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Black Feminist Thought: Transforming Social Work Research Methodologies

Valeria Ndunga, MSW.[1*], Sewsen Igbu, PhD (Student)[1*]

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[1]University of Toronto
*Corresponding author: Sewsen Igbu, sewsen.igbu@mail.utoronto.ca

Abstract. Social work research, education, and practices are rooted in white colonial supremacist ideologies and structures that continue to dehumanize Black children, families, and communities. In talking about Black children, families and communities, it is imperative to address how anti-Black racism plays a role in examining systems, such as child welfare in which social workers are located, that act upon them. Research in social work needs to center the humanity of Black knowledge production and lived experiences instead of re-enacting anti-Black racism that reduces Black people, families, and communities to damage-centered narratives (Tuck, 2009). In this article, we will argue that the utilization of Black feminist theorization and practices can disrupt intersectional anti-Black racism in social work and centers the knowledge production of Black women, femmes, trans and queer peoples. Black feminist theorization recognizes Black communities as sites for change are embodiments and effects that can bring material change to social work research and practices.

Keywords: Black feminist, intersectional anti-Black racism, and harmful research.

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Introduction

Not many of you will know of the formation recently of a new professional association….It is the professional Association of Canadian Social Workers, and its formation will perhaps be the first indication to many that the problems of inequalities and human relationship which arise from and live to burden our social structure have evolved a profession of social workers to meet them – a profession with a technique all its own, demanding rigorous training, and a code of ethics and standards to be lived up to (Jennissen and Lundy, p. 1).

The statement originally appeared in the October 1926 edition of *Social Welfare* to formally launch the Association of Canadian Social Workers, which was the professionalization of social work as a field. Social work, as well as the numerous social service professions (e.g., child youth care workers), are narrated as careers geared towards the betterment of children, youth, and families in various institutions such as education and child welfare. They are known as a 'helping profession,' which means 'solving the problems' that individuals and communities experience (Mullings et al., 2021). Furthermore, social work has numerous stated commitments, as outlined in the Code of Ethics, to social justice, action, and support, as well as advocating for individuals experiencing oppression, injustice, racism, and other structural barriers. However, social workers and social work researchers have overwhelmingly focused on individualized approaches that are rooted in deficit perspectives of Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrant, and LGBTQ members and communities (Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017). The narrative of the 'helping' profession also conceals the historical foundation of social work in Canada's empire-building rooted in colonialism, white settler-nation, the enslavement of Black people, and white supremacy (Mullings et al., 2021; Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017; Jennissen and Lundy; Gosine et al., 2011).

Social work cannot be solely based on scientific and evidence-based research known to whitewash history and center whiteness. The field of social work needs to move beyond whitewashed research grounded in colonialism, white settler-nation, and anti-Black racism for communal work that transformatively serves and works alongside the diverse communities that social workers support (Waller et al., 2022). Further, the advocacy and social justice work undertaken by social work research, education, and praxis should challenge current systems as well as the injustices and barriers that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and people of colour and communities (Waller et al., 2022).

In this paper, we contend that social work education, research, and praxis continue to uphold white colonial ways of care that are rooted in hetero-patriarchal white colonial and other structures of hierarchies. Social

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work education, research, and practices still operate from the lens that Black children, families, and communities are broken, damaged, and in need of fixing as opposed to dismantling the ideologies and structure that (re)produces anti-Black racism in its various forms (Duhaney et al., 2022; Johnstone and Lee, 2020; Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017; Mullings et a., 2021). Thus, Black Feminist Thought (BFT) provides an alternative way of thinking about care that social work could benefit from and utilize intentionally and meaningfully to be in solidarity with Black life in its multiplicity. Black women, femmes, trans and queer peoples theorization, and praxis stem from their lived experiences and work with Black families and communities. However, these experiences and communal work are not valued as qualifications obtained from white colonial social work programs, which are regarded as the standard and legitimate producers of knowledge. Nevertheless, Black women, femmes, trans, and queer peoples' theorization and practices of care and communal work have been, and continue to be, significant to the building and sustainment of Black families and communities.

