex lived experiences of Black female CPWs within the colonial Canadian context are important to investigate particularly in light of the Canadian Association of Social Workers’ (2005) Code of Ethics to which they are bound:

“Social workers do not tolerate discrimination based on age, abilities, ethnic background, gender, language, marital status, national ancestry, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status....Social workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups.” (pp. 3, 5)

As reflected, human rights and social justice are ethical priorities within the social work framework and Black CPWs’ ongoing exclusion and conditional yet unequal inclusion goes against the very fabric of the underlying principles of their profession. Ultimately, the goal of social work is to emancipate oppressed individuals and groups by critically analyzing, questioning, reframing and replacing dominant and normalized assumptions, ideologies and practices in everyday activities that continue to support unequal power relationships (Brookfield, 2009). Nevertheless, within the field of social work, the irony of Black female CPWs’ having to constantly negotiate their lived experiences and those of their communities in relation to institutional oppression in child protection has not been acknowledged, investigated or remedied. This, therefore, presents the point of entry and justification for social work researchers to interrogate how the oppressive experiences of Black female CPWs are institutionally organized and its impact on their overall well-being, ability and capacity to help families and children within the system. This investigation initiates an exposé of the institutional processes and nation building praxis that contradict the field of social work’s claims to maintain and uphold human rights and social justice as ethical priorities, and in doing so, simultaneously promotes oppression within the social work profession. By drawing on Black feminist thought, tenets from the postmodernist perspective, Foucault’s notion of governmentality, Indigenous approaches to decolonization, and this researcher’s critical transformational approach, this study investigates
the institutional organization of Black female CPWs’ (re)construction of their role as carers in child protection.
Chapter Two - Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

2.1. Introduction: Framing the Method of Inquiry

To examine how the child protection institution organizes Black female CPWs necessitates a theoretical analysis of the intersections of race, gender, and colonization in Canada. Black feminist thought (BFT), tenets of postmodern perspectives (PP), and Foucault’s notion of governmentality (FNG) are the theoretical lenses that are used to engage in this analysis. BFT, PP, and FNG are centred within the theoretical backdrop of ongoing power struggles and shifting power relations, and more specifically the contradiction of caring work as being an oppressive practice. This researcher’s concept of institutional trauma brings forth an analysis of the impact of systemic oppression and structural violence on Black female CPWs who negotiate the contested terrains and unequal power dynamics in the child protection setting. An Indigenous approach to decolonization (IAD) is employed to integrate decolonization into the intersectional reality of race, gender, and colonization. These theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations will ground this study’s methodological approach, as well as bring together and evaluate the existing literature.

2.2. Black Feminist Thought

In response to the theoretical inadequacies of feminist theories and critical race theory, Black feminist scholars developed BFT as a methodology, framework, and resistance movement that is specifically centred on the complex convergence of Black women’s lived material realities, knowledges and experiences (Collins, 1990; Stephens & Phillips, 2005; Wane, Deliovky & Lawson, 2002). It is an intellectual examination and exposé of the intersecting identities and oppressions that lead to Black women's exclusion and subordination, while simultaneously empowering Black women to actively resist their omission and subjugation and voice their realities within the broader context of historical, social, political and economic social justice through elimination of intersecting oppressions (Collins, 1990). BFT serves as a healing, rejuvenating and uplifting process that move Black women from positions of exclusion and silence to meaningful inclusion and self-expression (Collins, 1990). Furthermore, the intersections, interconnections and interdependence of the lived experiences of Black women are the points of resistance where social action, knowledge production, self-definition, and community growth thrive. BFT is a specialized knowledge that incorporates and values the
similar and collective self-definitions, knowledge and experiences of Black women, while concurrently encouraging the creation of new and diverse modes of Black female articulations and negotiations that speak to their complex and multitudinous lived experiences (Collins, 2000). In this way, this theoretical framework defies the standardized boundaries, discourses, ideologies, and practices of Black female inferiority that are embedded in the existing societal structure. BFT is a fundamental challenge to the established social order of racial and gender dominance (hooks, 1981).

Black women's experiences have become increasingly enigmatic especially when, at times, their intersectional experiences of race and gender approximate some of those of Black men and/or White women. Black feminist sociologist, Deborah K. King (1987) purports that Black women can experience a "both/or" orientation whereby certain dimensions of their experiences may closely resemble those of Black men, while others may be akin to those of White women, and still other experiences will remain unique to Black women. She indicates that this act of simultaneously being a member of a group and yet standing apart from it is a critical component of Black women's oppositional and multiple consciousness. Similarly, Collins (1990, p. 300) argues that the "outsider within locations are locations or border spaces marking the boundaries between groups of unequal power. Individuals acquire identities as ‘outsider within’ by their placement in these social locations." Accordingly, this investigator supports hooks’ (1992) argument that it is important to create a theoretical landscape that does not fragment Black women's experiences based on homogenous and additive divisions of race and gender, but one that interrogates the plethora of interconnections and diversifications that are located at the intersections of these experiences. As a result of the context of institutional racism, sexism and colonialism, Black women concurrently share common as well as divergent experiences of power, resistance and oppression.

Similarities in material conditions have cultivated shared Black feminist values that permeate the family structures, institutions, cultures, and communities of Black women in varying parts of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Canada and North America (Collins, 2000; Wane, 2002). As well, the dissimilarities of Black female experiences have served to enrich the epistemological stance of BFT by constantly reconstituting the discourses of race and gender through ongoing construction of diverse Black female theories and knowledge (hooks, 1992). This investigator contends that the convergence and divergence of Black women's intersectional experiences of race and gender is thus a complex and fluid experience of constant
re-articulation of self-definition, and points of entry. The multiplicity of Black women’s similar and dissimilar lived experiences of race and gender provide a critical consciousness that can lead to spaces for resistance to flourish and power to shift. To this end, the multitudinous nature of Black female experiences encompasses a complex and unique terrain that requires the flexibility and malleability of both the specificity and generality of self and group definitions. Engaging in this process at different points of entry allows an understanding of the contextual and historical intersections of the discourse of race and gender about Black women within a power analysis (Wane, Deliovsky & Lawson, 2002).

The effectiveness of BFT is centered on the establishment of its own methods of knowledge creation, theoretical foundations, and knowledge-validation processes (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 2000). To establish the legitimacy of their knowledge claims, BFT must be: 1) validated and accepted by Black female communities; 2) utilized in its own scholarly material; 3) accountable to the consequences of their scholarly work; 4) able to engage in dialogue about their scholarly findings with all Black women; and 5) active in the confrontation of Eurocentric masculinist epistemologies and practices (Collins, 2000). As such, this researcher maintains that these acts of Black female self-definition and reconstitution constitute resistance to the Eurocentric masculinist criteria for methodological and theoretical adequacy and legitimacy.

2.3. Postmodern Perspectives

A postmodern analysis assists in explicating the plethora of similarities and differences in the material conditions of Black women and their exercise of power that are articulated within the Black feminist thought framework. Congruent with its subjective and constructionist premises, postmodern perspectives do not have one clear definition, but rather, they subscribe to several tenets, which posit that all knowledge is subjective and socially constructed (Schneider, 2004). In effect, postmodern theories recognize that: 1) language is an organizing tool that is in flux; 2) knowledge and meaning is fluid and never stabilized into unchanging terms; 3) language and discourse permit critical analysis of social constructions and conceptualizations; and 4) there are multiple and simultaneous socially constructed knowledges and realities that are continuously being constructed and deconstructed (Schneider, 2004). Deconstruction is used to demonstrate the artificialness of these values, norms and knowledge and to reveal how the concept of rationality and power are socially constructed (Netting & O’Connor, 2003). The tenets of the postmodern perspective challenge the status quo by rejecting the notion of universal
laws and behaviours. This stance dissects language in order to understand its relationship to the various socially constructed theoretical dimensions that have created and maintained individual and structural inequalities, and to develop strategies and actions of resistance and change.

The tenets of the postmodern perspective support Foucault’s theoretical analysis of power and its fluidity amongst social relations. The following aspects of Foucauldian power analysis are congruent with the postmodernist tenets: 1) power flows unsteadily and unpredictably through networks of individuals; 2) power neither comes from a source or substance nor automatically generates or regenerates; 3) there are multiple relations of power that constitute the social relations among networks of people; and 4) power is both productive and repressive simultaneously or at different points in time (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 2003). It is the fluidity and instability of power that connects and integrates the ongoing social construction and deconstruction of people’s material conditions and social relations.

Similarly, some of the tenets of the postmodernist perspective are embedded within Dorothy Smith’s framework of Institutional Ethnography (IE), which is a method of inquiry that analyzes the institutional organization of social relations through the ruling relations’ coordination of everyday activities. Congruent with the tenets of the postmodernist perspective, Smith asserts that 1) the diverse perspectives of the research informants guides the IE method of inquiry; 2) IE examines the institutional organization of sequences of actions that shape people’s everyday experiences; and 3) the organization, dissemination, and design of ideas, beliefs, concepts and theories are conducted through language processes (Campbell & Manicom, 1995; Smith, 2005). On the other hand, Smith has critiqued postmodern epistemologies for its erasure of the active subject. However, this issue is mitigated by the child protection institution and its organizing processes and practices being the active subject in this study. The centring of the child protection institution and its coordination practices are consistent with the focus of IE and of this study. The exploratory nature of IE is founded on a constructionist position that is fluid and conditional and it is this intersection of postmodern perspectives and IE that is employed in this investigation.

Common to the BFT and PP position is the constructionist versus essentialist debate. At the heart of the constructionist framework is identity politics. The premise of identity politics is the active resistance to hegemonic, oppressive, and external accounts of diverse individual and group identities that are imposed by those who hold power (Buckingham, 2007). The goal of identity politics is for individuals and groups to have the right to self-determination regarding the
articulation and formation of multiple identities (Buckingham, 2007). Binary identity labels are deemed to be part of the standardized hegemonic and essentialist discourse that perpetuate negative and inaccurate ideologies about the identity of other people (De Ridder, Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2011), thereby also disavowing the idea that particular identities exist only in relation to the normative positioning of the dominant group. Thus, the essentialist or fixed notions of identity are not only rejected, but deconstructed and identity is reclaimed as the right to self-define the unified self. Specifically, essentializing Black female experiences is problematic due to their complexity and being rooted in the diverse intersections of Black female social locations, geographies and histories. Certainly, a group definition of “Blackness or to be Black” becomes a challenge in the absence of a single definition that directly articulates, theorizes, and examines their divergent lived experiences. Hence, it could be argued that the unique and complex Black female experiences may be lost as a result of employing such a broad theoretical framework as BFT. On the other hand, the constructionist problematic explicates how to govern and lead individuals and groups with diverse social positionings; however, without the ability to categorize and universalize similarities and differences within the human identity, it raises the question of how to ensure equality and human rights for all people in social, economic, political and epistemological structures. This constructionist versus essentialist dilemma speaks to the ongoing debate around how to accurately articulate complicated individual experiences, while, at the same time, employing common group experiences to simplify societal governance.

PPs react to individual and structural changes by deconstructing orthodoxy and allowing for the possibility of multiple alternative voices in the discourse in order to achieve transformational change (Netting & O’Connor, 2003). In line with hooks (1990) thinking, this researcher posits that the postmodernist critique of essentialism is useful for Black women concerned with reformulating outmoded notions of Black female identity from a narrow notion of Blackness. Postmodern theories challenge the notions of static over-determined identity, thus opening up new possibilities for the construction of self-identity and group definition. The decentred subject allows for new interconnections of bonding, rupturing of surfaces, and contextuality that makes space for resistance and emancipation practices (hooks, 1990). Thus, this researcher argues that the PP provides a critical theoretical framework that can expose the material conditions of Black women within the continuously shifting power dynamics, both individually and structurally. Ultimately, it is not the taking of sides in this dilemma that is important; rather, it is the space that the PPs provide to facilitate this constructionist versus
essentialist debate and allow the simultaneous existence of the specificities and generalities of Black women’s multiple and ever-changing experiences, reconstitutions and selfDefinitions.

2.4. Foucault’s Notion of Governmentality

Foucault’s notions of power, governmentality, and conduct help to position the organization of Black female CPWs into the broader social landscape of unstable power dynamics that underlie human social relations. In order to comprehend the institutional coordination of Black female CPWs in child protection, it is necessary to understand the nature of power relations. According to Foucault (2003), power cannot be acquired, possessed or self-generated by any individual, groups or institutional structures. He further asserts that an analysis of power begins with the direct application, exercise, and organization of the procedures, techniques, technologies, and mechanisms (i.e., colonial processes, methods of institutional oppression, exploitation, marginalization, violence, systems of surveillance and discipline, normalization of hierarchies, etc.) of power inherent in all power relations. As power is fluid, its practice exists at multiple points of confrontation within a network of social relations within an interconnected system of restriction and freedom, inclusion and exclusion, harmony and discord, acceptance and resistance, and compliance and disobedience (Foucault, 1977).

The exercise of power is an unstable and relational process that involves force and conduct. Force is defined as “anything that influences the actions of individuals in a relation” while conduct is understood as the act of directing oneself or other people (Foucault, 2004, p. xxii-xxiii). In any exercise of power, force directly shapes the conduct and actions of individuals, groups and institutions through the application of the procedures, techniques, technologies, and mechanisms of power.

Through force, power also co-exists in relation to multiple points of resistance. Resistance is demonstrated through actions of counter-conduct which is directly reflected in one’s acts of resistance to the exercise of being conducted, one’s desire to be conducted in a different manner, as well as in an individual’s agency to conduct their own behaviour (Foucault, 2004). In effect, acts of resistance are strategies within power relations among individuals, groups and institutions that destabilize organizations of power and generate new ways of acting.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand how ruling relations apply power. Foucault indicates that ruling relations exercise power by way of government procedures to organize people’s conduct and social relations (Gordon, 1991). Government is a set of
activities with the purpose of shaping the conduct of people by means of relational processes (i.e., self, interpersonal, community and institution) through the formulation and implementation of a milieu (Foucault, 2004). A milieu is a sequence of actions that are practiced covertly and overtly upon the population and are performed at a distance from one body to another using a standardized set of prescribed natural and artificial givens. The ruling relations use government to govern the population as a means of control over particular bodies, minds, spirits, and actions through a process called governmentality. Foucault’s notion of governmentality is defined as follows:

The word 'governmentality' means three things. First, the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific and complex power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second, the line of force has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power - sovereignty, discipline, and so on - of the type of power that we can call 'government' and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses on one hand and the development of a series of knowledges. Finally, the result of the process by which the state was gradually 'governmentalized' (p. 108-109).

Foucault highlights governmentality as being the preservation of the relation of forces and power relations via sequences of actions that produce and reproduce the norms and normalization processes of the ruling relations.

Mechanisms of discipline and security are used in government acts to organize and transform people’s behaviours to conform to norms of the ruling relations. Disciplinary mechanisms (i.e., surveillance, correctional activities, supervision, etc.) are regulatory acts of commission which support the norms underlying the laws, legislation, regulations and juridical acts that achieve the goals and purposes of government, while security mechanisms are acts of omission that “allow things to run their course and lets things happen” (Foucault, 2004, p. 45). Through a network of relations, visible and invisible disciplinary and security mechanisms are engrained and implemented by the multiple sequences of actions of various individuals within the network so that they appear automatic, normalized, and continual (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 1980). Like the penal system, the overall aim is to make the child protection system a place for the constitution of a body knowledge that regulates the exercise of child protection practice. The child protection system must know not only the decision of the assessors and judges and to apply
it in terms of its established regulations, it must unceasingly extract from this body of knowledge in order to transform the child protection norm into child protection measure and into a child protection operation. Violation of this knowledge leads to a penalty that modifies the child protection client in a way that will be of use to society and conforms to the norms of the ruling relations in the child protection system. In this way, acts of commission/discipline and acts of omission/security are strategically employed to coordinate sequences of actions, training, and behaviour modifications for the purpose of conformity to established norms.

