Exploring the Relationship Between Gender, Race, and Space, and Toronto Community Housing Policy

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Exploring the Relationship Between Gender, Race and Space, and Toronto Community Housing Policy

Anita Rachel Ewan

A Dissertation Submitted To The Faculty Of Graduate Studies In Partial Fulfillment Of
The Requirements For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WORK
WILFRED LAURIER UNIVERSITY WATERLOO, ONTARIO
AUGUST 2020
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the most important people of my life and those whom without this dissertation research would not be possible...

Elmirah, my first-born. You sparked a fire within me that is now impossible to extinguish. My aspirations and goals came into fruition because of my determination to be the best mother I could be, for you. In my mind, there were no boundaries or barriers for this teenage mom to accomplish what was needed for you to live a good life.

Sumiyah, Aaliyah, Nasir and Jamil, all of you entered this world during some point of this doctoral journey, and all of you reminded me why I had no option but to finish. You are the centre of my world; I am nothing and no one without all of my children.

My mother, Sonia Whitley. Thank you for watching over my children and for being their (grand) “mama” and best friend. You were the foundation to all of my postpartum recoveries. Your support has been invaluable. I also thank you for instilling the importance of education in me.

My brothers and sisters: Antonett, Cassandra, Lee-Roy (Junior) and Jonathan. You’re embedded within the names of my children because you mean the world to me.

Gamachu Ibrahim, my life partner. You are the other half to my five precious gifts. My mind was at peace knowing my children had an amazing father caring for them throughout these five years as I completed this dissertation. No one could provide them with the love you have and continue to give. There was no way I was getting through this degree without you by their side.

Last but absolutely not least, to the 20 amazing Black women who took the time to share their lives with me. I am forever indebted to you and our community. I am honoured to be a part of such a strong and resilient group of people. You have all inspired me to continue this fight for change. I could not have completed this dissertation research without you at all.
Abstract

This dissertation presents the racial-gendered lived experiences of Black women living in Toronto Community Housing (TCH; subsidized housing). This research found that Black women and their families are disproportionately faced with challenges due to barriers caused by housing policy and procedures that also affect the overall development and wellbeing of their children. It also highlights the ways in which Black women continue to thrive and survive in the face of detrimental and derelict living conditions; accomplished through community development and support initiatives, and fostering strong communities.

This is a qualitative research project that includes an art-based method. Utilizing a feminist participatory action research approach (Reid, Tom & Frisby, 2006), and a Black geographic lens (McKittrick & Woods, 2007), I and 20 co-researchers detail the realities and challenges Black families face by way of TCH policies and procedures. Twenty-one women (including myself) shared their experiences with TCH, and five of these women completed a community mapping exercise. The analysis was guided by feminist political economy of place (FPEP; Parker, 2016). Five themes were developed from the research data: 1) TCH Housing Policy and Communities pose developmental risks for Black children and create parenting challenges; 2) TCH communities and policies operate to confine, police and surveil Black bodies; 3) TCH communities and policies create barriers to upward social mobility; 4) TCH Black women residents are strong, resourceful and resilient survivors; and 5) TCH Black women (re)create spaces that are supportive, constructive, and loving. This dissertation presents recommendations and an action plan to improve the lives of the co-researchers and their families, alongside other TCH families.
Acknowledgements

I first want to thank The Most High for placing me on this path and providing me with the right people and strategies to get through this journey. I also want to thank and honour the spirit of my ancestors for guiding me throughout the way and for reminding me of the inherent strength we have within our bloodline.

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To my best friend, Janani, I love you more than words can express. I am so grateful that you came into my life and that you’ve been here for me during every step of the way. I would never guess that we would become not only best friends but doctors as well!

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GENDER, RACE AND SPACE IN TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING

Preface

This dissertation initiates a timely and critical discussion about race, gender and space in the context of Toronto Community Housing. It addresses a significant gap in geography and urban research literature (McKittrick, 2006; Parker, 2016), which currently fails to attend to the topics of race and gender. It contextualizes the current Canadian affordable housing crisis (Armstrong, 2020; Gaetz, 2020; Gordon, 2020) by illuminating the impact this crisis has on Canadians who have been increasingly restricted in accessing affordable housing. I have decided to highlight this issue through focusing on the lived experiences of one the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in Canada, Black women (Adjei, 2018; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018; Taylor & Richards, 2019).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation initiates a timely and critical discussion about race, gender and space in the context of Toronto Community Housing. It addresses a significant gap in geography and urban research literature (McKittrick, 2006; Parker, 2016), which currently fails to attend to the topics of race and gender. It contextualizes the current Canadian affordable housing crisis (Armstrong, 2020; Gaetz, 2020; Gordon, 2020) by illuminating the impact this crisis has on Canadians who have been increasingly restricted in accessing affordable housing. I have decided to highlight this issue through focusing on the lived experiences of one the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in Canada, Black women (Adjei, 2018; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018; Taylor & Richards, 2019).

I am a Black woman living in Toronto Community Housing (TCH; a public housing provider), for over 22 years. I already have awareness about the realities that exist for many other Black women and public housing residents. I wanted to share the realities of Black women TCH residents in a genuine and reputable way. I discovered that conducting research and writing a thesis was one way to do so. It would also provide me a larger platform to share this information than the platforms I have previously utilized. I have attempted to share the struggles of TCH residents in other spaces such as in meetings with politicians (in hopes of implementing policy changes) and at rallies with very little success in facilitating change for others or myself. However, after attending a youth summit in 2015 that included academic speakers discussing Toronto social housing, I quickly realized that people listen to academics. I then discovered that academics and scholars replicate and rely on narratives stemming from “expert-centred models” (Thurber, et al, 2018, p. 2) that use neoliberal ideologies to find solutions for creating “better” neighbourhoods and circumstances for public housing residents (August, 2014). Additionally, I
realized that although people have an idea of the challenges public housing residents face, they are unaware of the multiple layers that suppress and keep us in oppressive spaces and positions. The general public primarily rely on televised territorially stigmatized representations (Arthurson et al., 2014) of public housing residents to develop ideas about us. I realized that none of these representations of public housing residents align with my lived experience and what I know to be the real experiences of many other TCH residents.

**Research Purpose, Questions and Layout**

Another issue I realized is that there is scant Canadian research on public housing that highlights the experiences of Black women. Consequently, I produced this dissertation by supplementing my experiential knowledge with the stories of other Black women living in TCH to reveal a more accurate and broader representation of the issues Black women experience in public housing. The purpose of my research is to explore the spatial and racial-gendered lived experiences of Black women living in Toronto Community housing to examine the effects of housing policy and procedures.

**Research Questions**

1) How do Black women build and maintain cohesive communities within “revitalized” TCHC mixed-neighbourhoods?

2) What TCHC policies are problematic for Black women?

3) Do TCHC policies and procedures contribute to any of the challenges Black women experience in life? If so, to what extent and in what ways?
A substantial aspect of this dissertation includes my exploration of the subfield of inquiry, Black geographies (Cowen, 2018), to apply an analytical framework for the focus of my research on the racial-gendered lived experience of women living in Toronto Community Housing. I was particularly interested in how pre-existing housing policies and housing revitalization affects these women’s lives. Through reading literature, I realized how Black Geographies as a concept captured the ways in which women residents of Toronto Community Housing (TCH) imagine and produce new spaces to survive, and highlighted the ways women residents of TCH resist the systemic and systematic oppression imposed on them through public housing policy and discourse (Ewan, 2019). Part of this dissertation is also a map that details the trajectory of my education and familiarization with a subfield that reveals how our taken-for-granted notions of space and place actually contain hidden nuances, such as historical patterns and social policies, which can either restrain or free us.

Historical patterns of exploitation and oppression, which have fostered and perpetuated contemporary social inequities, play a role in how we have come to understand the Western ideology of space and place (Shabazz, 2015; Soja, 2010). De Leeuw and Hawkins (2017) reaffirm this sentiment in the context of geography as they state, “power produces unequal epistemological and ontological geographies in which we all live” (p. 306). For this reason, I present a discussion about how various forms of power orchestrated monumental events in history, and constructed oppressive systems resulting in colonization and arrangements of place and space for certain groups. In addition, I also write about personal growth and healing through cognizance. You will see that I intimately weave myself into this dissertation—which will later be indicated through italicized writing so to not centre my voice or overshadow that of my co-researchers—because the decision to investigate this field initially came from my frustrations
with my own lived experience and place in this world. I wanted to make sense of the struggles I went through, and continue to go through, as a Black woman and mother living in Toronto Community Housing.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce all of the components of this dissertation. I begin by telling a personal story to position myself into this work. Likewise, I provide a history of public housing in Canada, which informs readers about the profile and background of TCH—the public housing provider that is the central focus to this dissertation. The second chapter provides a review of the literature that situates this study in the context of previous research in the field of geography, urban research and social work with a focus on public housing policy. This chapter will also assist in justifying my assertion about the gap in research that overlooks the importance of exploring race and gender when examining public housing policy issues in these fields of study. I also contextualize terms, including: ‘mixed neighbourhoods/communities,’ ‘neighbourhood revitalization,’ and ‘gentrification’ to situate them within the context of this dissertation. I then shift into a discussion about three major concepts stemming from Black geographies that are applicable to my research focus: spatial politics, the racialization and sexualization of space, and spatial imaginaries. Afterward, I delve into a historical analysis of space and race by way of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The Transatlantic Slave Trade historicizes the spatial relations of Black women and gives insight into some of the common barriers Black women face as they navigate the spaces and communities around them today. It is essential to clarify that I do not want to insinuate in any way that oppression via housing policy or spatial politics can compare to the level of pain and violence my ancestors endured. Further, I am not making the claim that housing policy is a result of slavery (although racism is inarguably embedded within both of these phenomena). I only want
to show the ways our bodies have been consistently managed and policed. To do this, I rely heavily on the work of Shabazz (2015) who provides a comparative analysis of a form of housing Black people predominantly populate in Chicago and the American prison state.

To conclude this chapter, I cover a significant concept that I encourage readers to (re)familiarize themselves with before proceeding forward with my dissertation. This concept is *systemic* or *institutional racism*. It is essential for readers to learn and understand the difference between this concept which examines systems of oppression and their effects on racialized people, and the definition of racism they were likely taught in elementary and high school that focuses primarily on perceptions related to the colour of one’s skin. It is important for readers to understand systemic racism in order to understand why race is a key factor in many of the issues I discuss throughout this dissertation. I do not write about Black women residents being called the ‘n’ word or as victims of state-sanctioned physical brutality and violence (such as at the hands of the police). There is no discussion about the KKK. Sadly, these topics are usually the only indicators for many people to acknowledge that racism is present or that someone is being mistreated because of the colour of their skin.

The third chapter covers the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, Black geographies and Black feminist theory, which I utilize to position the lived experiences of Black women TCH residents within larger systems of oppression. These frameworks also assist me in evaluating the findings. After providing a succinct overview of Black geographies, I discuss Black feminist theory and some of its literature that aided my understanding about the interrelation of race, space, gender and public housing. Black feminist theory also guides my thinking so that I consistently frame my analyses and arguments around Black women and their concerns.
I integrate this chapter with writing about the Black geographies of Rivertowne, one of the Toronto Public Housing neighbourhoods included in my research. I do so by unpacking a story about a TCH Black women resident living in Rivertowne. Black geographies, Black feminist theory, spatial politics, feminist geography, racialization (and sexualization) of space, spatial imaginaries, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the American prison state all fit under an umbrella of what, to me, explains much of what I have learned within the subfield of Black geographies relative to the lives of women living in Toronto Public Housing.

The fourth chapter describes my research methodology, which includes a review of Participatory Action Research, an approach that assisted me primarily with the methods I decided to use and Feminist Political Economy of Place (FPEP), which was useful for conceptualizing the type of data I captured. The literatures that connects Black feminist theory and spatial politics derives from the sub field of feminist geography, including a particular piece about FPEP by Parker (2016), which played a pivotal role in the methodological direction I took with my research.

The fifth chapter organizes and reports the main findings of my research. The sixth chapter synthesizes and discusses the results of my findings as they relate to the research question, literature review and conceptual frameworks. It also highlights patterns and themes and notes any ambiguities or inconsistencies. Finally, the seventh and last chapter presents a set of concluding statements and recommendations. In this chapter, I will also reveal an action plan I have developed to further advocate for the Black women who assisted me in completing this significant piece of work.
I stated earlier that I entwine myself into this work through my personal experience, as Carol Hanisch states, “the personal is political” (as cited in Kelly, 2017, para. 1). The next section significantly foregrounds what I write about throughout this dissertation.

**Personal Story**

My lived experience as a TCH resident of 22 years is the catalyst for my inquiry into race, gender and space in relation to public housing and its residents. I am a Black-Canadian woman of Jamaican descent and a mother of three girls and two boys. I am also the third generation of my family to live in TCH, this spans 40 years. In 1972, my grandparents, Percival and Maud Whitley, emigrated from Jamaica. They worked and purchased a home as they waited for their seven children to receive their immigration papers to join them in Canada. In 1976, my mother and her siblings reunited with their parents. Unfortunately, the differences of Canadian culture unsettled my grandfather and he decided to move back home to Jamaica. He left my grandmother to raise seven children on her own, including paying for a mortgage. Eventually the bank put her home up for foreclosure. After temporarily staying in a shelter, my grandmother and her children moved into an affordable Toronto Housing apartment in Regent Park. Regent Park is an inner-city neighbourhood developed and operated by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), otherwise known as TCH.

My mother’s experience is similar. At one point, her, my father and my three sisters lived in private apartments where my mother paid market rent. My father is a truck driver and would provide her with the money for this rent. My mother stayed at home to raise three children under the age of three. After they separated, my father stopped giving my mother money for rent and we were forced to move into Regent Park. Two striking parallels between the experiences of my mother and grandmother is a key event—the loss of financial support from a male
breadwinner—that prompted their transition from ‘quality’ housing, rendered more valuable and respectable in our society to a form of housing that is shamed and scrutinized (Lipsitz, 2011). Their struggles are a clear example of how gendered inequality can result in overwhelming burdens for women. Further, their loss of respectable housing highlights one of the issues with accessible housing, as it pertains to property ownership and market rent, for racialized people, and women in particular. My mother did not have generational wealth or the support of my grandparents to help her to recover from her loss of income.

My mother later married and had two more children. Shortly after, our family became eligible to transfer into a brand new four-bedroom townhouse within another TCH neighbourhood, The Esplanade. My childhood memories of living in both Regent and The Esplanade reflect some of the realities, and ongoing issues regarding space, material conditions, and policy issues that continue to exist in TCH neighbourhoods today. My understanding about racial-sexual identities and relations were forming, and being reinforced, through interactions I had with people within my neighbourhood from a young age. TCH residents tend to have their housing subsidized for many years, which is indicative of generational poverty. Generational poverty is unequivocally linked to one’s racial-sexual identity (Catchen, 1989) and is engineered by oppressive housing policies (Kendig, 1984). I clearly recall the family compositions of TCH homes. Most of my friend’s households started as nuclear families. Some of them later changed to single mother-led families. The single mother-led families stayed in public housing while some of the nuclear families eventually moved out. Nuclear families have the benefit of income from two parents. Moreover, fathers are more likely to have higher paying jobs (Bruns, 2019). Their income provides more for their families and can go towards buying a house. In spite of
this, over the 20 plus years I have lived in TCH, I only know of a handful of families who moved out to attain home ownership.

Based on what I have seen in my time as a TCH resident, children who grow up in TCH are also likely to remain public housing residents. One reason for this is that policy states that once children are 16, if they are not in school, the rent rises. They are then required to gain their own income (through a job that is most likely low-waged, or through government assistance). Many end up finding jobs to contribute to the household, and are left with very little to save for their own future.

Parents who do not rely on government housing are not restricted to such rules. These parents are able to give their children the option to stay home and save their money, until they are ready to move out and buy or rent their own home. Some of these parents have the privilege of leaving inheritances, which may be in the form of both money and land, for their children. Research conducted in the United States by Shapiro (2004) affirms that inheritances determine life chances and upward social mobility more than college and employment. Land inheritances are presumably included in this analysis. Given the similar cultures and histories of the United States and Canada, these findings can be generalized to the Canadian context. The Institute for Public Policy and Research in the United Kingdom did research focusing on “what is happening to opportunity and social mobility and to trends in poverty and incomes – in Britain and other countries – and why” (Esping-Andersen, 2005, p. 18). Their report includes an analysis of social mobility within Canada and dedicates a full section of their report to “Social Inheritance and Equal Opportunities Policies.” The findings in this section support those of Shapiro. The history of my family illustrates generational poverty (accentuated by race and gender). It is more likely
my family will leave debt from funeral costs instead of land and monetary inheritances for their children.

**Social Positioning**

I am now a mother of five children. My Blackness and motherhood are at the core of my identity. Professionally, I am an early childhood educator, university instructor, and independent and doctoral researcher. Despite holding all of these positions, I still remain confined to TCH. I use the term confined to highlight that I am no longer here by choice. I have made several attempts to move out of TCH to no avail. Initially, I simply could not afford to leave. I currently live in a two-bedroom apartment. My subsidized rent afforded me the ability to pay rent and cover the cost of raising my children. However, most recently, I attempted to move out of TCH because TCH refuses to provide a larger home for my children and I. Moreover, I spent over three months trying to rent privately (through independent property owners) with no success. At the outset of this attempt, I anticipated difficulty in finding a new place to live. What I did not anticipate was abandonment by two realtors who both stopped responding to my requests to pursue properties. I can only assume that the numerous rejections I received from landlords—despite providing offers that were *over* what they were asking—was an indication to them that our search would be hopeless. Eventually, I lost hope, too.

Toronto has a severe issue when it comes to rental discrimination, particularly against Black people (Alini, 2020; Fombo & Gupta, 2020; Vincent 2019; Vincent, 2018; Teixeira, 2008). CityNews newscaster, Tina Yazdini states, “anti-Black racism is entrenched in the housing market, preventing excellent tenants from securing a place to live” (CityNews, 2020). She reported on a story about a Black woman named Roxanne Lemonious who was denied housing *after* signing a lease and paying her first and last month fees. When Lemonious went to
pick up the key and stood face to face with the landlord, she felt the atmosphere become strange. The landlord later claimed that his unit was no longer available for rent. Lemonious had a strong credit rating and a stable job, further, she had already showed her ability to afford the rent. Lemonious’ experience was not unlike my own; racism prevented her from securing housing. All of my identities, roles, and experiences contribute to how I have come to understand the information I gathered during the development of this dissertation. It has also motivated me to center the voices of other Black women and mothers living in TCH.

Today, the largest housing provider in Canada, and the second largest housing provider in North America, the TCHC, owns over 2,200 buildings (TCH, 2017a). These buildings are in 104 of Toronto’s 160 community areas (TCHC, 2017; see Appendix A), and are confined within their own communities. I previously understood TCH communities as sites of marginalization in need of study to highlight the multitude of problems that continue to oppress their residents until I completed a research project in the summer of 2016 that changed my perspective. This research project involved two focus groups with 12 women from two different TCH neighbourhoods. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain feedback and knowledge from TCH women residents about what makes a community (Ewan, 2019). Upon completing this project and analyzing my findings, women residents of TCH reminded me of their power to resist the complex network of subjugation inherent in social policies like Ontario Works and public housing policy (Ewan, 2019). These restrictive and punitive policies subject TCH women residents to ongoing surveillance, and prevent them from gaining upward social mobility.

I ascertained that TCH neighbourhoods are important sites of study to learn more about how women residents of TCH thrive in their environments. I also want to share what I learn with other communities trying to persevere in similar environments. Thus, I needed concepts and
frameworks to help elucidate the interactions between women residents of TCH and the agents of control (such as TCHC employees, police, and politicians) who employ strategies of localized power in TCH communities and perpetuate multiple societal systems of stratification. Black geographies is foundational to this dissertation because it provided me the knowledge to achieve this aim. Not only did it allow me to encapsulate these phenomena, but also to outline and theorize how women residents of TCH are able to resist these strategies and systems as they imagine and produce “alternative spaces” (McKittrick, 2006). Prior to reviewing Black geographies more in depth, I will use the next chapter to present relevant literature and provide an astute historical review of public housing in Canada. I will also unpack important terminology that is used throughout this dissertation.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The History of Public Housing in Canada

The poor conditions of impoverished communities in Canada’s urban areas in the 1930s were the catalyst for the large-scale development of government-operated public housing in the late 1940s (Vlakojvic, 2012). Housing research revealed extensive amounts of dilapidated housing in Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Ottawa (Purdy, 2003). Consequently, between 1949-1968, Canada created large housing projects referred to as “slum clearance programs” (Silver, 2011, p. 33). The amendment of the National Housing Act (NHA) was another important event that helped stimulate the development of three public housing projects in Toronto, Halifax and St. Johns (Suttor, 2016). This amendment set out provisions that required the federal government to pay 75% of these projects’ costs leaving provincial governments to cover only 25% (Silver, 2011).

The Post War era and the returning veterans created an urban housing crisis in “every urban centre across the country” (Suttor, 2016, p. 25). Population growth stemming from the war and munition-manufacturing employment were not met with adequate housing for lower-income individuals. Many people lived in emergency shelters after the war, a situation attributed to the extreme shortage of housing for more than one-third of Canadians (Brushett, 2001). In 1951, more than 285,000 families were living in crowded spaces and in 1956, 23% of people living in “urban dwellings” (Sutton, 2016, p. 28) were without a bathtub or shower.

Despite this crisis, many government officials opposed affordable social housing. Many shamelessly expressed their distaste for public housing neighbourhoods. Sewell (1994) documented how C.D Howe, who was “perhaps the most influential federal minister of his time,” made the following comment in the House of Commons: “It is the policy [of this
government] to ensure that as large a portion as possible of housing be built by the private sector” (p. 7). In October of 1947, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent is quoted as saying, “No government of which I am part will ever pass legislation for subsidized housing” (as cited in Rose, 1958, p. 85). Further, prior to the development of public housing projects, almost all of the housing programs were geared toward home ownership and those with the economic means for whom ownership might be feasible (Sewell, 1994).

Ontario significantly contributed to public housing policy and programs since there were pressures for housing during Toronto’s rapid growth period in the 1960s (Smith, 1995). Ontario was also the first province to create a housing agency that was able to take advantage of the updated NHA provisions in 1969 (Smith, 1995). This housing agency was called the Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC; Smith, 1995). The updated NHA legislation required that the federal government “provided for 90 percent loans and a contribution of 50 percent of the operating losses of a subsidized housing project owned by a provincial, municipal, or public housing agency” (Rose as cited in Smith, 1995, p. 907). Eventually, all other provinces created their own public housing agencies, with British Columbia and Quebec merging non-profit housing into this mix as well. Between 1949 and 1984, public housing underwent structural change (Smith, 1995). Initially the OHC primarily served families, however, over time this shifted to a focus on senior’s housing (Suttor, 2016). Smith (1995) referred to the period of 1949-1984 as the production phase of public housing projects.

**From Slums to Public Housing Neighbourhoods**

During this production phase, impoverished areas were being bulldozed to create space for public housing development (Silver, 2011). One prominently racialized area that was considered a slum is Africville (Silver, 2011). A video presented by CBC radio (2016) retells the
history of Africville, which is located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This settlement was a place where former Black slaves and refugees from the United States established themselves after the 1812 war. However, by the 1960s, the conditions were so poor that the government decided to clear out the community. Some of these conditions included “no running water, no sewage system, no garbage pickup, no streetlights, no public transportation, and no paved roads” (CBC Radio, 2016, para. 2). However, there was an open dump, incinerator, prison, railway tracks, an oil plant storage facility, a bone mill and a slaughterhouse (CBC radio, 2016; Razack 2002) as well as an infectious diseases hospital adjacent or nearby (Razack, 2002). The lack of infrastructure and the placement of these undesirable facilities were the decisions of the City of Halifax – Not Africville – and an intentional process designed to encourage the disbandment of Africville (Razack, 2002).

The fact that Black people thrived in such conditions demonstrates their communal strength and resiliency. Another sign of resilience was in the way the Africville residents maintained their homes without any government assistance (Razack, 2002). Permits to repair old homes and build new homes were a challenge to retrieve from the municipal government (Razack, 2002). Unfortunately, the lack of government involvement meant that many residents were unable to prove they owned their homes and were not compensated once they were bulldozed (Razack, 2002).