We present our positionality as co-authors and explain our conceptual framework, BFT. We continue by providing a review of anti-Black racism within social work education and research while including our lived experiences to emphasize the role of narrative as an act of counter-storytelling in the tradition of Black feminisms. We then re-envision social work through BFT for education and research grounded in community, Black communities as sites for ongoing material change, and Black women as producers of knowledge.

Positionality

Each of us has our own standpoint and experiences as two African women, Angolan-Congolese and Eritrean. Our standpoints are also informed by our diverse economic status, familial backgrounds, sexuality, and educational journeys. It was during our discussions that began at an undergraduate Child and Youth Care program and continued as one went to Social Work and the other to Education to engage in critical dialogue about race, anti-Black racism, colonialism, misogynoir, and our own role in systems and institutions that reinforce marginalization and oppression.

Black Feminist Theorization and Practices

Black feminist theories are the outgrowth of generations of work by Black women, femmes, trans and queer peoples in the everyday social, political, and economic material realities of their lives (Collins, 2000). Black feminism articulates Black women's social, political, and economic experiences in relation to ideologies and structures that continuously reproduce their marginalization within society and institutions (Collins, 2000). Given that Black feminism emerged from the lived experiences of Black women, trans and queer peoples, and the ongoing renegotiation of their relationships and roles, it is a living theory that is embodied and

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applicable to their lives, families, and communities (Collins, 2000; Wane, 2004).

A central tenet is the recognition and naming of the multi-complexities of anti-Black racism within colonial nation-states to understand the ways it intersects (Crenshaw, 1986) with ideologies and structures of hetero-patriarchy, ableism, and other forms of white supremacy. The recognition and naming are intimately connected to the concept of outsider-within (Collins, 1986). Collin (1986) asserts that Black women, as a result of their race and gender, are outsiders within white colonial structures and institutions while being within them. Black women's social location as outsider-within leads to their "ability to see" (Collins, 1986, p. S15) to recognize and vocalize a nuanced analysis of race, gender, class, and other structures. Another philosophy of Black feminism is intersectionality, named by law professor Kimberlè Crenshaw. Intersectionality articulates the particularly interconnecting marginalization that Black women experience because of their race and gender within the judicial system and other structures (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is an important theory as Black women were left out of discourses involving gender, synonymous with white women, and race, singularly applied to Black men. Black women were invisible in both spaces, and their intersecting experiences were not understood. Therefore, intersectionality is an important framework for analyzing the interlocking identities of Black women in relation to structures, such as social work education, researchers, and their professional experiences as social workers in institutions (e.g., child welfare, criminal system). Black women, femmes, trans, and queer people's standpoint, grounded in the unique interaction of their race, gender, and class, is epistemological knowledge that is oppositional to white colonial branches of knowledge and institutions as well as propelling social justice movements.

Hence, Black feminist theorizations and practices are transformative because of the restorative power to "claim, embrace and restore" (Nash, 2013, p. 3) in a global context in which intersectional anti-Blackness is deep-seated and internalized (Collins, 2004). The politics and ethics of Black feminists' care and love are about transcending the self for the collective to nourish alternative political communities. The care and love for self and others are interconnected and justice-oriented. Nash's (2013) readings of Black feminists' theories on love are as affective politics in which labour for political movements are generated from "longings, desires, temporalities, repulsions, curiosities, fatigues and optimism" (p. 3) - in other words, emotions, specifically love, as a theory and practice guide the journey for communal changes. Black feminists' conceptualization and embodiment of care, love, and affect re-envisions communities as sites for change instead of just directing remedy to the state (Nash, 2013), which is significant to disrupting and dismantling narratives of Black people and communities as broken and damaged.