While Foucault’s theory has been critiqued on several issues, this investigator maintains that his broader underlying conceptualizations are relevant when applying the tenets of postmodern perspectives. Foucault is faulted for focusing too much on global issues and relations as well as the negative aspects of power and too little on meaningful individual freedom (Gordon, 1991). This researcher further asserts that Foucault’s body of work is heavily entrenched in Eurocentric examples and understandings of power; the erasure of racialized bodies and their lived experiences makes invisible the ideologies and material realities of colonization and limit an intersectional analysis of their lived experiences. These critiques draw attention to the way that Foucault communicated his concepts and theories, not to the substance and usefulness of their application. Nonetheless, the applicability of Foucault’s concepts and theories are not diminished by his failure to be inclusive in his writing. As such, this investigation bypasses the Eurocentric aspects of his writing and employs, instead, his analysis of power which may be broadly applied to racialized communities and also integrated into an intersectional analysis. In this way, the tenets of postmodern perspectives are utilized to illustrate this researcher’s re-articulation of Foucauldian conceptualizations to destabilize knowledge and meaning and to construct and deconstruct knowledge and reality through the use language as an organizing tool.

Congruent with Dorothy Smith’s IE method of inquiry, Foucault’s notions of power, governmentality, and conduct provide a useful analysis of how the ruling relations exercise power in ways that converge and reinforce, as well as diverge and diminish each other, through the social construction and normalization of various subject-object positions (i.e. subjugated versus dominated, familiar versus stranger, belonging versus not belonging, insider versus outsider, etc.) More specifically, these theoretical concepts are utilized to conceptualize how Black female CPWs can be simultaneously oppressed and agents of resistance in their complex negotiations of their child protection work. To conceptualize power in this way acknowledges
its instability and constant state of flux. Therefore, any arguments in this investigation that employ this power analysis must be seen as provisional and contingent.

### 2.5. Limitations of Critical Race Theory

While the critical race theory has informed some of the underpinnings of race within BFT, it falls short of providing an analytical and conceptual framework to analyze the lived experiences of Black women. Black scholars have taken up critical race theory as a racial reform movement and a theoretical construction that actively engages in the emancipation of Black people from the individual and structural inequalities resulting from implicit and explicit experiences of individual and institutional racism (Closson, 2010). Since its inception in the mid-1970s, critical race theory has been articulated as a collection of related premises which defines an interpretive framework that theorizes and challenges normative discourses about race, racism and power, and its production of dominant ideologies, practices and structures (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Litowitz, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Similar to the tenets of BFT, the critical race theory focuses on: 1) the lived experiences of Black people; 2) racism as a form of structural and individual oppression; 3) the utilization of hegemonic civilizing methods (e.g. interest-convergence theory) as a way to normalize and reproduce specific notions of racial supremacy; and 4) the emancipation of Black communities through the abolishment of racism. Despite the advantages of the critical race theory, its foundation is rooted in the existing White hegemonic structure which includes Black men and excludes Black women based on their gender (Settles, 2006; Taylor, 1998). Hence, there is no platform within the critical race theory to analyze Black women’s individual and structural experiences of 1) racism and sexism from non-racialialized men, 2) sexism from Black and other racialized men and 3) racism from non-racialized women (Crenshaw, 2000; hooks, 1981).

### 2.6. Limitations of Feminism

Although the feminist theory has provided some valuable theoretical insights into the gender and sexism discourse that underlie parts of the BFT perspective, it does not articulate a framework that could analyze the lived experiences of Black women. Feminist theory explicates various ways of interrogating and understanding women’s lives and experiences, the nature of normalized inequality between the sexes, and the structuring of gender roles within the
frameworks of domination, patriarchy, privilege, and oppression (Code, 1988; hooks, 1984; Land, 1995). Furthermore, feminist praxis has served to bring about positive social changes for women within the areas of productive rights, abortion, voting rights, violence against women, equality in paid work, and recognition of unpaid work as equal work (hooks, 1984). Since the inception of feminism in the early 1900s, different types of feminisms (i.e., Native feminism, Multi-racial feminism, feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, social feminism, radical feminism, etc.) have been articulated, debated and clarified within research and literary circles (Anderson, 2004; Arvin et al., 2013; Harding, 2004; Land, 1995; Rupp, 1999; Thompson, 2002).

Like BFT, feminist theory highlights: 1) the lived experiences of women; 2) sexism as a dominant form of structural and individual oppression and exploitation; 3) the use of patriarchy to normalize and reproduce male domination; and 4) the liberation of women through the elimination of sexism (hooks, 1988).

Despite the positive contributions of feminist theory, it does not provide an adequate analytical and conceptual framework which facilitates the examination of the complex and unique lived experiences of Black women. Within the feminist movement, many influential White women with class and race privilege (e.g. Betty Friedan and Leah Fritz) fought for the rights of women, but opposed the inclusion of the intersectional experiences of gender with other social locations such as race, class, disability and so on (hooks, 1984). Radical feminist thinkers who interrogated gender from the intersection of race, sex, class and so on, were accused of being traitors, destroying the feminist movement, and shifting the focus of the movement (hooks, 1984). As a result, the lived and interlocking experiences of women without privileges of race, class, sexuality, and ability, etc. were excluded from their analyses. Accordingly, Black feminist scholars have criticized White feminist theorists for the absence of any critical analyses in their discussions of power and oppression around 1) their own White race privilege; 2) the impact of their White race privilege on the re-inscription and perpetuation of White supremacy within the feminist movement and in society as a whole; 3) the failure to position gender as intersecting and co-existing with other forms of identities such as race, class and so on; and 4) not framing gender oppression as an interdependent and interconnected part of a larger struggle to eradicate all interlocking forms of domination and oppression (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 2000; hooks, 1988).
2.7. An Indigenous Approach – Decolonization

As this investigation engages the concept of decolonization as a resistance practice for Black female CPWs, it is first necessary to understand its roots by examining the resistance struggles of Indigenous communities in Canada. Indigenous people, not only in Canada but in countries all over the world, have been engaging with their epistemologies as a lived experience that keeps them in constant relation with each other, their ancestors, the Creator, and their environment through interconnections within physical, mental/emotional, intellectual, and spiritual realms (Purcell, 1998). Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies are located within the traditions of storytelling, oral narratives, collectivity, the interconnections of spirituality and religion with science and politics, ancestral ceremony cycles, knowledge sharing forums across generations, living histories, and relational interactions with others and their environment as a form of pedagogy (Baldy, 2015; Bishop, 2008; Cram et al., 2001; Iseke, 2013).

For centuries, the Canadian colonial project has continually attempted to erase and silence Indigenous epistemologies and ways of being through acts of marginalization, violence, exploitation, oppression and genocide (Baldy, 2015; Christie, 2014). Alfred (2009) explains that “...colonialism is best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation – a disconnection from land, culture, and community – that has resulted in political chaos and social discord within First Nations communities and the collective dependency of First Nations upon the state” (p. 52). Simultaneously, colonization serves to validate and embed the supremacy, legitimacy, and universality of Eurocentric ideologies, languages, knowledges, and practices into the policies and laws that govern Canadian institutions and society (Akena, 2012). In response, the Indigenous people have used their power and agency to actively resist this colonial project through their re-centring of and re-engagement with their knowledges, epistemologies, and ways of being into discourse and practice. It is their process of re-claiming, re-articulating, re-authoring, and re-naming that disrupts unequal power relations and devalues colonial discourse and practices (Smith, 2012; Wane, 2006). Ultimately, the collective and self-determined cultural and epistemological resurgence and revitalization are, in effect, decolonization praxis.

The goal of decolonization is to open up space within power relations for multifaceted and inclusive interpretation of various knowledges and epistemologies. Similar to power, knowledge is never complete, as it is always in flux (Conway, 2004). There is space for all knowledge and
epistemological stances to agree, coalesce, and/or contest. Therefore, the different perspectives of the groups involved in power and resistance struggles should be utilized for fluid knowledge production processes and epistemological understandings (Haraway, 1998). Power is not situated from one position, but from multiple and unique relational experiences. In this way, the decolonization process re-inserts and restores excluded stances, lived experiences, material realities, knowledges, and epistemologies into the context of power relations.

This Indigenous approach to decolonization (IAD) is utilized in this investigation as it provides a theoretical foundation that adequately frames Black women’s resistance within their experience of the colonial context.

2.8. Caring Work as Oppressive Practice

Caring has been a central tenet in social work theory and practice (Biestek, 1957; Perlman, 1979; Rhodes, 1985). Daly & Lewis (2000) bring forth the concept of care as a theoretical construct which includes the micro and macro relations between people and the social and political systems within which they live, and how these relations are organized within their study of welfare states. They conceptualize “social care” as “the activities and relations involved in meeting the physical and emotional requirements of dependent adults and children, and the normative, economic and social frameworks within which these are assigned and carried out” (p. 285). Of the numerous strands of social care presented by Daly & Lewis (2000), three are of relevance to this study: a) caring as a performance of labour, b) caring within normative rules and responsibilities, and c) caring as public/private actions or activities. Their study suggests that acts of caring may be organized through institutional regulations and norms to shape social relations among people. Daly & Lewis’ conceptualization of care provides a useful framework to examine the specificities regarding how caring work is organized in child protection and how caring work has been co-opted by oppressors in power relationships. It also shows how institutions that manage the welfare and well being of people are able to organize micro and macro level social relations through proliferation of dominant normative frameworks.

On an individual level, caring has been accepted as one of many necessary attributes (i.e. empathy, trustworthiness, good will, genuineness, etc.) that social workers are expected to display in the social worker-client relationship (Perlman, 1979). In fact, caring is a necessary antecedent to helping behaviour. Noddings’ (1984) feminist conceptual model of caring views caring as a means of helping other people reach self-actualization. According to the Canadian
Association of Social Workers (2008), the purpose of social work is to help to enhance people’s individual well being, to reach their full potential and to increase their life chances through the development of their personal skills and abilities, the use of their individual, community and broader societal resources, and to have equal access to opportunities.

Within the macro context, caring involves the concern for the welfare and self-realization of all people through equitable provision of resources, services, opportunities, protection, safety, and security (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005). The social work profession has also been established as both a practice-based and academic discipline that is actively engaged in social justice activities, which include the promotion of and advocating for people’s empowerment, liberation, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diverse and intersecting social locations (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005; International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). This broader understanding of caring has been injected into the complicated social, economic and political structures that are in place to meet the competing social needs of all people in society (Himmelweit, 2007).

A critical analysis of power dynamics in caring work has been suggested as a way to reduce the power inequity in child protection practice (Brookfield, 2009; Coady & Lehmann, 2008). Central to the child protection branch of social work is the legislative and operational focus on promoting the best interests, protection and well-being of children, and helping parents/caregivers to provide adequate care for their children when individual/structural barriers prevent this outcome (Child and Family Services Act, 2017; Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2016). Research studies that examine worker-parent and worker-child engagement in child protection have found that the most important way for social workers to help clients is to engage with them in a collaborative process that, where possible, equalizes power imbalances and ensures the utilization of a client-centred approach during all aspects of the engagement, particularly with respect to communication, problem solving, and decision-making (Gladstone et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2010). Depending upon how power is used, caring can either be nurturing or oppressive towards the caregiver and/or the care-recipient (Windfield, 2007). Regardless of whether caring is provided on a micro or macro level, tension in the expression of caring may arise as a result of the fluid and unstable power dynamics within social relationships.

What is the cost of caring for Black female CPWs who must constantly negotiate the context of being conditionally yet unequally included in child protection? Wetherington et al. (1987) define the cost of caring as the propensity for women to be “more affected emotionally
than men not only by their own stressful experiences, but also by the stressful experiences of people they care about. Women’s roles obligate them to respond to the needs of others.” (p. 144-145). This definition of the cost of caring is helpful as it begins to outline the interconnection between women and their communities, and the impact of their own and their communities’ experiences of stress on their well being. Taylor (2015) used this definition of cost of caring in her Toronto-based research study which found that there are emotional costs (i.e. psychological distress) to caring for others which are contingent upon factors such as age (greater risk associated with women under the age of 30) and gender orientation (masculine orientation decreases risk for women while feminine orientation increases risk for men). Nevertheless, Wetherington et al.’s (1987) definition of cost of caring is limited in scope in that it does not account for the oppressive experiences of women with intersecting social locations (i.e. race, gender, etc.), how these embodied experiences are coordinated, their impact on women’s (re)construction of their caring work, and their effect on women’s physical and mental well-being. As such, this investigation expands upon Wetherington et al.’s (1987) definition of the cost of caring to include the impact of women’s embodied experiences of interlocking oppressions from intersecting social locations and their communities on their (re)construction of their caring work and on their physical, emotional and mental well-being. In order to elucidate the cost of caring of Black female CPWs, it is necessary to include the following questions in the analysis of their institutional organization and (re)construction of their caring work: 1) who cares and who does not, 2) who is receiving the care and who is not, 3) under what conditions is care being provided, 4) under what conditions is care being received, 5) who is doing the caring, 6) who organizes the provision of care, 7) who benefits from the caring relationship and who does not, 8) what is the purpose of the caring work, and 9) what is the value of caring work. The expanded conceptualization of the cost of caring and the above line of questioning is utilized to investigate how the caring work of Black female CPWs is institutionally coordinated within the backdrop of their embodied and observed experiences of institutional oppression in child protection work.

In light of the ongoing institutional oppression and colonial practices in child protection work, it is important to understand its organization and the impact of this organization on how Black female CPWs negotiate their caring work within the child protection institution (Blackstock et al., 2006; Clarke, 2012; McKenzie & Hudson, 1985; Trocmé et al., 2010). As Black women, Black female CPWs are in the complex position of simultaneously experiencing
and witnessing institutional oppression towards their communities while also being expected to provide care to others in their child protection work. This paradox in caring work places Black female CPWs in contentious and unsafe spaces, where acts of caring from the child protection institution are often institutionally oppressive and structurally violent towards them and their communities.

2.9. Institutional Trauma

This researcher’s concept of institutional trauma illustrates the negative impact of continuous colonial practices and structural violence on Black female CPWs. This concept arises out of the understanding of trauma theory which originates from Freudian psychoanalysis whereby trauma is interpreted as being linked to repression, transgenerational transmission of traumatic events, compulsive repetition, displaced expression, and intrusion of overwhelming stimuli (Freud, 1895). Trauma is connected to an individual’s reaction to the aftermath of a disturbing or distressful event and refers to the repetitive remembering and re-living of this experience through memory, dreams, and narrative that result in further inaccessible and unspeakable experiences of disturbance and distress (Caruth, 1991; Hartman, 1995). Theoretical understandings of trauma have been criticized for being founded in Eurocentric Western conceptualizations that deny the in-the-moment experience of trauma, exclude experiences of colonization and decolonization, omit the specificities of historical context, leave out the collective trauma experience, and negate structural and systemic causes of trauma (Gomez et al., 2016; Visser, 2011).