They were, however, provided a mere $500 for a “moral claim” (Razack, 2002, p. 217). To make matters worse, Africville communities were dislocated and their residents displaced. Most of them were forced to live in new public housing neighbourhoods: Uniacke Square or Mulgrave Park (Silver, 2011). Although the government subsidized these homes, some people struggled to afford rent. This is because they previously owned the homes they had in Africville,
and thus were not required to pay a mortgage or rent (Razack, 2002). With difficulty finding employment and being economically disadvantaged, the added expense of rent was simply too high.

Cabbage Town (North Regent Park) in Toronto is another well-known public housing neighbourhood that was created after the destruction of a slum (Rose, 1958). In 1948, Toronto City officials visualized a postwar modernist neighbourhood to be built over a 69-acre lot (Cabbagetown Info, 2013). Regent Park was then built between 1949 and 1957 (August, 2014a). During this time, both North and South Regent Park, Moss Park, Alexandra Park, and Don Mount Court were developed as public housing neighbourhoods (Silver, 2011). When these communities were built the city did not create enough low-income housing units to re-house those originally living in the slums (Silver, 2002).

One group of residents from a neighbourhood that resisted the destruction of their site is Trefann Court (Silver, 2002). Toronto City planners recommended that this neighbourhood be demolished and redeveloped (Sewell, 1993). With the assistance of a young Lawyer named John Sewell, residents were able to organize, disrupt and discontinue the plans the city attempted to enforce (Sewell, 1993).

**Public Housing Revitalized**

The transformation of slums was deemed successful for a short period of time (Silver, 2001). Brushett (2001) wrote that Regent Park was considered a universal success and was evidence of “how the principle of modern planning could magnificently transform the lives of society’s poor members” (p. 98). Two decades later, in 1970, Regent Park was receiving similar scrutiny to that it had before it was transformed. It had garnered a reputation as a destructive neighbourhood by the public, academics and the media (August, 2014; Cabbagetown Info,
2013). The discussion of another round of revitalization developed in 1995. Once again, John Sewell worked alongside a group of activists and residents to consult with the Toronto Housing Authority (a local housing provider in Toronto) and the provincial ministry of housing to conceptualize the future of Regent Park (Cabbagetown Info, 2013). The decision to again revitalize Regent Park was announced in 2002. August (2014) claims that this redevelopment was “a strategy driven largely by financial motivations, and supported by an organization-wide belief in the principle of social mix” (p. 1321). The organization August is referring to is what is now known as the TCHC (August, 2014a). This organization went through many changes before it became the corporation it is today.

**The Toronto Community Housing Corporation**

In 2001, The Social Housing Reform Act eliminated the provincial government’s financial responsibility for social housing (Foroughi-Mobarakeh, 2009) making the municipal government responsible for social housing expenses. Funding and administration were dispersed and assigned to 47 service managers (Foroughi-Mobarakeh, 2009). There were also new policy and regulations that would govern social housing. The reassignment of responsibilities allowed for certain facets of programming, such as financial and social assistance, to use a collaborative approach with other social agencies. This was expected to provide better service to low-income clients and to reduce costs for taxpayers (Sousa, 2006). The Social Housing Reform Act was also the catalyst for the creation of the TCHC. Foroughi-Mobarakeh (2009) referenced TCHC as “an Ontario Business Corporation and an independent third-party agency, to take control of the City’s social housing programs” (p. 13). He also noted how the following year the funding and administration for all social housing programs was transferred to the City of Toronto. A year
later, in May 2002, the responsibility for funding and administering social housing programs was formally transferred to the City of Toronto.

On January 1st, 2002, there was an amalgamation enforced by the City of Toronto for two of the local housing providers—the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corporation (formerly named the Metro Toronto Housing Authority), and the Toronto Housing Company (which was merged in 1999 with the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Company Ltd. and the City of Toronto non-profit Housing Corporation, also known as City Home) to create the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCH, 2019). Throughout this dissertation, when discussing this corporation and its neighbourhoods, the terms Toronto Community Housing and Toronto Community Housing Corporation will be used interchangeably.

**TCHC Operation**

The sole shareholder, as mandated by the provincial government’s Housing Services Act, is the City of Toronto. Toronto provides shareholder direction, which outlines the principles that govern the TCHC. City councillors also provide direction to the TCHC. They do this by voting for motions, which are then passed at City Council (TCH, 2019). The city of Toronto is also TCHC’s service manager. They were authorized to be in this role through the Housing Services Act. Their management in this role is done through the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division, and is governed by an operating agreement (TCH, 2019).

The City of Toronto also appoints 12-member board of directors to help operate TCHC. The board is made up of three city councillors, the Mayor and nine citizen members. Two of these members are required to be TCH residents. There should be a higher number of residents sitting on this board for greater influence. Otherwise the presence of these residents remains tokenistic. The board manages and monitors the performance of TCHC’s strategic plan and is
accountable to the City of Toronto through the presentation of a business plan, annual reports, financial statements, and a four-year strategic plan that runs consecutively every four years (TCH, 2019).

With around 110,000 residents TCHC houses a diversity of people. Fifty-eight percent of them identify as female and 42% identify as male. Twenty-eight percent are seniors, 37% adults, and 35% are children and youth. An estimated 43% of TCH households have at least one member with a physical disability and 12% self-identify with at least one member with a mental health concern. All of these statistics are available in TCHC’s annual report (see TCH, 2018b). Interestingly, there are virtually no published statistics immediately available to the public that identify the composition of TCH residents based on race. I was able to find statistics on race in an online document showing the results for a “tenant experience survey” (see TCH, 2018c, p. 1). There was a random sample of 16,900 tenants who were invited to take the survey but only 2718 tenants participated, resulting in a 16% response rate overall (TCH, 2018c). The tenant experience survey states that 26% of the respondents were Black and 34% percent were white, leaving 40% of respondents unidentified. Even if we do not make assumptions about how well these statistics represent the whole population of TCH, the comparison to the overall racial composition of Toronto is still striking. Anecdotally, it is clear that a high percentage of TCH residents are Black. However, Black people make up only 7.5%-8.5% of the Toronto population compared to 50.2% for white people (Canada Population.org, 2019). Because of the lack of access to statistics on the racial composition of residents in TCH, I rely on what I have just presented, as well as my personal observations as a resident of TCH.

Currently, there are 250,000 public housing units in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). TCHC currently manages approximately 60,000 of these units (City of Toronto, 2019). The
majority of TCHC’s buildings are over 50 years old. Because of previous negligence and lack of maintenance, there are now 2.6 billion dollars’ worth of repairs needed over the next 10 years, without which the older buildings will be in critical disrepair (TCH, 2019). These repairs have been funded through a 10-year capital fund, which includes 7.5 billion in private and public investments, some of which are planned through neighbourhood revitalization, which will develop mixed neighbourhoods (TCH, 2019). Mixed neighbourhoods are typically built in urban centres and sought-after locations, and the City profits from the sale of public land (Arthurson, 2012).

**Mixed Neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood Revitalization, and Gentrification**

Although the underlying reason for building public housing—containing various groups into distinct areas—remains the same, the ways in which they are built and organized is changing. Many policy makers and governments in North America are now recognizing that segregating spaces engenders multiple social issues (August, 2014b). Segregated spaces have been associated with high crime rates and levels of poverty (Wacquant, 2008). One solution, which was initially brought forward by scholars and later accepted by politicians, is dispersing low-income families into neighbourhoods with higher-incomes—creating ‘mixed’ neighbourhoods (August, 2014b). In the US, the deconcentration policy was implemented to facilitate the process of mixing households of different socioeconomic statuses together (August, 2008). To implement this process the government provides ‘housing vouchers’ to eligible families, which then allows them access to private rental properties through government subsidies. Canada has also moved towards combating problems in inner cities by mixing low-income and higher-income families together (August, 2014).

Another method that has been implemented is neighbourhood revitalization. In Toronto,
neighbourhood revitalization begins with the municipal government and TCHC selling public housing land to private developers (August, 2014b). The private developers are then required to build mixed neighbourhoods with a percentage of housing reserved for those who receive subsidized housing from the government (August, 2014a). The remaining homes are rented out or sold at market value (August, 2014a). The amount of subsidized homes constructed by private developers is allegedly the exact number as before (Brail & Kumar, 2017). However, based on conversations I have had with some of my neighbours, many TCH residents do not believe this is the case. For instance, in Rivertowne—the first TCH neighbourhood to be revitalized—residents contend that there are significantly less subsidized homes than those that existed when it was still called Don Mount Court (the name of their neighbourhood prior to revitalization).

Gentrification also has the effect of reducing the number of poor Black residents in non-public housing neighbourhoods (Rutland, 2018). Smith (1982) defines Gentrification as “the process by which working class residential neighbourhoods are rehabilitated by middle class homebuyers, landlords, and professional developers” (p. 139). Gentrification differs from neighbourhood revitalization and the creation of mixed neighbourhoods by the way it pushes out the primary residents (who are generally lower income) from their living spaces with no intention of allowing them to return. The erasure of low-income residents happens over a period of time during which various mechanisms are employed that make the neighbourhood an unaffordable and uninhabitable place to live. An example of gentrification includes the closure of smaller local businesses and an influx of higher-end boutiques. Another example is the reallocation of public property into private property, which becomes only accessible to those who can afford to enter (i.e., private swimming pools and gyms in replacement of public community centres). However, residents resist these processes in multiple ways in order to
protect their bodies, and the spaces in which they live. This form of engagement has been termed ‘spatial politics’ and will be described further in the next section.

**Spatial Politics**

The term spatial politics describes the many engagements and contestations involved in socially producing and reproducing space (Schofield, 2017). McKittrick (2006) describes these engagements and contestations as “social practices, [which] create landscapes and contribute to how we organize, build, and imagine our surroundings” (p. 21). Scholars who investigate this concept aim to make sense of the causes and effects of social oppression embedded in geographical settings (Schofield, 2007).

Many scholars focus on the spatial politics within public housing neighbourhoods (August 2008; Reid, 2007; Shabazz, 2015; Wacquant, 2012; Williams, 2008). An example of spatial politics in public housing neighbourhoods is the US federal government’s complicity in the production of urban inequality. Part of this production includes ‘white flight’ (Troekson & Walsh, 2019). In the 1940s, the US federal government created affordable neighbourhoods initially designated for war veterans (Pappas, 2013). However, eventually poor white people moved in (Williams, 2008). Black people later began to occupy these neighbourhoods (Shabazz, 2015). As a result, of increasing Black residents, white residents abandoned these communities and found new homes in the suburbs (Shabazz, 2015). The financial support and property maintenance the government provided significantly reduced once poor Black people were the primary residents (Williams, 2008). Consequently, the conditions of these neighbourhoods deteriorated until they were no longer safe (Shabazz, 2015).

Amoo-Adare (2005) brings insight into the infrastructure of neighbourhoods saturated with Black residents. Although Amoo-Adare (2005) wrote about architecture in Britain, she
explained that globalization renders her analysis applicable to other countries. This is because “forces of globalization have created certain western information flows, fragmentation and pace that often replace previous traditional communities and places” (p. 1). She interposed her familiarity with spatial politics in her role as an architect and averred that the field of architecture is conversant with spatial politics, especially due to how western spatial politics is entrenched in, and mediated by, racism (Buras, 2011). Since architecture is a field consisting predominantly of white men (Besner, 2017; Stratigakos, 2016), many structures (including residential buildings) are designed in a way that is reflective of white men’s ideas about how certain people live. Amoo-Adare (2005) describes these models as “hegemonic western architectural models” (p. 4).

An example of a hegemonic architectural model is the ‘poor door’ (Conor, 2017; Wall & Osborne, 2018). Schwartz (2016) provides an excerpt of the architectural detail of a building with a poor door in New York:

One Riverside Park, displaying a generic, high-end hotel version of luxury, at least in its lobby: the chandelier, the marble floor, the fleet of doormen behind their counter, the satin couches and armchairs in earth tones. . . . [The poor door was] obscured by the glaringly red sign of the building’s garage. Finally spotting it, I laughed out loud. It’s not that the façade is dinky or the plain entryway dingy: on a different street, in a different neighborhood, it would be perfectly fine. But as the only entrance of its kind on any of the surrounding streets, it is distinctly marked as a thing apart, as clearly “other” as servants’ quarters. (para. 6)

Poor doors have appeared in condominium and buildings in many countries including England (Wall & Osborne, 2018), Canada (Tanner, 2018), and the United States (Dupy, 2017). These are buildings and condominiums that are created for ‘inclusionary housing’ (Conor, 2017), and have a rationale similar to mixed neighbourhoods—fostering the cohabitation of rental and
homeownership to accommodate people from varying income levels (Conor, 2017). Many of these buildings are created through the process of revitalization wherein they are required to ensure that a certain percentage of the homes are affordable for low to middle income families (Diagne et al., 2016). In order to accommodate the more affluent residents by keeping the less affluent residents separate, architects created separate entrances - ‘the poor door’ - for lower-class residents/renters to enter and exit the building. These buildings are created in ways that identify the poor residents and where they are situated. Poor doors also prevent the less affluent people from intermingling with the homeowners. Backlash to the obvious systematic segregation and marginalization that poor doors create has caused some countries to ban them altogether (Moyer, 2015).

Wall and Osborne (2018) note how despite the wider community being in opposition to the production of buildings with poor doors, many councils disregard their position and approve the construction of these designs. In Toronto, in the face of criticism, developers argued that poor doors had already existed within co-operatives for many years (Wall & Osborne, 2018).1 The developers’ claim holds true as not only had poor-doors already existed in Toronto, but also poor sections are also present within many of the revitalized neighbourhoods in Toronto (August, 2014a). The ongoing creation of segregated neighbourhoods of poor people undermines any argument that Toronto is against this trend or that they have any empathy for the dignity of poor-racialized people.

*In my community, Rivertowne, the private properties and social housing are segregated.*

The poor sections are very distinctive and this is not only because of the location of each group’s

1 Cooperatives are communities and properties primarily governed by the residents, and that occasionally provide subsidized rent to their members (Sousa, 2013).
(private/public) location, the landscape of each territory is noticeably different. The private homeowners’ spaces are maintained year-round, the plants are always trimmed and the sidewalks are almost always clear of any litter, and the condominium owners have trash dispensers built into the sides of their townhomes whereas TCH buildings rely on the garbage bins provided by the city and a large open space designated for larger items. Both the bins and the open space are consistently full to the point where garbage has to be left on the ground until the next round of garbage pick-up. Another signifier of private space and poor space is the police presence. Due to a high rate of gun violence over the last few years, the Toronto Police Service has been assigned to oversee our community and periodically drop in throughout the day. When I watch these police travel through my neighbourhood, whether it be on foot or by car, on no occasion do I see them cross over to the private space.

Regent Park is another community where there are clear differences between the condominium owners, renters, and public housing residents. In my role as a community worker I took a trip to one of their revitalized buildings. At the outset, the buildings looked nicely built and it was difficult to distinguish which apartments belonged to which type of residents, save for the TCH sign on the side of the building. However, I spoke with a few TCH residents who revealed that the inside of their apartments are low quality. The appliances are substandard as are the materials used to build the cupboards and closets. I was also told that the rooms are very small, and the elevator broke down frequently. There was also a bicycle room in the basement of the building that got broken into multiple times.

Amoo-Adare (2005) states that the places we live are “laden with western, male, middle-class conceptions of how people in a contemporary city must live in order to serve a capitalist economy” (p. 2). In addition to the issues inherent in a capitalist society, there are the negative
preconceptions white men have about racialized people (Amoo-Adare, 2005). Governmentality theory also provides an explanation of how racialized bodies are managed and surveilled in their neighbourhoods (Rose, Malley, Valverde, 2006). Revitalized homes are being built much smaller, and with less privacy in order to facilitate these processes (August, 2014a). The message this infrastructure sends is that poor-racialized people should not take up space and that they are to be consistently supervised. In addition, the cheap material used in revitalized homes (which began to deteriorate in Regent Park very shortly after residents returned to the neighbourhood) tells us that poor-racialized people are undeserving of quality and healthy living spaces. Furthermore, when these cheap materials begin to deteriorate, it supports a discourse that low-income tenants are incapable of taking care of their properties and spaces.

Rivertowne is fortunate to have women who resist marginalization. When the neighbourhood was revitalized the subsidized housing residents were not provided with areas for their children to play (except alley ways and streets), there were no community spaces built, and no traffic control measures were implemented (see chapter 5 findings). Through community organizing and activism, they gained a play space for their children, received a renovated recreation room, and speed bumps on local roads to slow down traffic (after two children were hit by cars while playing). Black women’s protesting and advocating is a form of spatial politics that has been studied in-depth. *The politics of public housing*, by Williams (2008) highlights the advocacy work of Black women and the politics of public housing in Baltimore.

In the 1960s and 70s, Black women residents of Baltimore were actively involved in producing better living conditions for their neighbours and families by fighting against the government’s social production of inadequate and destructive living spaces (Williams, 2008). This form of resistance was also in response to the techniques initially used to keep Black people
confined to these neighbourhoods. Moreover, Black families made many attempts to own their own houses. Unfortunately, there were certain housing policies that were enforced alongside “disciplinary social policy” (Wacquant, 2008) that contributed to how and why the majority of people living in public housing neighbourhoods in the United States are Black.

**Racialization (and Sexualization) of Space**

According to Bonam et al. (2017), the racialization of space is the way that policies, practices, laws, and institutions construct race, racial boundaries and racial hierarchy to manipulate space. The racialization of space also includes utilizing space to reinforce racial privilege and disadvantage (Bonam et al., 2017). In Bonam et al.’s definition, space refers to:

... the built environment (e.g., structures like schools, houses, neighborhoods, roads, and city infrastructure), the natural environment (e.g., naturally occurring habitats like forests, fields, and rivers), and places (e.g., geographic regions, nations, and states). (p. 2)

Wacquant’s (2008) comparative sociology reveals how the interconnection of policy, practice, race and space during the 1970s formed spaces he refers to as the “hyper-ghetto” (p. 1962). He defines the hyper-ghetto as “a territory of desolation that now contains only the unstable fractions of the African-American working class, exposed to all manners of insecurity (economic, social, criminal, sanitary, housing, etc.)” (Wacquant, 2008, p. 1962). In the matter of policy and practice, Wacquant also examined local and federal US strategies used to control and restrict the Black population of Chicago from entering spaces reserved for white people’s homes and property ownership. Two housing strategies included redlining and blockbusting. Redlining, also known as credit blacklisting, involved withholding mortgages from people residing in specific areas usually inhabited by Black people (Aalbers, 2006). The practice of redlining also
limited the number of loans banks distribute to people who live within particular areas. Bankers enforced this policy through claiming it was risk prevention (the prevention of missed payments from clients who live in “bad” areas). The second policy, Blockbusting, was the aggressive solicitation of property through placing fear into property owners about the possibility of Black residents infiltrating their neighbourhoods, and consequently bringing down property value (Rohe & Stewart, 1996). Both blockbusting and redlining have perpetuated housing segregation whereby white people remain in relatively homogenous and high-valued neighbourhoods, and Black people live in diverse communities with properties of much lower value and quality (Aalbers, 2006). Lamb et al. (2016) assert black-white housing segregation in the United States remains very high.

Further, many Black people can only afford to live in public housing neighbourhoods. As previously stated, this form of marginalization is the result of the tactics and techniques used to produce racial hierarchy and boundaries, both historically and presently, by the government and private landlords (Aalbers, 2006). Women also constitute another group that has been subjugated to live in impoverished areas (Khosla, 2008). The effects of patriarchy and gender oppression accentuate their challenges (Simien, 2004). For instance, working lower-waged jobs and being primarily responsible for child care disallows women from earning an income substantial enough to pay for a mortgage or private rental costs. Thus, Black women tend to take up residency in the majority of public housing neighbourhoods in the US and Canada as they are subject to marginalization due to both race and gender (Khosla, 2008; Reid, 2013; Urban Promise, 2015). The racialization and sexualization of space function in parallel ways to politicized spaces.

Reid’s (2013) study draws attention to the relationship between public housing and gender. She highlights how in 2011, public housing women residents outnumbered men residents
two to one in Chicago and New York, and also showed how this statistic is reflective of the national demographic. Reid makes a grave point in stating how “hegemonic notions of gender and family underlie the history of housing in the US” (p. 336). An example she utilizes to illustrate this process is from the Great Depression Era. During this time, the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), an American real estate “professional trade organization” with a goal to “bring together the nation’s minority professionals in the real estate industry” (NAREB, 2020), had concerns about public housing destroying the nuclear family. Single mothers were the majority of recipients for this form of public assistance. Public housing also made possible the ability for single mothers to afford housing for their families.

The NAREB also argued that a successful way to achieve middle class status is to have men as breadwinners (Reid, 2013). In order not to disrupt the social structures of gender and class, the government provided less resources and support for public housing neighbourhoods, which resulted in detrimental consequences both socially and materially (Reid, 2013). The deterioration of public housing neighbourhoods worked in favour of the government, as they preferred that these neighbourhoods not appeal to the general population (Wacquant, 2008).

The sexualization of space can also be examined through the literature on gendered bodies and space (Alvi et al., 2001; Bryant, 2007; Rose, 1993). The sexualization of public housing created a negative and stereotypical notion of women public housing residents in the United States. However, the exploitation of women occurs through other spatial relations. Bryant and Livholtz (2007) elucidate the way that certain spaces are sexualized impacting women’s feelings of safety. They focus on public spaces and how “women as citizens have to negotiate and adopt measures to enjoy, or even move through, the same public spaces as men” (p. 31). One reason for this is that the onus for safety is put on women to avoid certain spaces rather on men.
not to harass or attack women (Rose, 1993). However, Alvi et al. (2001) found women’s fear of public housing did not stem from being previously harassed or attacked, but rather the physical appearance of the neighbourhood. They mentioned graffiti and youth gatherings as some of the sightings that would bring anxiety. In this case, it was not the presence of men that defined where women felt safe, but how a space was maintained. The idea of what is considered “safe-space” for women appears to be influenced by what they were socially influenced to believe what constitutes a safe space (cleanliness, greenery, bright colours, etc.), which many public housing communities lack due to governmental and proprietor negligence (Silver, 2011).

Many people who live in low-income public housing neighbourhoods are exposed to environmental risks (Teelucksingh, 2003). Teeluskingh (2003) documented how TCH properties are characterized by a lack of maintenance, insect infestations, inadequate garbage collection facilities and falling short of fire and health standards. Ollevier and Tsang (2007) wrote about how South Riverdale, where Rivertowne is located, was at the centre of protests due to the environmental risks it posed to residents. This area, which they referred to as the “The Port Industrial area (of South Riverdale),” (Ollevier & Tsang, p. 6) was considered a heavy industrial zone within the city of Toronto. Residents remonstrated about surrounding industrial facilities that poisoned the air quality, and the water and soil pollution that affected those who lived nearby. By the time Rivertowne was created these facilities were gone. However, the new Rivertowne residents still faced issues of disorganized and poorly monitored streets (which did not have road bumps or signs to direct traffic) and a lack of planning coordination regarding the infrastructure of their homes (August, 2014).
The racialization and sexualization of space occur in both racialized and primarily white neighbourhoods. The NAREB’s ideology coupled with the manipulative and oppressive policies enforced by the government result in the representation of public housing residents as Black single mothers. In contrast, property that is owned is, by the NAREB’s logic, to be represented by white married men and women. Policies such as redlining and blockbusting directed the way Black women’s bodies traveled and where they resided during the 1970s in the US (Williams, 2008). As a result, Black women were limited to moving across public housing neighbourhoods once they decided, or were forced to move homes. Further, the isolated location of some of these neighbourhoods required some women to travel far distances outside their neighbourhoods to access food due to a lack of local grocery stores (Williams, 2008); and because there were few bus routes that entered the ghettos, Black women were forced to walk for miles to find a bus stop going into urban centers (Power, 2012).

Racial-sexual spatial relations exist in Rivertowne as well. There are many cameras installed around the neighbourhood. In our neighbourhood only men are employed in the superintendent’s office to monitor the cameras, and as maintenance and repair workers. This creates further power imbalances and leaves women in vulnerable situations, such as having to allow men into our homes to conduct maintenance work and being under the constant supervision of men. *Keeping in line with the data I shared regarding the sexualization of Black girls, I can assert that our young daughters are not excluded from this sexualization. There are also men who catcall and pursue girls and women around the neighbourhood. Black women’s bodies are constantly watched through the gaze of their neighbours, whether it is by men or women, Black or white people.* This can be for many reasons. There are studies that show that Black women are more sexually objectified than white women (Berberick, 2010; Watson et al.,
2015). The media plays a large role in the sexualization of Black women as they appear in many music and entertainment videos and advertisements (Berberick, 2010). Black women’s bodies are also often seen as grotesque (Hobson, 2003).