Anti-Black Racism in Social Work Education and Research

To understand the concept of anti-Black racism in the social work profession, education, and research, one must first understand the colonial history of so-called Canada (Duhaney et al., 2022; Johnstone and Lee, 2019; Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017). Social work in Canada was, and continues to be, rooted in white supremacy and settler colonialism. Social workers played a role in the foundation of Canada as a white settler nation through their active engagement in the removal and displacement of Indigenous children during residential schools and the sixties scoop (Gosine, Phillips and Pon, 2011). Social workers continue to apprehend Indigenous and Black children at a higher number within the child welfare systems in comparison to their white counterparts (Blackstone et al., 2006; Blackstock and Trocme, 2005; Clarke, 2011 and 2012; Contenta, 2014; Lerner, 2021). Thus, the history of social work as a state-sanctioned profession has been instrumental in the marginalization of non-white racialized families and communities, which is masked by Canada's false idea of multiculturalism and mosaic - a combination of diverse groups of ethnicities, languages, and cultures coexisting together (Duhaney et al., 2022).

Multiculturalism as a policy and discourse work to conceal the oppression and systemic racism of marginalized communities by reframing Canada as accepting, which in turn fails to realize the trauma and impact of both historical and current intersectional anti-Black racism on Black lives (Duhaney et al., 2022). In the context of social work, the lens of multiculturalism allows the minimization of anti-Blackness within the education, practices of social workers, and research methodologies utilized by the profession (Duhaney et al., 2022). The rootedness of anti-Blackness within mainstream social work research, education, and practices is erased, invisibilized, and/or superficially understood and, consequently, fought against. Furthermore, anti-Blackness is not only limited to social work research and education but also to the social justice undertaken by social workers and their work in institutions (e.g., child welfare, education) where they are located. It is an ongoing cycle, and to acknowledge anti-Black racism with social work research, education, and praxis, we argue that the field of social work (from education to praxis to research) must first be conscious of how it intertwines with multiculturalism discourses and the mythology of Canada's history as a safe place for Black people and communities. These conceptualizations also need to be explored in relationship with how social work research and education values and prioritizes Eurocentric knowledge and ways of learning while disregarding and minimizing non-western education and ways of learning.

The Eurocentrism of social work research and education invisibles the knowledge, scholarship, theorization, and work of racialized non-white scholars and community members, including Africentric ways of knowing, researching, and doing social work (Mullings et a., 2021). There is a dire need to incorporate Indigenous, Africentric, Black feminist thought and

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other forms of knowledge and scholarship into social work education to not only address social injustices but also reflect the community members that social workers work with. Yet, research shows that social work education is continuously resistant to teachings about anti-Black racism and transformative, culturally responsive, and relevant pedagogies (e.g., Africentric and Black feminist thought) (Brock-Petroshius et al., 2023; Mullings et al., 2021; Lerner, 2021). Resistance to discussions, teachings, and research about race, in particular anti-Black racism, is reinforced even further by false narratives of advocacy, multiculturalism, and color-blindness ideologies that exist within social work. For example, within my MSW [Valeria] studies, the program was challenging and left me feeling traumatized as the experience solidified how volatile it is for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) bodies to be in social work education, which is positioned as vital for working with our community members in the variety institutional spaces that they are in. A specific example was in a social justice class, in which we covered a topic relating to advocacy each week (e.g., BLM, Indigenous social work, child welfare and protection, communal work). During a lecture on anti-Blackness and Black Lives Matter (BLM), white students refused to engage by not turning on their cameras and remaining silent in the discussion even though the questions were pertinent to them and the work they do and will do. For instance, the professor asked what anti-Black racism is and how it manifests in social work, yet throughout the entire lecture, many of the white students would not engage. I eventually messaged the professor to inform him that the Black students, after a group chat with each other, will not be talking in class and we would like to hear from the white students as we already know how anti-Black racism shows up in social work as well as being tired by continuously being the only ones to engage in discussions related to Blackness. This specific example speaks to the absence of dialogue and complexity in social work classrooms, particularly to anti-Black racism, and one of the main reasons why this research is necessary. Further, the example highlights the importance of Africentric research in social work because it is necessary to de-center whiteness and critically examine the impact of white supremacy on social dynamics and power structures within the profession itself (Swigonski, 1996). In social work, an Africentric viewpoint is essential, particularly when considering the significance of white fragilities and white tears during impactful conversations in the classroom. The need for Africentric research in social work is critical as it continues to center and advocate for the experiences, voices, narratives, and perspectives of Black people and Blackness (Swigonski, 1996). Africentric social work aims to de-center whiteness in order to dismantle systematic racism, particularly when whiteness and research are seen as the norm and standard of social work research (Swigonski, 1996). This entails paying attention to Black researchers, validating Black researchers' findings, and validating Black service providers as well as Black service users and their experiences as they continue on their fight to topple the systems that support