Freyd (1994) extends trauma theory to include betrayal whereby the trauma experience involves attachment in relationships and betrayal blindness – which is defined as unrecognized experiences of interpersonal abuse at the hands of a trusted person or by someone in which one is dependent – and the reoccurrence of the abuse is required to maintain the relationship. Similarly, institutions are expected to be a trustworthy and to provide a safe and inclusive environment for individuals and groups (Tremblay, 2010). ‘Institutional betrayal’ occurs when this trust is breached though the institution’s wilful ignorance of the perpetration of interpersonal abuse and retribution towards individuals who speak out against such abuse (i.e. child protection, military, police, school, etc) (Gomez et al., 2016; Smith & Freyd, 2013). Acts of institutional betrayal towards Black communities are deeply entrenched in the Canadian nation structure as evidenced by the racialized police brutality, racial profiling, and racially biased processes towards the Black
community in the Ontario justice system (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017; Sudbury, 2005), the overrepresentation of Black children in the Ontario foster care system and Black families in the Ontario child protection system (Clarke, 2011; Clarke, 2012), the disproportionately high rates of income and employment inequity of Black women and men (Block & Galabruzi, 2011; Galabuzi, 2006), and the colonization of Black communities (Carty, 1994; Mensah, 2002; Walker, 1980). To be systemically, routinely, and wilfully pathologized, oppressed, devalued, ignored, unprotected, and harmed may result in individuals experiencing trauma(s) that manifest into negative outcomes which include physical and psychological complaints or illnesses or distress (Carr et al, 2010).

This researcher’s concept of institutional trauma expands Smith & Freyd’s (2013) concept of institutional betrayal to include the impact of Black female CPWs experiences of institutionally sanctioned structural violence and oppression. Even more concerning is the institution’s participation in acts of institutional betrayal as not only as a witness and/or knower, but as an active perpetrator. Institutional trauma is the organized individual and collective impact of systemic institutional betrayal on victim(s) that result in their complex adaptations (e.g. hyper-vigilance and other anxiety responses, decreased/non-existent self-care practices, impaired systems of meaning about oneself and others, engagement in poor physical health practices, etc.) to these chronically stressful experiences. In relation to Black female CPWs, institutional trauma is a consequence of always having to resist, rise above, and protect themselves from pervasive forms of institutional betrayal. It is Black female CPWs’ individual and collective responses to the pattern of the institutionally coordinated negative conditions that affect them and their communities, which result in their experience of institutional trauma. It is the absence of action to eradicate the deeply ingrained and organized colonial ideologies and practices that leads to institutional trauma. The systemic nature of this problem makes it a social issue where all of society is individually and collectively responsible.

By employing BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD, this investigation illustrates the covert sequences of actions that produce and reproduce institutional oppression and structural violence on Black female CPWs and the lack of direct individual and structural accountability for its organization.

Herman (1994) indicates that trauma must be voiced in order to be accessible and brought into the present in order to start the healing and recovery process. This researcher uses the term ‘institutional trauma’ as a way to articulate the consequences of the complicated experiences of institutional betrayal on Black female CPWs and to begin a process of rejuvenation through the
voicing, re-centring, and self-defined reconstitution of Black female CPWs experience(s) of institutional trauma into child protection discourse.

### 2.10. Development of a Critical Transformational Approach

This researcher’s critical transformational approach (CTA) locates the lived experiences of Black female CPWs in the context of colonialism in Ontario while also creating a space for them to engage in decolonization practices that directly counter their colonial organization. The CTA is informed by the concepts, tenets, and frameworks of BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD. This researcher illustrates the praxis of CTA through a conceptual model that illuminates Black women’s journey to reconstitution.

The conceptual model below amalgamates the analysis generated through the theoretical frameworks and research literature. The BFT and PP provide an understanding of the negotiations of Black women in regressive and productive spaces, particularly within the child protection institutional setting. The intention of the conceptual model is to illustrate Black women’s journey through their various temporalities by using power to move towards their ongoing reconstitution of self.
Consistent with tenets of PP and FNG, the open space throughout the model represents the landscape where power moves fluidly and unpredictably. This researcher situates Black women at the centre of this open space as a demonstration of the ongoing opportunity to exercise power in different ways through their development and understanding of their histories, knowledges, theories, practices, and self-definitions. Black women’s journey through open space illuminates their movement through spaces of repression to spaces of production in their roles as child protection workers. The open space reflects the relative nature of power as repressive and productive, which is felt but not seen.

The power as repressive space is used to show how White communities exercise power to organize the nation space. It is here that normalization processes, civility practices, and institutional coordination strategies (i.e. standardization of text and talk) are used to erase Black female bodies from the Canadian landscape. This process of institutional organization of White
colonial space progresses to the illustration of the exclusion of Black women from that space. As Black women’s space is interconnected with the space of the Black community, Eurocentric normalization processes, civility practices and institutional coordination strategies that directly impact the Black community as a whole also directly impacts them. In addition to this researcher’s examination of the exclusion of Black women in Canada in general, and more specifically as child protection workers, it follows that Black women are also organized by exclusionary practices that are evident in child protection interventions with Black families, which show 1) an overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system; 2) biased reporting, assessments, and other child protection decision making practices; 3) the absence of a continuous analysis of power relations and interlocking oppressions; and 4) the over-exposure of Black families to the child protection system. As a result of this institutional oppression and structural violence, Black women may experience institutional trauma. However, it is important to note that Black women are excluded, but not removed from the space and their presence may be taken up as the beginning of an act of resistance. Consistent with the tenets and frameworks of BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD, the black bow on top of the blue arrow represents a rupture in the flow of power indicating that Black women have begun to negotiate their space.

The conditional yet unequal space represents the act of push and pull between White groups and Black female groups that exist during the negotiation of this open space. Here, Black women fight for an equal position through demonstration of their contribution to Canada as carers in child protection. Simultaneously, the White communities’ organization of Black female CPWs continues, but has shifted in methodology from exclusion to conditional yet unequal inclusion.

The power as productive space shows a greater illustration of the resistance of Black female CPWs’ lived experiences of structural racial and gendered oppression within the Canadian nation. This is a transformative space where Black women are actively exercising power to make social changes that lead to their full emancipation. The resistance space symbolizes the change in social relations between White groups and Black women that occurs when Black women fully exercise power in a way that transcends time and space. Thus, Black women’s resistance efforts change the nation space in a way that articulates and makes room for their histories, knowledge, theories, practices and self-definitions. At this point, there is a multidirectional arrow that points to the possibilities for movement within the open space. The use of power by both groups is dependent upon the direction that they choose to go and the
path(s) that they construct and deconstruct. Finally, the four black curved arrows around the conceptual model signify the variability in the circulation of power.

The goal of this conceptual model is to demonstrate how CTA may be used to articulate Black female CPWs’ complex experiences of institutional oppression, as well as their agency and resistance to their material, emotional and spiritual conditions. This approach explicates the fluidity of Black women’s journey towards the reconstitution of their lives through the exercise of power and constant social relations with White people. This researcher engages with CTA as a point of entry in the examination of the unequal power dynamics between Black female CPWs and White groups that inform Black women’s lived experiences of subjugation and institutional trauma, as well as their resistance and strength. In this way, CTA shows that power and resistance is in a constant state of flux and transformation where all group interactions are contingent upon their relations with each other.
Chapter Three - Method & Design: Institutional Ethnography

This dissertation engages a research method of inquiry called Institutional Ethnography (IE) which is effective in mapping out how ruling relations organize social relations through coordination of institutional processes in work environments (Smith, 2006). IE is employed to uncover concealed institutional processes inherent within outward institutional regulations, mandates and priorities in child protection services. Of particular interest is the light IE may shed on how child protection institutional talk and text processes coordinate the work activities of Black female child protection workers (CPWs) and the way Black female CPWs negotiate and (re)construct their role as carers in child protection within this context. This study uses informant interviews and institutional text to elucidate how the ruling relations in child protection services utilize institutional discourse to govern and regulate everyday sequences of actions of Black female CPWs.

3.1. Roots of Institutional Ethnography

Sociologist, Dorothy E. Smith (2005), developed Institutional Ethnography as a feminist response to the dearth of tools to address the normalization of women’s exclusion and inequality in all areas of society, particularly in ruling positions, and the subsequent development of their distinct ideologies, practices and functions. More specifically, Smith was concerned with how the ruling members manufacture, organize and embed women’s exclusion and inequality within the everyday activities and actions of people. The IE method of inquiry was initially predicated on Smith’s social position as a woman and her self-reflexive reports of the material realities of her experiences as a mother, teacher, scholar and wife. After much criticism of IE’s unacknowledged and unchallenged Eurocentric and heterosexual standpoints, Smith broadened her analysis into a general methodological inquiry of how known and unknown epistemological views of ruling relations organize knowledge, forms of thought, and sequences of everyday actions to influence how people are viewed by others and the way people view themselves in general. This broader scope allowed an examination of gender and its varied intersection with race, class, etc., within power and ruling relations.

To emphasize IE’s primary focus of uncovering how organizational and structural processes and functions are activated and utilized to guide people’s lives, Smith drew on the
works of several theorists in developing the IE method of inquiry, including ideologies from feminism (Harding, 1988), Marxism (Marx, 1973; Marx, 1976), social behaviourism (Mead, 1934), postmodernism (Foucault, 1972), developmental psychology (Luria, 1961; Luria, 1976; Luria & Yudovich, 1971) and language philosophy (Bakhtin, 1981; Vološinov, 1973).

3.2. Utility and Limitations of IE

In congruence with the underpinnings of Black feminist thought and tenets of the postmodernist perspective, IE necessitates that research be guided from the direct perspectives and experiences of research informants in order to reveal the points of connection of institutional discourse, processes and actions across multiple sites (Smith, 2005; Stephens & Phillips, 2005; Wane, Deliovyky & Lawson, 2002). Additionally, this method facilitates in-depth insight into the sequences of actions embedded within informants’ experiences of institutional discourse and text by tracing how ruling relations organize their everyday experiences (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 2005). IE is not the study of institutions, individual experiences or generalized group experiences. Rather, it is a point of entry into discovering how ruling relations shape people’s lives through institutional organization of their everyday activities from the micro to macro-level, from local to extra-local level, and from covert and overt processes and ruling relations (Burawoy, Burton et al., 1991; Burawoy, Blum, et al., 2000; Campbell & Manicom, 1995).

Stemming in part from traditional ethnography, IE shares some similarities and differences with its predecessor. Congruent with IE, the ethnographic method engages an inductive investigation of people and cultures in the ‘natural’ environment where shared meanings are constructed through the interdependent social relations between people, that is, researcher and informant (Hoolachan, 2016; Mead, 1934; Smith, 2005). Similar to IE, traditional ethnographic researchers may become intertwined in a form of institutional capture where observations, text and talk of the informants are analyzed and interpreted utilizing institutional academic discourse. Attempts to correct this problem include the development of the ‘talk around text’ ethnographic method where the researcher moves beyond the text, frame of reference and use of a dominant lens (Lillis, 2008). Despite the shared challenges of institutional capture, IE is notably distinguished from traditional ethnography in its goal to uncover hidden ruling processes involved in the institutional organization of people’s daily activities. This focal difference endorses IE as better suited to examine the institutional organization of Black female CPWs and
how their experiences are constructed and organized, knowingly or unknowingly, by the ruling relations that govern child protection in Canada.

3.3. IE Concepts

The goal of Institutional Ethnography is to “reorganize the social relations of knowledge of the social” in order to make visible the invisible coordination of people’s experiences by mapping the ruling relations’ regulation of knowledge, discourse and everyday activities (Smith, 2005, pp. 29). Smith refers to social relations as the specific and interconnected sequences of actions between people and across sites and temporalities. The social is people’s interconnected, daily and continuous activities that are being coordinated. As Smith (2005) explains:

Institutional ethnography explores the social relations organizing institutions as people participate in them and from their perspectives. People are the expert practitioners of their own lives, and the ethnographer’s work is to learn from them, to assemble what is learned from different perspectives, and to investigate how their activities are coordinated. It aims to go beyond what people know to find out how what they are doing is connected with others’ doings in ways that they cannot see. The idea is to map the institutional aspects of ruling relations so that people can expand their own knowledge of their everyday worlds by being able to see how what they are doing is coordinated with others’ doings elsewhere and else when (p. 225).

In effect, the researcher uses the informant’s everyday experiences to uncover the relations behind the processes that coordinate their activities and reveal how the institutional order is put together. Essential to understanding the institutional ethnographic framework is Smith’s conceptualizations of 1) women’s standpoint; 2) the problematic; 3) ruling relations; and 4) institutional text.

Smith denotes that within the dominant patriarchal system, there was no available discourse for women to adequately communicate their experiences of oppression, isolation and invisibility, as well their passive participation in this system. As Smith and other women connected with each other and discussed their experiences, they began to name and theorize their experiences, create their own discourse, and engage in social activism based on their fierce opposition to their varied experiences of sexism, oppression, harassment and violence. These women’s connection was grounded in the sharing and voicing of their experiences to each other and to society, which translated into a political tool for active resistance to their unequal
circumstances. Smith conceptualized these feminist sociological interactions and connections as *women’s standpoint*, the goal of which was to unify diverse feminist standpoints, vocalize women’s thoughts and experiences, and challenge dominant male epistemologies (Clough, 1994).

Much like its feminist theoretical foundation, women’s standpoint has been criticized for essentializing all women’s experiences and perspectives from dominant White, middle and/or upper class, able-bodied and heterosexual perspectives, thus excluding the voices of women whose social locations fall outside these spheres. Congruent with arguments against the feminist theory in the 1960s and 1970s, Black feminists have criticized women’s standpoint for falling short of identifying, addressing and eliminating the plethora of women’s oppressions that intersect with dimensions such as race, class, sexuality, culture, ability, etc. (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981). Nevertheless, a ‘standpoint’ is still beneficial as it provides a way for all people to openly express the material and political realities of their own experiences and take a stance for or against their lived experiences.

In acknowledging this exclusivity, Smith transitioned her notion of ‘women’s standpoint’ from the experiences of women to the experiences of people, so that the ‘sociology for women’ became the ‘sociology for people.’ Allowing space for multiple experiences and perspectives to unfold and take root reflects Smith’s process in the decolonization of this research method of inquiry. Further, it is the organizational process underlying the articulation of diverse ‘standpoints’ that allows for individual and group vocalizations against their oppressive circumstances from their subject positions. IE starts with the standpoint of people which brings forth concerns (i.e., subjugation, marginalization, oppression, violence, etc.) located in people’s social relations with others; it directs IE researchers to investigate the institutional order that coordinates the activities that give rise to these concerns. It is from people’s standpoints that the IE researcher unpacks the problematic, that is, the interrogation of how people are voluntarily or involuntarily intertwined with the institutional relations that shape their material realities.

Smith (2005) defines *ruling relations* as a conscious and complicated set of spatially linked and temporally connected relations that organize people’s everyday lives, including academic and professional discourses, mass media, government bureaucracies, knowledge, and corporations’ relations. The objectification and subordination of people occurs through the clandestine organizational practices of ruling relations via the creation, normalization and dissemination of their domination ideologies, beliefs, thoughts, and practices into the everyday
actualities of people. Furthermore, the ruling relations clearly evidence what is valued and what is not through their acts of omission or acts of commission in their institutional practices and institutional texts. The ruling relations shape the discourse of people through their standardization of institutional knowledge and practices. For instance, the institutional coordination of the experience of Black women in child protection is not visible to the subject unless it is observed through the structuring, patterning or orderliness that is generated through norms or rules. Issues such as institutional racism and sexism are embedded in institutional processes through pre-established text, talk, and practice of institutions. The standardization of people’s activities is so smooth and seamless that people do not recognize their participation in their own subjugation. This lack of recognition may stem from many factors, including but not limited to an actual unawareness of their participation, the effects of institutional capture, and distortions of their experiences within the institutionally organized context. The institutional ethnographic research method empowers the subjects’ position and serves as the basis for the investigation of institutional processes which directly opposes the ruling relations’ objectification and subjugation of subjects. Through the expression of people’s subjective stance, IE analyzes the problematic so that the standardized processes underlying the omission of bodies, knowledge, discourses and practices, as well as the commission of oppressive acts within these facets are made visible. In other words, IE attempts to uncover the interconnected institutional processes that create the material conditions for people’s invisibility within institutional activities, practices and discourse.