Sara Baartman is a prominent historical figure who represents how Black women have been objectified and sexualized for many years (Qureshi, 2004). In the early 1800s Sara Baartman was brought by a surgeon on an African slave ship and put on display in London for the entertainment of white people (Qureshi, 2004). White people believed her body was exotic and malformed. They poked and prodded at Sara’s body, treating her inhumanely (Qureshi, 2004). Even after death, Sarah was objectified by millions of viewers as her corpse remained on display (Qureshi, 2004). Two hundred years after she was born, her remains were finally returned and buried in her homeland (Qureshi, 2004). This was after many years of legal battles and protests by South Africans, including Nelson Mandela (Qureshi, 2004).

McKittrick (2006) eloquently writes about the auction block and how it is a key representation of how slavery treated Black bodies. It also signifies a particular form of oppression, objectification and exploitation for Black women. Although enslaved men were similarly molested by auctioneers and interested buyers (Walvin, 2007), Black women were often on display and sought for their sexuality and sexual reproduction (Prince, 2004). Prince (2004) details the story of Mary Prince to demonstrate how Black women were frequently transported across lands for a variety of reasons during slavery. Mary was objectified as she was sold with her mother to her enslaver (Darrell Williams) who then gifted Mary to his granddaughter. Born in Brackish Pond, Bermuda, Prince was only 12 years old when she was separated from her family. Mary initially moved between enslavers’ homes because Williams hired her out to another white family as a maid. Once Williams’ wife passed away, he shipped
Mary out to Spanish Point, Bermuda to another enslaver to whom she was sold. Mary then worked on Turks Island, returned back to Bermuda, and then was sold once more to the enslaver, John Wood, in Antigua. She finally escaped in England after travelling on a trip with the Woods’ family, who worked tirelessly to prevent her freedom.

Mary was also severely abused because she was considered a “stubborn” slave. Her cruel enslavers consistently tried to punish her by separating her from the people whom she loved, such as her husband. Mary defined her spatial relations as “going from one butcher to another” (Prince, 2004, p.10). The displacement of Black women, especially being separated from their children, was commonplace during slavery (McKittrick, 2006; Prince, 2007). The displacement of Black families and separation of families is also a common practice in TCH homes, facilitated through problematic housing policies.

TCH has an eviction policy that lists the many reasons they can pursue an eviction. One of these reasons includes the following: “Illegal acts in the residential complex (such as assault or drug trafficking) committed by a tenant or occupant, or committed by another person with permission of the tenant or occupant” (TCH, 2011b, p. 1). Another reason stated is: “Impairment of safety [such as weapons or serious fire hazards in a unit or on the property]” (TCH, 2011b, p. 1). Both policies have contrived to break up Black TCH families. In addition to being harassed and targeted by police more than their counterparts (August, 2014; Gaetz et al., 2010), Black males are also disproportionately jailed (The John Howard Society of Canada, 2017). In the event that these men are arrested on TCH property, they can be accused of committing illegal acts on TCH property or impairing the safety of TCH residents. The consequence of which is not being able to return home. Although TCH should be required to prove the policy has been breached, there have been instances where families were threatened with evictions for crimes of which TCH had no proof of guilt for the resident (Ewan, 2019; see findings in chapter five). One
Rivertowne family that were victims of a drive by shooting went through an eviction process based on speculation and hearsay. The main target, a young man, did not have a criminal record, however, rumours were circulating that he was bringing violent people into the community. Ultimately, this young man had to leave his family to stop the eviction. His mother was heartbroken and experienced extreme stress because of the barriers that were now in place for her to mother her child.

Further, the Ontario provincial government is currently vetting another process that will help landlords ban residents and reject housing applicants with criminal records (Wilson, 2019). This is another mechanism that breaks up Black families. The following quote from Mayor John Tory reveals his opinion on the matter and how he supports these actions:

This has been a longstanding request from the City to ensure that a tenant who is evicted for serious behavioural misconduct, such as drug dealing, domestic violence, or involvement with guns, cannot immediately apply for rehousing from Toronto Community Housing. (Wilson, 2019, para. 5)

There are historical patterns and systemic barriers that contribute to young black men resorting to criminal activity for income support. Black people have higher-than-average unemployment rates in Canada (Pierre, 2019). The unemployment rate for Black people in Canada is 12% while the national average is 5% (Pierre, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2016a). Black people are also relegated to less desirable jobs. In addition, Black youth have higher dropout rates than others (Statistics Canada, 2016b), and many have referred to the school system as a prison pipeline because of how Black youth are stigmatized, mistreated, over policed and consistently disciplined (RCI, 2019; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Beyond the systemic reasons for Black men’s involvement in criminal activities, Black men are more likely to be discriminated against at
every stage of the legal process from interactions with police on the street to being searched, arrested, held without bail, convicted, and given longer sentences (Armstrong, 2013). This systemic oppression fuels the domino effect of Black men being penalized and evicted from their TCH homes, and being torn away from their families as a result.

The ways in which Mayor John Tory believes we should deal with evictions sheds light on how he conceptualizes public housing space and how the people that exist in these spaces should be handled. The next section will review a concept by Lipsitz (2011) with a strong focus on race called ‘spatial imaginaries,’ which details how certain groups think about space and the effects of these thoughts on how they act and react toward people in these spaces.

**Spatial Imaginaries**

Lipsitz (2011) comments on how we uphold unquestioned assumptions about space. His insight helps to expose underlying tactics within the development and establishment of public housing and space. He states:

> Seemingly, race-neutral urban sites contain hidden racial assumptions and imperatives. The design, construction, administration, financing, and policing of [public housing neighbourhoods] follow the racial logics of hostile privatism and defensive localism. . . . These sites serve to produce and sustain racial meanings; they enact a public pedagogy about who belongs where and about what makes certain spaces desirable. (p.15)

Lipsitz (2011) underscores how government policies related to creating public infrastructure are racially motivated. He also makes a connection between the outcome of implementing these policies and how they influence our understanding of space and place. Lipsitz uses the concept of ‘spatial imaginary’ to discuss socially constructed notions about space and place. According to Said, “spatial imaginaries are socially held stories, ways of representing and talking about
places and spaces” (as cited in Watkins, 2015, p. 509). Lipsitz’ description of Black (and white) spatial imaginaries, corresponds with how I interact with and perceive space in both private and public neighbourhoods.

Based on what I have personally observed and presented from the literature thus far, mixed neighbourhoods are a function for police and are created for various agents (such as the more affluent residents) to surveilled and contain racialized people so they are not able to contaminate the space of white and upper-class people. Because of the overwhelming disparity regarding racialized people living in public housing spaces in comparison to white people, people eventually believe this is where we belong. This is why so many people call the police on Black folks for being anywhere that is not the ghetto.

In the summer of 2018 in the United States there were many incidents of white people calling the police on Black people for being present in places they were not expected to be and Black people were subsequently penalized for merely existing. For instance, there is the well-known interaction between a white woman and two Black men who were barbecuing in a public park. The woman, Jennifer Schultz, called the police on the two men for using charcoal (NewsOne, 2018). Schultz was later nicknamed BBQ Becky by social media users. In a video recorded by a Black woman, Michelle Snider, who also overheard BBQ Becky harassing the Black men, there is an exchange between her and BBQ Becky debating charcoal use. Some of the ridiculous excuses BBQ Becky presented for calling the police were that the charcoal might be harmful to children, and cost taxpayers money and that there were policies that banned the use of the particular charcoal the Black men possessed. BBQ Becky utilized the “laws of the land” made by white people, to harass and control these Black men. Snider informed BBQ Becky that she was aware that the only reason Becky was calling the police on these men was because she
did not want to see two Black men barbecuing. The video then goes on to show BBQ Becky over-dramatizing the interaction when speaking with police; she hunched over and cried by a car and pretended to hyperventilate once the police arrived on the scene. Her manipulation resembles the insidious, conniving, and perilous ways that white women have been historically known to act towards people, particularly Black men, they falsely accuse. Many times, these immoral actions resulted in the death of those accused. See the story of Emmitt Till’s false accuser Carolyn Bryant Donham (Whitfield, 1991) and Leiha Ann Sue Artman in 2016 who lied and said four Black men kidnapped and raped her (Callahan, 2018).

BBQ Becky’s interaction was uploaded to social media and instantly went viral where the public ridiculed her for her racist, petty behaviour and deceptive actions. Later in the summer there were other white people who were publicly shamed for similar actions. Two examples include Permit Patty, the white woman who called the police on a young Black girl for selling lemonade without a permit (Campisi et al., 2018), and Pool Patrol Paula who accosted, assaulted, and then called the police on two Black teenagers for swimming in their friend’s pool by invitation (CBS, 2018).

All of these interactions reinforce a “placelessness” (McKittrick, 2006) of Black people. They also show the way that white people conceptualize space and are reflective of white spatial imaginaries, as described by Lipsitz (2011). Moreover, this form of policing is simultaneously a form of erasure, because although once publicized these white accusers received severe backlash through social and traditional media, there are a multitude of other incidents happening daily that are not publicized that result in either reprehension, detainment or death for Black people. Black people are weary and fearful about being in public as a result.
In Rivertowne a different dynamic exists between people within the private and public (housing) spaces (which remain segregated; see TCH, 2017b). There are rarely people seen outside in the condominium area. Those who are seen walking are primarily white. Their families seldom interact with children living in TCH. Conversely, during the warmer seasons the porches of the predominantly racialized TCH residents are lively with neighbours gathered around, laughing and talking to one another. Children play in virtually all places deemed safe, which include their backyards, the playground, and sometimes parking lots located behind some of the townhouses. However, this was not always the case.

When Rivertowne was first developed, the public housing residents were heavily surveilled by their condominium neighbours (August, 2014a). This prevented them from peacefully convening outside. In the event there were too many residents crowded in an area (presumably more so for the Black men), the ‘community’ police would show up and begin to interrogate these residents. August (2014a) details how residents were not even able to gather on their own porches without having police harass them. Thus, TCH residents stayed indoors as much as possible to feel safe. In the summer time, this was particularly stressful as another flaw of the Rivertowne infrastructure is overheated homes. The heat indoors is abnormally high and TCH staff credit this to a faulty heating system. There is apparently one boiler that manages the heat for multiple units. Therefore, TCH is responsible for turning this boiler up and down during different seasons. Unfortunately, the heat from the boiler exists year-round and therefore seeps into the TCH homes year-round.

The description and actions of Rivertowne condominium residents aligns with how white imaginaries promote “hostile privatism and defence localism” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 60). Lipsitz (2011) further explains this sentiment stating that white spatial imaginaries include “widespread,
costly, and often counterproductive practices of surveillance, regulation and incarceration [that] become justified as forms of frontier defense against demonized people of colour” (p. 13). It also explains why the condominium residents that August (2014a) wrote about in her study (who instigated the assault of the young racialized youth in Rivertowne by the police) felt their surveillance was justified because they were ‘protecting’ their properties. They also felt they were justified in defending their space from the racialized residents who are demonized through social relations such as this one, and also negative preconceptions, and stereotypical notions of public housing residents (McCormick et al., 2012; Salzer, 2000).

Mayor John Tory’s approach to reducing crime in Toronto Public Housing neighbourhoods stems from stereotypical notions of public housing residents and is reflective of a white spatial imaginary. His solution of banning those with criminal activity constitutes a “frontier defence against demonized people of colour” (p. 60). He is also perpetuating public ideology of who is deserving of a basic human right—housing—and who is not. If these individuals with a criminal record are unable to receive subsidies for their rent, then where will they live? If we consider this fact, we can see that not only is John Tory banning criminalized and racialized people out of Toronto Housing, but out of Toronto altogether. This is yet another tactic used to ostracize racialized people from particular places via housing policy.

In contrast, Black spatial imaginary is influenced by the strength of the Black diaspora community, their survival and their resistance. Our communities work together to survive within and resist systems such as white supremacy, capitalism, and neoliberalism that were made to leave us dehumanized and dispossessed. Lipsitz states, “Blacks have consistently drawn a distinct spatial imaginary to oppose land use philosophy that privileges profits over people and instead to create new ‘use values’ in places that have little ‘exchange value’” (p. 19). bell hooks
provides a heart warming and powerful story about her grandfather who had a connection to the land, which differed from that of the enslavers’ (which was underscored by capitalism and greed). hooks recounts how her father would reify his personhood by illuminating the ways in which the land—not the white man—had authority over the corn fields within which he worked as a slave. The words of her grandfather beautifully display this sentiment:

No man can make the sun or the rains come - we can all testify. We can all see that ultimately, we all bow down to the forces of nature. Big white boss may think he can outsmart nature, but the small farmer know. Earth is our witness. (hooks, 2009, p. 118)

In this narration, we can see how Black people use place and land to transform trauma and pain into a form of protection against the dehumanization by white people (hooks, 2009).

Loftus (2017) provides a different perspective, wherein he analyzes spatial relations on slavery plantations in the early twentieth century while highlighting the experiences of freed slaves through a Black spatial imagination lens. Loftus discusses how freed slaves congregated within a town called Bethel, and on a plantation called the “Benjamin Jackson plantation” (Loftus, 2017, p. 34). Loftus described how this plantation was located in an area that was less violent and dangerous for Black people during this time. In surrounding areas, extremist, white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were developing and rampantly terrorizing Black people within their neighbourhoods (Loftus, 2017).

The Benjamin Jackson plantation served as a site of protection and also an “insulated community . . . [that] generated social, economic, and cultural opportunities among community members (p. 34). Loftus (2017) also contends that these Black people were inspired to create a safe space out of the need to convene with people who had similar histories, experiences, and
cultural backgrounds. They worked together to secure property, and develop infrastructure to advance their community (Loftus, 2017). Eventually, the mechanization of farming alongside industrialization drained resources and significantly reduced economic opportunities for Black people, which caused them to move away from the plantation and seek new opportunities for survival (Loftus, 2017). Nevertheless, the spatial relations on the land of Bethel, and among the Black residents living on the Benjamin Jackson plantation, centered around protection, cultivating resources to feed their community, and mapping assets that would sustain the lives of families and community members.

Black spatial imaginaries exist within many TCH neighbourhoods as well. There is a very strong sense of community in many TCH neighbourhoods (August, 2014; Ewan, 2019; Sousa, 2013), despite how TCH marginalizes and mistreats their residents through negligence and oppressive policy and practice (Broadbent, 2017; Paliagro, 2017). TCH communities bond together to alleviate the struggle and pain they experience due to systemic and systematic oppressions. For example, there are 60 community gardens that exist in TCH neighbourhoods (see TCH, 2017b, p. 12). Regent Park has a community garden with lots that residents can use to plant their own fruits and vegetables, which can then be sold to their neighbours (CRC, 2019). In Rivertowne, during the warmer seasons we usually have a Farmer’s market that allows residents to buy fresh and healthy food that is accessible and affordable. The community garden and farmer’s market help to address issues of poverty.

Another element of Black spatial imaginary prevails in the community programming and events that happen in Rivertowne. One of the community leaders has invested many hours and money out of her own pocket. With the help of other women residents, she founded a breakfast program—free of charge to the community— and a homework program. She also plans a
community barbecue each summer, which receives donations from local businesses, community stakeholders, and TCH. This leader fosters community engagement and development, which, as a tenant representative, I have seen TCH fail to support. She has influenced and encouraged residents to care for our community. Her concern for our community has prevented community conflict and violence. Many residents were skeptical about the community police assigned to our community, but she guided them on how to use an anti-oppressive approach to develop trust with TCH residents.

It is admirable that this leader continues to find value and make use of our neighbourhood space. As a single, low-income mother, it would be reasonable for her to expect some form of monetary compensation for the time and labour she puts in to these programs. However, she selflessly facilitates programming for her community with the volunteer support of other TCH women residents. All of these women (re)imagined and (re)created a space for TCH residents to feel valued and connected with each other. This racial-spatial imaginary was crucial in rebuilding the Rivertowne neighbourhood post-revitalization.

Neighbourhood revitalization is built on the premise of white spatial imaginary. The developers prioritize the profits they can gain from these projects, rather than the social wellbeing of residents who will live in their newly developed properties (August, 2008). The infrastructure of Toronto revitalized neighbourhoods still enforces segregation, and permits the surveillance of public housing residents (see Appendix B). Mixed neighbourhoods are places where people assume there is equitable space, however, the space becomes more inequitable once public housing residents are located with people who are held in higher regard due to identities such as socioeconomic status and race. In addition, once a TCH neighbourhood undergoes demolition to begin the revitalization process, the Black spatial imaginary is
fragmented. It depends on residents for it to reform. Once this is done, there exists a complex relationship between both white and Black spatial imaginaries, similar to the ones described on the Benjamin Jackson Plantation.

**Historical Analysis of Race and Space**

While reading historical texts about African slavery, there were three distinctive subjects that gained my attention. The first subject was “Displacement.” For the purpose of this chapter, I used the term *displaced* by The Merriam-Webster dictionary, which is “to expel or force to flee from home or homeland” (2019), to explain this subject. The second subject is related to the first, but pertains more to familial matters. I call this theme, “Family separation.” In these circumstances, one or more individual is separated from their family through force or by escape. The final subject is the “Confinement and Neglect of Black bodies.” I consider how Black bodies were treated from the time they entered the slave ship, to the time they arrived on plantations. I focus on their poor material conditions but also the negligence and brutality of their enslavers. These subjects are prominent because they bare similarities to the oppressions that Black women TCH residents experience. Once again, I do not claim that African slavery suffering, pain and trauma equates to the experiences of Black women TCH residents. I only want to highlight the similarities that exist in the ways our bodies are marginalized and managed, by systems of power and by our oppressors. To do this, I will draw from scholarly work and expand on them to show how each relates to Black women TCH resident experience.

**Displacement**

Walvin (2007) writes about the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade and factors influencing African enslavement. Walvin claims that African slaves were considered more docile, stronger, and less susceptible to the effects of the sun because of the pigment of their
skin. This popularized the sale of African slaves during a time when the slave trade was expanding in Islamic societies at a very fast rate. Due to the “sheer growth of slave trading, on a massive scale, across such a vast geographic expanse of the Islamic world . . . [in] time it came to be assumed that Black Africans were natural slaves” (p. 30).

Carbado (2005) identifies the act of making an assumed racial connection to something over and over to the point where it becomes (mis)identified, as “racial naturalization.” Racial naturalization occurs through systematic and repetitive attribution of race to certain characteristics and behaviours (Carbado, 2005). Carbado also discusses how while he was being racially naturalized, he was also denationalized. People would dissociate him from being American and instead define who he was only based on his birth country. Carbado argues that the fact that he was a Black man with an accent created cognitive dissonance for those (particularly a police officer) questioning him about his citizenry. As I read about racial naturalization, I thought of how Black people in Toronto have been racially naturalized to public housing spaces. This is due in part to the media and stereotypical notions of Black people. When public housing residents, such as those who live in TCH, are on the news, it is usually in reference to violence and crime. The residents involved in crimes that are publicized are usually racialized. Thus, public housing space is represented as being occupied by unruly racialized people (Motley & Perry, 2013; Salzer, 2000).

**Family Separation**

For the second subject, family separation was evident in all historical texts I read about African slavery (Prince, 2004, 2009; Walvin, 2007). I wrote earlier about Mary Prince and how she was separated from her family following the death of her enslavers’ wife. Walvin (2007) denotes how the cries of enslaved Black mothers were one of the most heart wrenching and
harrowing aspects of slavery. At the Smithsonian’s Museum of African American History and Culture, there is a full exhibit called “The Weeping Time” that documents the U.S. history of enslaved children’s separation from their enslaved mothers (Brown, 2018). There is one story of an enslaved family seeking refuge in Canada that details the heartbreak of torn Black families during slavery. In *A Shadow on the Household*, an enslaved man named John Weems works tirelessly to buy freedom for his wife and eight children (Prince, 2009). Everything changes, however, after his enslaver’s death. John Weem’s family is divided between his enslavers’ two daughters. When one of the daughters falls into debt, she liquidates her family’s “assets” with her husband. The Weems family was sold to a trader under the condition that they are not returned to the area. At this time, John was attempting to raise money to save his wife, Arabella and his children. Unfortunately, he is too late and his wife and sons are sent to the Deep South while his daughters are held in a slave pen.

The treatment of African slaves as property to be sold off when financially beneficial demonstrates how they were objectified. Even in situations such as Mary Princes’ where the slaves develop relationships with their enslavers’ family, they are still treated as objects of monetary value and their personhood and emotions are disregarded. The enslavers did not believe slaves had human emotions and thus were ignorant about the mental trauma slaves suffered due to being torn from their families and communities. Likewise, TCH sold their properties to developers as a business plan; despite the negative impact this would have on residents, to alleviate some of their debts (TCH, 2019).

Neighbourhood revitalization has been shown to have many flaws and has not solved many of the issues Toronto Housing claimed that it would. Toronto Housing states that neighbourhood revitalization provides “economic benefit, health benefits, social benefits, and
environmental benefits” (TCH, 2019c). More specifically, they claim that there is a 15% reduction in crime and 2.1 million fewer hospital visits. As a resident living in their first revitalized neighbourhood, I am skeptical about these claims. I can only rely on anecdotal evidence due to the restricted access of TCH crime statistics and the amount of time it would take to request and receive this information from TCH. However, if we focus on gun crime, there have been multiple shootings in my community each year for each of the last seven years I have resided in Rivertowne. Further, last year there was an ambulance in our neighbourhood on average about twice a month and this has remained consistent over time. I was not a resident of old Rivertowne (Don Mount Court) but I was told by my neighbours and co-researchers that at one point the crime and shootings in Rivertowne were worse than before.

Neighbourhood revitalization also breaks families and communities apart. There are still some Toronto Public Housing residents that were relocated and have not returned to their old community. Brail and Kumar (2017) report that in 2017, 11 years since Regent began its demolition, 32% of Regent residents were waiting to return, 11% moved out of Toronto Community Housing, and 10% waived their right to return. They also found that there was a high turnover in community leadership employees hired by the City of Toronto and Toronto Housing. All of this information reveals how neighbourhood revitalization is not centered on the wellbeing of residents. Furthermore, studies show that residents who experience neighbourhood revitalization become “dislocated and isolated by physical and social changes” (Atkinson, 2015, p. 373), and are “subject to moving costs, and the emotional trauma—anger, sadness, feelings of powerlessness, etc.—of displacement against their will” (Toews, 2010, p. 40). Moreover, Urbanik (2017) asserts that neighbourhood revitalization “robs the neighbourhood of means of informal social control, leaving many residents feeling increasingly fearful about the supposed
changes in predictability and nature of violence” (p. ii) and “allowed for . . . new gang(s) to form, creating competition over status and resources between established groups and emerging one” (p. ii). Given the overwhelming evidence of negative outcomes neighbourhood revitalization continues to produce (Ubranik, 2017), it brings into question whether TCH cares about the impacts their decisions have on the wellbeing of TCH families.

**Confinement and Neglect of Black Bodies**

Finally, for the third subject, confinement and neglect of Black bodies, I found a connection between how enslaved people lived in dreadful conditions, and how our government is unwilling to provide sufficient financial support for TCH to maintain their properties. In doing so, they are also neglecting the lives of those whom reside in these homes. Walvin (2007) authored the painstaking journeys that African slaves endured in ships that were unsanitary and unbearable. Africans were forced to lay in their own feces, urine and vomit for days. There were also rats and other pests that lived among them. From the moment of their capture, Africans were doomed to this form of mistreatment and torture. Once they arrived to their new place of enslavement, their conditions were at times only good enough to avoid the transmission of diseases. At other times, they were worse.

The response and management, or lack thereof, of superintendents and maintenance workers shows complete indifference toward residents who live in TCH housing. Toronto Community Housing residents have been relegated to extremely poor material conditions and go years without maintenance issues being addressed. This is why most of their aging buildings will be in critical condition within 50 years (TCH, 2019c). TCH residents live with mold, rodents, feces and urine in the hallways of buildings, many nonworking appliances, roaches and other pests (Lornic, 2018; Ombudsman Toronto, 2018). *In the later years of my residence on The*
Esplanade, my home was infested with roaches and bedbugs. I had to suffer through bedbug bites during my pregnancy with my first daughter and had many sleepless nights because of this. There were about three treatments completed in my house and I doubt that these treatments were done properly. The infestation was so bad that I would find bedbugs in my high school textbooks when I opened them at school.