White supremacy and whiteness (Swigonski, 1996). White fragility and a lack of accountability have no place in the social work sector, and Africentric scholars aim to subvert the centring of whiteness (Swigonski, 1996).

The silence and refusal were also frustrating because Black students were navigating dual pandemics, COVID-19 and the disproportionate impact on BIPOC communities, and systematic anti-Black racism, specifically police violence towards Black people such as Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, and Korchinski-Paque. The previous example provided, and many others by BIPOC social work students, speaks to the ongoing dominance of whiteness and resistance from white students and educators. Through white fragility and white silence, white students and educators maintain social work whiteness and discounts the lived experience and knowledge of Black social workers, as well as community members, through the labeling of Black students as angry and hateful towards white people (Brock-Petroshius et al., 2023; Lerner, 2021; Phillip, 2022). During the emotionally taxing discussions on racism, race, decolonization, colonization, criminal system, and child welfare, BIPOC students also have to worry about how they show up to minimize being regarded as 'angry,' 'emotional,' and the 'perpetrator' of white discomfort (Lerner, 2021). The maintenance of whiteness and white innocence (e.g., in discussions, curriculum), especially from white women, are harmful to BIPOC students and educators who experience emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual trauma (Brock-Petroshius et al., 2023; Lerner, 2021). Let us briefly elaborate on white women's maintenance of whiteness and white innocence in social work. Historically, white middle-class women used social work as well as other helping professions, whose focus is on family units, to gain professionalization and surveillance of families, especially those with lower socioeconomic status and from non-white racialized communities; thus, becoming instrumental in these fields (Chilton, 2007; Misra and Akins, 1998; Orloff, 1996). Currently, white women continue to act as "gatekeepers and racial torch bearers" (Daniel, 2019, p. 32) within these professions by their refusal to analyze their whiteness and the role that they played and continue in maintaining structures of white domination and anti-Black marginalization through social work research, praxis, and education. For example, within my [Sewsen's] Child and Youth Care (CYC) studies, during a classroom discussion on how to support young Black students experiencing and witnessing racialized trauma and anti-Black police brutality, there was a suggestion that clubs and spaces for only Black students be created. In these spaces, Black students with educators and Child and Youth Care workers of the same racial identity could safely and openly talk with one another about their feelings and experiences. A white female CYC student stated that this kind of space would be segregation, asking, "What about white CYC youth workers who wanted to support Black students too?" A Black female CYC student pointed out that it would not be segregation. After all, she emphasized, women who are survivors of

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sexual and gender violence have their own spaces, so why can similar spaces not be created for Black students to collectively discuss and work through anti-Black violence together safely. Furthermore, during this same conversation, it was pointed out that having white CYCs and educators in spaces where race, especially Blackness and anti-Black racism, is being discussed often leads to white fragility and centering of whiteness, as evident in the discussion unfolding right then. This lived experience demonstrates how white women are gatekeepers of white supremacy within the field of social work and other 'helping' professions. Consequently, Brock-Petroshius, Garcia-Perez, Gross, and Abrams (2023) state that initiatives to prepare white students for anti-Black racist social work practices are inadequate as systematic and institutional racism are being discounted in favour of colorblind ideology, diversity, equity, and inclusion that frequently individualize structural marginalization and sustain whiteness.