Readers of institutional texts encounter normalization of institutional discourse in which the categories of persons and events are absent from the perspective of the people. Smith (2005) describes the text-reader conversation in experiential text (i.e. reading a book) as the reader activating the text through his/her/their experiences, localities, sequence of actions in which it is read and identified meanings whereby the reader becomes the agent of the text. Since institutional discourse coordinates the text, the reader progresses from the agent of the text to the object of normalization and organization of institutional discourse. Institutional discourse, procedure and text reconstruct and override the experiential text, talk and writing and replace it with institutional discourses that are based on and from the power of institutional regimes (Glenn, 2002, Ken, 2007), thereby creating institutional realities that are operationalized and made actionable (Smith, 2005; Montigny, 1995). The replication of institutional discourse across institutions and multiple work sites ensure the standardization of activities, ideologies, beliefs,
and practices across time and diverse populations, cultures, and micro and macro environments. It also guarantees the reproduction and perpetuation of institutional normalization processes and the continuity of institutional coordination of people’s lived experiences (Ahmed 2007).

The IE method of inquiry is advantageous for investigating the institutional organization of Black female CPWs as the institution’s child protection mandate is heavily regulated through a plethora of complicated and intricate texts such as regulations, laws, assessment tools, policies, etc. In cases of allegations of child abuse and/or neglect, the child protection texts coordinate and produce standardized action based on the responses of CPWs to such allegations. The social relations between the child protection institution, the CPWs, and the child protection client(s) are interconnected through various institutionally coordinated activities, however, the ruling relations’ organization of these interconnections remains largely invisible. Through institutional discourse, the ruling relations produce and reproduce ideologies, beliefs, concepts and practices that benefit them (Campbell and Manicom, 1995). For example, when examining the social issue of institutional racism and sexism, the ruling relations disseminate beliefs, ideologies, rules and practices regarding racial and gender superiority of White men dominant in laws, policies, and institutional policies and procedures (Hooks, 1981). For Black women, it is this standardization of institutional discourse that has directed Black female CPWs’ experiences within the child protection setting. Consequently, this institutional standardization of talk and text could disseminate, promote and perpetuate a variety of negative ideologies, stereotypes and misinformation about Black women based on the hegemonic discourse of the ruling relations. IE is useful in tracing the following institutional actions: 1) how the ruling relations coordinate and standardize institutional racism and sexism towards Black female CPWs through institutional discourses, text and work practices in child protection; and 2) how these institutional processes shape the way Black female CPWs (re)construct their role as carers in child protection.

3.4. Research Design

3.4.1. Recruitment

Snowball sampling technique and convenience sampling were employed to recruit study informants. The researcher’s several years of experience and training as a front line child protection worker facilitated the identification and selection of Black female CPWs, through professional connections, and based upon fit with the inclusion criteria. The recruited study
informants in turn referred the researcher to other Black female CPWs who also met the requirements of this study. The researcher explained the investigative study to all recruited informants which comprised of nine Black female CPWs currently employed at a child protection institution in Ontario.

3.4.2. Informants and Site Selection

This study anticipated the participation of fifteen Black female CPWs currently employed at a child protection institution, nine from Ontario and six from Nova Scotia. The informants and sites were selected on the basis of the Black community being the third largest racialized group in Canada, the largest in Nova Scotia at 51% (19,225) and the third largest in Ontario at 17% (473,765) (Statistics Canada, 2006b; Statistics Canada, 2006c). Notably, Ontario and Nova Scotia have the first and second largest Black populations respectively among all the Canadian provinces and territories (Statistics Canada, 2006b; Statistics Canada, 2006c).

During the recruitment process for informants from Nova Scotia, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Professor at Dalhousie University, reported that there are no independent child protection institutions in Nova Scotia, and so few Black female social workers that their identities could easily be known. Ultimately, no informants were recruited from Nova Scotia due to ethical concerns over possible breach of confidentiality as well as lack of anonymity arising from the very few Black social workers in that province.

Congruent with the goals of IE research design, the value of these samples is the provision of points of entry into understanding institutional processes that coordinate Black female CPWs’ construction of their role as carers in child protection. As such, the sample size of 9 is sufficient to address the research question and as well, a larger sample would not strengthen the research inquiry process. Each informant met the following inclusion criteria: 1) self-identify as Black women; and 2) currently employed as child protection worker in Ontario.

3.4.3. Data Collection: Interviews

Individual interviews were one mode of data collection for this study. Smith (2006) describes interviewing as a conversation that involves a reflexive process whereby the researcher and the informant work together to construct knowledge. The informant perspectives and experiences organized the direction of this research investigation (Smith, 2005). Furthermore, the
researcher’s social location as a Black woman and previous experience as a child protection worker were utilized to provide insight into this study’s exploration of how institutional racism and sexism coordinates Black female CPWs. The researcher worked collaboratively with the informants in the knowledge creation process which was also beneficial for informants having trouble moving beyond the institutional language of the ruling discourse (McCoy, 2006). In such situations, the researcher’s previous child protection experience enabled the probing and analyzing of any gaps in informant accounts as result of being trained in the institutional language (Devault & McCoy, 2006; Campbell & Gregor, 2002). On the other hand, the researcher was at risk of “institutional capture” during the informant interview process, and more specifically, of reframing the informant’s experiences into institutional discourse of child protection. To mitigate such risk, the researcher completed self-reflexive processes such as self-examination of the impact of experiences as a Black woman and former child protection worker and identifying existing biases.

Informants were offered a pre-interview meeting to detail the information about the research study and to respond to any questions or concerns, however, all declined and chose instead to have the information e-mailed to them.

The semi-structured interviews were approximately two hours each in duration. The interviews were conducted utilizing a set of pre-determined clear, concise and simple interview questions to initiate conversation with the informant (Devault & McCoy, 2006). Additional questions were asked to further probe and explore relevant and new themes, to learn about the sequences of actions that inform their institutional coordination, and if necessary to ensure the informants’ understanding of the interview questions. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Each informant was provided with a $30.00 honorarium in appreciation for their time and to cover their transportation and parking costs. This interview process was communicated verbally and in writing to each informant prior to the interview.

The interviews were completed at a location selected solely by the informant, so as to respect expressed confidentiality concerns, comfort level and the specific needs of each informant.

3.4.4. Data Collection: Institutional Text

Various anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity texts on child protection agency websites were examined as part of this study. The researcher conducted internet searches of several child
protection agencies in Ontario to seek anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity statements and/or policies within each agency website, which were saved for further analysis. A note was made in instances where websites carried no child protection anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity statement and/policy.

3.4.5. Analyzing Data

The researcher conducted an analysis of the data employing an IE inquiry. This method requires social relations to be the analytic focal point of the research investigation. IE involves an analysis of the social organization of people through the interconnectedness of local and translocal activities and experiences of people (Devault & McCoy, 2006).

As such, the researcher assembled the informant interview data into chunks of sequences of action which were analyzed for patterns and processes to identify how the ruling relations coordinate the work of Black female CPWs and its impact on how they perform their role of child protection. The informant data was utilized to explore the sequences of actions in child protection work that are informed by institutional processes. Through a detailed and descriptive analysis of some portions of their social relations with the child protection institution, the researcher made visible the ways in which the institutional order creates individual and structural conditions for Black female CPWs.

Institutional texts can produce standardized sequences of actions through the way it is taken up (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and doing activities) (Turner, 2006). The inclusion of textual analysis extends the understanding of how the ruling relations’ sequences of actions shape individual text-work-text activities (Turner, 2006). The anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity texts on public domains, such as the child protection agency website, is a starting point in the sequences of actions necessary to begin to address various inequalities and inequities that Black female CPWs may experience. In this study, the researcher analyzed the anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity texts (i.e., policies and statements) posted on various child protection agency websites. Also explored was how these texts guided Black female CPWs’ sequences of actions, exchanges and decision-making in child protection work and how these institutional processes impacted the informants’ (re)construction of their role of carers in child protection. The researcher looked for connections and disconnections between the language and meanings in these texts and actual experiences of Black female CPWs. Anti-oppressive, diversity and inclusivity texts were analyzed at the level of text, syntax, content, and word choices in
terms of its complements and contrasts. Finally, the researcher searched, analyzed and described the connections found among informants’ experiences of institutional discourse and practice in order to trace and identify the ruling relations’ coordination of what actually happens among those involved.

3.4.6. Other Ethical Considerations

The University of Toronto Research Ethics Board reviewed and approved this study prior to its commencement. At initial contact with each informant, the researcher reviewed and provided them with a hardcopy of the consent form, which included 1) the purpose, nature and goal of this study; 2) a description of the interview process; 3) the associated risks and benefits; 4) a pronouncement of voluntary participation and withdrawal from the research study at anytime without penalty or reprimand; 4) the maintenance and limitations of confidentiality; 5) honorarium for study participation; 6) the reason that their lived experiences are important for this study; 7) the researcher’s data storage and deletion process; and 8) the contact information for supervising faculty and the Research Ethics Board regarding this study. All informants were advised that their study participation was voluntary and all data generated from the study would be immediately destroyed if they chose to withdraw from the study. Ongoing opportunities to discuss informant thoughts and questions about the study were offered. The researcher explained that the information gathered for the purposes of this study would not be shared with anyone else without their prior written consent. Furthermore, the risk of informants’ employers, families, and other people becoming aware of their involvement in this research study was mitigated by the omission or the disguise of all identifying information using a letter and numbered codes. All informant interviews were transcribed verbatim, and informants were given their transcriptions to review for accuracy. While it was anticipated that there was limited psychological/emotional risks, the researcher recognized that the informants’ participation in this study may lead to possible emotional distress resulting from the disclosure of their experiences during the interview. This risk was mitigated by allowing the informants to take breaks as required or stopping the interview at any time. In addition, each informant was provided with typed referrals to counselling services in their local community to help address any psychological/emotional issues that may arise. The protection of the informants’ data was ensured through the secure storage of their data on a separate secure server environment (i.e., encrypted external data storage device). Consent forms have been stored separately from the digital recordings and
transcripts with no links between them. The secure storage device has been locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher’s residence. The audio recordings and transcribed data will be destroyed five years from the completion date of the study.
4 Chapter Four - Findings: Institutional Organization of Colonial Processes in Child Protection

The data shows that the child protection institution’s organization of Black CPWs is illustrated through processes of exclusion and acts of dissimulation. The child protection institution manipulates colonization and decolonization discourse and practices through their use of exclusion and acts of dissimulation in order to reinforce and sustain its goals. These institutional processes interlock into a complicated network of sequential discourses and actions that illuminate the complex environment that Black female CPWs must navigate in their work. As a way to resist, Black female CPWs exercise their power and employ a variety of strategies to (re)construct their role as carers in this child protection context. Additionally, the Black female CPWs’ narratives reflect the cost of caring in an institutionally oppressive environment and in a continuously contested terrain.

The findings show the following pattern of institutional coordination in the child protection text:

(1) Acts of dissimulation - The absence of texts on decolonization;
   a. Acts of commission - Some texts focused on the agency-specific sequences of activities that show their performance of anti-oppressive practice (AOP), diversity, and/or inclusivity;
   b. Acts of omission - Limited or absent acknowledgement of the child protection system’s use of colonial ideologies and practices towards Black female CPWs and Black families and children;
   c. Acts of omission - No agency-specific admission, accountability (i.e. statistics, figures, etc.) and transparency regarding their utilization of colonial ideologies and practices towards Black female CPWs and Black families and children;
   d. Acts of omission - No agency-specific measurable outcomes (i.e. statistics, figures, etc.) demonstrating any increase or decrease in the utilization of colonial ideologies and practices towards Black female CPWs and Black families and children;
   e. Acts of omission - Limited understanding of the colonial context inside and outside of the child protection institution for marginalized communities;

The findings in the informant narratives reveal the following sequences of actions in child protection practice:
(1) Acts of dissimulation - The absence of decolonization practices; 
a. Acts of commission - CPA claims to practice top-down AOP in their organizations through verbal expressions of staff appreciation and recognition, supervisory offerings of assistance in child protection work, and communication about provincial and agency-specific child protection updates as demonstrations of the general values of CPWs;
b. Acts of omission: The child protection institution organizes patterns of silencing and erasure of Black female CPWs in general everyday activities and particularly when advocating against colonial practices in child protection;

(2) In response to the institutional organization of colonial practices in child protection work, Black female CPW organize and produce sequential acts of resistance in their caring work as a way to combat colonial practices;

(3) The institutional organization of the production and reproduction of colonial practices in child protection work results in coordination of Black CPWs’ experiences of institutional trauma.

4.1. Acts of Dissimulation in the Text and in Everyday Practice

Acts of dissimulation entail the institutional support of sequential activities that, under false pretenses, conceal the true motives and ideologies of the institution. Within this dissimulation process, acts of commission are overtly performed as a front to externally demonstrate an institutional stance. Acts of commission involve the institutional authorization to carry out a sequence of outward activities necessary for the performance of regulated institutional work. At the same time, acts of omission utilize withdrawal or denial of certain actions or activities to covertly display an institutional perspective and are the institutional authorization to neglect particular sequences of actions of work to support certain institutional outcomes. In effect, both acts of commission and acts of omission obscure the real purpose of institutional activities by way of endorsing specific action(s) and inaction. In child protection, outward acts of anti-oppression, diversity, and inclusivity in the text and the covert negation, exclusion, and erasure of decolonizing ideologies and activities camouflage the colonial stance of and practices within the child protection institution. Thus, this pattern of false truths exhibit a strategic shift in colonial ideologies and practices from separate acts of commission and omission to a new clandestine way of authorizing systemic institutional oppression and structural violence through acts of dissimulation.

A few child protection agency (CPA) texts illustrate their top-down engagement in anti-oppressive practice (AOP) by documenting their performance of various AOP education, consultation, needs assessment, declaration of a position statement, and policy-revision activities that directly impact the families and children they serve. In this way, AOP is recorded in various public child protection documents to outwardly affirm institutional change within their service delivery.

**Agency Text:** “In June 2015, we officially launched our Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) journey with our community. The public launch featured speakers and entertainment including, keynote speaker Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, as well as youth-in-care who shared their personal experiences of oppression.

Anti-oppressive practice is a social work practice that addresses issues of power and oppression. In child welfare, integrating anti-oppressive practices means addressing institutional power and systemic oppression. This includes preventing and addressing concerns of the overrepresentation of minoritized and indigenous communities.

To guide us in this work we have declared the following AOP Directional Statement, “We are committed to anti-oppressive practice in which we challenge the impacts of power and privilege, eliminate barriers and are inclusive of the broad range of diversity in our community.”

While this year saw our official public launch, our initial steps began long before the event. Over the last few years, we have been diligently working to implement this initiative internally and develop staff capacity. This included increased training, commissioning an Anti-Oppressive Practice needs assessment, and hiring an Anti-Oppressive Practice Integration Leader (AOPIL), to support the organization.

An overarching goal of the work is enhanced capacity in all aspects. To support this goal we have expanded our training for staff, foster parents and volunteers. This has included formal training, as well as sessions related to both celebrations and world events that affect the various cultures and communities we serve.

We have conducted more informal sessions [with the African Canadian community] where there have been difficult discussions ... We are also reviewing all parts of our work, for example: our internal structure, policies, forms, support services for youth and families, staff demographics, our publications, and all aspects of our service delivery.”
Agency Text: “...leaders from the African Canadian community have been working with [the Child Protection Agency] to create a process for ongoing dialogue and engagement with a view to identifying and resolving systemic issues that impact this community...We are currently working on the development of a Community Advisory Council to be implemented in 2016-17.