Although I am grateful for access to affordable housing for my children and myself, this affordable housing definitely comes at cost. Being a public housing resident comes with an added layer of marginalization on top of the marginalization that comes with being poor, racialized, and being a woman. Furthermore, those who are low income tend to feel the blight of gentrification, however Black women—a group that is disproportionately affected by poverty (KFF.org, 2018; NWLC, 2015)—have unique experiences when affected by these circumstances. On top of the impact of being forced out of their homes and neighbourhoods due to rising costs, Black women also deal with additional issues due to racism and sexism (patriarchal domination, gender discrimination).

All of these issues are entwined with, or a product of systemic racism.

**Systemic/ Institutional Racism**

The concept of systemic racism, also known as institutional racism, encapsulates many of the topics that I have written about earlier on. Systemic racism recognizes how our history affects our present and why it is difficult to enforce changes without dismantling historical systems and practices (Feagin, 2013). Systemic racism is a form of racism rooted in a society’s or organizations practices or policies which privilege and/or disadvantage some races over others (Feagin, 2013). It is most often reflected in racial disparities seen in wealth accumulation and other socioeconomic indicators, like education level, employment and incarceration rates, and
healthcare and housing access (Shapiro, 2004). Institutional racism can also have residual effects on marginalized communities long after these practices and policies have been corrected (Shapiro, 2004). A good example of this would be the systemic practice of “redlining,” when banks refuse loans to people or for properties in communities with high financial risks (Aalbers, 2006). As previously described, redlining denies or impedes racialized communities’ access to wealth accumulation through property ownership and negatively affects the opportunities available to their children/descendants in the present or future (Aalbers, 2006). Additionally, since racialized communities are unable to enjoy property ownership in their own communities, they are forced to rent and find themselves overrepresented in public housing (Nadesen, 2013). A society’s failure to acknowledge and correct this disadvantage is also an example of institutional racism (Elias & Feagin, 2013).

My dissertation research displays that Toronto has failed to correct the disadvantages Black women experience related to housing policies and procedures, and other spatial matters (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018). Nevertheless, the following two sections cover information that will assist in explaining the challenges Black women face and how they navigate space.
Chapter 3: Conceptual and Analytical Framework(s)

This chapter covers multiple frameworks and concepts. The first concept is Black geographies. I then transition into writing about Black feminist theory as the primary theoretical framework I use within this dissertation. This is followed by Feminist geography and the Feminist Political Economy of Place, which a framework substantial to the methodology of this dissertation research.

**Black Geographies**

Black geographies is a growing subfield of inquiry that opens up an analysis of the intersectionality of “race, blackness and spatial politics” (McKittrick & Woods, 2007). Black geographies goes beyond dominant ideologies of geography which assumes space can be viewed, assessed, and ethically organized from a stable (read: white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, and classed) vantage point (Hoffman, 2016; McKittrick, 2007) to bring attention to various systems of oppressions through which race – particularly Blackness - and space are produced.

A critical exploration of geography makes visible the ways in which Black people create, occupy and own different places and spaces. This is in comparison to the imperialist, racist, and hegemonic processes from the traditional field of geography (McKittrick, 2006; Shabazz, 2011), which denies Black people—historically and presently—access to recognizable and verifiable possessions of geographic knowledges and land. Because of the long histories of Black people’s exclusion from property ownership, there is a “reified ideological assumption that blackness is equated with the un geographic and a legacy of dispossessio n” (McKittrick 2006, p.14). Black geographies counters this ideology through revealing how Black people resist barriers to producing what we traditionally know as legitimate spaces.
Black geographies is also used as a tool to help cultivate new meanings about space relative to marginalized and racialized neighbourhoods (Shabazz, 2015). Many of these neighbourhoods have been defamed and rendered worthless because of how we are socialized to think negatively about impoverished racialized people and the moribund areas where they reside (Waquant, 2008). Black geographies allows for the imagination of space that would not otherwise be possible through the sole understanding and methodologies of traditional geography. For instance, some standard indicators used in determining the value of a neighbourhood include the value of properties, the physical location, the demographics of residents (such as their class and race), family structures, and surrounding infrastructure and resources (Curtis et al., 2004; Grief, 2015). If we were to use these indicators to measure the value of Rivertowne, this neighbourhood would still only be viewed as an at-risk and inner-city neighbourhood due to its location and resident demographics. At-risk and inner-city neighbourhoods are often assumed to consist of problematics such as violence (domestic, gun, and gang), poor material conditions, drug addiction, poverty and other criminal activities (Harris & Hyden, 2017). However, many scholars have written about other aspects of these neighbourhoods that (re)tell contrasting stories and focus on the assets, power and resistance of the community.

For example, Henery (2011) writes about the counter-narratives of Favelas told by elderly Black women living in Brazil. ‘Favela’ is a term used to describe the idealized impoverished and racialized Brazilian neighbourhoods that are described in similar ways as TCH communities are according to traditional geographies. According to Henery (2011) sociocultural representations of Favelas include “ubiquitous drug trade, violent criminality, and ideas of a culture of poverty or misery that have racial and gendered dimensions” (p. 87). However,
subsequent to working with a group of elderly Black women, Henery was able to conceptualize Favelas defined by community relationships and activism. She utilized a Black geographic lens that resisted the detrimental ways in which these neighbourhoods are evaluated and viewed. Instead of explicitly illuminating stories of violence and poverty, Henery highlighted stories that encompassed "a construction of space, relationships, identity, and values that historically holds different meanings for residents than those who live beyond" (p. 98). Reflections on raising families illustrated life that exists outside the demarcated landscape of debilitating living conditions for the Brazilian women. Recounts of familial interaction provided opportunities to have conversations around relationships, identity, and values. One example of this included a memory that was shared about a mother and son walking through the neighbourhood engaging in conversation about staying away from criminal activity. Although criminality and poverty are prevalent in neighbourhoods such as Favelas, Black geographies accentuates the life that happens in conjunction with, before, after and past these spatial limitations. For instance, the conversation between the mother and soon reveal the ways in which Black mothers guide and nurture their children within these spaces. McKittrick (2006) uses multiple Black geographic methods to interrogate what spaces involving Black people seemingly presents (or not). One method involves describing the interactions of Black bodies with the lands they traveled and populated to show how space is resisted and reimagined.

McKittrick (2006) provides a historical account of slavery and theorizes about alternative and reimagined spaces. She writes about the slave auction block and how it was a key representation of space and spatial politics during slavery by way of Black bodies being exposed on various lands. Further, the auction block also signified a certain form of racial-sexual oppression. Although both men and women were subjected to the invasive and humiliating
procedure of auctioning whereby their bodies were prodded while examined, the bodies of women were often sexualized and put on display for the pleasure and exploitation of white men—eventually leading to the sexual assault and rape of Black women (McKittrick 2006; Prince, 2004; Walvin, 2007). Racial-sexual oppression and indicators of slavery are not made apparent through general maps provided to us today. However, McKittrick’s analysis makes visible these buried histories and spatial interactions, and creates markers for an interface between Black people and space.

Keeping in line with the pattern of symbolic spatial representations, Shabazz (2015) extends this to an analysis of a form of housing called kitchenettes in Chicago created in 1916. This was during the Jim Crow era where racial segregation laws were rigorously enforced (Urofsky, 2014). A kitchenette is an apartment, attic, or basement that is divided into smaller units in order to house more residents (Shabazz, 2015). These units also have shared bathroom and cooking facilities (Michney, 2007). Kitchenettes were a popular style of infrastructure for Black people living in public housing. However, they were often created from older buildings that were once occupied by low class white people. Private property owners increased their profits by making more—albeit smaller—rooms for Black families (Michney, 2007; Shabazz 2015).

Shabazz (2015) draws connections between kitchenettes and prisons and the impact both have on Black families. Some of these connections include a lack of privacy and inescapable ongoing surveillance. The conversations and movements of Black families were always exposed because of the adjacent apartments. In addition, actions and thoughts usually reserved for oneself were forcibly shared orally and physically. When a member of the family wanted to get dressed or undressed, they had to announce this out loud instead of simply moving into a private space.
Many of these interactions are similar to what occur in prisons. Prisoners and correctional agents similarly and consistently watched other inmates (Comfort et al., 2005).

Shabazz (2015) also critically notes how “racial democratization” (p. 35) was enacted during this time. European immigrants, who were lower on the racial hierarchy than white Americans, were able to move out of apartments into neighbourhoods considered more desirable in great measure due to the homogeneity of white residents. This is because of “expanding conceptions of race that allowed more European immigrants to claim whiteness” (p. 35). The racial democratization coupled with the Europeans’ move across different landscapes played an essential role in the spatial formation of kitchenettes and the neighbourhoods within which they existed. An enquiry exploring Black geographies takes what appears to be only a flux of immigrants into a certain neighbourhood, and highlights the racist and political undertones of this migration. A Black geographic review also allowed for a more in-depth examination of housing development and the signifying kitchenette, revealing similarities and uncovering two systems of Black oppression.

A commonality between the analyses of the scholars mentioned prior (see Michney, 2007; McKittrick, 2006: Shabazz, 2015), is the way Black people are restricted with regard to the spaces and places they occupy. The favelas that Henery (2011) writes about in her work are neighbourhoods that Black Brazilian women are relegated to due to social consequences based and economic disadvantage. A brief look at history can partially explain this dilemma. Four point eight million Africans were enslaved and brought to Brazil to work in the fields to produce coffee, sugar and cotton (Barbassa, 2018). Many of the descendants of these Africans continue to live in Brazil today. However, the impact of slavery on Afrobrazillians has shown to have malignant and long-lasting effects as these women “remain at the bottom of the socio-economic
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They earn less than whites, suffer proportionately more violence, and have less access to resources and rights” (Barbassa, 2018, para. 16). A lack of resources and finances hinders the ability to purchase land and own a home, thus leaving the only option to live in the least desired spaces and neighbourhoods with higher rates of crime and poor material conditions.

McKittrick’s (2006) analysis conspicuously draws attention to the ongoing restriction of space for Black women due to the era of slavery. During slavery, Black people were enslaved and considered property of slave masters. Thus, Black women slaves’ mobility occurred insofar as their enslavers allowed them to move around, and they travelled only where they were shipped, delivered, or instructed to go to complete errands (Prince, 2004; Prince, 2007; Walvin, 2007). Although Black people were considered ‘free’ when kitchenettes in Chicago were created, the systemic and systematic, racism that existed left Black people chained in covert ways. This was mainly to satisfy the needs of white people who wished to live in areas that were free of racialized—especially Black—people (Williams, 2006). Further, their restricted movement and space occupation contrasted with how white people fled neighbourhoods that were becoming more racialized so much so that they termed this form of neighbourhood out-migration “white flight” (Troesken & Walsh, 2019). The comparison between how Black and white people navigate space also supports the notion of placelessness that Mugabo (2018) describes in their work focusing on Afropessimism. Mugabo asserts that Black people are rendered placeless due to ongoing and unwavering anti-Black racism and committed acts of state violence. Harming Black people everywhere they exist sends the message that they are unsafe and unwelcome. Once again, Black geographies serves as a useful tool to illuminate how space is owned and experienced by Black people in multiple ways. It is also useful in highlighting how Black communities in TCH have persevered through complicated and violent experiences of space
within their neighbourhoods, including how some Black women were terrorized and torn apart from their family members—namely their partners and children.

It is important when discussing these policies and the lives affected by them to place a particular analytical focus on gender. As mentioned earlier, the majority of TCH residents are female (TCH, 2019) and thus the policies that are harmful affect mostly women. In McKittrick’s (2006) book, Demonic Grounds, she uses Black feminist theory as an avenue to highlight the gendered difference of spatial barriers, violence, and other experiences of Black people. Black feminist thought is a relevant and effective field with scholars and authors dedicated to centering the lives and perspectives of Black women (Collins, 1989). It also demarginalizes the perspectives and lived experiences of Black people in similar ways to how Black geographic thought unveils and idealizes Black space within the traditional field of geography (Crenshaw, 2018). Further, I find Black feminist theory entwined and critical to the analyses that occur within many of the works of scholars in the field of Black geographies, especially those whom have a particular focus on women. Thus, Black feminist theory is critical in my discussion and exploration of this field, and was equally important in the analyses of my dissertation research.

**Black Feminist Theory**

Black feminist theory focuses on the oppression of women while highlighting the identity of race. It centers on the experiences of Black women and the discrimination they face due to sexism and racism (Simien, 2004). Another key aspect of Black feminist theory is the concept of “interlocking systems of oppression” (Hill Collins, 2000; Taylor, 2017), which demonstrates how various forms of identities interact to produce varying challenges, thus marginalizing people in multiple and different ways (Collins, 1989). This theory is important because it recognizes the diversity of struggles that may occur within a group of women who share similar identities but
also have individual and unique experiences based on the differences that exist between them (Collins, 1989).

There are some issues and events influential to the field of Black feminist theory that also led to the development of Black geographies. According to Taylor (2017) the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) formed due to “. . . the failure of white feminist organizations to adequately respond to racism” (p. 73). Whereas, Black geographies stems from “Black-oriented epistemologies operat[ing] in resistance to reductionary claims on Black spaces, places, theories, and methods” (AAG, 2017, para.1), commonly found within the Eurocentric field of geography (McKittrick, 2006). Both fields were motivated by the erasure and silencing of Black people and their experiences. People working within Black feminist theory and Black geographies are dedicated to spreading awareness about Black people’s challenges and oppressions.

Mama (1989) wrote an intriguing paper on violence against Black women living in Britain’s public housing. A distinctive aspect of her work is the way she uses a Black feminist lens. Mama elucidates how the state responded to domestic violence crises and how the structure of public housing intensified the violence these Black women experienced throughout their lives. These women were in dire need of affordable housing to escape their abusers. In a study conducted in the US, Menard (2011) found that even when women endured the violence of their partners, their proprietors would eventually evict them because of the violent tactics their abusers would inflict toward these property owners. The abusers were aggressive and intimidating toward proprietors who tried to intervene or investigate the problems happening in their households. However, for women who attempted to escape, there were more barriers making the escape challenging and perilous. It was difficult to find new and affordable housing because housing departments and proprietors acted as protectors of the ‘general’ public from the Black
public. They would exclude Black people from renting their properties so that their properties would remain homogenized with whiteness.

Although Mama’s (1989) article was based on the housing situation in the UK in the 1980s, discriminatory housing continues today and the issues that Mama raised are relevant in the Canadian context (Darden & Kamel, 2000; Dion, 2001; Mensah, & Williams, 2013; Teixeira, 2008). Housing discrimination based on sex is also pervasive throughout the housing market, and this has been proven globally (Flage, 2018; Ghabrial & Barata, 2010; Hughes & Wickeri, 2010; Lazarus, et al., 2011; Little, 2015; UNOG, 2018). One excuse proprietors provide for denying housing to women, and single mothers in particular, are their fears that these women will not be able to pay rent due to economic challenges (Ghabrial & Barata, 2010). Indeed, women remain more economically disadvantaged than men (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2019), and many do rely on their partners to assist with life expenses. That being said, Black fathers and male partners are at times torn away from their relationships and families due to the over-institutionalization of Black people as a result of systemic and systematic oppression (Wilson, 2002). Black men are overrepresented in prisons (Armstrong, 2013; McIntyre, 2016) and are more likely to be wrongfully convicted (Chokshi 2017; Vega, 2017). Consequently, Black women experience multi-layered oppressions due to their intersecting identities of Blackness, motherhood and womanhood.

Scholars that prioritize the identities of Black women have been able to examine issues connected to housing—such as housing discrimination—for Black women in a way that explicitly shows how the power relations linked to their identities interlock. The controversial spatial politics of Black women and housing centers around three pillars: race, sex, and parenting (Leigh, 1989). The work of Leigh (1989), while dated, continues to be relevant today. Leigh
explains how Black women encounter discrimination in housing markets for three reasons: because they are Black; because they are women; and because they have children. Roscigno et al.’s (2009) study of court cases filed against landlords in the US for refusing housing based on an applicant’s race, sex and parental status demonstrates that this discrimination continues today. Roscigno et al. (2009) added class to their analysis of discriminatory practice. According to Roscigno et al. (2009) “African American women are most likely to face . . . housing discrimination—a pattern we interpret as a function of several factors, including their gender and class status as well as their status as mothers” (p. 66). These researchers also found that Black women face discrimination because of negative stereotypical notions of Black single mothers. The cases in this study demonstrated multiple points in the housing process where Black mothers experienced housing discrimination, including property owners rejecting rental applications, bankers refusing to approve mortgage loans, and neighbours being uncivil toward families with Black mothers. A participant identified as Susan reported that when she went to inquire about a rental property, the property owner told her she had too many children and needed to “get her Black ass out” (p. 59). This woman not only experienced housing discrimination, she also experienced violence in the form of verbal assault. Black women face multiple forms of violence when attempting to access safe housing.

Another housing issue Black women experience is forfeiture of an important resource that may trigger feelings of isolation and depression because of this loss. This occurs once property owners eject these women from their homes within neighbourhoods they have lived in for many years. Keene and Ruel (2013) conducted a study investigating the effects of relocation on elderly public housing residents. All of their 25 participants were Black, and 19 out 25 were women. These authors discovered that there were health disparities between their participants
and the residents already living in the communities where the participants would relocate. A critical analysis, which includes a Black feminist lens, on possible mediating factors of these health concerns reveals how being a Black elderly woman creates differentiated housing experiences. Some of these women discussed how relocation removed their access to informal childcare for grandchildren in their care. Access to informal childcare can substantially help a grandmother with a limited income to support her family. Furthermore, Black women are considerably more economically disadvantaged than the average white woman in the United States (Hulliung, 2017).

The elderly women in Keen and Ruel’s (2013) study shared how relocating prevented them from socializing with their neighbours and navigating through their neighbourhood. For elderly people that are already experiencing issues with their physical health, reducing physical activity is likely to cause further issues (Fox, 1999; Zisberg et al., 2011). Relocation thus negatively affects their mental and physical health. However, Keene and Ruel (2013) assert that social cohesion positively mediates the overall experience for women living in public housing in the United States.

Social cohesion was also found to give moral support and accompaniment for the elderly (Keene & Ruel, 2013). In the context of neighbourhood revitalization, social cohesion is the association and participation of both private owners and public housing residents for community development and activities (Manzi & Smith-Bowers, 2005). However, when residents are relocated into neighbourhoods by way of neighbourhood revitalization or the use of housing vouchers (which is a system enforced in the United States) they are moved under the premise of being “mixed” into “better” neighbourhoods—Neighbourhoods occupied primarily by white and/or upper-class people. Historically, white people have made great efforts to keep
racialized and particularly Black people, out of their neighbourhoods (Rubinowitz & Perry, 2001). They would use many tactics, including being hostile and intimidating toward their Black neighbours (Greene et al., 2017; McGruder, 2015; Wagemiller et al., 2017). Thus, a Black elderly person may not speak with their new neighbours for fear of receiving a hostile response. Black people avoid white people because they are in fear the behaviours of white people may affect their mental health and wellbeing (White, 2017). In a poignant online piece, White explains how his negative experience with white people, including those whom were friends, caused him to avoid and detach himself for the sake of his mental health (White, 2017).

Critical analytical and theoretical frameworks create a certain kind of mindfulness for researchers (Hick & Furlotte, 2009). This is why Black feminist theory is pivotal to my work. Parker (2016) suggests that it is necessary to include more “methods, modes, and sites of analysis” (p. 1337) in a field such as Urban planning and geography. Parker created her own approach that includes a “reinvigorated intersectional, partial, material, relational and theoretically ‘hybrid’ analyses of cities and power relations” called the Feminist Partial Political Economy of Place (FPEP) (p. 1338). The following section will detail more on this approach and discuss the motivations of its developments. It will also introduce another subfield of geography that embraces how women approach geography in ways that are contrary to the prototypical white, male hegemonic geographic thought (Amoo-Adare, 2011).

**FPEP and Feminist Geography**

The FPEP approach is intriguing and has been useful to my dissertation work; however, the information Parker (2016) uses to substantiate her call for an alternative approach is what I am most interested in. Parker argues that problems of privilege, patriarchy and positivism “haunt the way cities are built, studied, governed, and represented” (p. 1338). She also comments on
how privileged white males dominate studies conducted in fields such as urban planning and geography and how Marxist political economy is influential to these fields as well.

I agree with Parker (2016), I have viewed the way that white, patriarchal and privileged intellect and ideology influence fields of study including urban planning and geography. Many, if not most, of the developers spearheading neighbourhood revitalization are white, privileged men whose only goal is profit. This is why many of the revitalized neighbourhoods to date are going through the same tribulations post-development (August, 2014b). For instance, a neighbourhood in Toronto named Regent Park has undergone revitalization. However, residents still complain about “neglected physical environments . . . safety issues, and drug-related activities (August, 2014b, p. 1317). These developers failed to set up a social action plan that creates a space for diverse groups to flourish as a community (August, 2014b). This is another reason why Black women are prone to facing unnecessary difficulties while living in Toronto Public housing or once relocated to a new community (Ewan, 2019). In my experience, and through doing research in the literature, I can attest to the fact that the white, privileged, housing developers and influential scholars do not account for or address how the public consistently exploit, surveil, police, and harass racialized bodies. Further, their work does not push for policies to address many of the existing problems that deter upward social mobility for many residents (Brandon, 2007; Horak, 2010; Keatinge & Martin, 2016). This can be attributed to a lack of awareness at best, or at worst a blatant disregard for the lives of public housing residents. Regardless, this lack of accounting for the social realities of racialized residents stems from their position as white, able-bodied heterosexual, and privileged. Black feminist theory disrupts how academia centers the geographical and spatial experiences of white able-bodied heterosexual men (Parker, 2016). Feminist geography and FPEP further interrogates how academia considers
the aforementioned lens as the most valid form of theorizing and analyzing place, space and geography overall.

**Feminist Geography**

Before I explain the FPEP approach, I want to share feminist geography literature that will contribute to my understanding of space and place. These literatures also have a link to Black geographies in the way they conduct critical analyses and uncover obscured perspectives of marginalized groups. The most prominent feature of feminist geography is how it unsettles taken-for-granted ideas of geography while authenticating gender and sex as meaningful subjects for analysis. Feminist geography also disrupts conventional binaries, and addresses power relations embedded in the production of knowledge within academia (UBC, 2019). In addition to having similar objectives as Black geographies, there are underlying schemas in feminist geography analogous to Black feminist theory.

Mollet and Faria (2018) maintain that the concept of intersectionality is fundamental to theorizing about spatial politics, concepts, and processes. They assert that conceptualizing about intersectionality means to engage in and think about “the interlocking violence of racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism [as] constitute[ing] a spatial formation” (p. 566). Mollet and Faria use the poignant work of Ruddick (1996) to demonstrate the process of spatial formation. Ruddick writes about how newspapers used racist rhetoric to report on four Black men involved in the murder of a white woman. The media also strategically emphasized the perpetrators’ and victim’s identities of difference (white/black and men/women) to racialize and hypersexualize ‘bad Black male’ immigrants. The media spatialized the perpetrators bodies and identities by identifying the birthplace of the perpetrators (Jamaica) to reinforce the idea that the perpetrators did not belong in Canada in the first place. Ruddick (1996) focused on how the
media contrasted and weaponized intersectional identities to demonize and exclude Black immigrant men. Overall, Ruddick’s analytical framework compelled Mollet and Faria (2018) to regard her work as ‘intersectional thinking.’

In my work, I apply a feminist-geographic lens to community-based research (Ewan, 2019). The research that I refer to focused on the perspectives of public housing women residents on what makes a community. Although I do not explicitly state that I use feminist geography, I do petition to value the voice of co-researchers, who are also public housing community members. I understand how the location and gender of public housing residents influences the way they are silenced in academia and by society. I understand the juxtaposition of university space and community space; how forms of knowledge represent each space and how these knowledges are valued unevenly. Finally, I am aware of how the nexus of Blackness, femininity and public housing residency manifest in the way co-researchers’ voices are excluded from important conversations about their living situations.

Parker (2016) advises, “there remains a need to engage with both individual and intersectional structures of power” (p. 1343) in communities and neighbourhoods. In my own research I have done this by first acknowledging the identities of my co-researcher and eliciting how these identities affect their interactions on a micro-level (Ewan, 2019). I then broaden my focus to describe wider systems in place that contribute to the erasure of co-researcher voice (Ewan, 2019). I continue this process throughout my dissertation research with the use of Black geographies as an analytical framework. However, I use Parker’s approach as a methodological framework to conjure up quality data that makes this form of analysis possible.
Feminist Partial Political Economies of Place (FPEP)

Parker (2016) compartmentalizes FPEP into four areas to impart guidelines for urban planning and geography researchers and scholars to conduct research that is radical, critical and disruptive. For the purpose of this chapter, I first outline the four areas of this approach and then reflect back on my own research, lived experience and the lived experience of other Black women in Rivertowne. I do this to provide examples of Parker’s approach already present in my work or to evince possible strategies I have used to incorporate FPEP into my project.