Another way social work education, especially Master of Social Work (MSW), maintains its whiteness and regard is through professionalization of the field (Johnstone and Lee, 2020). For instance, the *Canadian Association of Social Workers*, in its original mission statement (as cited in Johnstone and Lee, 2020), asserted that a central objective of their work is professionalization through a variety of activities: the bringing together of professional social workers, promoting professional standards and building the awareness of the public to recognize social work as a profession. As a consequence, social work as a profession, including research, education, and practices, is steeped in Eurocentrism, and other ways of learning, teaching, knowledge, and praxis that does not fit or reinforce the narrative of white supremacy are discredited and invalidated (Mullings et al., 2021; Lerner, 2021; Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017). A great example is the disregard and separation of social work and workers from communal work done by BIPOC and immigrant community members by prioritizing formal social work education that is intimately connected to professionalization (Johnstone and Lee, 2020). Eurocentrism, in combination with the underrepresentation of BIPOC social work educators in leadership positions and deficit education about BIPOC communities, create ineffective ways of practice as Western social workers struggle to provide care and support from a cultural praxis standpoint to BIPOC individuals, families, and communities (Lerner, 2021).

Moreover, social work research, whose aim is to advance the development of knowledge and inform practice, continuously reproduces BIPOC communities as 'damaged' and 'broken.' As discussed by Tuck (2009), damage-centered research records the 'damage' of Indigenous youth, families, and communities. Tuck (2009) goes on to state that damage-centred research appears to be different from deficit models in that social and historical contexts, such as colonization and residential schools, are included in the analysis to examine the 'damage' being researched. Yet, these contexts fail to capture the ongoing structures and ideologies of

oppression, which sustains the pathologization of Indigenous peoples, as the 'damage' is situated in historical contexts of colonialism while the current operationalization of settler colonial nation-states is ignored (Tuck, 2009). We assert that damage-centered narratives within social work are also applicable to research on Black children, youth, families, and communities.

Research on BIPOC communities has been and continues to be, from the perspective of them as damaged and from a deficit perspective (Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield, 2017; Lateef et al., 2022; Okafor, 2018). Damaged-centred narrative and brokenness within research always posit that there is a problem(s) within Black children, youth, families, and communities that needs 'fixing.' Subsequently, research on Black people begins by showing the 'problems' and the quantification of 'damage' to reveal the urgency and gravity of the study and the 'change' needed. Okafor (2018) states that the theory of change is conceptualized as materially and politically benefiting Black women but through the narration of them as 'damaged' that is frequently attributed to them as being the cause. This way of research is an objectification of Black communities and tourism of pain that leads to career advancement for many academics, particularly non-Black researchers (Okafor, 2018).

Furthermore, the underrepresentation of Black social workers and non-Black social workers researching on and with Black communities contributes to the deficit of perspectives within social work literature. Lateef et al. (2022) study, content analysis of social work publications to determine the inclusion of African-centered frameworks between 2000 and 2019, found that while change has taken place, there is still immense underrepresentation within mainstream social work literature. The authors (Lateef et al., 2022) ascribed the exclusion of African-centered frameworks in social work publications to 1) the continued utilization of deficit approach when it comes to Black communities, 2) the privileging of Eurocentric approaches and gatekeeping that sustains the exclusion of theorization and practices from Black social work researchers, 3) lack of knowledge by social workers of putting African-centered theory into application with practice, and 4) racial inequities in promotion standards that Black scholars experience, which influences the form of scholarships they pursue, as well as the minimal institutional support and mentorship they receive.