In addition, [the Child Protection Agency] is excited to be working in partnership with the African Canadian Legal Clinic on the implementation of their support and intervention services to African Canadian families involved with child welfare. This program is slated for implementation as a pilot project in 2016-17.”

Agency Text: “To help build the capacity of our staff, we have monthly learning sessions that are safe spaces to have courageous conversations about difficult and controversial matters such as anti-black racism, colonialism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and the various intersections of oppressions.”

Agency Text: “Internally, we have created an [anti-oppressive] (AO) structure that includes an AO Steering Committee and several AO Sub Committees which allows us to embed AO throughout the work of the agency.”

Agency Text: “Some of the things the organization has done include i) hiring an anti-oppressive practice subject matter expert to lead this integration process; ii) commissioning an organizational AO needs assessment by an external subject-matter expert;...iv) a review of policies through an AO Equity Lens tool; v) currently working on the creation of an AO Road Map based on recommendations of the needs assessment.”

The focus of the child protection text is to show the institutional AOP actions that have recently occurred or are in the process of occurring and those AOP actions that will be implemented in the near future that address client experiences of institutional oppression. The presented temporal scope is from the recent past to the near future.

The CPAs’ provision of an intersectional analysis of experiences of oppression occurred on only one occasion. The text of one CPA indicated the following:

“Oppressions such as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, disableism etc., are interrelated and interlocked (Dei, 1996). That is to say, aspects of social differences such as race, gender, sexual orientation and class are unintelligible without considering them in relation to each other (Ng, 1993). Thus individuals and/or groups can simultaneously experience oppression from more than one source of their social location.”
Some CPAs defined the terms anti-oppressive practice, diversity, and inclusivity in their choice language and from their social position in the power dynamic.

“Anti-Oppressive Practice is a form of social work practice that addresses issues of power and privilege based on social location and institutional and systemic forms of oppression.”

“Anti-oppression is the lens through which one understands how race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, ability, age, class, occupation and social service usage, can result in systemic inequalities for particular groups. Anti-oppression practice refers to engaging in work that critically examines how social structures and social institutions work to create and perpetuate the oppression and marginalization of those who have been identified as not belonging to the dominant group.”

“Diversity simply means difference.”

“Inclusivity is a way to address differences in a group so that everyone feels included.”

“[Inclusiveness is] actively reaching out, in culturally appropriate and respectful ways, to include and welcome people from diverse communities to participate in the decision making processes of the organization as well as to promote fair access to information and services at [The Child Protection Agency]. It also involves including and welcoming individuals from diverse groups to provide input into agency policies and services.”

Other CPAs chose to reference academic research citations in their term definitions.

“Anti-oppression, in combating all facets of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, disableism, etc, begins with the premise that there are inequities in power that pervade all social relations. These power imbalances are socially constructed or learned ideologies where a hierarchical relationship (implicitly or explicitly) benefits a dominant or privileged individual/group(s) and marginalizes others (Bell, 1997; Bishop, 1994; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Oppression occurs when a person is blocked from opportunities towards self development, excluded from full participation in society, denied rights that the dominant group takes for granted or is assigned a second class citizenship, not because of individual talent, merit or failure, but because of her/his membership in a particular group or category of people (Mullaly, 2002).”

“Anti-oppressive practice is concerned with eradicating social injustice perpetuated by societal structural inequalities, particularly along the lines of race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, ability, age, class, occupation and social service usage. (Source: Dumbrill, 2003. Emerging Perspectives on Anti-Oppressive Practice).”
“The word ‘diversity’ suggests the range of human characteristics found in any workplace or community. The diversity of identifying characteristics includes race, culture, language, faith & religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, income, family status, literacy level, educational background, housing, immigration status, HIV status, and mental health status, among many others. Groups and individuals are both visibly and invisibly different from each other. These differences shape and have a significant impact on our experiences and expectations in any given situation. (Source: adapted from Lopes and Thomas, 2006. Dancing on Live Embers; and Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2004. Inclusive Community Organizations; A Tool Kit)”


A plethora of CPAs did not have any child protection institutional texts posted on their website publicly confirming their stance on institutional oppression, their anti-oppressive and inclusivity practices, and their acceptance of diversity.

Other CPAs promote texts on diversity, anti-oppression, and inclusivity as a general ideology and practice as a way to move forward without any acknowledgement of the ongoing colonial ideologies and practices in child protection, engaging in a critical power analysis (i.e., examining power dynamics, privilege, oppression, interrogating what is not known or obvious, analyzing dominant and unquestioned assumptions, etc.), and understanding the negative impact of these ideologies and practices on marginalized and oppressed communities (e.g. Black communities). The following CPA texts illustrate this practice of omission:

“[The Child Protection Agency] is committed to ensuring that children and families of all diverse groups can access our services and that service is responsive to their unique needs ... [The Child Protection Agency] respects and values the diversity and similarities within its community and endeavours to be inclusive through its various activities and functions, as appropriate. [The Child Protection Agency] is dedicated to collaborating with community service agencies, which are representative of [the City’s] diversity, in support of and in order to promote, the Society’s vision, mission and values ... [The Child Protection Agency] makes a determined effort to enhance services to meet the ever-changing needs of our community’s diverse population and works to ensure that staff members remain involved in critical dialogue to affect our practices, policies and processes, and to support service users’ needs and/or emerging community concerns and interests related to the welfare of children and their families...

The main objectives of this policy are:
• to eliminate systemic discrimination and promote diversity and inclusion through positive relations and attitudinal change, including access to employment opportunities and services;
• to foster understanding and mutual acceptance of diversity among [the Child Protection Agency’s] board, staff, volunteers, placement students, fostering and adoptive parents and service users;
• to ensure the needs of all service users are addressed in a manner that respects individual dignity and unique differences;
• to strengthen working connections with diverse organizations in [the City] whose service users experience inequity and oppression;
• to ensure discriminatory and/or harassing incidents or behaviours from board members, staff, students, volunteers, fostering and adoptive parents, as well as service users are not tolerated; reinforcing a zero tolerance of discrimination, racism and harassment;
• to establish effective ways to address issues and concerns relating to workplace diversity and inclusion, discrimination and/or harassment under the Workplace Violence Policy;
• whenever possible, to establish that staff, board members, foster parents, volunteers, students and adoptive parents reflect the diversity of the [City’s] community;
• to establish a framework that requires all departments within [the Child Protection Agency] to embrace fairness and equity in all operations, including access to employment opportunities and service delivery; and
• to monitor progress, evaluate progress, and adapt strategies to ensure that [the Child Protection Agency] becomes a diverse and inclusive organization.”

Other CPAs only present a position or mission statement that refers to diversity and/or obstacles to inclusion without recognizing the ongoing colonial context and their participation in the creation of colonial practices in child protection or providing a plan of action to follow through their statement without engaging in further acts of assimilation and colonization under a different name.

“The [Child Protection Agency] recognizes the diversity of the community it serves and is committed to resolving, where possible, any barriers that limit, impede or frustrate any person’s ability to access or participate effectively in its services and processes, especially when these barriers relate to an equality rights status, such as disability, age, sexual orientation or ethnicity.”

A few CPAs include text about the colonial context surrounding institutional oppression and structural violence towards specific communities, citing academic research. Even fewer CPAs have put up texts that recognize systemic institutional oppression in the child protection field that directly impacts Black families and children. Despite this acknowledgement, there is an
absence of the specific CPAs’ direct contribution to this problem. Individual CPAs do not provide agency-specific facts, figures, and statistics that show their direct role in producing and reproducing institutional oppression and structural violence towards Black communities. Missing is text on agency-specific measurable outcomes that show any increases or decreases in child protection investigations, open child protection cases at year end, children admitted to care, children in care served during the year, children in care at year end, and total children in care days for overrepresented Black families and children in the child protection system in one year as well as comparatively across several years. These CPA texts outline the broader child protection system’s structural violence towards Black and Indigenous communities while simultaneously excluding the specific agency’s direct role in this process.

Agency Text: “Unfortunately, the system is broken for many individuals and groups. Current child welfare statistics reveal a disproportionately high number of children in care from poor, Black, Indigenous, and single parent-led families, to name a few. For example, Aboriginal youth aged 0-19 represented less than 3% of the total child population in Ontario (Census 2006), but 14.4% of children in care (OACAS, 2008). In an urban centre of Ontario, where the Black population totals 8%, Black youth represent 65% of the youth in group care. This means that Black and Indigenous communities are overrepresented within child welfare. We are also aware that disproportionality is a risk in systems like child welfare and are working to ensure equitable outcomes. Most recently, the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto released statistics that 41% of children and youth in their care are black, while only 8% of the Toronto population is black. This indicates an overrepresentation, and has recently been discussed in the media such as the Toronto Star.”

Agency Text: “This consultation was born out of concerns raised about overrepresentation of African Canadian children and families in the child welfare system.”

By hiding behind the general reports of systemic institutional oppression in child protection, the CPAs are not transparent and accountable for their direct role in their performance of structural violence towards Black families and children, and thus, they are not employing AOP.

The only sentence in a CPA AOP text that provides a vague semblance of responsibility for systemic institutional oppression excludes the ongoing colonial context that Black families and children experience by omitting any direct reference to their agency’s colonial beliefs, the ongoing negative impact of colonialism on Black families and children, and any concrete
acknowledgement of the current material realities of Black families and children in the Ontario child protection system:

“We have had to challenge beliefs that may have historically impacted the families we serve.”

As a Black woman and former child protection worker, this researcher was part of a group of Black female (and male) CPWs and children service workers (CSWs) at a CPA who independently came together to advocate to the CPA to eliminate the overrepresentation of Black youth in care by addressing institutional oppression toward Black families and children. This group was the Collective Hands Committee. Through the persistent advocacy efforts of these Black female (and male) CPWs, CSWs and this researcher, the systemic institutional oppression of Black families and children was drawn to the forefront whereas previously this issue was routinely perpetuated and ignored. In examining the following AOP text from this CPA, this researcher noted the inaccurate description of the origins of the Collective Hands Committee and an absence of direct recognition of the Black female (and male) CPWs and CSWs who were responsible for the creation of this committee and initiation of the development of critical consciousness within this CPA.

“In support of our AOP work, we have several AO sub-committees that serve as resources for staff and caregivers, and help us to examine our services through an AO lens. The committees provide various avenues to discuss issues, present information, and enhance our services. This year, two groups have launched initiatives specifically for youth.

One of the AO sub-committees, Collective Hands, is focused on issues impacting Black families and children. This year the committee started a program for Black children and youth in care to support identity development, stronger cultural connections and a deeper understanding of Black heritage. Their first event was a trip to Buxton Museum to learn about the Underground Railroad. They also meet monthly for events featuring cooking culturally traditional foods, guests from the Black community, and discussions about topics like culturally significant days and Black hair.”

This textual omission supports the CPA’s misrepresentation of its role in developing and participating in this committee and their co-optation of the Collective Hands Committee as part of its AOP practices. In this way, this CPA promotes and produces the erasure of the human agency, resistance, and advocacy of Black female (and male) CPWs and CSWs within it and without this researcher’s insider knowledge, this falsification would appear to be the truth. Thus,
this act of omission confirms that part of colonial practice is for the colonizer to frame history from their perspective and in their language.

Several CPA texts that refer to their position and engagement with anti-oppressive practice, diversity, and inclusivity are only in relation to the families and children they serve. These documents do not address the CPAs’ policy and exercise of anti-oppressive practice, diversity, and inclusivity towards and between all staff, volunteers, and foster parents, and the CPAs. More specifically, these types of texts do not exist for Black female CPWs.

“A significant part of our work is the recognition of anti-black racism and the acknowledgement that we are part of an oppressive system. We are helping staff and caregivers understand how oppression and power imbalances may impact the families we serve. We have just begun to process deeper understandings such as anti-black racism and anti-colonialism.”

While this CPA text acknowledges and recognizes anti-black racism, anti-colonialism, power imbalances, oppression, and its location within an oppressive system, its position is not linked to the plethora of diverse roles that Black communities members assume at the CPA. In effect, this statement does not recognize and address the agency-specific and systemic institutional oppression and colonial practices, as well as the intersectionality of identities and oppressions in the experiences of Black female CPWs and other Black staff, Black volunteers, and Black foster parents. Similar to the Black families and children the CPAs serve, the CPAs do not provide agency-specific statistics that show their direct role in creating and maintaining institutional oppression and structural violence towards these Black community members. In this way, Black female CPWs are excluded and silenced in the anti-oppressive practice, diversity, and inclusivity text.

CPAs rarely practiced anti-oppressive, diversity-acceptance, and inclusiveness towards all members of their organization as well as towards their clients, as indicated by the following text in one CPA’s anti-oppression and anti-racism policy:

“[The Child Protection Agency] values the advancement of equality, diversity and human rights for clients, staff, care providers and volunteers. It recognizes and upholds the inherent dignity, worth, and rights of each individual and is committed to the pursuit of equality, freedom from adverse discrimination and harassment and the removal of all barriers to equal opportunity. We recognize and uphold the principle of equality of access to appropriate services which are sensitive to the needs of clients whatever their race, religion, colour, national origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, place of origin, marital status, or
ability. In addition, the Society believes that each individual should be free from discrimination, harassment and barriers to equal opportunity related to their gender identity and social condition, including their economic status.”

4.2. Institutional Decolonization Practices & Verbal Discourse

4.2.1. Acts of Commission in Everyday Practice

Black female CPWs’ narratives revealed a pattern of CPAs’ acts of commission through their declarations of general staff appreciation and recognition of all child protection workers, supervisory/managerial offerings of child protection work assistance, and communication regarding provincial and agency-specific financial and operational updates as a part of their general messaging to all child protection workers. These CPAs’ acts of commissions appear to be a generalized expression of the value of child protection workers.

Staff Appreciation and Recognition

Informant Comment: They [management] say things to you like, ”We recognize maybe this has been a very high volume time with cases and the complexity of some of the cases that are coming in. We know you're all doing really good work, and we really appreciate it. We really like it…”

Informant Comment: “Yeah. They have a big thing [celebration event]. You get a nice meal and you’re presented with [a gift for] whatever 5 years is, 10 years, 15 years, whatever and its every year they have it. It’s like a staff appreciation thing [celebration]. They will talk about how you are, what you do, and how well you do it and all that stuff. It’s something that they do.”

Informant Comment: “For me personally, I've had more than one supervisor who I've either worked for directly or who I haven't worked for, but they've either experienced me in some other type way, state about how good of a worker I am, or how hardworking, diligent, the passion is there for the work ....”

Informant Comment: “…upper management says “yes, we believe what you guys do is important and oh by the way, you specifically have such passion and are so organized and you get so much done and we don't know how you get all that done. The presentations that you give, you can see the passion just coming out of you as you speak about the work and the kids and stuff.”
Informant Comment: “I mean they'll [management] say, ‘Oh good job, great job,’ when I had to apprehend ... children ...”

Informant Comment: “They [management] say it. They'll say it in branch meetings or through emails. They'll be like, ‘As an agency, we're doing really well and we appreciate the work that you guys are doing.’ They'll say it that way.”

Offering Assistance

Informant Comment: “I've had supervisors who are like, ‘What can I do? Can I physically go out with you? Can I physically help you get things done? Do you need extra help? Are you safe to go out on your own?’ Those sorts of things. I've had supervisors who do not do any of that...

There are lots of times I'm in the office on a Friday afternoon at five o'clock and look around and there are tons of my peers sitting at their desks. Managers are walking around saying, ‘Hi. Have a good weekend. Don't stay too late. Don't live here....’