According to Parker (2016), there are four characterizations of FPEP, which include:

(1) Attention to gendered, raced, and intersectional power relations, including affinities and alliances; (2) reliance on partial, place-based, materialist research that attends to power in knowledge production; (3) emphasis on feminist concepts of relationality to examine connections among sites, scales, and subjects, and to emphasize “life” and possibility; and (4) the use of theoretical toolkits to observe, interpret and challenge material-discursive power relations.

The first characteristic of FPEP is “attention to gendered, raced, and intersectional power-relations, including affinities and alliances” (p. 1337). This principle is central to the research I conducted in Rivertowne and one that I expand on in my dissertation research. Most of the attention to race and gender emanates from my co-researchers’ identities as Black mothers. Using this identity as a starting point, I was able to discuss many issues that affected TCH residents’ experiences that were based in gender (as women), race (Black[ness]), and their marital status (wives, girlfriends, friends, etc.) discrimination. For instance, a well-known and controversial mandate is the ‘duty to report’ in accordance with the ‘Visitor and Guest Policy’
which requires tenants to inform TCHC when they have people in their unit classified as guests.

TCH defines guests as:

Persons who require temporary accommodation with a tenant (guests do sleep in the tenant's unit, but only for a maximum of 30 days within any 12-month period . . .). Guests are not part of the tenant’s household. Guests maintain a home address outside the tenant's unit. (TCH, 2019, para. 2)

Before 2013, there was a grace period where residents would not have to report a guest and could allow them to stay in their unit for up to 6 weeks. My superintendent informed me about this policy when I required my brother to stay with me for an extended period because of health challenges. However, I am unable to find the old policy published anywhere on TCH’s website.

The reasons for this policy update are currently unknown. However, TCH has been able to criminalize and evict many women residents, and single mothers in particular, based on this policy (Ewan, 2019). Moreover, while conducting my research, I found that there are men who victimize and control women residents with whom they are in relationships. Often these men overstay the policy timeline. What starts as occasional sleepovers turns into short-to-long-term residencies, and then permanent ones. When TCH women residents attempt to end abusive and violent relationships, they are unable to because their perpetrators threaten to inform on them about their residency (Ewan, 2019). The visitor and guest policy also state:

If a person remains longer than 30 days in breach of this policy, Toronto Community Housing may pursue any legal rights available to it including, but not limited to:
possible termination of subsidy if it is an rent-geared-to-income household due to failure to notify the landlord of changes in household composition as required by the Housing Services Act, 2011;

- enforcement of any rights available to Toronto Community Housing under the Trespass to Property Act against the unauthorized occupant; and

- any action against the tenancy available to Toronto Community Housing.

If any rent-geared-to-income household loses their subsidy they will have to pay the market rent for the unit and will no longer qualify for a rent-geared-to-income subsidy. The tenant has the right to request a review of decisions related to their continued eligibility for rental subsidy.

Accordingly, this policy allows abusive partners to use the threat of reporting the women to TCH as a means of retaliation and control. Further, the ‘Visitor and Guest Policy,’ puts women at risk of homelessness for themselves and their children. Beyond being able to evict women whom they find in violation of their policy, TCH is also able to revoke their subsidy status (TCH, 2019b). Revocation of subsidized status is ultimately a roundabout way of evicting the resident, as these women are not in a position to pay market rent. Without subsidized rent, 90% of TCH residents would no longer be able to reside in their units (TCH, 2019a).

If we consider the power relations involved, it is apparent that women’s economic stability is in the hands of both their partners and the TCH. This relationship demonstrates how systems work in conjunction to keep women in a position where they can be subjected to patriarchal control at both the individual and institutional levels (Ewan, 2019). Men are empowered to abuse women by theoretically gender blind, but in practice sexist policies (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Isiaka, 2019; Benard, 2016; Spencer-Wood, 2016). Focusing on gender
uncovers how patriarchy functions at the institutional level. According to the Department of Justice, 79% of intimate partner violence victims are female, with more than half of those reported being within a dating relationship, rather than a spousal relationship (Government of Canada, 2019a). Further, due to gendered expectations and responsibilities, after relationship breakdown, children are more likely to live solely with their mother (87%) than solely with their father (7%) (Government of Canada, 2019). To complicate things further, if a woman resident confides in a TCH employee about their domestic violence, they risk the chance of the TCH employee reporting them to the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), which may lead to CAS involvement including possible removal of the children from the mother’s care. As TCH housing policy currently exists, it contributes to the precariousness of women’s housing, their economic stability, their susceptibility to abuse, and their ability to care for their children.

As mentioned earlier, racial identity cannot be overlooked as a complicating factor as it is inextricably linked to power and spatial relations within TCH. Institutional and structural racism result in multiple forms of violence including police brutality, prejudice, and housing discrimination (Araujo, 2007). Most of the residents of Rivertowne are racialized, and the majority of my co-researchers are Black. Moreover, Black women experience domestic violence at an alarming rate (Jeltsen, 2018). While data on cases of domestic violence for Black women victims is not available in Canada (Jeltsen, 2018) — statistics in the US show that “More than 40% of black women experience intimate partner violence during their lifetimes compared to 31.5% of all women” (Whaley, 2018, para. 4). They also report that Black women are two and a half times more likely to be murdered by men than their white counterparts (para. 5).

I have shown how the first aspect of FPEP is applicable to my work. As my dissertation research expands on previous research conducted during my doctoral studies that draws attention
to gender, race, and intersectional relations (Parker, 2016), it will also address the concern Parker (2016) mentions in the next area of FPEP.

The second characteristic of FPEP research is a “reliance on partial, place-based, materialist research that attends to power in knowledge production” (Parker, 2016, p. 1337). I appreciate the way Parker (2016) includes the term “partial” to acknowledge how no individual research project is all-encompassing; neither can they solve all problems. “Partial knowledge” permits room for other perspectives, which counters the hegemonic idea of knowledge production as creating a singular grand ‘truth’ (Haraway, 1988; Stoddart, 2007). In addition to making space for additional knowledges and realities, it is necessary to discern the power in knowledge production. To do so, I think of power as shared, dialogical, and relational (Hanold, Gardiner, & Stomberg-Walker, 2017; Lopez, 2003), as opposed to unidirectional, top-down, and coercive (Malara & Boylston, 2016). I also think about who is excluded when knowledge is constructed through traditional means and methods versus collective means (academia versus community, or written versus orally), and understand the significance of collaborating with hard-to-reach marginalized groups, especially when doing research about their communities.

In fact, I assert that this is the essence of doing community-based research (Ewan, 2019). I argue that it is critical that the stories, information, and focus the co-researchers (participants, in traditional research terms) identify as most important be accentuated in community-based scholarly research and publications. In order to achieve this aim, I have relied upon feminist participatory action research (FPAR; Kindon et al., 2008) principles because FPAR “emphasizes the value and validity of all knowledge and experiences” (Ewan, 2019, p.3). FPEP is also important because public housing residents’ concerns are rarely taken into consideration when
external organizations and developers are in charge of organizing neighbourhood-related initiatives (Rockwell, 2018; Seth, 2019; Tran & Dalhom, 2005).

Public housing proprietors disregarding and neglecting the concerns of residents occurs within a global context (August, 2014a; Ewan, 2019; Gustavsson & Elander, 2016; Huang & Du, 2015; Huat, 2000; Seto, 2019; Wacquant, 2008). Thus, to thoroughly understand this social phenomenon, it is necessary to “examine connections among sites, scales, and subjects” (Parker, 2016, p. 1337). Parker delineated this objective as the third part of FPEP, and understandably so. It is unsurprising that similarities exist between public housing residents around the world. August (2014a) denotes that neighbourhood revitalization is an “increasingly popular global strategy for restructuring public housing” (p. 1161). She also identified that this trend materialized during the 1990s in the United States as an effort to deconstruct deteriorating post-war public housing, and has since been replicated all around the world.

Public housing and neighbourhood revitalization are both driven by neoliberalism and globalization (Pow, 2018; Shen, 2015). The success of neoliberalism and globalization is essentially contingent upon the oppression of marginalized groups (Nicholls, 2014). Neoliberalism and globalization are systems created to support those who strive for optimum economic gain (Nichols, 2014). Neoliberalism and globalization advance the growth of a free-market that dissolves social responsibility, and promotes an individualistic mentality under the guise of financial freedom (Nicholls, 2014). Neoliberalism also aims to dismantle social welfare programs, on which many public housing residents rely (Nadesen, 2013). Women suffer on a global scale because of how neoliberalism supports the social systems that intensify gendered oppression. For example, because of economic inequities, women and particularly single mothers are disproportionally represented when it comes to social and public assistance enrollment.
This imbalance is even greater when it comes to Black women in relation to their white counterparts (Harell & Saroka, 2014).

The women residents with whom I conducted research displayed knowledge of neoliberal values and principles underpinning public housing organizations and programs. We frequently discuss how we believe The TCH Corporation and its employees are only focused on protecting their own careers rather than on creating safe and healthy homes for underprivileged residents. I speculate that Toronto community housing finds neighbourhood revitalization appealing because it resolves the profound drawbacks for which they are notoriously known. This includes the disgraceful lack of property maintenance resulting in dilapidated infrastructure (Broadbent, 2017; Murdie, 2012; Pagliaro, 2017), and multiple CEOs resigning and being fired for improper management of resources (680 News, 2019; Alamenciak & Pagliaro, 2014; CBC News, 2019). It also allows them to pay their employees with profits attained from the developers, while simultaneously erasing debts they have incurred over the years.

I also theorize additional reasons as to why TCH is attracted to the neighbourhood revitalization procedure. Governmentality theory suggests that the government intentionally takes part in “shap[ing] human conduct” (Li, 2007, p. 275), through various agents consistently supervising and surveilling ‘designated groups’ (Li, 2007. p. 275; Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2006). TCH, as a government entity which surveilles and exercises restrictions and controls on its residents is one of these agents, and public housing residents—whom are poor and primarily racialized—are a designated group. Prior to the contrivance of mixed neighbourhoods TCH would oversee neighbourhoods via security cameras placed in buildings and their surrounding communities. They also have their own security guards who prowl around neighbourhoods throughout the night, remaining vigilant of any ‘misconduct.’ Alongside security guards, TCH
also appointed the Toronto Police Service as ‘agents of landlords’ (see TCH, 2018b), giving them the authority to expel any individual who they find trespassing on private property. Any individual who is not a resident of TCH can be considered a trespasser.

However, since the implementation of revitalization, TCH also shares the role of supervision with private homeowners. This is evident in the way mixed communities are structured, where public housing homes are segregated and concentrated in demarcated areas, remaining distanced from the private homes and condominiums (see TCH, 2017b). August (2014a) learned from her research how the police had targeted and attacked a racialized youth from Rivertowne who was walking home from school. This incident followed complaints from condominium owners. The police slammed this youth onto the hood of their car. Witnessing this act of police violence, and subsequently being informed that this youth was in fact a resident and therefore belonged in the neighbourhood, the condominium owners decided to disband a group they had previously created to participate in discussing community matters, and apparently enforcing a neighbourhood watch (August, 2014a). While acting to ‘protect’ what they perceived as ‘their’ neighbourhood, these homeowners mobilized state power in order to expel someone they perceived as not belonging, in effect, a poor racialized youth.

Using Parker’s FPEP model underscores the complex networks of subjugation TCH women residents endure. Throughout the last few paragraphs I added into my analysis three of these networks: governmentality, neoliberalism, and globalization. Governmentality is alluring to use as a ‘theoretical tool’ (Parker, 2016), because of how well it articulates the way various organizations and professionals are on guard against those society considers undesirable, such as poor, racialized, and disabled people (Lipsitz, 2011; Wacquant, 2008).
Economic theory amalgamates neoliberalism and globalization discourses based on their interconnections. For example, Litonjua (2008) declares, “globalization is the global spread of the economic system of capitalism. Promoted by the ideology of neoliberalism, the goal is a wholly deregulated global market society” (p. 254). Economic theory will inevitably emerge in discussions about neighbourhood revitalization and urban planning, as neighbourhood revitalization is fronted by the same processes as gentrification—an inflow of affluent residences and businesses creates environments that are unaffordable for low-income people, thus forcing them out of their neighbourhood (Bryson, 2013). Gentrification also replaces derelict properties that have deteriorated over the years due to government’s negligence (Wacquant, 2008). In addition to theories that focus on our economy and the financialization of the housing market (Kalman-Lamb, 2017), I also interlaced a racial-gendered perspective into my analysis. I routinely do this in my work with the assistance of Black geographies, and theories like Black feminist theory, as a conceptual framework.

The use of multiple theories may appear messy, perplexing, and disorganized. However, the use of multiple theories aligns with Parker’s (2016) fourth and last area of FPEP, which entails “the use of theoretical toolkits to observe, interpret, and challenge material-discursive power relations (p. 1338). The way theoretical toolkits were present in this research was through the multifaceted perspectives and insights of the co-researchers. Parker also explains how using theoretical toolkits is “an implicit willingness to learn from and engage with other knowledges and encounters” (p. 1354). Not only am I willing to learn from other knowledges, I have made the commitment to do so in order to have a better understanding about the lived experiences that will be conveyed to me through my research. A theoretical toolkit also expands my way of thinking to encapsulate a more comprehensive assessment of TCH residents’ narratives.
Since many TCH residents are also mothers, we often use our theoretical tools to discuss our experience of motherhood and parenting. Interestingly, our dialogue about our children contains gendered analogies. There are irrefutable differences about the anxieties we have for raising our sons and daughters. I have three daughters and many of my fears are connected to wider systemic issues, such as patriarchy and racism, that would affect them regardless of whether they lived in TCH. I worry about the way they are vulnerable to mistreatment by men, in part because of daunting statistics of racial-gendered violence like the ones I previously shared (Jeltsen, 2018; Whaley, 2018). I worry about “others in society’s attribution of sex as a part of the ‘natural’ role of Black women and girls” (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015, p. 133), and the horrid crimes that derive from this oppressive and dangerous outlook (finoh, Sankofah, & Fellow, 2019). Muhammad & McArthur (2015) define this mentality as the “hyper-sexualization of Black girls” (p. 138). I also worry about my daughters not being afforded their childhood because Black girls are expected to mature quickly, and are not seen as children by people in our society (Epstein et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2014). It is possible that my daughters will go through the challenges I discuss in this dissertation. But I am confident that my privileged position as a doctoral student heightens my chances of escaping Toronto public housing before my daughters become leaseholders and have to adhere to more housing policies than they do now as occupants.

I recently gave birth to a son (who is now one year old) and will be soon giving birth to another in a few weeks. I have anticipated my son’s future experience from learning from other TCH Black women residents who have sons. Although they are beneficiaries of patriarchy, they are also seriously impacted by the unyielding nexus of racism, governmentality, and TCH policy. The material-discursive power that Parker (2016) refers to is evident in the way many Black male youth are victims of TCH-appointed police brutality, and are often used as vehicles to evict
TCH families (Mahoney, 2018). The former issue is related to how TCH appointed the Toronto Police Service as ‘agents of landlords’ (see TCH, 2018b), giving them the freedom to navigate TCH neighbourhoods as they see fit. Because of this, TCH neighbourhoods are inundated by police presence, intensifying the police brutality against Black youth.

It is well known and documented that the Toronto Police Service (TPS) target Black male youth (August, 2014a; Gaetz et al., 2010; Meng et al., 2015; Wortley & Tanner, 2003). During 2006-2017 the TPS enforced a ‘Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy’ (TAVIS; TCH, 2011), which was scrutinized and criticized for over-carding (a procedure where an individual is stopped and asked for identification) and harassing Black male youth (Gillis, 2018; Owusu-Bempah, 2014). Many of the Black youth who the TPS carded (and also brutalized) were Toronto Public Housing residents (Bateman, 2015; Nangwaya, 2014). This is another example of material-discursive power collaboratively enacted by TPS and TCH. In an official TCH document, TCH writes that one outcome of TAVIS is “Police Officers highly visible in select communities” (see TCH, 2018c, p. 10).

The latter issue of strategic eviction by way of young Black male youth is convoluted with underlying motives and unjust practice. Mahoney (2018) clearly writes about TCH using evictions as a ‘tool’ for reducing crime. TCH believes that if they evict residents with criminal records or those whom are involved in criminal activity, their issues of crime will be absolved. I do not believe that they are focused on reducing crime. If TCH is sincere about their mandate to reduce crime then they would focus on the systematic and systemic barriers that prevent public housing residents from finding employment (Rohe et al., 2016) and maintaining good health (Winsa, 2016). As these barriers and the subsequent economic issues result in frustration and poor decisions due to deprivation and desperation as well as limited options (Wacquant, 2008).
Instead TCH weaponize and demonize Black youth to support their racist, colonialist tactics (Crichlow, 2014). They senselessly and selfishly tear Black families a part as a lazy method of ‘crime reduction,’ without thinking about the repercussions of their actions. The eviction is similar to the actions of slaveholders who would ruthlessly displace Black bodies through selling their bodies across space and place (McKittrick, 2006; Prince, 2009; Walvin, 2007). They did not care about the pain they caused these families; their only goal was to meet their economic and business needs. This displacement and forced migration of Black bodies through discriminatory housing and police policies is a continuation of the treatment of Black people during slavery and colonization.

Returning back to associating Black youth with oppression and material-discursive power, I previously highlighted how the eviction process is discursively inscribed into TCH policy, which then materializes through the eviction of TCH families. I started this analysis first by discussing the gendered experiences mothers endure by way of their children. I also noted how a gender analysis is important in understanding how Black male youth are disproportionately targeted by law enforcement (Crichlow, 2014; Warde, 2013). I rearticulate this analysis to draw attention to the recurrent act of evicting families and jailing black youth (Ewan, 2019; Mahoney, 2018), and how these social practices are integral to how TCH manages and operate their neighbourhoods. In the next section I expose more harmful practice of TCH by way of sharing the experience of a Rivertowne resident, while simultaneously outlining spatial relations using a Black geographic lens.

**Rivertowne Black Geographies**

In the following example I use a pseudonym and have changed minor details for anonymity. This is a story about “Alexis,” a Black single mother of four (ages 11, 3, 2, and 1
year old). Alexis currently lives in a two-bedroom townhouse with her children. Alexis also lives with many mental health issues. Due to the nature of one of them, her home creates a significant barrier to her parenting and overall wellbeing. Although her home is well kept and in a much better state than many other TCH homes, the space is very tight for four small children to run around in. Recent changes to the Occupancy Standards make Alexis ineligible for a priority transfer. Up till last year, the occupancy standards stated that each child was entitled to a room. However, the occupancy standards now state that in order to be considered underhoused (living in a home too small), you have to be two bedrooms short. And children are no longer entitled to their own room. They are expected to share with at least one other sibling, regardless of gender (City of Toronto, 2019b).

Alexis has been fighting for a new home for over a year and a half. She received supporting documentation from her social worker and psychiatrist for her application. Unfortunately, her application has been already been denied four times, despite a letter clearly stating that she is in a life-threatening situation. Alexis experienced a breakdown of her mental health after the fourth rejection and wrote an email to various organizations pleading for help. The police and mental health crisis nurse showed up at her door because someone at one of those organizations was concerned about Alexis’ wellbeing. Alexis was so worried about her mental state at one moment that she had to self-report to the Toronto Children’s Aid Society. She has increased her medication and has to work with many health professionals at a time to remain stable. Alexis has reached out to other city officials, and has now filed a human rights complaint. The Ontario Human Rights tribunal legitimized her application and her case file is now being prepared for mediation.
Alexis is unable to afford market housing in Toronto. She also prefers to stay downtown because that is where the majority of her support resources are located. Further, it has been documented that isolation and depression are common issues for Black women when they are forced to leave their communities (Keene & Ruel, 2013). Alexis is working tirelessly to save for a house of her own. In the meantime, she makes sure to remain connected with her support network and has rearranged her home to create more space and to avoid some of the triggers that affect her health.

Shabazz (2015) described how the conditions of the kitchenette were likened to prison cells. In Alexis’ home, Black bodies are confined; orchestrated both by municipal policy (City of Toronto, 2019b) and TCH policy. I argue that Alexis is currently in both a mental and physical prison. I also argue that her situation is a continuation of the historical treatment of Black women. TCH refuses to accommodate Alexis and her children despite knowing that she is suffering every day. TCH does not take into consideration the consequences to the entire family, including the possibility that Alexis is no longer able to care for her children, if her housing needs are not met. Their refusal to accommodate Alexis’ mental and physical needs demonstrates that her Black body and her children’s, like other Black bodies, is not valued and is disposable.

Black geographies help me visualize and conceptualize spatial relations as Alexis advocates for a healthier space for herself and her children. Her body both physically and symbolically traverses across and between spaces and places of Toronto’s terrain. Although she feels as though she is held captive in her home, she is forced to leave her home to attend medical and counselling appointments, appeal to city officials in person, pick up and deliver numerous applications, and to take trips to the hospital.
Black geographies also help me think about how Alexis contests and recreates a space that works better for her family. She is working within the limitation of space she receives as a TCH resident. Black geographies allow me to attend to the power imbalances that play a role in Alexis’ situation. She is faced with policies that TCH upholds and hides behind to legitimate their mistreatment of her.

Black geographies bring attention to the racial and gendered oppression Alexis faces. As a resident, I am aware of certain residents receiving transfers for less urgent matters. Most of these residents are white families. For instance, my previous next-door neighbour is a white woman who was able to relocate from a home around the corner due to a verbal dispute she had with a Black woman in the neighbourhood. The Black woman was not held criminally responsible for this dispute, which makes it unlikely that she uttered threats to the white woman. There is another white family that wanted a bigger townhouse so their daughter could move in with them. They were provided their bigger townhouse and now their daughter’s room sits empty while she attends University. The father of this household only had to threaten TCH with contacting city officials. Black geographies made me aware of the spatial freedom and access afforded to white people that is denied Black people because of how their bodies need to be consistently contained and surveilled.

Another demonstration of how Black and white bodies are valued differently involves a street in Rivertowne being named after a white woman who died due to gun violence (CBC, 2017). Although she was an innocent bystander, individuals in her family were involved in conflicts with other men from different communities who were bringing violence into the community. I don’t dispute that this woman should have been memorialized this way, however, none of the racialized individuals who died due to gun violence before or after this incident were
memorialized in this way. For example, a young man who was very involved and close to people in three TCH communities was shot while attending a memorial for his friend that died due to gun violence (Westoll, 2018). Following his death there was no discussion about naming a street after him.

Finally, Black geographies made it possible for me to recognize how Alexis’ body was weaponized as a threat to the community instead of receiving the appropriate treatment for her mental health needs. One of the organizations Alexis accessed for help felt the need to send three police and a crisis nurse (who showed up much later) to her home. They attempted to police Alexis instead of redirecting her to community resources that could help or sending a professional that would not criminalize her. Alexis had previously had a negative experience with the police when she was arrested under the Mental Health Act. This Act allows police to arrest and institutionalize people identified as experiencing a mental health crisis. Since Alexis was hospitalized through this process, she was left with an arrest record, further marginalizing her, which almost caused her to lose a job. This job required a criminal record check, which forced her to explain to her employer that she had been hospitalized for mental health issues, information she would not otherwise be required to share with her employer. This was not only embarrassing and invasive, but also had the effect of refusing help from nurses or police in the future.

Spatial matters are thoroughly entwined in Alexis’ marginalization. Black geographies equipped me with a new perspective about community relations and Black people’s relationship with space and place. From being introduced to this field of inquiry and the related literatures I have read; I now have a more thorough understanding of geography that is integral to my understanding of oppression. This chapter was written to demonstrate how I have come to learn
about Black geographies. Furthermore, I structured this chapter, and my dissertation as a whole, in a way that I could insert myself throughout its development.

I historicized public housing, similar to how I later do so for race and space. This was done to make connections between the purpose of public housing and how public housing residents are viewed and treated today. In order to refine my focus on Black women residents, I turned to Black feminist theory. Black feminist theory is central to Black geographies when focusing on the lived and spatial experiences of TCH Black women residents. Therefore, I reviewed this theory focusing on articles written by scholars who use a Black feminist lens (Collins, 1989; Collins, Crenshaw, 2018; Simien, 2004). Black feminist theory was also at the core of feminist geography when it comes to centering the experience of women. Feminist geography reveals how gender impacts the way we navigate, hold, and take up space (Mollet & Faria, 2018).