The last finding is important as racial and gender identities also play a factor in the dearth of social work literature by Black women scholars. A review of social work literature by Nicholas-Casebolt, Krysik and Hamilton (as cited by Littlefield, 2003) between 1979 and 1990 showed that women of colour were significantly underrepresented, even taking into consideration journals that are particularly meant to address women's issues. Black women scholars' experiences are explained by the term misogynoir, coined by Moya Bailey in 2010. Bailey defines misogynoir as a distinct form of misogyny and anti-Black racism that is directed towards Black women (Bailey, 2021; Bailey and Trudy, 2018). Hence, Black women researchers experience gendered forms of anti-Black racism that is

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unique to them because of their racial and gender identities that intersect. Within social work, Obasi (2022) states that the voices of Black women have been marginalized in multiple spaces and roles, as researchers, practitioners, users of services, and research participants. Thus, a crucial component to re-envisioning social work through Black feminist theorizations is the challenging and eradication of misogynoir and the recognition and valuing of Black women as producers of knowledge.

Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma and racial trauma are encapsulated in Black bodies and communities due to experiences and histories of global anti-Black racism (Burke-Maynard, 2016; Jonas, 2017). These collective experiences are not only the result of past actions and experiences of our ancestors but also the present structures and ideologies of intersectional white supremacy and whiteness that continue to uphold the narrative of Black trauma and Black people being less than others (Burke-Maynard, 2016). We see and witness these in our lived experiences within social work and child and youth care education and practices (for further examples, please see Bernard, Wanda Thomas; Mbakogu et al., 2021; Mullings et al., 2021; Phillip, Breanna). We would like to note that in conversation about trauma, it is also important to recognize and honour Black joy, life, nourishment and futurity as Black youth, families, and communities are thriving and self-communal-determining of lives.

Intergenerational trauma and intersectional structure of anti-Black racism is an ongoing practice supported by hetero-patriarchal white supremacy, ableism, capitalism, and colonialism ideologies and structure (Burke-Maynard, 2016). Historical trauma on Black bodies is passed on from generation to generation and currently plastered in media for others' pleasure and consumption, disregarding the pain and heartache of the Black community. In relation to the field of social work, we rarely discuss or share the importance of the impact that continuously watching, witnessing, and hearing about structural anti-Black violence has on the Black children, youth, families, and community members in our care (Burke-Maynard, 2016). There is this normalization of violence and disposability of Black bodies that does not only occur in the media but continues in conversations within all systems. The overplay of violence on Black bodies continues to send a message to Black people and Black communities that they are not valued, they are not necessary, they are not humans, and their deaths or bodies do not matter (Patterson, 2019). The racial trauma and PTSD that is associated with witnessing and living through anti-Black racism is something that is not talked about but needs to be addressed in social work (Black, 2016).

Black students are constantly subjected to re-traumatization within their learning in social work and other social service fields. For instance, going back to my [Sewsen] example, Black and non-white racialized students were met with silence, white fragility, and pushbacks through the

language of inclusion when discussing race and anti-Blackness. Specifically, the conversation was about the need for Black-only spaces for Black youth to discuss the trauma and fatigue of ongoingly being exposed to spectacular Black violence without whiteness being centred. This occurrence speaks to the frequent experiences of Black students and practitioners who are not afforded the space to name and talk about race, especially related to Blackness (Daniel, 2019; Phillip, 2022). This and many other experiences beg the question of how Black students and social workers can learn without being re-victimized and re-traumatized, especially when Western ways of learning continue to contribute to such harmful practices (Black, 2006).