The agency always tells you it's not your file alone. If something needs to be covered, let them cover it. Do not come in to the office and make other people sick!....”

Communication of General and CPA-Specific Updates

Informant Comment: “They [upper management] try to keep us informed as to what's happening within child welfare across Ontario. You know, what funding is going to be looking like, in terms of trying to keep our numbers stable, at a certain number. You know, in terms to our status compared to other child welfare agencies, if we're hiring or not, in terms of how does that look for our agency as a whole, how are we growing as an agency. How are we standing up in comparison to other agencies...In comparison, I think the upper management is trying to allow themselves to be more accessible to front line workers....”

4.2.2. Acts of Omission in Everyday Practice

The following Black female CPW’s narrative illustrates the absence of decolonization practices in child protection. She outlines sequences of actions in which the CPA staff and management engage in a pattern of silencing and erasure of her acts of resistance to colonial processes by 1) simultaneously denying institutional racism while repeating acts of institutional racism towards the youth-in-care’s ethno-racial community; 2) neglecting to address established colonial mechanisms (i.e., increasing internalized oppression, institutional racism and
assimilation practices; 3) discarding the clinical social work judgment of the Black female CPW in child protection work; 4) sabotaging her relationship with the youth-in-care; and 5) disregarding the impact of these colonial experiences on her. These sequences of actions organize this Black female CPW to feel an increased level of responsibility to protect the youth-in-care in light of the colonial context as well as her personal responsibility to the child’s parents to care for and protect their child as if she/he were her own.

The youth’s parents do not differentiate between the child protection institution and the Black female CPW when inquiring about the care of their child, as the Black female CPW represents the child protection institution. This representation, in turn, implies the Black female CPW’s agreement with the child protection institution’s activities; as such, any room for disagreement is silenced by this parental expectation, and the child protection institutional responsibility to care for the youth-in-care is placed directly on the Black female CPW.

Although tempted to advise the youth’s parents about their child’s living conditions, the Black female CPW abstains as she is torn between her commitment to the child protection institution and the youth’s parents. She explains how these sequences of actions led to her experiences of institutional trauma, including feelings of sickness for stifling her resistance efforts and inability to stop colonial processes, withdrawal from child protection institutional events to protect herself from racist staff, and depression, and ultimately having to take a leave of absence from work.

**Informant Comment:** “I had a file I was working with. I had a child in care who was [a person of colour], a young girl. She came into care based on mental issues. She threatened to kill herself because she had a very, very complicated, very, very traumatic relationship with her parents and was rejecting her whole identity as a young person [of colour]. She was brought into care and was placed, at her request, in a White foster home in a rural area.

This was before I got the file. When I got the file, I challenged that. I said, ‘I appreciate that this child has been through I don’t know what, but I did not feel that isolating her from [her ethno-racial community] was healthy for her psyche, her well-being or the situation.’ I raised this concern with the resource worker for the child and the child’s therapist and was told I was racializing the situation. From then on, my relationship with my peers became a bullying relationship.

The resource worker told me…the family that the young person was placed with were White and they would often make disparaging comments about [the young girl’s ethno-racial community]. They would refuse to take the child
around [members of her ethno-racial community]. They would refuse to have staff work with the child. The resource worker was White. The placement was White. The therapist was White. When I tried to get the child a child youth worker [that was a member of her ethno-racial community], the placement refused to work with them.

I went to an external meeting with a therapeutic agency about the child because I wanted the child to have some therapy about her trauma. Her foster parent made a comment about the people wearing towels on their head.

I reached out several times to the resource worker to address the issues with the foster parents. They were making offensive comments about [the young girl’s ethno-racial community] in front of me, in front of other staff at meetings when discussing this family.

I had spoken with my service director about it on a couple of occasions.

That situation was so bad. The harassment from that situation got so bad that I asked for the child to be reassigned to another worker.

The child refused to work with me because the foster parents told [the child] I was trying to force her to be around people she didn’t want to be with.

When she went into the community and would, just by happenstance, pass a person from her culture, she would threaten to kill herself or cut herself. She was cutting actively. I was feeling like we were exacerbating this child’s mental health.

When I would see her family, her family would ask if she was okay, if she was being treated well and how she was doing. I knew she was in a placement where I had concerns about racism. They’re asking me, ‘Are you taking care of my child?’ and I’m sick to my stomach about where she’s placed.

...it's in my head that when I take a child out of their home or I'm caring for a child out of their home...I am standing in the place of their parents.

The situation got pretty bad. I was pretty much depressed and had to take a leave of absence. The situation escalated internally.

It’s just such a bad situation to recount. I didn’t want to come to work. I didn’t want to see my peers. I didn’t want to see the resource worker. I didn’t want to see the foster parents. I had to do monthly visits. I didn’t want to go.

I felt like crap sitting in front of her parents thinking that no parent would want their child where she was. I couldn’t tell them the extent of my concerns because my loyalties were divided as a worker and as a worker for this family.
As I said, it got really, really stressful. I ended up taking a leave of absence...I think I was off for about three months.

I was angry. I’m still angry about that situation. I don’t think they understand about the effect it has for the individual worker. Our agency has gatherings for young people in care. I couldn’t go to them because I was going to cross this team. Our agency has gatherings for staff. I couldn’t go to them because the foster parents were there and I didn’t want to see them. People didn’t get that. I didn’t want to walk down that hall and see certain peers.

We’ve been having some discussions about how the case has been emotionally impacting us because when we look at the larger context of who's in care, who's working with child welfare, it's our community.

There is a feeling in me that's innately protective when I'm working with Black families or Black children because I recognize that we're behind the curve. That Black families are under serviced, that they are overrepresented in the criminal community, in the child welfare community. If we don't find a way to support our own in the work that, not only am I being unprofessional in not supporting families, but I'm failing my community.

All that stuff was about me saying more often than not, racialized people are failed by systems that don't understand them.”


In spite of the colonial processes in child protection work and their lived experiences of institutional trauma, Black female CPWs reported their engagement in covert collective care efforts towards other child protection workers and to their clients. Sometimes, their child protection clients reciprocate acts of caring. Black female CPWs inject these caring activities into the child protection institution’s colonial sequences of actions as a way to counter its organization of their conduct.

Black Female CPWs and Child Protection Worker Reciprocation

Informant Comment: “I’ll talk to my peers a lot in terms of other realms of health like sleep or sleep management....”

Informant Comment “I couldn’t do what I do and not do what I do with my peers, if that makes any sense. I couldn’t go out and help people in the community and then come back and not give a crap about my peers and my team. My team are my team or my teammates.”
Informant Comment: “I also have close friends, of course, who I’ve met at work. One of my closest friends, she and I have been working together [for a long time]. She and I work very, very closely together. We’ll talk about work both in work and outside of work.”

Informant Comment: “… If you’re struggling with anything, there are child protection workers who are [people of colour] you can ask [for help] even if it’s something you don’t want anybody else to know.”

Black Female CPWs to Child Protection Clients

Informant Comment: “My assessment with one particular mom [Black woman] was that she seemed very emotional and overwhelmed, and so I felt I needed to be in there every week to see how she was doing...I also have referred her to [a nurse], and I had healthy babies [Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Services] in there as well, so there were a lot of eyes on this baby...

She saw it as support, because in coming there all the time and also, having the infant wellness nurse, we’re also sometimes bringing her things. So we’re helping with diapers. We might bring some formula. Healthy Babies is also doing an educational piece as well, so it just seemed like support was rallying around her....”

Informant Comment: “Let's put it this way, I would never broadcast it, but whenever there were like those warehouse sales. For instance, Target went out of business, and there was detergent for dirt cheap at some different locations. If I saw that there was something extra, I would buy detergent or something, and I would just give it to the family. I wouldn't tell them where it's from. I'd just say oh, I just came across this and thought you would be able to [use it]. The thing is some families would be so appreciative...I wouldn't make it a practice because that's out of your pocket, and no one's reimbursing you for that, but if you feel that you have that need and they can really use it, and they'll be appreciative of that, and they'll use it for what it's for, I'll do it.”

Informant Comment: “So if she [a child protection client] has an interview, and she has no way of getting out there. We might have a taxi, but it has to be approved by the upper management and your supervisor, and a job interview is not one of those things that is part of the approval process. I'll take her to it. If my time can permit where I can juggle or reschedule something to help her out, because this might help her family in the future... I'll do that.”

Informant Comment: “I think [that my protectiveness and caring] comes from the fact that I know that there is a larger percentage of Black youth in care in our country. The only other group that is more [overrepresented in the child protection system] than us are Aboriginal youth. I look at the circumstances, and sometimes, other groups, it's just a little bit easier...
I'm hoping that in moments when she [Black female client] feels she can't do it, she'll remember countless conversations that she and I have had, and she'll remember being told, ‘You have potential. You can do it. You just have to stick to it. You need a plan. You can do anything you want.’ I try to talk to her about different life lessons that I had the benefit of learning because of my environment. I talk to her about money, about relationships with men (i.e., what you look for, what you don't stand for, what you don't allow) hoping that, at some point when she's in those situations, she'll remember some conversation that we had.”

Child Protection Clients to Black female CPWs

Informant Comment: “The family I was just talking about, I saw them on Thursday night, and I was in their house for over 2 hours. At the end, they were like, ‘Thank you. Thank you. I'm so sorry we have you here so late. I'm sorry. I know we kept you longer.'"

Informant Comment: “I have clients that know me, and I have clients that I've gone in and I'm not having a good day, and they ask, 'What's wrong?' And I would say, ‘Nothing.’ They'd say, ‘No, you didn't sound right on the phone.’ I've had clients where they can tell that I'm not feeling well, and I say, ‘No, I'm fine!’ They state, ‘No, the way you sat down just now [shows that something is wrong], [and then, they ask] ‘Is there anything I can get you?’ I've had clients where, when I've been off sick for a period of time, they were trying to get from my supervisor where I was and what hospital I was in.”

4.3.1. Re-claiming and Re-organizing Space in a Contested Terrain

The complex insider and outsider role of Black female CPWs help their resistance efforts to ward off colonial processes that disproportionately plague Black communities in the child protection system. Their unique insider-outsider role intricately combines being a member of diverse Black communities with their understanding of the colonial processes in the child protection institution that directly impact their communities. As a way to re-claim and re-organize their space in the child protection colonial context, Black female CPWs’ use their direct access to and influence over child protection management decision-making as a space to advocate against the colonial practices towards Black families. Black female CPWs’ resistance efforts are seen through their sequences of actions that may prevent Black youths being placed in the foster care system and strategically delaying management decision-making, educating the child protection manager on the Black family’s values, and advocating for the Black family’s right to self-determination regarding decisions about their child. In this way, Black female CPWs
employ their power to produce and reproduce their collective caring enterprise while simultaneously combating colonial processes in the child protection system.

**Resistance Efforts through Prevention**

Informant Comment: “There was one experience that myself, another Black female worker, a Black male worker, and East Indian female worker, helped a Black family. The family has a very lengthy history with child welfare. Nothing bad, but we were dealing with the condition of the home and attendance at school. The mother had a lot of different openings of either confirmed or unconfirmed [child neglect allegations].

They were trying to deal with the grandchildren. The grandmother wanted to put forth a plan, but she has a lengthy history [of child protection involvement]. They were assessing her. There was a kin worker who was an older White female. She was unable to make contact with the grandmother, and then basically was saying because she wasn't able to connect with her, that there was a problem. The grandmother wasn't answering or replying to her phone messages. The kin worker did not make any unannounced home visits.

The worker who had the file, the other Black female worker, was away on vacation. Unfortunately, when she did her last case note, there was an error on the case note. They had a back-up worker, an East Indian female worker, go out to see the family and saw that their home was unclean.

They were trying to figure out whether they should apprehend these kids, or accept the grandmother’s proposal to move out of the house, and stay temporarily with another family member while they looked for a permanent place. The kinship department just saw the history and didn't know the family dynamics so they were advocating to have the kids apprehended and brought into care. We [the Black female CPW, another Black female worker, a Black male worker, and East Indian female worker], who've met the mother a couple of times in the absence of the regular worker, were saying that we don't think apprehending the children and bringing them into foster care is going to solve the issue. We advocated to accept the grandmother’s proposal to stay temporarily with a friend while she looks for a permanent place to live. We stated that the grandmother wants to take her grandchildren out of that environment and put them somewhere safe, which we felt was appropriate.

We had a senior service manager who was White, or sorry, two senior service managers who were White and female, and a supervisor for the kinship department who is White and female. You had these supervisors and upper management who were White and were making the decision, but we were pushing against what they were proposing. It ended up that they did not bring the children into care because we were so strong about what we felt was best.
for the kids and the family at the time. However, if we didn't push that hard, they would have been brought into care.”

**Resistance Efforts through Delay, Education, and Advocacy for Self-determination**

**Informant Comment:** “Well, there is one [Black] family where they were having so much difficulty with the child's behaviour. They didn't want to look at the medical aspect, because they decided automatically if the child was to see a doctor, they're going to automatically put him on medication, which they don't want to do. We tried various programs to help the child. We've tried to put him in different activities. It kind of helped a little bit, but the child got bored, and certain behaviours returned.

After trying so many things, I said to the parents that we might need to look at the medical piece to see if this would work. The family was resistant at first. After some time of revisiting our discussion, the parents couldn't avoid the medical piece anymore. They allowed their child to be assessed by a doctor. The parents were part of the assessment and they had to give their input. The school added their input. It ended up that the child was diagnosed [with a disorder]. However, medication was not pushed. It was offered as a last resort, but the parents wanted to use different angles to try to manage some of the child’s behaviour.

That family was appreciated that we were not pushing them to put their child on medication. They appreciated the fact that we tried different things to address the issue, until we exhausted every other avenue possible before looking at the medical aspect...

I know when I had my supervision with my supervisor, she was pushing for the parents to take their child to the doctor. I told my supervisor about the family’s wishes. At the same time, I had to work with the parents to kind of massage that idea [of an assessment] with them while making sure that the child is still remaining safe.”

**4.4. The Cost: Institutional Trauma**

Black female CPWs who continuously navigate this contested terrain in the child protection system as resistor, advocate, protector, and carer while simultaneously experiencing and witnessing colonial processes and oppression develop institutional trauma. They display institutional trauma through acts of hypervigilance, feelings of resentment, and symptoms of anxiety, fear, stress, withdrawal, and continuous overwork, often, at the cost of their self-care. Despite the negative impact(s) of institutional trauma on their well-being, Black female CPWs continue to complete their work at all costs. Demonstrations of these behaviours are visible in the informant comments below:
Anxiety and Hypervigilance

**Informant Comment:** “If I’m in the office from 9:30, for example, until 11:30, I’m typing in my actual calendar: ‘I checked voice mails, emails. I returned this call, I did this, I did this referral, I contacted this person, I did this court document,’ what have you. That’s partially for me. That’s also partially because this work engenders… I find it engenders anxiety, anxiety that you’re not getting things done and that if you don’t stay on top of what you need to do and that you’re not checking yourself to make sure you’re getting things done, you feel lost in the shuffle. There’s so much that needs to be done at any given time.

I’m fact checking myself; have I gotten through my task list, but I’m also keeping track of myself in being able to…I want to have a sense I can also demonstrate that I’m making use of my time. Again, that’s the work.”

Resentment

**Informant Comment:** “There are times, and when I do do this [bring work home] I'm very resentful of it.”

Stress

**Informant Comment:** “When you apprehend a child, it's very traumatic, and there's not enough time given for you to process that, because you're right onto the next task.”