Through researching material related to Black geographies, I came across the FPEP methodology by Parker (2016). She created this methodology due to the “imbalances and silences [that] persist in urban research (Parker, 2016, p. 1337). The guiding principles of this methodology are informed by feminist geography but are also very relatable to Black geographies overall. I was fortunate enough to meet with Parker who verified that the FPEP model aligns with my area of research and fits well with a project that uses Black geographies as an analytical framework. Some of the principles that are shared between FPEP and Black geographies are a focus on power imbalances with knowledge production, relational analyses about trending issues that affect people who live in different places in similar ways, and using theoretical toolkits to explore a concept or issues, just as Black geographies appear to do, and similar to what I have done in this dissertation.
Writing about spatial politics provides an avenue to illuminate how preconceptions and perceptions about Black bodies politicizes space. It also displays how influential ideology is when it comes to those who have the power to create space, and the ideas they hold about the people who will exist within these spaces. Amoo-Adare (2005) presented a remarkable argument about white supremacy within architecture and the role it plays in building homes in Black communities.

Just as whiteness is influential to space and place, so is Blackness. McKittrick (2006) eloquently explained how the spatial relations of Black women during slavery demarcated spaces and places that were not thought to be associated with Black people. Her analysis of the auction block and how it served as a site of oppression opened up possibilities to imagine and discern how people occupy and claim space in alternative ways. Space is imagined differently by various cultures and groups and Lipsitz’s (2011) concept of spatial imaginary delineated the key dissimilarities between Black and white spatial imaginaries. Similar to Amoo-Adare’s (2005) theorization, Lipsitz was able to reveal the implications and consequences of thinking about space, place and land as a commodity that is used to gain profit, surveil and regulate certain bodies, or as a shared entity that is also used to support, nurture and connect people within a community. By taking a look at the history of race and space, we can see how these imaginaries are ongoing conceptualizations shaped by systems of power and oppression, and belonging to those who either want to protect or resist these spaces.

Writing the story of Alexis was an exercise I used to demonstrate how I think about spatial relations and spatial politics. I also wanted to provide insight into some of the challenges that Black women residents face as TCH housing residents specifically. Black geographies created a platform where I can honour the creativity, resourcefulness and strength of TCH Black
women residents while simultaneously bringing attention to their resilience and resistance to TCH policy and wider systems of oppression. This is why I found utilizing this analytical framework coupled with the FPEP methodology essential for my dissertation research.
Chapter 4: Methodology

In the previous chapter I explained the methodological and theoretical frameworks that I used to assist me in collecting and understanding my research data. In this chapter I explain the method in detail. I review the following topics in this chapter: the background and research problem; the research questions that guide me in exploring my research problem, including the rationale for each question; the research perspective and approach that undergirds this work; the research design; information about the participants—or co-researchers as is typical in feminist participatory action research; the data collection and analysis of this study; and I finish with how I maintained theoretical sensitivity and trustworthiness to ensure the validity of my work and how my positionality aided in completing this process.

Research Problem and Purpose

For the last 15 years, Canadian housing policy has been characterized by the destruction and restructuring of public housing neighbourhoods (Horak, 2010), and the displacement of public housing residents (August, 2016; Twigge-Molecey, 2014; Walks & Maaranen, 2008). These residents remain at the epicentre of public policy and research initiatives oriented to interrogating the effects of these changes (Ewan, 2019). As neighbourhood revitalization projects continue to take precedence over other housing matters, we must critically question how housing policies can best support child, family, and community outcomes (Thurber et al., 2018). Thus, public housing is an essential area of study for academic research. My research posits that it is crucial that research shifts away from the “expert centered models” that typically inform public housing policy as they fail to consider the perspectives and knowledge of those who experience the material consequences of housing policy (Ewan, 2019; Thurber et al., 2018).
There is virtually no Canadian research that focuses on the spatial and racial-gendered experience of women living in public housing; my research aims to amplify the voices of Black women TCH residents. Addressing this gap utilizing a feminist participatory action research methodology allows for an examination of the effects that Toronto housing policy has on the lives of Black women living in public housing. Consequently, the purpose of my research is to explore the spatial and racial-gendered lived experiences of Black women living in Toronto Community Housing to examine the effects of housing policy and procedures (including neighbourhood revitalization) on their lives.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that lead this inquiry are:

1) **How do Black women build and maintain cohesive communities within “revitalized” TCHC mixed-neighbourhoods?**

   Rationale: This question focuses on the spatial relations and politics Black women engage in while they build and support their communities. It also provides the opportunity to explore the concepts of resilience and survival; skills, which I believe were integral for many Black women TCH residents to be able to endure the experiences they discussed.

2) **What TCHC policies are problematic for Black women?**

   Rationale: This question provides space for co-researchers to highlight any specific policies that are particularly problematic in the lives of Black women residents.

3) **Do TCHC policies and procedures contribute to any of the challenges Black women residents experience in life? If so, to what extent and in what ways?**
Rationale: This question was created to understand the relationship between policies/procedures and the challenges and barriers Black women residents experience, while simultaneously creating a platform for them to share their stories. This question is particularly important for the creation of a report specifically for policy analysts and politicians.

**Research Perspective**

Qualitative researchers avoid rigid structural frameworks and embrace a personal and flexible approach to research (Carson, et al., 2001). Research designs in qualitative research acknowledge that the researcher and co-researchers are situated within “complex and multiple contexts of political, social and historical realities (Tucker, 2016, p. 89). For this project, the term ‘co-researchers’ was used synonymously with ‘participant’ to highlight the collaborative process of knowledge development. The term co-researchers is used to describe how the research process is collaborative with those who are traditionally considered “participants” (Cahill, et al., 2010). These participants are actively involved in the research process and all of our contributions are equally valued (Cahill, et al., 2010). In this context the researcher’s ‘self’ is acknowledged and is reinforced through the practice of reflexivity (Mukherji & Albon, 2018) which occurs when the researcher thinks about the impact they have on their research and in turn how the research impacts them (Mukherij & Albon, 2018).

Critical qualitative research designs recognize differences in power between the researcher and co-researchers (Hesse-Biber, 2013). This recognition was essential to this project primarily because my identities as resident and researcher created a complex insider/outsider relationship with my co-researchers (Acker, 2000). Although I am still a public housing resident, my position as a doctoral student, university instructor, and government research consultant afforded me opportunities many of the TCH women residents did not have. In addition, people
may elevate my perspective above theirs based on our social locations and the way certain knowledges are valued over others (e.g. knowledge gained through academia vs. experiential knowledge).

The qualitative research process is often considered just as important as the outcome (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Therefore, the design tends to emphasize the highly detailed gathering of data in an interactive and rigorous fashion. In my research this was evident in the collaborative process, which required me to be consistently reflexive about my positionality and how I interacted with the other co-researchers (Acker, 2000).

The information co-researchers provided was sensitive and personal and required my constant vigilance throughout the data collection process. Qualitative research designs are focused on gaining detailed information rather than making generalizations about large populations and phenomena (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). This study focused on the lived experience of a specific population in particular neighbourhoods. Although their experiences may be applicable to a wider population—since their demographic is reflective of the majority of the Toronto Public Housing population—my concern was primarily with how these particular co-researchers were affected (TCH, 2019). Feminist participatory action research is an approach that accentuates all of these principles and provided me an avenue to achieve the goals of my project (for example: providing a platform for Black TCH women residents to share their stories; finding a suitable and flexible way to work collaboratively with Black TCH women residents).

**Feminist Participatory Action Research**

Earlier in this dissertation I wrote about the FPEP methodological framework that assisted me in conceptualizing how I would conduct this research. In addition to this, FPEP was particularly useful as a methodological framework because it specifically addresses urban and
placed-based research. However, using feminist participatory action research (FPAR) as a research approach provided a more informative guide for the steps and methods I used to collect data. It also has many strong and practical elements that are useful for conducting community-based research and working with marginalized groups (Chakma, 2016). FPAR is an approach that stems from Participatory Action Research (PAR) and is informed by feminist theory (Chakma, 2016; Maguire, 1987). Additionally, FPAR emphasizes the value and validity of all knowledge and experiences; however, it centers on gendered and women’s experiences (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Placing attention to gendered and women’s experiences is a political choice; it acknowledges the influence of hegemonic and patriarchal power over the production of “knowledge, data, and expertise” (Chakma, 2016, p. 166). Reid et al. (2006) summarize FPAR as a “methodological [approach] that enables a critical understanding of women’s multiple perspectives and works towards inclusion, participation, and action, while confronting the underlying assumptions researchers bring into the research process” (p. 316).

Chakma (2016) outlined four focus areas of FPAR: (a) feminisms, (b) participation, (c) action, and (d) research. Chakma stated that feminisms encompass accentuating the importance of gendered and women’s experiences. Participation refers to the full inclusion of participants in every stage of the research. Some of these stages include establishing the research problem, collection and analysis of data, and transferring knowledge. Action refers to the efforts of the researchers to produce positive structural change. Lastly, research pertains to generating new knowledge.

As identified by Chakma (2016), a critical element of FPAR is the involvement of co-researchers from the very beginning of the research through to the end (Reid et al., 2006). I did not consult with the women living in TCH when deciding on the research topic. I argue that my
extensive experiential knowledge as a TCH resident for 22 years, combined with the various roles I have held in TCH communities (e.g. advocate, tenant representative, and community researcher) provide me with enough insight to make this decision independently. However, once I presented the idea of exploring how housing policy affects TCH women residents’ lives, many of them were interested in my work and requested to participate. If these women were disinterested in my research questions, I would not have moved forward with my project. It would be very challenging to conduct this research in the method I chose without having the interest and collaboration of the co-researchers.

**Research Design**

**Recruitment**

I relied on recruitment through posters (see Appendix C) and purposive sampling, which is “the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses” (Etikan et al., p. 2). These sampling techniques were implemented subsequent to research ethics board approval. Purposive sampling also contributed to the validity of this project despite claims that purposive sampling is problematic because it creates bias (El-Masri, 2017). Morse and Niehaus (2009) argue that purposive sampling is intended to maximize efficiency and validity. Purposive sampling was effective and necessary for this project because the specific identities of my co-researchers were fundamental to the analysis of this work. Purposive sampling also allowed me to make a conscious decision to specifically choose individuals that I knew identify as (and are) both Black and women. It also may have reduced the time frame for recruitment due to the particularities of the co-researcher’s identities.
**Sampling**

There were a total of 20 TCH Black women resident co-researchers included in this project; nine from Rivertowne (six of which lived in Don Mount Court—Rivertowne prior to revitalization) and eleven from nine other TCH Communities. These communities are: Flemingdon Park (n=1), The Esplanade (n=3), Tapscott & Finch (n=1), Moss Park (n=1), Rexdale (n=1), Exbury Road (n=1), Hydro Block (n=1), Cataraqui (n=1), Driftwood (n=1). Each of these neighbourhoods is identified on a map of the Greater Toronto Area (see Appendix F). I contacted three Rivertowne co-researchers that had taken part in prior research I conducted, and who had expressed interest in participating in my dissertation research. These women then informed me about three additional potential co-researchers who lived in Don Mount Court before it was revitalized into Rivertowne. I reached out to two of these women and asked them if they were interested in participating, to which they agreed. One connected with me while I was completing an interview in Rivertowne’s recreational room.

I also posted recruitment flyers (see Appendix C) inside residential buildings and community centers in Rivertowne and the other TCH neighbourhoods to recruit additional co-researchers. The posters placed in each neighbourhood provided a brief description of the study and also highlighted that each co-researcher would be compensated ($50) for their time (1 hour). The remaining women contacted me through information they found on posters they viewed in their neighbourhoods, or through hearing about my study from their colleagues and friends (who then provided them with my information).

I specifically used purposeful sampling to recruit Black women from The Esplanade, one of the neighbourhoods where I grew up. I was able to recruit three Black women using this method.
Co-researchers

All of the co-researchers are Black and ranged from 19-59 years of age. The mean age is 32.75. All of the participants identified as Black women. Fifteen of the women were mothers. Twelve of the residents were either born in the Caribbean or were of Caribbean descent. The rest were continental Africans or of direct African descent (their parents were born in Africa). Table 1 provides brief descriptions about the identities and backgrounds of each co-researcher.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Background/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Country of Birth/Year came to Canada</th>
<th># of Childre n/ Age/ Living at Home</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Years of Residency in Neighbourhood/Social Housing</th>
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<td>Construction Worker</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>10/10+</td>
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<td>Somali and Kenyan</td>
<td>Somalia/1988</td>
<td>4/17,16,10,9/4</td>
<td>DMC to Rivertowne</td>
<td>Community Worker</td>
<td>HS</td>
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<td>Congo/1989</td>
<td>9/29,28,26,24,23,19,18,16,10/6</td>
<td>Hydro Block</td>
<td>Stay at Home Mom</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>6/20+</td>
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<td>Congo/1994</td>
<td>3/13,11,8</td>
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<td>Security Guard Student</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>6/20+</td>
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<td>1/4/1</td>
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<td>Hair and Beauty aesthetician</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>5/12</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>1/2/1</td>
<td>DMC to Rivertowne</td>
<td>Early Childhood Assistant</td>
<td>HS</td>
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<tr>
<td>DW</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>4 +2 (Custody of Granddaughter)/31,30,29,26,12,4/2</td>
<td>Rivertowne</td>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>HS</td>
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<td>College</td>
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<td>Flemingdon Park</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>3/20+</td>
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Research Sites

Interviews were completed in the communities where the participants lived. I proposed meeting in local coffee shops or other public places that provided a quiet and comfortable enough space to record our interviews. The interviews that took place in Rivertowne (n=9) were conducted in the recreational room or at the homes of the co-researchers. I conducted interviews in the homes of all Esplanade residents since we already had an established relationship and felt safe enough to do so. There were co-researchers (n=3) who were attendants of a nearby community organization for young mothers. I conducted the interviews of these co-researchers within a meeting room inside the building of this organization. Two co-researchers were university students and requested that we conduct our interview in the office space of one of their professors. The remaining interviews (n=6) took place in local public spaces such as coffee shops (n=2), at the workplaces of co-researchers while they were on break (n=2), and within local food plazas (n=2).

Interviews

Qualitative interviews are useful for “studying people’s understanding of the meaning in their lived world” (Kyale, 1996, p. 105). This form of interview provides thick descriptions of
the people who are being explored within the project (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Semi-structured interviews are designed to provide comprehensive information about the beliefs, thoughts, and feelings of co-researchers (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are partially inductive in the sense that they attempt to understand complex phenomena and behaviour without entirely deciding the categories of response that may be present (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). This was important to this project because I did not want my preconceived notions to influence the type of knowledge that would be generated. This was also one way to undermine the researcher/participant power dynamic typical in knowledge production.

I developed two interview guides: One for Rivertowne residents who lived in the neighbourhood before it was revitalized in order to capture the experience of revitalization (Appendix D); the second interview guide was created for all other TCH residents, including those who lived in Rivertowne only after it was redeveloped (Appendix E). Each guide contained 10 questions, some with sub-questions. The second guide included questions that were more relevant to the revitalization experience. The interview questions were shared with and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University.

Prior to beginning the interviews, I thoroughly read aloud the consent form, informed the co-researchers of the purpose of the study, explained to them the procedures, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I also reassured them that their confidentiality would be maintained. Finally, I asked for their consent to audio-record their interview. I conducted semi-structured interviews with co-researchers that lasted up to 90 minutes. Semi-structured interviews gave co-researchers the opportunity to discuss matters that were more important to them (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Community Mapping

Community mapping is a tool used to encompass community members’ thoughts of the sociopolitical spatial and physical location of their neighbourhoods (NCMI, 2019). It is an arts-based method that provides an alternative and more accessible way for co-researchers to participate in the production of knowledge (Parker, 2016). I utilized community mapping (NCMI, 2019) in the latter part of the project. This was restricted to Rivertowne co-researchers since they were all from the same community and I wanted to highlight how they conceptualized their redeveloped space. The revitalization process creates an additional level of experience for Rivertowne residents, which I felt the community mapping would be able to encapsulate. This was especially true in relation to the updated infrastructure and layout of the community, and how these factors affect how Black bodies are managed and policed. There were five co-researchers that participated in the community mapping activity. They were asked to draw a map that represented how they visualize and conceptualize the spaces within their community. This could have included areas with particular components related to infrastructure (e.g. the wall that separates the public and private properties); spaces that captured various spatial relations (e.g. where meetings are held or the playground where children from TCH and private property homes play together); or areas where certain tragedies or events took place in their neighbourhood (e.g. the street named after Peggy-Ann smith, a grandmother senselessly murdered over gun violence; Lavoie, 2017). Co-researchers were able to effectively and meaningfully contribute through this process.

Data Analysis

Subsequent to transcribing, direct-scribing was used to clarify the input and perspectives of all co-researchers. Direct-scribing involves writing down the interaction of a co-researcher or
interviewee word for word alongside their personal interpretation of what they shared (Martin, 1998). Including quotations was one way to reinforce this method and not obscure the feedback and shared knowledge of the co-researchers (Martin, 1998). Co-researchers who made statements that needed clarification participated in direct-scribing, this was useful as it allowed them to provide their own explanations so that their statements were not misconstrued. While community mapping was used to accentuate the stories and voices of co-researchers, direct scribing was also used when reviewing the products of community mapping to ensure there was no misrepresentation. Direct-scribing also allowed for active participation during the data collection and analysis.

Coding

Miles et al. (2014) define codes as “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 71). In addition, these authors state: “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). I used coding in order to condense my data and make it more conceptually understandable (Elliot, 2018, p. 2854). After the transcribing and direct-scribing process, I uploaded the transcriptions to NVivo 12 (NVivo) and used my notes from the direct-scribing as a clarification guide while coding the data. I developed a coding framework, which initially included 12 different codes. These codes were created prior to me reading through the transcripts that I uploaded to NVivo. The codes were developed based on knowledge that I gained in the process of conducting the interviews and concepts derived from the literature review. The process of using pre-developed codes is also known as “deductive coding” (Linneburg & Koorsgaard, 2019) or “concept-driven coding” (Evans et al., 2017).
As I browsed through the transcription and began to organize my data under certain codes, I realized there was key information I needed to include that did not fall within the initial coding framework. Thus, I engaged in the “open coding” process (Gibbs, 2007) whereby an individual creates new codes as they analyze their data (Evans et al., 2017). I created eight additional codes, including three aggregated codes, (to make a total of 12 emergent codes) through the open-coding process (see Appendix G).

**Rationale for (Independent) Coding Approach**

Researchers are encouraged to select a coding approach that is based on the epistemological and methodological framework that they have used (Punch, 2014). Elliot (2018) asserts that researchers with a philosophical commitment to qualitative research are likely to use emergent codes developed through the open-coding process. However, Creswell (2013) states that pre-coding limits the analysis to the “prefigured” (p. 185) codes instead of allowing the data to reflect the view of the participants in a traditionally qualitative way. Creswell (2013) and Elliot (2018) both agree that using both methods of coding is most pragmatic. Using both forms of coding allowed me to facilitate a rigorous and effective method of analysis.

I initially planned for co-researchers to participate in the coding process. However, my analysis took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which required social distancing measures to be exercised by all citizens. Since I was unable to meet up with co-researchers during this time, I took responsibility for analyzing the data using the coding method. Furthermore, I was using a fairly expensive data analysis program (NVivo 12) to code my data, so it would be difficult to provide co-researchers access to the same program or expect them to purchase this program for the sake of my dissertation analysis.
Community Mapping Analysis

I relied on direct-scribing to ensure that I accurately analyzed the community mapping drawings. Statements that co-researchers made about their drawings directly after submitting them to me were written down as personal notes. I also made personal notes regarding commonalities and key features that I recognized while reviewing the drawings. The notes were useful to inform my discussion of the findings.

Trustworthiness and Theoretical Sensitivity

Co-researchers assisted with the analysis of the transcripts creating advanced “theoretical sensitivity” (Strauss et al., 1990) within the analytical process of this research. They contributed by clarifying their input through follow-up meetings and phone-calls. Theoretical sensitivity involves being conscious about your data and different aspects which may affect the outcome of your analysis. My personal and professional experience had the potential to influence the way I analyzed the data so it was important that I considered any factors that may have created a bias during this procedure. I also mitigated this issue by “manufacturing distance” (McCracken, 1988), taking a step back and reflecting on “the matters with which I have a deep and blinding familiarity” (Marcus & Fischer as cited in McCracken, 1988, p. 159), which helped me to remain alert and to also seek guidance or check-in with others, such as the co-researchers, throughout the analysis stage. With regard to checking in with co-researchers, Erlandson et al. (1993) noted this was possible through “having informal conversations with [co-researchers] and “asking for a written or oral commentary” (p. 144) on the contents of the inquiry. Paying close attention to theoretical sensitivity and ensuring to manufacture a distance at times were two techniques I used to strengthen the trustworthiness of this project.
Social Location of the Researcher

I am a resident of TCH for over 22 years and the Tenant Representative of my community. I have many years of challenging experiences as a resident. My social location provides me an invaluable insider’s perspective (Ewan, 2019; Kanuha, 2000). However, I also understood this positionality eliminated any element of objectivity that is at times expected or required within other research paradigms (Acker et al., 1983; Eisner, 1992). That being said, my experience of oppression did not minimize the validity of my findings, and the co-researchers’ feedback and perspectives helped to balance out my biases. Although my co-researchers identified as Black women, they were still very diverse in age and cultural backgrounds. Thus, I expected to have residents who had differing opinions and views of being a Black TCH woman resident. The co-researchers’ unique experiences and backgrounds were enriching for this project.
Chapter 5: Findings

In order to present my findings, I divided this chapter into various sections. First, I present an overview of the codes I developed. Each code is inputted into a chart and numbered (see Appendix G). In the second section, I review the findings related to the community mapping activity. In the next section, I outline my themes and highlight compelling quotations to provide evidence for the relationship between the data, each code, and each theme. I have also included my own relevant experience into the findings. As a reminder to the reader, my personal experience and interactions as a TCH resident are italicized.

Coding Framework

I developed a coding framework from my review of the literature and from the new knowledge I gained from conducting the interviews. I created 12 codes to include within this framework. However, while reading through the transcriptions, I determined there was key information that was being excluded, as it did not fit within the pre-set codes. I created eight additional codes including three aggregate codes that were subsections of the predetermined codes (see Appendix G). The next section describes codes I created and the frequency of each code during data analysis.

The codes I referenced the most were: Maintenance, Policy and Practice issues (n=171); Power Relations (n=148); and Sense of Community (n=118). The three least referenced codes were: Blackness and Disablement (n=8); Location and Relocation Policy and Practice (n=14); and Reimagined Space (an aggregated code from Black Geographies). However, the frequency of a code does not equate to its relevance or importance. I have interpreted the frequency of codes as being related to a combination of common experiences between the co-researchers and also due to my subjectivities that derive from my social location and the lens I use to navigate
this world. I developed themes from the codes, taking into consideration the data as a whole. Each theme contains an overarching story that has been told by each of the co-researchers.

**Themes**

Five themes emerged from the research data: 1) TCH Housing Policy and Communities pose developmental risks for Black Children and create parenting challenges; 2) TCH communities and policies operate to confine, police and surveil Black bodies; 3) TCH communities and policies create barriers to upward social mobility; 4) TCH Black women residents are strong, resourceful and resilient survivors; and 5) TCH Black women (re)create spaces that are supportive, constructive, and loving.

Themes four and five primarily assisted in answering my first question: How do Black women build and maintain cohesive communities within revitalized TCHC mixed-neighbourhoods? Themes one and two answered the second research question: What TCHC policies are problematic for Black women? Theme three mainly contributed to the third research question: Do TCHC policies and procedures contribute to any of the challenges Black women residents experience in life? If so, to what extent and in what ways? Each theme is discussed in further detail below.

**Theme 1: Developmental Risks and Parenting Challenges for Black Children and Parents**

During the coding process, I identified data that related to ‘child development risks and parenting challenges’ 87 times. The frequency of this issue in addition to co-researchers identifying environmental risks (such as criminality, derelict conditions, and maintenance issues) for Black children living within TCH neighbourhoods and communities highlighted the relevance of this theme. With the majority of co-researchers being mothers (n=15), and my position as a mother and early childhood educator, it is not surprising that this theme arose in
both the data and analysis. However, all co-researchers, not just the mothers, spoke of issues around the developmental risks to Black TCH children.

*Gun Exposure and Violence.* One co-researcher, “DW”, recalled a time where her granddaughters, who are in her custodial care, witnessed a shooting while they were playing in a playground.