Re-Envisioning Social Work Research and Education through a Black Feminist Theorization and Praxis

Hence, Black Feminist thought is critical to social work education and research as it is an epistemological standpoint that is informed by multiple and complex social, historical, and cultural relationality (Bryson and Lawrence-Webb, 2000; Lewis, 1996). Historically and currently, Black women, in their multiple categories of identities, play a crucial role in the development and sustenance of Black communities that go beyond providing services and support (Bryson and Lawrence-Webb, 2000; Mullings et al., 2021). Daenzer states that Black women have laboured to ensure that healthcare, education, resources, childcare, and settlement services are available to Black children, families, and community members (as cited in Mullings et al., 2021). Black women's communal advocacy and labor is to ensure nourishment and the self-determination of Black children, families, and communities amidst ongoing anti-Black racism in Canada. The work of Black women and community members is in stark contrast to professional social workers whose work does not actively challenge dominant hegemonic systems of whiteness even though the social work code of ethics and practice encourages social justice and recognition of service users' diverse categories of identities (i.e. race, gender, status) (Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, 2023; Mullings et al., 2021; Reamer, 2013).

Yet, much of the work, if not all, done by Black women and other marginalized communities is not part of the formal social work profession in its numerous formations, including education, practice, and publication, nor are they formally recognized as 'professional social workers' (Bryson and Lawrence-Webb, 2000). These experiences and communal work are not valued as qualifications obtained from a social work program from white colonial educational systems that are regarded as the standard and legitimate producers of knowledge. Given these contexts, it is critical for the profession to center Black feminist thought and scholarship by Black women by embracing an interdisciplinary approach within social work. As a profession that primarily works with BIPOC children, youth, families, and communities, social work research must be willing to examine and include

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knowledges, theories and praxis that are outside of their discipline especially with the scarcity of publications from racialized non-white social workers within the field. We argue that BFT theorization, and their deeper historicized and intersectional structural analysis, nurtures 'otherwise worlds' by concentrating on transformative justice and abolition rather than reforming systems that are carceral for BIPOC children, families, and communities (Bergen and Abji, 2020; Gringeri et al., 2010; Igbu et al., 2022; King et al., 2020). Social work can benefit from BFT as Black women with intersecting identities (e.g. Queer, working class, immigrants) have, and continue to, pay attention to power to theorize how it impacts Black women, families, and community members and communities as well as re-envisioning 'otherwise worlds'.

For instance, within social work research and practice, and for social workers, they are situated in systems, such as child welfare criminal justice, that (re)produce intersecting marginalization or matrix of domination as termed by Collins. Child welfare, and social workers who make up the bulk of the workforce, is strikingly implicated in the state's marginalization of poor and low-income Black mothers as they, alongside Indigenous women, are disproportionately overrepresented (Abdillahi, 2022; Clarke, 2011 and 2012; Contenta, 2014; Gosine, et al., 2011; Roberts, 2014). Yet, the child welfare system and social work research overwhelmingly continues to concentrate on individual and micro factors as risks that are attributed to Black families, specifically, Black mothers as 'unfit', while systemic causes are ignored or superficially examined (Abdillahi, 2022; Clarke, 2011 and 2012; Roberts, 2014). We assert that BFT (as evidenced by the work of Idil Abdillahi, Fatouma Abdi, Jennifer Clarke, Robyn Maynard and many more on child welfare) reveals the historical and current structures of marginalization and power that sustains gendered anti-Black racism in a system in which white middle-class women as child welfare professionals regulate and surveil the lives and families of Black mothers (Abdillahi, 2022; Clarke, 2012 and 2011; Gosine et al., 2011; Maynard, 2018; Roberts, 2014). BFT's multiple utility and potentiality as a movement, relationality, theory, methodology and praxis and roots in Black women's standpoint to see and understand the insider and outsider perspectives is important to social work education, research and praxis (Collins, 2009; Jackson et al., 2022). Barbara Smith, Black feminist and scholar, emphasizes BFT's transformative capabilities when she notes that "the concept of the simultaneity of oppression is still the crux of a Black feminist understanding of political reality and, I believe, one of the most significant ideological contributions of Black feminist thought" (2000, p. xxxiv). By embracing the work of Black women's researchers and community members, we assert that social work has much to gain from BFT and disciplinary fields that their work is located; hence social work needs to and should be multidisciplinary.