**Informant Comment:** “I find [my role as a carer in child protection] sometimes to be too heavy. I also find sometimes you leave families' homes and some of what they shared with you and you discuss it just it weighs heavy on you, and you take it home. You don't get to leave it there because you now have to case note it. So then you have to relive that whole visit. I find the role of carer sometimes to be too heavy, and sometimes it's just overwhelming.

So, when I say ‘heavy,’ heavy is when you leave a visit and, okay, you're mulling over some of what happened. You're home now, it's still on your brain. You might be thinking about it when you go to bed. You may wake up thinking about it. That's the heaviness. It's not the kind of job that you can just (tapping her shoulder) ... the end of the day comes and you shake off whatever happened. It's just not that kind of a job. People tell you things, they've had experiences, maybe you're meeting them in the midst of a crisis, it just stays with you, and sometimes it's too much.”
Fear

Informant Comment: “That would come to basically having a conversation with your team leader/supervisor. You can't make a decision on your own. If you do, you can be in a lot of trouble, and liable. You always have the, in the back of your head, a liability bubble because if you make a decision, and for whatever reason, that decision does not work out to what you forecasted that should be, at least you have the support of your supervisor, having reviewed that plan with you...I will say, 99.9% of the time.”

Withdrawal

Informant Comment: “Yes, every time I would go to the office, it was like ... I felt my posture slouch. I felt the heaviness of going into the office. I set up my laptop. I didn't want no one to see me because I didn't want to have conversations with people because I'd feel that I would start to vent, and I don't want to vent. It just felt unhealthy at that period of time. Basically, it came down to okay, I feel like I'm in an unhealthy environment, but I need a job. How am I going to figure out how I'm going to be successful, or to be able to manage my job, while I deal with the other stuff? I had to make the decision as to what I wanted to do. My best way of doing it, when I go quiet, something is wrong. If I'm not talking to you, something is wrong. If you don't see my presence around as much as you usually should, something is wrong. If you don't see me submitting stuff, something is wrong.”

Overwork and Lack of Self-Care

Informant Comment: “I think that basically it’s just constantly go, go, go. From the time I’m in the office to the time I start visits and I hit the ground running, it’s go, go, go, go, go, thing after thing after thing. That commonly doesn’t leave time for self. It commonly doesn’t leave time for meals or breaks or bathroom breaks.”

Informant Comment: “Bathroom breaks, you [are] just rushing in and out of Tim Hortons... I was just joking with someone just a couple of days ago that you realize like it’s 4 o’clock, and you ask yourself, ‘Did I even go to the bathroom?’”

Informant Comment: “It’s that stuff where you could just get caught up, especially if there’s a crisis or something, then your day is off and maybe you knew what was going to happen and you had your food there and then you get called out of the office, which means you can’t heat up your food. You’re on the road and you’re running, running, running and you realize 3 o’clock and you’re just picking up something and stuffing it in your face before you have to go to the hospital for your youth. You have to go here to this appointment and stuff...
There have been times when it’s like 5, 6 o’clock it’s the first thing you’re eating for the day.”

**Informant Comment:** “A lot of times, I eat lunch while I'm driving to an appointment. Because there's so much to do in a day, you end up depriving yourself, so you're like, say I'm starting my day at 10:00 and I have all these things to do, I look, 'If I take an hour for lunch, that's an hour I'm losing to do whatever I need to do.’ So sometimes, you just keep pushing it [time] back until you end up in the drive-thru and you're eating while you're driving to your appointments.”

**Informant Comment:** “I’ll talk to my peers a lot in terms of other realms of health like sleep or sleep management and how many of us don’t sleep on a Sunday night going back to work on Monday because you're anticipating crisis or stress or when you’ve been away on vacation you sleep really well. You go back to work and you’re not sleeping at all or when you're anticipating meeting with a certain client or having to deal with a crisis over certain days, there’s not a lot of sleep or not a lot of rest or it’s not very restful sleep.”

**Informant Comment:** “The agency always tells you ‘it's not your file alone. If something needs to be covered, let them cover it. Do not come in to the office and make other people sick!’ They do. I do. We all do because the thought of leaving something or not getting something done is ... it's terrifying. If I don't do this, and this, and that...if I’m sick, even if I’m legitimately sick. If I'm off three days I have to replace the three days of visits. I have to figure out where I'm going to fit those three days of visits and I have to do it by a certain timeline. Otherwise I need to explain why I didn't.”

### 4.5. Bringing It All Together: Institutional Colonial Discourse and Practice

The findings show that the child protection institution organizes sequences of actions and discourses that produce and reproduce colonial ideologies and practices in the child protection system. It does so by excluding decolonization and performing acts of dissimulation in the institutional discourse and practice to embed and normalize colonial mechanisms into everyday child protection work. These institutionally coordinated sequences of discourse interconnect with the sequences of practices and displays of colonial “documents in action” and, ultimately, solidify colonial occupation in child protection practice (Prior, 2003, pp. 102). This organized colonial permissibility enables the repeated performance of structural violence towards Black female CPWs and their communities.
Black female CPWs exercise their power to implement resistance strategies that help them to manoeuvre strategically in this environment as a way to oppose the attempts of the child protection institution to organize their child protection work. More specifically, they covertly coordinate their caring work to counter and deconstruct the child protection institution’s colonial
narrative and oppressive practice by inserting their (re)construction of collective and individual caring back into child protection activities. During this resistance process, Black female CPWs undergo complicated intersectional experiences of race and gender, subject and object, insider and outsider, and resistance worker and surveillance agent and must (re)construct their role as carers as part of their negotiation of this landscape. While resisting the institutional oppression towards their communities, they continually experience institutional oppression from the same institution. As a result, a colonial tornado effect is continuously being created to ensure the unmanageability of the resulting chaos and the secret maintenance of the colonial status quo. The cost of their caring and endurance of such colonial mechanisms is illuminated in their demonstrations of institutional trauma. From the realities of this lived experience, the findings illustrate how the institution of child protection uses colonial strategies to organize the lived experiences of Black female CPWs and how Black female CPWs navigate various power and resistance relations in their everyday work activities.

BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD are applied in this researcher’s analysis to understand the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of findings. BFT and IAD bring to light the intricate nature of Black female CPWs’ resistance to the colonial conditions in their child protection work through their injection of decolonizing practices. At the same time, FNG and PP illustrate the fluidity and contingent nature of power and resistance relations between Black female CPWs and the Ontario child protection institution within the context of colonialism and whiteness. The productiveness and repressiveness of power are evident in this ever-present power struggle. The IE method of inquiry lays out the child protection institution’s organization of FNG in child protection discourse and practice while simultaneously outlining patterns of Black female CPWs’ application of BFT, PP, FNG, and IAD in their resistance practice. This researcher’s analysis of the findings supports the argument that Black female CPWs experience conditional yet unequal inclusion in the Ontario child protection system.
Chapter 5 - Discussion

This discussion is centred on the exploration of the Ontario child protection institution’s use of colonial mechanisms to organize Black female CPWs and their (re)construction of their role as carers in child protection. At the same time, this conversation focuses on Black female CPWs’ organization of their resistance and institutional trauma responses to such colonial mechanisms in their work. Identifying and analyzing the institutionally authorized sequences of actions in their lived experiences and in the child protection decolonization texts are essential to this revelation and illustrate the systemic patterns and contingent processes that are located in shifting power relations. A critical transformational approach is used to illuminate the need to re-establish decolonization ideologies and practices within the child protection system. This study contributes to understanding the complex institutional methods that sustain colonial ideologies and practices in the child protection system and centralizes the importance of its impact on Black female CPWs’ well-being and work practices. Drawing upon the existing literature, conceptualizations of exclusion and acts of dissimulation are employed to elucidate the sequences of actions and institutional discourse which sanction the exclusion and the conditional yet unequal inclusion of Black female CPWs in the child protection system. This discussion serves as a point of entry into a much needed dialogue about the contradiction of the social work profession that prioritizes human rights and social justice while simultaneously upholding and participating in colonialism in child protection.

5.1. Power and Resistance

The Black female CPWs and the Ontario child protection institution’s exercise of power involve unstable and relational processes that result in ongoing power struggles at multiple points of resistance and confrontation. These continuous processes are observed in the child protection institution’s organization of the exclusion of Black female CPWs and in the Black female CPWs organization of their acts of resistance in their caring work. In accordance with CTA, PP, and FNG, knowledges and realities are constructed and deconstructed as a demonstration of this power struggle and represent the contingent nature of these social relations. At one CPA, Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs) resisted colonialism towards Black communities by advocating for the elimination of the CPA’s systemic institutional oppression towards Black families and children through their initiation and development of the Collective
Hands Committee (CHC). Using BFT and IAD frameworks, this Black CPW and CSW formed and operated committee has been re-claiming, re-articulating, re-authoring, and re-naming the Black communities’ strengths and successes, experiences of institutional oppression as strategies of decolonization. As an act of commission, the CPA permitted the CHC’s formation and operation and, on the surface, it seemed to consent to its existence.

When the CPA wrote about the Collective Hands Committee in one of their public agency texts, they excluded the Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs) who were responsible for the establishment of this committee and initiation of the development of critical consciousness within this CPA and re-framed/omitted the facts surrounding their colonization of Black families and children. Consistent with Foucault’s mechanism of security, the CPA maintains its colonial stance by controlling and surveilling the child protection institutional discourse through the exclusion of Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs’) perspectives, languages and overall caring work in this CPA text. This act of omission enables the CPA’s co-optation of this committee and the erasure of the resistance efforts of the Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs) responsible for its development. The CPA’s act of commission and act of omission combine to constitute the act of dissimulation that it employs to maintain its power.

In agreement with FNG, the child protection institution applies their power by organizing the conduct of Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs’) through the omission of their resistance and decolonization efforts from the agency text. In this way, the CPA attempts to covertly silence Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs). Multiple intersections of confrontation and resistance are visible in the child protection institution’s quest to maintain colonialism and in the Black female (and male) CPWs (and CSWs’) mission to de-stabilize colonialism in child protection. The fluid nature of these intersections contests Coleman’s (2006) idea of civility as a unilateral process. These unstable power relations between these groups highlight the fluidity of power exercised by each group and the broad spectrum between dominance and non-dominance that is neither fixed nor guaranteed to either group. It shows how the social realities and knowledges of both groups are continuously and simultaneously being constructed and deconstructed (Schneider, 2004).
5.2. IE: Mapping Colonialism

This study’s findings reveal that institutionally coordinated acts of dissimulation and exclusion in the child protection discourse and practice support the maintenance and perpetuation of colonial processes that organize Black female CPWs’ exclusion or conditional yet unequal inclusion in the child protection system. The challenge lies in understanding how to map non-linear and multilateral colonial processes.

Covert and overt Eurocentric colonial practices and institutional discourses are difficult to capture in any given sequence. Colonialism is so pervasive and widespread that its existence simultaneously appears to be everywhere and coming from nowhere; it is not only found in a set of sequential linear processes, practices, and procedures; it is also captured in the constancy and fluidity of its existence. It follows that colonialist actions and inactions in the Ontario child protection institution occur in a manner that is interconnected and contingent on a variety of broader, deeply engrained colonial actions and activities in Canada. The Ontario child protection institution’s Eurocentric ideologies and practices have shifted from the actual perspectives of individual people to the normalized ideologies and practices of the child protection institution (Smith, 2005). In other words, colonialism is kept in place by the actions and inactions that support the constancy and fluidity of colonialism. In effect, colonialism becomes difficult to map using the sequential mapping used by traditional IE. However, the IE method of inquiry provides a space for the investigation of non-linear and multilateral colonial processes as informant experiences reveal part of the institutional organization which may or may not be sequential in nature. Smith (2005) asserts that:

Analysis remembers that each informant contributes only a piece of a social organization that is the coordinated achievement of people’s doings. In writing the ethnography, the researcher assembles the different work knowledges of people situated in and contributing differently to the process on which research focuses (p. 160).

As such, this researcher employs the IE method of inquiry to expose both the sequences of actions and the constancy of the inactions involved in the Ontario child protection institution’s organization of Black female CPWs’ (re)construction of their caring work.

The research findings in this study show that decolonization texts and practices do not occur within the Ontario child protection system. Congruent with Coleman’s (2006) notion of civility and FNG, CPAs engage in acts of dissimulation to organize and maintain colonial
ideologies and practices in child protection work. The execution of acts of dissimulation relies on the use of non-linear and multilateral acts of commission and acts of omission in order to disguise its colonial focus. For instance, some CPAs perform acts of commission through their public documentation of various AOP activities via education, consultation, needs assessment, declaration of a position statement, and policy-revision. This act of commission represents the first step in the Ontario child protection institution’s disingenuous support and engagement with decolonization. Simultaneously, CPAs appear to have the option to acknowledge and address their role in producing and reproducing colonialism in the Ontario child protection system as many CPAs do not acknowledge their role in the ensuring prevalence and pervasiveness of colonial ideologies and practices in the child protection system. While a few CPAs identify the systemic institutional oppression in the child protection field that directly impacts Black families and children, they do not provide agency-specific facts, figures, and statistics that show their direct role in producing and reproducing institutional oppression and structural violence towards Black communities. The problem lies in the constant absence of complete transparency, accountability, recognition, and responsibility by all the CPAs within the Ontario child protection for the creation and maintenance of colonialism in its system. This continuous and omnipresent act of omission illustrates the second step in the Ontario child protection institution’s use of acts of dissimulation to disguise its colonial stance.

Acts of dissimulation in the institutional text are performed either through the exclusion of all text on decolonization or the deflection of attention away from decolonization to an insufficient and inconsistent textual focus on diversity, anti-oppression, and inclusivity; in institutional practice, it is illustrated through the child protection institution’s verbal discourse on the general valuing of all child protection workers intertwined with the covert prohibition of decolonizing activities. The absence of decolonization and the entrenchment of acts of dissimulation in the child protection institutional discourse and practice establish a fluid and interdependent pattern of colonial permissibility in everyday actions and activities, thereby authorizing the standardization of colonial processes in child protection work. In this way, acts of dissimulation are a reiteration of Coleman’s (2006) notion of civility. Consequently, unequal power relations remain in place as disingenuous performances of anti-oppressive practice and verbal expressions of valuing of child protection workers combine with the omission of decolonization to normalize the colonial ideologies and practices that sanction the continuous institutional oppression and structural violence towards Black female CPWs. This institutional
coordination of text and practice expounds the complex colonial environment that Black female CPWs must navigate in their child protection work and also highlights how this ongoing organization of structural violence places them at risk of experiencing institutional trauma.

Promoting and engaging with diversity, anti-oppressive practice, and inclusion are insufficient methods of fighting institutional oppression as the underlying systemic colonial ideologies and practices remain intact and in effect. The findings of this study indicate that while some CPAs promote diversity, anti-oppressive practice, and inclusion, the statistics on the colonization of Black youth in care and their families in the Ontario child protection system are omitted from the publically available institutional discourse; in addition, the promotion and application of diversity, anti-oppressive practice, and inclusion are centred on people of colour assimilating to the institutions' colonial ideologies and practices. Thus, the unequal and contested power relations of Black female CPWs in the child protection institution remain intact.

Acts of dissimulation combine acts of commission and acts of omission in the child protection institutional texts to conceal acts of colonization in Canada and thereby breach the equality and human rights laws in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act. These equality and human rights legislative texts inform the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and its governance of the 47 child protection agencies in Ontario (Canadian Department of Justice, 2016; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2016). Despite this legal protection of every individual’s equality and human rights in Canada, actual decolonizing ideologies and practices in the child protection institution remain largely absent. This discontinuity between the child protection institutional systems’ texts and practices with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadian Human Rights Act is a microcosm of the broader colonial context in Canada.