It's scary. It is. It is scary. Like it was to a point where I was in the park. One time, when the gunman shot the guy on the step here, and ran right across me and [her granddaughter] coming into the house at nine o'clock at night. And the smoke was still coming from his gun as we were running and I thought he was the one that got shot. But then they're saying he's the one that did the shooting.

And he ran right past us.

The same shooting was particularly difficult for her other granddaughter to experience. DW tried to alleviate some of the trauma with the help of TCH to no avail. “[Granddaughter’s name redacted] had a hard time because she was out in the park. So, I tried to push for transfer. And they did their surveillance or whatever and they said that we didn't qualify.”

Another co-researcher reflected on her childhood while living in Rexdale. “JN” stated, “It was a rough childhood . . . Seeing a lot of things, being exposed to a lot of things that I shouldn't have at such an early age.” While sharing specific memories JN said, “I remember waking up and we would go outside. There would . . . sometimes be bullet casings.”

The presence of guns and gun violence and were a norm for JN while growing up. In addition to the bullet casings she would see outside in the morning, she also had to hear about local store owners who would carry guns and other weapons to potentially use against children
they believed were committing crimes. When asked about whether her neighbourhood was safe for Black children, JN responded:

We were always targeted; we were never trusted. Even just to go to the local store, I remember there used to be locks on things that was just so unnecessary. Sometimes there were rumours that certain convenience stores were licensed firearms people. So, some of the times they had knives on them, guns on them, just in case if they were going to be robbed in the nights. So, we were just never trusted. And we were always looked at.

Co-researcher “LS” also discussed the impact of gun violence. When asked about the safety of her neighbourhood for Black children, and discussing some of the gun violence she witnessed while growing up, she stated, “People are still affected by the shootings . . . you could be affected by a shooting for the rest of your life.”

Child exposure to guns and gun violence was also a common experience among other co-researchers. “MT” and “BH” spoke about traumatizing experiences where their young children were exposed to guns through police raids in their home. MT recalled:

A month ago, there was a shooting that happened, one of my guests happened to be on the street and then when the shooting happened, they came running to the house and the bullet skimmed their foot. But wait, when they came to the house, the officers came rushing to my door like the shooter was at my house. I get the whole concept of keeping the community safe, but you also treated me like a fricking criminal. Oh my God, my kids were traumatized; I was traumatized, [name redacted for confidentiality] putting his hands up, they’re telling us to put our hands up.
BH had a similar experience where the police raided her home because of a crime committed by one of her guests. They did not take into account that children were in the home:

The doorbell rang and when I went to answer the door, [name redacted] and [name redacted] followed me. It was early morning, right before we were getting ready to head out for school and daycare. When I opened the door, there were two officers with huge guns pointed right in our face and they started yelling. My kids were so scared, they started screaming too. I was so shocked; I didn’t even know what to do. They pushed their way in and ended up tearing up my whole house from top to bottom. (BH)

BH also mentioned how this affected her son who was five years old at the time. “[He] keeps asking me if [name redacted] is a bad man. He knows the police came for him. Whenever we go to my mom’s house, he told the story over and over again to my mom.” Additionally, MT alluded to the lasting impact the gun exposure had on her children.

AE: That's terrible. Are your kids okay now? Did they have to go to counseling or anything?

MT: I don't know, to be honest.

AE: Do they ever talk about it?

MT: Yeah. Yeah.

AE: That's so sad. Too bad you can’t-

MT: So, I don't feel safe. I still don't trust them. I was in tears.

One of the co-researchers, who is a neighbour of MT, witnessed the same shooting and expressed similar sentiment. We had the following conversation:
“NM”: This neighborhood, I feel like it isn't that safe just because of the amount of shootings that have been going on. Some kids were at the park when my sister was, not involved, but she witnessed it.

AE: Oh my God, was it the last one?

NM: It was one where the guy ran by the park so all the kids saw.

AE: Someone was telling me about that.

NM: Yeah. And then there's one that happened on my doorstep.

AE: Oh my God.

NM: Yeah. So, the person who got shot in their foot, they were sitting on my doorstep. . . . So, I don't feel like it’s that safe. I am sometimes scared, especially summer time, I feel it’s the worst because everybody, I don’t even know these people and they’re on my doorstep.

Environmental Confinement and Toxicity. Black people are restricted with regard to the space and places they occupy (McKittrick, 2006; Michney, 2007; Shabbaz, 2015). The co-researchers shared experiences related to this and further discussed how it was affecting their children. Most of these discussions revolved around a lack of space and living in spaces that were unsanitary. While talking about her family’s need for a larger home, co-researcher “AM” shared:

But she's been on this list, and it hasn't moved for so long. And the thing that makes it worse is that my brother’s autistic. So, he’s that type of person where he loves the outside. He likes to run around so he needs a bigger space.

“MK” expressed concern over the lack of space in her home for her children and how her family is restricted to this space because of their low income. All three of her children, two daughters
and one son (aged 13, 11 and 8 respectively), share the same small room. This has been very stressful on one of her daughters to the point where MK was reported to child welfare services:

Oh, well, I have had Children’s Aid come to my house because my daughter is extremely tired and stressed out. She’s 13 years old. She finally got her period last year. And my other daughter, they all share room. And my son, they share room. He’s nine years old. And it’s extremely a small room. There’s no room to breathe. It's just unacceptable. But there’s not much I can do because I don’t have the income to cover that, right?

“RT’s” interview highlighted the unsanitary conditions her family lives in and having to use methods similar to those living in third world countries

The bathroom is small. We are six people, one bathroom, and I have to have . . . like you can call something like bucket, where if someone’s in the bathroom and you can’t go, so you have to go in the bucket, and then later go dump it, which is very difficult.

Not only are the homes and rooms too small, there is low air quality and very few windows in many TCH homes. In Rivertowne, many of the children’s rooms do not have windows but balconies instead. “TS” speaks about her frustrations regarding this issue alongside how the low-quality air has affected her:

For sure, health-wise maybe in the summer it can get really hot and so I'll have to open my door in order to have the air flow in. Even in the winter, just because the air can be stiff. You need some airflow in your room. It’s never happened, knock on wood, but I have to open my door a bit. Someone crazy comes along, they could jump into my door. There’s potential for danger in
that way. I will be honest, it’s very easy to climb up and down the back ends of these.

RT spoke about having issues with mold and being required to immediately vacate her previous home with larger space because of air toxicity. With regards to the bathroom mold: “It's worrying because my bathtub have a mold, and the last time they came, they just put paint on top, and they said they would come and remove it all back, the tub, so now I'm still waiting.”

Regarding the air toxicity:

So, they told me that the housing is not safe. I remember them telling me, why is not safe? I believe they come test it, the air was bad, but they didn't tell me. I think they hide this from me.

**Pests.** Maintenance issues are a prevailing problem for TCH neighbourhoods and homes (Smee, 2020). Maintenance, Policy and Practice Issues was the highest referenced code in my data analysis (n=171). Not only do maintenance issues negatively affect the material conditions of TCH homes, they also have detrimental effects on those who live in these homes (namely, the children; Peters et al., 2007; Rabito et al., 2003). “JK” shared how her daughter was bitten by bedbugs after they internally transferred into a townhouse within their same neighbourhood, which was also infested:

Well, I want to take it up with [name redacted], the new guy because I was living a couple doors up for 10 years. I never had problems with roaches, and especially bedbug . . . never had problem. I come here, and it's a big problem . . . my daughter, whose skin was bitten up, everything.

Another co-researcher spoke about pest concerns and her attempts to deal with this problem proactively. According to “NJ”:
There was one issue where I had mice in my apartment for the longest time and I was starting to hear them in the walls and I asked if they can be proactive and do something about it. Their only thing was, “Oh we would have to do this and this,” but in my head I was like, “You should still do it” because then you're going to have an infestation and then you’re going to have to make bigger moves or plans to get rid of them. So, just do it the right way and get it done with. I felt like there was some things they were a little sloppy with.

NJ’s issues with mice were not limited to her unit; another co-researcher talked about the appalling mice infestation in her home who she shares with her son:

With the mice? Yeah. Yeah, they were trying to get in my house from I moved in here they were actually pretty bad. When I first moved in like they would jump on my bed when I moved there. Yeah, they're really bad like that. Like they’re jumping. So, it was on my bed when I walked in, so I ended up getting a cat and since I have my cat, I have not seen no mouse. Yeah, because other than that I would have had to move out if I didn’t think of the cat because mouse is jumping on your bed? That's crazy.

Co-researcher DW, who lives with her granddaughters, also had a prolonged experience with mice:

But I kept going to him and telling him I’m smelling something in my bedroom was there’s something in my bedroom closet there is dead mice in there or dead body. Yes. Its stinking in my bedroom closet, it rank. So, for months and months to three months went by and I got so pissed off that I went there and I said either
you guys get somebody to come fix it here smell what see what’s going on or
I'm not paying no rent. I'll take it to court.

**Broken Appliances and Amenities.** Another maintenance issue that can affect children’s quality of life is broken appliances. Kitchen appliances are necessary for low-income families to cook nutritious meals for their children (Landers & Shults, 2008). However, many appliances in TCH homes are broken and remain unfixed. “MW” discusses how her fridge broke within a year of getting what TCH claimed was a brand-new appliance.

Yeah, same with the fridge. I had a problem with the fridge and like, all my stuff melted. This is two times my stuff melted in the freezer and it stopped working.

And I tried to contact the manager of the complex two times, like one of the head guys. And they didn't get back to me. I emailed him probably two times, gave him a call a couple times. They don’t email back they don’t get back to me.

And basically, I was trying to get I was trying to get like . . . I was trying to get my money back. Wasting all my groceries. Because I’m going to [inaudible] my fridge after, right? And nobody gets back to me about anything like that.

When MW was finally able to get ahold of someone to complete a work order on her fridge:

The guy just says like, everything’s fine. And this is one, they gave me this new fridge last year. So, it’s a new fridge also. So, it’s just like, Oh, well, you just got this fridge. I'm like Exactly. So why is it doing this? Right? But they don’t do anything they can’t say anything. Like this is just, you know? What it is.

DW experienced appliance issues that lasted over a year. Her food also spoiled many times during this time. She also unknowingly provided some of this spoiled food to her four-year-old granddaughter, who would consistently complain about the taste:
DW: I complained. I complained. I complained. Oh! They have people come in say ‘oh, check the fridge mechanics or whatever. Oh, the fridge is fine, fine, fine’. But then one morning I woke up were completely shut out. So, I ended up losing—

AE: All your food!

DW: Right! So, I went to the office. I brought the guy over there. He took pictures the food that was swimming in the water. He helped save it by taking it over there and putting it in the fridge for me. And then they gave me a small, free little fridge to help out. . . . They put an old fridge in and I complained. . . . The fridge was nasty, it was dirty. And I called head office and I complained. And then the super, the supervisor called me the next day to let me know. It’s only temporarily. Well, it’s a dirty old temporary fridge. I don't want it. . . . Up until now [May 2019 to March 2020], I was losing milk. And every three, four days my milk was going sour. I would say to [child’s name redacted], ‘well drink your bottle.’ ‘No Nanny, I don't like the taste.’ ‘What's matter with the matter with your milk?’ ‘I don't like the taste.’ Things were going sour and I kept complaining and they kept—you know the guys (inaudible) from the place say oh the fridge working fine but then two guys came in back to back and says this fridge is not working.

Co-researcher, LS, experienced maintenance issues with the stove and other amenities in her unit:
The amenities here break down all the time. You can see the stove that they will never fix. There's no cooling . . . this oven needed to be replaced five years ago.

Every day one of the heater things are not working.

A particularly concerning maintenance issue that was unattended to by TCH was shared by co-researcher “SM”. She spoke about how the lock of her front door remained broken for two weeks. SM lives in Moss Park, which is known for its drug abuse issues and crime (Levy, 2018): “I have had to wait weeks for my lock to be changed . . . if anything gets stolen, you're going to tell me I'm not liable so, I need somebody even now.”

**Policy.** The last area within this theme that posed a potential developmental risk for Black children is related to policy. Some of the policies within housing also create tensions between parents and their children (also creating parenting challenges). In her interview, JK explains how:

The minute my kids get old and they start to work now, you might be on disability or social assistance or you’re working for less pay. If your kid . . . working, they want the kid to pay more, right? . . . More rent, and then it become in the household a struggle now because the kid’s arguing with the parents because they’re saying, “My rent is $900 and all you're paying is $200. I could bring over whoever I want.” So, I become like a . . . It’s bad, you know? . . . They make it to be a violent situation in the household with parents and kids because Toronto Housing do not want to give the kids their own place.
This policy is also very stressful for children who are students. SM also reflected on this policy and spoke about some of the frustrations and the ways in which this policy affected her education:

Because Toronto Community Housing has this thing where, once you're 16, you need to all of a sudden report your income. Why? I am a high school fucking student, what business do you have in my pockets? And why does that affect my mom’s rent? Because as far as I'm concerned, this is, if I get a part time job, it’s so I get in the habit of being in the outside world, and being in a working environment. But it should never get in the way of my education.

LS also experienced challenges around this issue. She discussed how stressful it was for income to be taken away directly out of school and the weight of responsibilities imposed on children who work:

Like, obviously if you're not in school, then you’re expected to pay rent, which of course I understood that. But I didn’t understand it was going to be that quick, so quick after you graduate that they were like ready to take all your income. . . .

So now the kids are taking on the roles of the parents because it all depends on your income and it’s rented your income obviously. Right? But I think the way in which they just force it down your. . . . I'm taking steps to get an education. Of course, there are people who just never get jobs and that's okay. They're suspicious of those people, but there's a lot of people here who just need that few months. . . . I think the way in which they really hound people and kind of witch hunt them to give them money, is kind of ridiculous, especially kids. . . . And it's kind of unfair that I have to think about rent where people my age (age 26),
because they don’t live in housing, they could just live scot-free and never have
to think about rent. So that’s just an added stress on myself.

Finally, RT talks about the stress of having to update TCH with supporting documentation
proving that her children are in school (as per policy):

One time I give them a report card. They didn’t want a report card. They want
time table. I say, ‘What is difference makes?’ Just a report card. . . . They give
it to me for this year. I can go make up time table, but you want. . . . Yeah.
Why not accept report card? And they said to me, if I don’t get that timetable
by the end of the week, your rent is going to go higher. So, I have to go to
school, go get timetable.

The recollections presented above are factors I noted that contribute to the potential
developmental risks and parenting challenges experienced by Black children and parents and that
are unique to TCH residents and families. These findings related to maintenance issues are
critical to acknowledge because of the noted overrepresentation of Black people who live in
Toronto Community Housing. They are forced to withstand, and disproportionately affected by,
these substandard living conditions.

Theme 2: Confining, Policing, and Surveilling Black Bodies

In chapter one, I cautioned readers to understand the concept and design of systemic
racism. The Aspen Institute (2016) defines systemic racism as:

A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural
representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to
perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and
culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and
disadvantages associated with “colour” to endure and adapt over time.

[Systemic] racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist. (para. 3)

I am reviewing this definition to situate the data within a social context of systemic racism; how Black bodies are systemically confined, policed, and surveilled within TCH spaces and through TCH policy and operations. It is important to understand these issues as systemic rather than isolated acts of racism by individuals. Furthermore, it is counterproductive to focus on the ‘intention’ of specific people (such as TCH employees) since the TCH policies, space, and operation (systems) that I am discussing have been developed through years of cultural and historical oppressive practices.

Policing and surveillance often occurs when Black TCH residents attempt to gather in public within their own communities. When I asked LS about some of the differences that existed between living in her old neighbourhood, Don Mount Court before it was redeveloped as Rivertowne, she shared with me how many complaints were made by home owners about TCH residents. LS stated:

They always have problems with people hanging out in their backyard saying, “You guys are too loud. You’re causing a commotion.” When it’s like Saturday night . . . [b]ecause everything we seem to do irritates them. There could be two people sitting on our balcony having a conversation, and they’re like, “You guys need to quiet down.”

These homeowners would then use their privilege and entitlement to call the police and have them enforce order in LS’ neighbourhood. They also reached out to TCH, who
advised them to make noise complaints if they were disturbed by their TCH neighbours. However, the homeowners began to abuse this power, which resulted in TCH and the police telling the homeowners to stop abusing the system.

It even went to the extent where they [TCH] had to sit down, police and Hamilton people, and have a discussion being like, “You need to stop calling the cops for this because people are allowed to live and be in their space and if you have a problem with that, then you can only really call after 11:00 PM and all we can really tell them is to turn down the noise and that’s it.” (LS)

Many co-researchers noted they felt the infrastructure of their communities was formed in a way to intentionally surveil TCH residents. This was particularly the case for residents who lived in neighbourhoods that were revitalized. For instance, MT, a co-researcher who lived in both Don Mount Court (DMC) and Rivertowne said:

You have no more privacy; you share more. . . . We have to see each other.

Even though if you see your neighbours, whatever, but you actually have to . . . I can’t explain it. Share that same space all the time, yeah, so it’s different.

Additionally, MT claims that when she moved back to DMC and it was redeveloped to Rivertowne, TCH added their street numbers on the back of their homes so they were more easily identifiable: “Then the low-income housing started coming back, it was like, okay, they’re causing too much noise. They actually put numbers on the back of our houses so they can identify us easier.”

Technological surveillance was also an issue discussed by co-researchers. LS revealed how cameras were mounted in positions that allowed TCH residents to see
that they were being watched, but were actually ineffective when it came to monitoring serious incidents and crime:

One example is like with the cameras that they put in. That was in response to incidences that were happening. They said like, cameras are going to go in so we’re going to be able to see who’s committing these crimes. . . . Then another crime happened and then when it was time to use the footage from the camera, it turned out the cameras actually weren’t to the standard or level that was initially put forth. You’re watching us more. It just seems like I don’t know, the vantage point of where they’re placed is like who are you watching. It seems like you’re watching us more than you’re watching the exit zones, streets.

NM, another DMC to Rivertowne resident commented on the lack of privacy TCH residents have, “We have neighbours that if they’re smoking and stuff like that, we don’t really have a lot of privacy.”

Other co-researchers highlighted how the infrastructure played a role in being consistently reported to TCH for causing a disturbance to their neighbours in other ways. RT discussed how she was intimidated by her neighbours due to her children making noise while playing. She would receive calls from TCH regarding complaints and her neighbours would write her letters in the mailbox telling her to move out. “She’s playing in the house. I can’t tie her legs. That used to concern me a lot . . . I’m being kind of noisy. I’ll get just letter, ‘Oh, you can’t be here, move out.’” Another co-researcher, AM discussed another form of intimidation and harassment from her white neighbour who then also tried to use TCH to prevent her mother from standing her ground while using building amenities:
My mom just ran into this incident recently, like about two weeks ago. She was in the laundry room, and she’s been waiting . . . my mom has three kids, so obviously, she had to use majority, and she was about to dry, and she had her money. She was about to use . . . four dryers, and then one white lady came and said, “You need to save me one.” And my mom was like, “I’ve been waiting for so long for these dryers, so I’m going to use the ones I need. So, if I need all four, I’m going to use all four.” So, my mom put the clothes in the dryer, and then she went upstairs to get something, came back down, and her clothes were out of the dryer, but she used her money to pay for it. So, the white lady ended up taking up my mom’s clothes, putting it on top, and putting her clothes inside. So, then my mom went back down, took out her clothes, put her clothes back in . . . the white lady said she’s going to report my mom to the superintendent. My mom said, “Go ahead. If I need all four dryers, and I’ve been waiting hours for that.”

All of the interactions described above happened between the co-researchers with white and non-Black residents. However, each interaction was facilitated through the use of TCH policy. TCH policies allows other residents and community members to confine, surveil, and police Black bodies into spaces they deem acceptable in less overt ways. However, there are other invasive policies that co-researchers expressed were being used to consistently control and watch without having to engage with another individual. JN spoke about a policy related to annual reviews where TCH residents are expected to report all of their assets and income:

The income ticks me off sometimes because it’s like, ‘It’s none of your business’ . . . I just feel like the financial piece always ticks me off because they always want bank statements or if you’re trying to give them one bank
statement, they’ll call you. I’ve been in a situation where I’ve had three
accounts on one card and I printed off maybe three months’ bank statement and
they’ll call me back and be like, "We see that there’s other two accounts on
your card. Send those too.

Co-researcher, MW was reprimanded through this policy for having more money in her bank
account than she initially reported. She was instructed to retroactively pay back-rent by the
thousands of dollars and even faced eviction. She shared, “They [TCH] hiked up my rent so a
couple extra thousand went on my bill. Yeah so I had to go to court and deal with that.” When I
followed up for clarification on this part of the transcript, MW explained that she misunderstood
the timeframe she was required to report that she received employment, which is why she did not
immediately inform them about a new job position that she received.

**Agents of Policy Enforcement.** Women and mothers are inadvertently made responsible
for managing the crime and enforcing policies within TCH neighbourhoods. Two of the co-
researchers were placed in very vulnerable and compromising positions due to the actions of
other people living in their household. BH was given an eviction warning and a subsequent
notice/order because someone who was living with her created chaos within the neighbourhood.
This individual caused commotions among her neighbours and eventually began hiding guns in
her unit, unbeknownst to her. She commented on this experience, “I feel like they always held
me responsible even though I had nothing to do with whatever incident happened outside of my
unit.” I then asked BH about a policy that makes leaseholders responsible for crime committed
by anyone in their unit in TCH neighbourhoods:
AE: And at one point, the policy that was specifically affecting you is [the one] that states if someone is charged with a criminal offense or I think it’s convicted, that you are eligible for eviction. Do you think that policy’s fair?

BH: No, not unless it’s you. I think if it’s somebody that you know, I don’t think it's fair to you.

BH further commented on how she feels TCH should deal with these matters: “I think housing should only hold you accountable for what you do, not for the others around you. I feel like housing doesn’t take into account what the reasons are that you don’t report people living in your unit.” JK is another co-researcher who experienced dire consequences due to crime in the neighbourhood. In this case, her son was a targeted victim of gun violence. Instead of JK’s family receiving support and protection, JK was accused of bringing violence into the community and was treated accordingly:

I was up for eviction because of my son. I know gun violence is very serious and I could understand them. But at the same aspect that they understand my part, too. I’m the victim. It’s not like my son stand up on the stairs and shoot up nobody. Somebody was shooting in here up at him. So, they tried to evict me on that and it was not nice. It was not nice.

JK went on to explain the aftermath of this traumatic experience: “It was a long process and it’s very worrying, very stressful. And I would like nobody to go through that, you know?” Thankfully, with the support of her lawyer and community members, TCH did not win their eviction case against JK. “They call and then they say or tell me they will have to cancel the case because they realized I was winning the case already” (JK).
Ironically, although these women are considered responsible enough to maintain law and order within the community, some of these same women have been eliminated from being considered appropriate candidates for being official leaders within their communities. Recently, TCH established a new framework and guidelines for the role of tenant representative. These new guidelines have yet to be posted on their website. They have now replaced what used to be a one-person role with a group of people who will represent their respective communities. However, they have placed severe restrictions on who is eligible to run for these positions. MT and JK shared some of the new restrictions. According to JK:

The new thing that come with it now, if you want to be, like you have tenant rep. You're going to have six people in, and with the six people who’s on that panel have to vote for two people to go represent your community. . . . And the funny thing, what is it now, they just had a meeting and I was so upset with them. If you owe rent, you cannot join. . . . If your kid live in your household and the police come to your door, you cannot join. . . . If the Toronto Community Housing officers come to your door for any noise disturbance, you cannot join. . . . So, all the politics, it’s so crazy behind it.

MT detailed these new changes and questioned the ethics regarding the eligibility standards. She also questioned whether the condo owners would have the same requirements as TCH residents:

My personal problem with what's happening with my community, do you have that same regulations with the condominium people? If you need them, because this is our community, to participate in this, are you looking back in their legal background? Whether they owe mortgage?
The following are the findings related to lack of space TCH families are provided to live in.

The Return of the Kitchenette. The final area is related to the physical restrictions and barriers to living in a healthy home. In chapter three, I wrote about Chicago’s historic public housing infrastructure. Chicago was well known for housing Black residents in public housing apartments containing kitchenettes (Shabazz, 2015).

A kitchenette is an apartment, attic, or basement that is divided into smaller units to house more residents (Shabazz, 2015). Based on reports from co-researchers who underwent the redevelopment process, TCH appears to be adopting this approach to housing design. All co-researchers noted that the Rivertowne homes are much smaller than the homes in Don Mount Court. NJ and LS eloquently discuss these changes:

NJ: We had a little bit of a front little portion. We had a basement. It was huge. I loved it. . . . Except for the fact that, when we moved into it there was mice and there was issues but we had washing machines in our units. Whereas now, I’m not in a townhouse but in the building, there's not even a washing machine or a dryer per floor. . . . It’s a four-story building, and there’s three washers, three dryers.