Further, BFT is integral to meaningfully redressing white heteropatriarchal supremacy and intersectional anti-Blackness ideology and structures within social work. Central tenet of BFT is the importance of

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dialogue in producing knowledge from Black women's standpoints based on their multiple and intersecting identities in relation to ideologies and systems (Collins, 2009). Hence, research methods and methodology is crucial as it allows opportunities for participants to "speak for themselves, naming their own experiences and make decisions about their lives" (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015, p. 514). Within this, attention to research and power means understanding how knowledge is built, who and what gets studied, and nurtured, as producers of knowledge to challenge the Eurocentrism and androcentric biases in research as well as education (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2015; Gringeri et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2022; Lindsay-Dennis, 2015). This is important as the how students and practitioners study in disciplines informs what they know (Anderson-Nathe et al., 2015). Within social work, students are still primarily being 'disciplined' to entwine themselves and their praxis to white settler colonial ideology and structures that reinforce marginalization.

As Hester and Squires (2018) writes, holding onto canon upholds white settler colonial borders and thus, settler colonialism ideologies and structures. Thus, centering BFT tenets, especially differences, enables social work research, education, and praxis to transcend the self and profession towards the well-being of others. In "Sister Outsider", Audre Lorde writes that "As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change [. . .] But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (2007, p. 112). Lorde's call towards recognizing and honoring differences is timely as it will assist to move away from white heteropatriarchal settler colonial ideologies, relationalities and structures (Igbu et al., 2022) embedded within social work education, research and praxis. Differences as theorized and practiced by Black feminist examines and works in a way that transcends essentialist categories of identities to recognize and honor the intersecting and multiple complexities of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identities.

Lastly, BFT and research that centers on Black women, trans, queer, nonbinary, gender nonconforming and disabled necessities Black women with multiple categories of identities as social work educators, researchers, practitioners and knowledge production including curriculum. Given the historical and contemporary contributions of Black women in a variety of spaces and fields (e.g., community work, theory and praxis), Black women need to be centered, listened and supported within social work as students, educators, researchers, practitioners and service users. Belonging and taking up space by Black women is particularly important to resist the lure of symbolic inclusion in which Black women's texts and theories are incorporated, and welcomed, more than Black women themselves (Collins, 1996). BFT and Black feminists standpoints, lived experiences and knowledge production should be entrenched within social work education,

research and praxis to challenge and dismantle the lure of symbolic inclusion and gendered anti-Black racism.

Conclusion

According to the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the social work field was created to "reduce poverty and inequality" (*What Is Social Work?*, 2023) by fighting and protecting those in the most vulnerable stages of life. The social work field is positioned as championing changes, driving social justice matters and advocating for all regardless of their racial backgrounds (*What Is Social Work?*, 2023). There is no denying that the social work field and social workers have done some good and made changes throughout the years; however, the field played a significant role, and continues to, in the systematic marginalization and harms that BIPOC children, families and communities experience (McCauley and Matheson, 2018). These systematic practices of harm and marginalization are rooted in colonialism, white supremacy, anti-Black racism, heteropatriarchy and other systems that greatly contribute to the atrocity within BIPOC communities.

Thus, it is crucial to not only address the lack of cultural humanity in social work research and education but also to make it intentional to take accountability in working towards embodying and implementing the true meaning of ethics on care, transformative justice and abolition of carcerality as theorized by Black feminists and BFT. Doing this allows communities to continue their communal work and lead based on the community research that makes sense to them and is applicable to their lives. Further, BFT in social work research enables Black women, trans and queer peoples to focus on issues that are driven by damage center-narratives and highlights the importance of communal work. In doing this, the community will utilize the practices that are effective and supportive of their people and their people's well-being by utilizing communities' knowledge and standpoints.

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