5.3. Re-constructing Caring Work

Despite this colonial landscape, Black women continue to work as CPWs as part of their non-linear and multilateral decolonizing strategy to resist colonialism and engage in collective caring work. Black female CPWs have a unique and ongoing experience of interlocking racial and gender oppression that is directly shaped by notions of Eurocentric normativity and ideas of civility and result in their exclusion or conditional yet unequal inclusionary status as ‘outsiders within’ (Collins, 1990; King, 1987). They use their 'outsider within' posts as a way to fully exercise their right to self-determination and make space for their communities to do the same. In
this study, Black female CPWs went beyond the surveillance requirements of their work to provide care to Black female clients. One informant reported that she provided ongoing education about various life skills and carried out counselling and mentorship activities to a Black female client as a way to help them navigate around and work through experiences of institutional oppression and exercise their power and self-determination. She indicated that her acts of caring and protectiveness arise from her knowledge of the overrepresentation of Black youth in the Canadian foster care system. Another informant stated that she used her work autonomy and flexibility to find the time to drive a client to a job interview. While this act of caring supported the potential financial stability of the client’s family and community, it was neither expected nor approved in child protection work. A different informant outlined her collaboration and advocacy with other child protection workers of colour to successfully prevent Black youth from entering the Ontario foster care system and to have them remain in a kinship arrangement with their grandmother. Here, the Black female CPW used her voice in collaboration with the voices of other child protection workers of colour to resist the Eurocentric colonialist practices towards the Black community in the child protection system.

Acts of resistance are represented by Black women’s presence and survival as child protection workers within a colonialist system as well as their decolonizing strategies of knowledge sharing, oral narratives, and active community support to re-claim, re-articulate, and re-name their knowledges, epistemologies and ways of being. Smith (2012) indicates that these processes disrupt unequal power relations and devalues colonial discourse and practices. Collins (2000) and Wane (2002) indicate that Black women’s social actions, knowledge production, and self-definitions are points of resistance that continuously confront and dislocate Eurocentric masculinist epistemologies and practices. Black female CPWs’ choice to inject caring practices into their work is a form of resistance to the Ontario child protection institution’s Eurocentric and colonialist practices and ideologies.

Resistance work is seen in the Black female CPWs’ expression of collective care for other child protection workers and clients. Their exertion of power is evident through their connections with others as a way to uplift and rejuvenate their spirit. Engaging in helping others in an oppressive environment reveals the individual and collective strength of Black female CPWs. Strategically, they do not completely relent to the pressures of the child protection institution to undertake surveillance, control, and disciplinary activities, but instead employ and insert their own caring activities into their child protection work as a way to fight for their vision of child
protection as a collective caring enterprise. By doing so, the Black female CPWs make the choice to embody their work in a way that is enriching to their well-being. It is in understanding that they have a choice and making this choice as a strategic option where resistance lies. These resistance efforts represent their (re) construction and (re) organization of their child protection role as collective carers within this context. The Black female CPWs commitment to decolonization is as personal as it is political, and as individual as it is collective in that each category intersects and intertwines in a way that cannot exist separately. Black female CPWs do not accept colonialism; rather, they continue to fight against caring as an oppressive practice and redefine it as a collective caring enterprise.

### 5.4. Organizing Institutional Trauma

The repeated internal and external management of colonial processes position Black female CPWs to exist in a colonial tornado effect where they are forced to exist in an unmanageable chaotic colonial environment where they have to find ways to survive their experiences of structural violence while also functioning in the role of caring for others. One informant reported sequences of actions where the CPA not only sanctioned institutional oppression and colonialist practices towards racialized youth in foster care, but simultaneously engaged in these same practices towards her. When she resisted this process, the child protection institution silenced her and forced her to comply with their colonial practices. The CPA’s upper management endorsed these colonial sequences of actions through their knowing, witnessing of, and participating in these institutionally oppressive practices. In this way, the child protection institution perpetuates colonial ideologies and practices from the top-down, enforces Black female CPWs’ conditional yet unequal inclusion in the child protection institution, and demonstrates how FNG is articulated in practice. Consequently, this Black female CPW reported her experience of depression as a form of institutional trauma. This finding is supported by Veenstra & Patterson (2016) and Logie, et al.’s (2013) research study which found that Black Canadian women’s experiences of institutional oppression and institutional trauma could result in mental and/or physical health problems.

As colonialism is embedded in the Canadian context, Black women are highly likely to experience institutional oppression and institutional trauma in a variety of institutions. Any attempts to resist the CPA’s acts of dissimulation through re-claiming, re-articulating, re-authoring, and re-naming Black women’s diverse ways of being, knowledges, and
epistemologies are met with disavowal and erasure by the child protection institution. No matter where Black women are in Canada, they are unlikely to escape the colonial environment, and it follows that they have to manage the colonial ideologies and practices inside their workplaces. In this study, the Black women chose to work as CPWs and manage the Ontario child protection institution’s pressure for them to accept and practice their colonialist regime. When locating their position on the spectrum between accepting colonialism and resisting colonialism, their choice varies depending on their articulation of their experience(s), level of energy to enact resistance efforts, possible experiences of institutional trauma, and their own need for self-care and self-healing.
6 Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Canada's colonial landscape has been maintained through an evolution and organization of disciplinary and security mechanisms, techniques, and procedures to maintain its regime; this is particularly evident in the organization of Black women in general and Black female CPWs in particular. These processes are embedded in the everyday activities of Black female CPWs who simultaneously experience, witness and forcibly participate in the child protection system's colonial processes. Black female CPWs are included in the child protection institution only on the condition that they comply with its colonial procedures. In this way, the child protection institution conditionally yet unequally includes Black female CPWs in their system.

The child protection field is mandated, regulated, and funded by the Canadian government. The Canadian government’s nation building project is based upon the maintenance of unequal power relations through its organized dissemination of colonialism within its institutions. It follows that the social work profession has to accept and participate in the same colonial organizational processes as its ruler. Dissimulatory strategies are employed to conceal this agenda. For instance, social work upholds the ethical priorities of social justice and human rights. However, such goals are deemed to be disingenuous when the field of social work does not actively decolonize the existing colonial system, thus making it complicit in the broader Canadian government’s perpetuation of colonialism, structural violence, and institutional trauma.

6.1. Limitations

While IE is useful for examining the institutional coordination of people, an identified limitation for this researcher is institutional capture where child protection institutional discourse and practices may control, reconstruct, and re-author the experiential feedback, text and talk of informants within this institution (Smith, 2005). As frontline workers have been trained to draw upon and speak from within the ruling institutional discourse, researchers must find ways of moving the talk beyond “institutional language” to “what really happens” in the setting (Devault & McCoy, 2006, p. 28; Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 70-71). This researcher attempted to achieve this by continually keeping the institution forefront during the data collection process, confirming the institutional language employed in informants’ work setting, engaging informants in a process of sharing their experiences utilizing language extrinsic to ruling discourse, and providing informants with opportunities to express ways in which the institution could modify or
change its practices. In doing so, this researcher continually interrogated the covert institutional processes and coordination practices that extend beyond informants’ work environment to the research study.

As a former child protection worker, it was even more important for this researcher to avoid the pitfall of allowing child protection and academic institutional discourse to frame research outcomes and discussion (McCoy, 2006). Smith (2005) indicates that:

“The dialogue between interview/observer and informant or between observer and her/his own experience is implicitly a dialogue organized by the ethnographer’s participation in the institutional ethnographic discourse. The researcher is oriented to a discourse to which she or he will be accountable if the research is written up for publication or as a report to those people or organizations. The experiential data can thus be viewed as a moment in a social relation, a sequence of coordinated action that organizes the dialogue between informant and researcher as a step or moment in a sequence that hooks back into the institutions of academic, professional and related specialized discourses” (p. 135-136).

This researcher is aware of her own regulation by the academic institution that she attends and her previous employment at a child protection agency and how this impacts upon the way that this research is conducted. This study is impacted by this researcher’s experiences, as a Black female, a former child protection worker, and a Ph.D. student, which are organized by the ruling relations that inform various institutions (e.g., education, child protection, etc.). This researcher is also guided by the institutional discourse within these institutions. In addition, this researcher is aware of her own privilege of knowledge of the academic discourse and the resulting coordination of the informants experiences for academic purposes. In light of these concerns, this researcher tapped into her own experiential text and talk in order to not get caught up in the institutional language that has organized this researcher by using self-critical analysis and self reflexivity practices (e.g. journaling, critical reflection exercises, etc.). For example, this researcher used the following self-reflexivity/self-reflection practices: 1) journaling about this researcher’s feelings about the study data, both independently and in relation to her own child protection experiences; 2) writing about this researcher’s relation to the child protection and academic institutions and critical analyzing how these relations may possibly influence her institutional capture; 3) discussing this researcher’s self-reflections with her faculty supervisor; 4) reviewing informant data to look institutional capture in their discourse; 5) having this
researcher’s thesis reviewed by a supervisory committee with IE and child protection experience; and 6) re-examining this researcher’s written discourse for possible signs of institutional capture.

A kind of unintended analytic drift can occur, in which the analytic focus shifts from the institution to the informants (McCoy, 2006). This research had find ways to analyze the interviews in ways that keep the institution in view through the examination of both patterns and sequential processes. The impact of colonial processes of the informants was named as the end result of the colonial processes, but it was not the focus of this research investigation.

The goal of IE is to find the complementsarities and intersections of different informant accounts that shed light on how ruling relations coordinate the informants’ work. This method of inquiry does not seek to have agreement among informants’ experiences and any level of external validity. While IE offers an effective means of mapping the sequences actions that underlie institutional practices and discourse, this research design cannot infer cause and effect relationships among variables, as variables are not measured in a particular point in time and extraneous variables are not controlled through data analysis (Singleton & Straits, 2010). These issues are mitigated through the use of triangulation techniques (e.g. textual analysis and interview data analysis).

Moreover, non-probability sampling results in several limitations in that: 1) it does not control for investigator bias; 2) their pattern of variability cannot be predicted from probability sampling theory, thereby making it impossible to calculate sampling error or to estimate sample precision; and 3) making an informed selection of cases requires considerable knowledge of the population before the sample is drawn (Singleton & Straits, 2010). Thus, it is important to point out that the generalizability of findings will not be possible with non-probability research and convenience sampling techniques.

Finally, this research study is limited to examining the intersection of race and sex. This means that information about how Black women are institutionally organized through other socially constructed categories, such as class and sexuality, will be absent from my research study. This is a valuable area of study that requires further exploration and examination in future research.

6.2. Implications

This study applies IE as a way map out the covert processes that keep colonialism in place and shed light on how power is exercised. Such applications of IE are useful in examining
the production and reproduction of unequal and/or shifting power dynamics within multiple
social relationships as it provides a way to understand how these dynamics are created,
maintained, resisted or changed.

As power is fluid and unstable, social work has the opportunity to use its power to resist
the colonial system within which it is built. Social work can re-define its goals and organize the
injection of decolonization strategies back into its foundation. To do this, social work needs to be
willing to actively engage in a power struggle to dismantle the colonial status quo inside and
outside of its systems and accept the messiness, discomfort, and disruption associated with this
(re)organization process. Social work’s understanding of social relations, power, and human
behaviour can be applied to help transition people from their individualized-life focus to a
collective caring enterprise that is needed for real social change. Complete decolonization of the
social work profession is necessary before social work can sincerely and genuinely fight against
and eliminate inequities and inequalities in society arising from colonialism. Social work must
develop a new decolonized system where all people operate as a cooperative that affirms equal
and equitable rights in society as well as provides space for multiple forms of knowledges and
realities. In doing this, social work would lead transformative and collective social change using
a top-down strategy that enforces and reinforces harmonious and respectful ways of being and
living.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate in this study at any time.

**Withdrawal from the Study:** At any time, you can withdraw from this study. Your decision will not influence the ongoing relationship that you may have with this researcher, child welfare agency or University of Toronto. All data collected from you will be destroyed.

**Confidentiality:** All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your data will be collected through audio recorded interviews that will be transcribed. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and the principal researcher will only have access to this information. All data will be stored in a secure external data storage device for five years and will be destroyed thereafter. The research results may be used in peer reviewed written publications and/or oral presentations. All identifiable personal information will not be included in this study. All research participants will remain anonymous, as code names or numbers will be used to identify each participant. The information gathered for the purposes of this study will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone else without your prior written consent. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

There are limitations of confidentiality. Such limitations include obligations under law to report any child abuse and neglect to a child welfare agency if they disclose child protection concerns during the interview process, provincial statues that may require the report of concerns of sexually transmitted diseases, and intent to murder or suicidal thoughts communicated to me during the interview.

The research study you are participating in may be reviewed for quality assurance to make sure that the required laws and guidelines are followed. If chosen, (a) representative(s) of the Human Research Ethics Program (HREP) may access study-related data and/or consent materials as part
of the review. All information accessed by the HREP will be upheld to the same level of confidentiality that has been stated by the research team.

**Questions about the Research?** If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Charmaine Williams, Associate Professor and Faculty Supervisor at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Social Work by telephone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board, at the University of Toronto and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. If you have any questions about this process or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact Daniel Gweyu of the UT Research Oversight and Compliance office at [redacted] or by telephone at [redacted].

**Legal Rights and Signatures:**

I________________________, consent to participate in ‘The institutional organization of Black female child protection workers’ (re)construction of their role as carers in child protection: An institutional ethnographic inquiry’ conducted by Woyengi Gigi Goary. I have understood the nature of this research study and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

**Signature** __________________________  **Date** __________________________
Participant

**Signature** __________________________  **Date** __________________________
Principal Investigator
Appendix B: Interview Guide

1) Describe your typical work day from the start to the end of your shift.

2) How are child welfare documents used to guide your everyday work activities?

3) Describe the decision-making process that you use in child protection cases.

4) Describe the process in which the child welfare agency manages conflict between co-workers and other co-workers, supervisors or upper management, clients, and community collaterals.

5) Have you had a work experience that required you to use a child welfare conflict management process? If so, please describe this work experience.

6) How has the child welfare agency communicated to you about your value as a child protection worker?

7) Can you tell me about a work experience that informs how you think Black female child protection workers are viewed in the child welfare context?

8) Can you tell about a work experience that informs how you think Black families are viewed in the child welfare context?

9) How do you view your role as a carer in child protection in light of your experiences as a Black female child protection worker?

10) How does the overrepresentation of Black children in care impact your view of the child welfare system?

11) How does the overrepresentation of Black children in care impact how you view your role as a child protection worker?

12) How do larger structural processes impact the lived experiences of Black women in Canada?
Appendix C: List of Counselling Resources

This researcher confirms that a list of counselling resources was provided to all informants prior to the commencement of their interviews. The list of counselling resources were divided into the regions of Ontario near the informant’s workplaces/city of residence. In order to protect the anonymity of the informants, this researcher will not include the list of resources in appendix C.
Appendix D: Demographic Form

a) Participant name:

______________________________________________________________________

b) Personal contact information (i.e., address, phone number, and email):

______________________________________________________________________

d) Nationality:

______________________________________________________________________

e) Confirmation of your current employment as a child protection worker:

Please circle: Yes/No

f) Name and location (City, Province) of the child protection agency in which you are employed:

______________________________________________________________________
Appendix E: Compensation Receipt Confirmation Form

I ___________________________ confirm that I received an honorarium of $30.00 on
(Print Name)
______________________________ for my participation in W. Gigi Goary’s PhD research study
(Date)
called The institutional organization of Black female child protection workers’ (re)construction
of their role as carers in child protection: An institutional ethnographic inquiry.

________________________________________
(Participant Signature) __________________________
(Date)

________________________________________
(Witness Signature) __________________________
(Date)