AE: Wow. So, it’s a lot of wait[ing].

NJ: Yeah. A lot of wait [ing]. And if somebody’s using two of the dryers, you’re waiting for the whole day.

AE: Of course. So, did you like your unit the same, less, or more? I’m assuming you liked the Old Donmount more than-

NJ: Oh, yeah.
LS expressed frustration with how small her current Rivertowne unit is:

And another thing I can say about this neighborhood is the space. Before when I used to live in Don Mount Court, we had a backyard, we had a basement. We had so much storage. Now, literally it feels as though we’re like hoarders. And it’s not that. It’s that our houses are physically smaller and we can’t fit as much stuff in here. And the space is just so small. Living even with just three of us is so hard. It’s so difficult.

The second way TCH appears to be adopting the Kitchenette living standards is through the ways in which they continue to allow families to live underhoused. According to TCH, being underhoused means “You are a rent-geared-to-income household and living in a unit that is too small for your household based on the City of Toronto’s Occupancy Standards” (TCH, 2020a, para. 4.). If your household is deemed underhoused, you are then placed on an internal transfer waiting list. However, it takes many years (more than five years on average) to move to the top of this internal transfer list. My step-father, who is overhoused (in a unit that is too large) has been on the internal transfer list for four years now. You must be underhoused by two or more bedrooms to be placed on the priority transfer list. This means that if you are living in a one-bedroom unit with three children, you are not considered a prioritized underhoused household. This is because the Toronto occupancy standards state that each room within a home can occupy two individuals. So, in the case of the single parent with three children, they would only be underhoused by one unit since an additional unit would allow them to room two of the three children.

Furthermore, the City of Toronto occupancy standards do not specifically use the term “bedroom” when discussing the standards for residents sharing a space. They only provide
measurements and descriptions for what is considered an acceptable room for residents to sleep in. This gives housing the legal ability to instruct their residents to utilize other rooms within their households. *I am currently underhoused, living in a two bedroom with four going on five children. I am still not considered eligible for the underhoused priority list according to TCH and the City of Toronto’s housing policies. I have been personally instructed to utilize my living room as an extra bedroom for my children while I await a transfer.* TCH’s policy related to underhoused families also does not consider gender. Previously, they made the distinction that each gender would be eligible for their own room. They have since removed this criterion from their policy. Co-researcher, “TB”, explains her dismay regarding these policies:

The transfer policy. I just don’t, I can’t really grasp exactly what makes me ineligible for a transfer. And I would call around and everyone would just pretty much give me the run around or I’d get different answers from different coordinators. . . . So basically, I'm being told that I cannot get a transfer because my daughter and I can share a bedroom. I need to have three other persons living with me in order to get a transfer to a two-bedroom apartment. . . . I feel like they don’t respect my space at all. They just don’t care. I think they feel that because my rent is based on my income, that I should just take whatever they give to me and be quiet.

Co-researchers AM, MT, and RT, also discussed living in homes that are too small for their families. MT is currently living in a two-bedroom townhouse with three children. MT was reported to Child welfare services because her daughter displayed stress while at school. RT spoke about her family using a bucket to use the bathroom at times because they share one bathroom between six people. AM shared that her and her two other siblings share one room together. She also discussed how her brother is autistic and requires a lot of space to comfortably navigate his surroundings and to appropriately support his developmental growth. All of these
families are currently living under standards that are similar to those families living in Kitchenettes. I will elaborate on this further in the next chapter.

**Theme 3: Barriers to Upward Social Mobility**

Upward social mobility occurs when an individual navigates within a social group, or class to a position of increased status or power (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). This theme focuses on a variety of incidences and policies co-researchers noted that have, or would have, a long-lasting effect on their lives and create barriers to upward social mobility.

Co-researcher AM discussed with me how her mother is unable to openly run her own business in her apartment because TCH has restricted her from running a business. Her mother has to hide her tools and materials each time she puts in a work order: “So, when it comes to reporting issues, she has to be prepared. She needs to cover everything before she can even call them.” AM also spoke about how TCH does not support residents who are business owners:

I feel if they’re just not doing enough for people, especially like when I look at like within my own setting, like my mom has to be careful to do her own business at home. . . . She has to focus. My mom told me she has to focus more on her business. Not like she doesn't care about us, but she has to focus 100% on her business because that's how she feeds us. That's how she buys us clothes. That's how she buys us things.

Finally, AM shared that her mother is met with challenges when it comes to reporting the income she makes from her business:

AE: If you don’t mind me asking you this, and this is completely okay. I’m not judging you. All of this is anonymous. Does she report her business to housing? So, do they know she makes money from that business?
AM: I feel like she’s starting to put it out there but not as much. I know there’s some paperwork that she usually fills out, and they ask her maybe how much she makes. . . It’s hard because it's not consistent, and housing will only give you two months, and then they raise your rent.

Ironically, entrepreneurial activity and business development are capitalist activities that are highly regarded in society (Flordia et al., 2020). But in this case, and for many other TCH residents, entrepreneurship is treated as an underground illegal activity. In addition to the residents that AM detailed in her experience, there are residents who take on businesses doing hair braiding, catering, and childcare and do not report their income to TCH. People do not report this income because TCH is highly invasive and the increase to rent is not justified by the amount these enterprises—often undertaken to cover the cost of incidentals—bring in. TCH does have a program that supports residents who would like to become entrepreneurs (TCH, 2020c), however, these programs are limited to youth age 13-29 and are entirely under TCH’s supervision, including requiring specific procedures for monitoring and reports about profits. Whether residents participate in this program or become entrepreneurs on their own, TCH maintains control through excessive monitoring which keeps financial security out of reach. In this way Black bodies and TCH residents’ independence and freedom are limited.

Another way that TCH keeps its residents in poverty is in the wages they pay community workers. MT worked for TCH as a community worker and was paid under minimum wage. Further, they threatened to evict her because she did not report her income in a timely manner. “It's not because I was trying to be fraudulent, I'm just busy. I was busy with work, I was busy with whatever, and then so they charge me back rent for the income that I've been making.”
(MT) MT was forced to go to court to fight the eviction notice and to dispute the amount TCH was demanding after her contract ended.

So, I went to court . . . I went to actually legal aid, it was really like they got to the level where. . . . I missed my court date and then I couldn’t afford the legal aid. Then I went to the legal aid and they helped me out, then when I got there, but then all at the same time, my contract ended at work. I was like, okay, yeah, I agreed to pay you guys back payment of this, but I’m not paying it now. . . . So, she’s [the tenant service coordinator] threatening me to go back to court now. (MT)

JK is another active member within her community who receives no compensation for the programming she developed and facilitates for her community members. This is despite the fact she has received municipal awards for her community contributions (See Appendix H). JK shared: “Most of the program I do, it kind of fulfill me, like it make me feel happy and like I'm doing something positive to change the neighbourhood. So, I'm very happy to live in this neighbourhood.” JK has been mentioned by many of the other co-researchers for her work as well. Despite her positive contributions to the community she has been threatened with eviction on numerous occasions because of activities involving her son. Instead of trying to support JK, who is a positive and active member of the community, TCH is swift to try and remove her.

Earlier on in this chapter, I shared the story of BH and the difficulties she faced due to the criminal activities of an individual living with her at the time. BH experienced a lot of stress because of the way TCH reprimanded her due to her live-in guests’ behaviours. She was required to take time off at work and at one point was facing homelessness. From my role as a tenant representative, I am aware of other women who did not participate in this study but were required to leave TCH and were banned from re-entering for the same reasons. They were then
left to seek affordable housing through another organization or were left with the option of paying a significantly higher amount of rent through private rentals.

Another co-researcher and mother experienced issues with administration who retaliated whenever she complained to them about their staff. She received her housing through a priority application since she was pregnant and facing homelessness. However, her living situation placed her in an even more precarious, dangerous and stressful situation. “SF” shared:

They would treat you like crap and if you ever wanted to complain or threaten to complain to their higher ups, they would call CAS on you. They would find all sorts of things. . . . They did that to me. They tried it.

Not only are TCH resident who are mothers experiencing barriers to upward social mobility, children who live in TCH are not afforded the same opportunities as others when it comes to building a foundation for their future. For instance, many students decide to stay at home in order to pay off student loans and save to purchase their first home (Lowe & Arnett, 2020). TCH policy mandates that children 16 and over are required to pay rent if they are working. There are also students who are required to start paying rent immediately after they graduate. TS spoke about how she was pressured by TCH to pay her rent as soon as she graduated:

AE: Have you ever been evicted or threatened with eviction?

TS: Yeah, actually. They love to do that. I don't know why and we are good paying . . . good paying. I pay on time. Me and my sister are just finishing school. I know they have all my cred-- they have my whole life on a piece of paper. They know the type of person that we are. I get it in terms of trying to get money out of people, it's like a scare tactic, but it's a bit much.
SM discussed her frustrations regarding the strict policies for TCH children and students. She also briefly discussed how more leniency is required to support youth mental health.

I’m saying like even from, I’d say my mom’s perspective, when my sister took a year off because she actually did go to London, and she started . . . you know, mental health. It gets too much and . . . at that point it just consumes you and you just need a break. And it’s that pressure, “well, if she’s going to be at home, she has to work. . . . Or else we have to talk about your tenancy. Or else your tenancy, or else your tenancy.” And then it’s, oh, “if you don't show us something, you’re evicted.” What the fuck? Why?

Finally, one co-researcher highlighted how even though TCH’s mandate is to serve marginalized people; they show little empathy resulting in increased stress for the people already experiencing challenging circumstances. NJ shared her experience with paying rent late and the ways in which TCH responded:

NJ: And I think once you're late, it's not-- I could consider late if it's not paid within the month. Know what I mean? Give you a chance…I think they should allow you the opportunity to kind of be able to pay your rent, even if it's not on the first, maybe till the 14th, because. . . . And then, especially when you pay it through the bank, it takes three days. Okay.

AE: Of course. So, what has happened in the event that you didn't give...?

NJ: Oh, [eviction warning] letters . . . the letters, the emails or whatever.

Whatever communication. And it’s like, whenever you try to call and be like, “It’s really because you did that . . .” Oh, that's my problem. It’s the way they address it.
The previous data demonstrates how TCH policy and practice makes it difficult for Black women to improve their lives. However, despite the barriers these policies and procedures have created for the co-researchers and their families, they continue to find resources and solutions in order to thrive.

**Theme 4: Resourcefulness, resilience, and survival.**

Black women residents experience many challenges living in TCH. However, during our interviews and community mapping exercise, co-researchers also shared invaluable information about their resourcefulness, resilience and survival. Many of the co-researchers have become self-advocates and advocates for their neighbours. There are a number of co-researchers who shared the strategies they endured living in TCH.

**Resourcefulness.** DW spoke about relentlessly fighting to have dead mice cleaned out of her unit. She contacted multiple agencies to share her concerns and persisted in speaking to each of them until she reached a resolution:

DW: I never sued them and I coulda. I had the health inspector and everybody involved. Oh yeah, I went over everybody's head. By the next time I knew the superintendent of this building, John was here...another big super like biggest, biggest guy. I have them all in here. Inspector them the animals control them.

Anita Ewan: And if you hadn't... been persistent and if you didn't--

DW: They woulda let me live with it.

MW resorted to contacting the City of Toronto about safety concerns she had with her neighbourhood park:
I went in and actually complained about it a couple times, that’s not safe for the children, they went in they removed the plank that was there but they didn’t do anything else towards the park . . . nobody checked it . . . so when I went to the city about it, they did tell me that it’s not part of city park. So, it’s up to our people here, Vendome management, it’s Del management, and they’re supposed to upkeep with the park, but they’re not doing that.

Another example of resourcefulness is in the way JK self-funded the breakfast program that runs every Friday morning. JK cooks a full and nutritious meal for those who attend. Everyone in Rivertowne is welcome. As the tenant representative of Rivertowne, JK consulted with me many times about the lack of funding provided for her to sustain the breakfast program she created. She informed me that TCH would provide minimal funding and that she would often have to take money out of her own pocket to meet the needs of the community for the rest of the year. JK also used other methods to sustain her program. In order to facilitate a program that was inclusive, she would make deliveries to members in the community. MK shared:

She [JK] does her breakfast program . . . and then she’ll take it up there to people who cannot come down including the elderly, who are in disability. She will go up there with breakfast and cater to them. That to me is a community love. JK also plans and facilitates an annual barbeque for Rivertowne each year. Once again, TCH was only willing to provide partial funds for this event. JK and a few other Black women in the community (including NJ, MK, and MT) reached out to neighbourhood stakeholders and businesses to donate to the barbeque. They have been successful in their fundraising each year since 2015.

Co-researchers who advocate for and support their children also demonstrated Black women resourcefulness. As mentioned, RT utilizes a bucket so that her children are able to use the
bathroom in a timely manner and in order to reduce tensions within her household. MT was able to strategically utilize the resources within her neighbourhood to best support her child’s learning. She explained how there were two schools designated to Rivertowne, but she opted for her children to attend one farther away because the other school had better resources due to gentrification.

AE: Have there been any positive effects with the new income, mixed income?

MT: Of course. Well, positive effects, my daughter, for example . . . when the neighborhood first started getting gentrified, my sons, I live in Rivertowne, and there’s two public schools. There's [School 1], and I used to take my sons to [School 1] because it scored higher. I chose to take my sons to go to [School 1], which is not as convenient as [School 2]. So, the biggest positive effect that I can see, [School 2] as a public school has changed so much because of gentrification because people with money tend to advocate for themselves a lot more. So, they have to include now French immersion, they have to include better lunch programs, they had to change the principal.

Another example of resourcefulness came from AM’s mother who created a business to provide for her children. She was able to run this business through her apartment despite the fact there were many risks involved. According to AM:

I don't know if this is in all buildings, but in our building, you're not supposed to do your own business . . . but she has to focus 100% on her business because that's how she feeds us. That's how she buys us clothes. That's how she buys us things.

**Resilience and Survival.** Co-researchers demonstrated their resilience and their desire to survive. One incident in particular involves RT. RT was forcibly uprooted
from her original unit, which was a six-bedroom unit. RT has nine children but at the
time one of them lived out of province and another was out of the country attending
school. The six-bedroom unit with two bathrooms was spacious and suitable enough to
house eight people and could also accommodate her children living out of town when
they came back home to visit. However, TCH informed her that she had to leave her
unit immediately and be transferred to a five bedroom with only one bathroom to share
among her nine children. The reason for the transfer was not entirely clear, however RT
believes that air toxicity levels were high. TCH claimed that she would be able to return
to her six-bedroom unit once they fixed the issue with the unit. It’s been four years now.
Here is RT’s account of this matter:

So, they say I have to move right away, transfer. . . . Temporarily into [address
2], and then they go fix the place, and then you can move back into your unit,
which is six bedrooms. Since then I moved into [address 2], they haven't even
fixed [address 1]. They haven’t fixed nothing. I check with them. They say . . .
“We don't know when it will go fixed. Oh, they find the mice there. Oh, a lot of
things. So, we haven't fixed.” . . . That's why I’m stuck [address 2]. Because all
when it used to be six bedroom, the house was big, was more comfortable,
except it was cold. They're not even doing nothing . . . this is since. . . . Probably
going four years.

NJ was resilient in the way she managed her grandmother’s health problems and maintained
her unit payments with no support from TCH. NJ’s grandmother visited Jamaica and fell ill. At the
time, her grandmother was the leaseholder. Unfortunately, NJ’s grandmother was unable to sign the
annual documentation that would determine her eligibility for subsidized rent. As a result, NJ’s
grandmother temporarily lost her subsidy and was being charged market rent, which she could not afford. NJ had to advocate for her grandmother so that she was not evicted. Eventually, NJ’s grandmother permanently moved leaving the apartment behind for her granddaughters (NJ and her sister) who she would often care for and were also on her lease. However, NJ was required to pay off her grandmother’s debt before TCH would reinstate their subsidy and allow them to take over the unit:

   My grandma got stranded in Jamaica due to health issues and stuff like that.
   So, she couldn't travel back and she couldn’t sign the papers here. So, her rent went to market rent. And then we lost subsidy and then in order for the unit to become mine, I had to pay off her arrears. (NJ)

   A more subtle form of resilience is enduring mistreatment and microaggressions. NW exercised this form of resilience when confronting TCH staff about the way they treat residents. She explained how it was troubling that some TCH staff are disrespectful to residents and she finds that it is because many of them are low-income and rely on subsidy: “I've had to call a couple of them out, because they feel that they can be disrespectful to us.” There are other residents who shared life experiences not directly related to TCH barriers and challenges but other forms of systemic oppression. For instance, SF was a teenage mother and with a daughter who is disabled. SF discussed how prior to moving into TCH, she and her mother were illegally evicted:

   SF: The woman, she wanted her place back because she lost her job, couldn't afford having two houses so she took our house back. It was a lot.

   AE: Did you get enough notice?
SF: Not really. The woman was like, “I'll pay you the rest or whatever,” but my mom had to find her own place and at least I knew I could get into [TCH] so she took the money to find her place.

“SW” is a survivor of domestic violence. She raised five children primarily on her own. She endured domestic violence for many years because she was unable to afford a new place to live and was unable to have her partner removed from the unit because of lease restrictions. She finally met someone who informed her of the priority transfer policy but was required to stay in a shelter with her three youngest children for about two months before a new place was provided for her and her family.

I called the police many times while he was drunk. I hoped they would see how unsafe it was for me and my children. But each time they told me there was nothing they could do to get him out. Sometimes they convinced him to leave the house until he was sober. He would always come back. I didn’t want to put him in jail so I never told him how he sometimes threw things around. He would never hit me but he was always yelling at me and the kids. He said a lot of things to hurt them. Finally, my eldest daughter told me about the priority transfer. I filed an application right away and did everything they told me to. It was hard to put my kids in a shelter but I was relieved when it was time to leave. (SW)

*In Chapter three, I wrote about a young woman named Alexis. Alexis a Black disabled mother of four children. Alexis is currently in the middle of a Human Rights Tribunal case with TCH. She has been fighting for an internal transfer since 2016. TCH has lost her paper work (see Appendix I), denied her applications and appeals four times (see Appendix I), and has delayed her transfer process by requiring medical professionals to rewrite the same letter multiple times (see*
Appendix I). Alexis is still awaiting a transfer. She is now pregnant with her fifth child and is at-risk when it comes to her medical condition. The unit she lives in continues to present challenges and barriers. Since the time I wrote chapter three, Alexis’ medical condition has worsened and she has been hospitalized due to her living conditions. She has reached out to TCH a number of times to no avail. She has sent emails to her city councilor; she has emailed the CEO of TCH many times; she filed a complaint with the Toronto Ombudsman; and consulted with the City of Toronto to inquire about their problematic occupancy standards. None of these organizations were willing to help, save for the councilor’s assistant. However, he claimed he was restricted by TCH’s institutional rules and regulations. TCH claims they are restricted by the City of Toronto’s housing policy. It is all a vicious cycle. In spite of this, Alexis continues to survive. Alexis is me. I decided to use the alias Alexis in chapter three because I did not want to center my story over that of the co-researchers. My resilience and survival also shows in the way that I continue to write this dissertation.

**Theme 5: Supportive, Constructive, and Loving Spaces**

Black women residents went beyond resilience and survival to create supportive, constructive and loving spaces. A common theme throughout all of the interviews was the supportiveness of Black women. This could be either in relation to the co-researcher’s family members or about community leaders. Furthermore, these supportive Black women found a way to create healthier and more welcoming spaces for residents. Below are a few examples of these women and the impact they made in their community:

AB: They have like programs in the building where like you could go and they’ll help you with your homework. They do cooking. There’s a lot of like . . .

What do you call it? It’s like, I would say program, but it’s like where they
come, they have like meetings where they talk about like what's happening. Like they're always posting it everywhere, come join.

AE: Who usually runs this? Is it funded by Toronto Housing?

AB: No, there's a lady, she's the board member or something like that. She and other people in the building, my building.

AE: Then you know the ones that run the programs, who’s typically running the program? Is it run by a Black woman?

AB: Yes, she's a Black woman.

JK is a prime example of a supportive Black woman. She understands the importance of social cohesion and community development and has dedicated her time to ensuring that her community is well supported. JK, despite living on social assistance for many years, has provided out-of-pocket funding to sustain her programs. JK runs a breakfast program every Friday in Rivertowne and also a Homework Club where the police also volunteer to facilitate this program and assist young children with their homework. Below are a few examples of co-researchers who spoke about JK and her programming:

DW: The lady [JK] that does the breakfast, is good. Nice lady . . . and Miss lady has not stopped fighting yet for the homework club. Yeah. comes in very handy for the kids.

TS spoke about JK’s home being a place of solace: “If anything goes wrong, we can always go to [JK’s] house. [JK] can always come to our house, and we feel safe with each other.” MK discussed a variety of programs JK facilitates and how she goes above and beyond for her neighbours:
But what I love about the most is we have someone like [JK]. She does her breakfast program and homeless program, and then she’ll take it up there to people who cannot come downstairs . . . the elderly, who are in disability. She will go up there with breakfast and cater to them. That to me is a community love.

NJ also discussed how JK and other Black women support programs from out of their pocket and also the value these programs bring, particularly for the children:

AE: Yeah. You talked about the programming and how women do it out of their pocket, I think, did you mention that?

NJ: Yeah . . . having the food, the food that the kids get . . . you come in, it's fresh cooked . . . it’s not bologna and cheese. It’s ox tail and rice and beans and coleslaw, fresh made every day. . . . And she’s [JK] coming from work doing this. . . . The parents and the tutors . . . but a lot of times it’s myself or [name redacted] sitting here and helping the kids with their homework while she’s doing the cooking all by herself.

LS discussed how JK made efforts to connect with the condominium owners within Rivertowne and also how she maintains programming for the betterment of the community:

I know especially with [JK] she’s been able to really become friendly with a bunch of them. So that’s been a good kind of step in a good direction . . . I can say [JK] and the rest of the women all try to keep programs and things going on so that people aren’t feeling bored, and they’re not going to other outlets to try to release their stress or anger and stuff.

As seen in the conversations above, one of the reasons why JK has been so instrumental within her community is because of other Black women who surround her. LS spoke about how Black women essentially keep the Rivertowne community together:
I can say it does have a strong sense of community, but I think it’s led mostly by women. And it’s the women who are taking the reins to make it a strong community, and they do. . . . Yeah, the Black women, they do everything they can to make the kids feel safe.

MK shared how Black women make her feel safe despite the fact there is gun violence:
I feel comfortable because we have such a strong Black women power in our community by making sure that we take care of each other, but I still feel uncomfortable in a sense of the little shooting and little things like that occur in our community.

MT spoke about her own involvement in the community, “I was part of the street change, I was part of the park name, I was part of everything.” The same patterns existed in other communities where Black women provided substantial support for their neighbours and overall community. JN spoke about how Black women helped to care and raise her in her community:
“Some people, their own mothers used to babysit me when my mom was out doing her thing and. . . . Yeah, we’re still close to this day.” I called JN to verify the women she spoke about were Black and she confirmed this was the case.

AM reflected on how she relied on a number of African women in her community for a variety of services:
So I have my hairdresser who lives in the building in front of me . . . [and] my mom’s friend who also a good cook, also in that building and then on exactly on my floor, in my unit. I have my mom’s two African friends that she sews for, so we’re like a big community. I guess the African community, we know each other, and we don’t hesitate. If we need something, we’re always going to ask.

Finally, there were co-researchers who spoke of how their mothers created comfortable spaces for their families. In our conversation, SM stated:
It’s because my mom made it a comfortable space. And you don’t realize you’re living in housing, it’s your home…honestly, home where you make it. And, I feel like you could live in the dirtiest place in the city but, the four walls that surround you, as long as it’s clean, it smells good, it’s fresh, the upkeep is nice, it’s your space.

JN’s mother would take on maintenance work to keep her home in shape: “My mom, she was always a handy dandy woman so the place was always clean, kept well. If there were any problems, she definitely fixed it right away.”

The next section discusses the community mapping drawings completed by a few of the Rivertowne residents who previously lived in Don Mount Court (n=4). These findings include information ascertained through direct scribing, which involves writing down an interaction of a participant or interviewee word for word alongside their personal interpretation of what they shared (which, in this case, is their drawing; Martin, 1998).
Community Maps

Figure 1

LS’ community map
LS: “So basically, my drawing is just my interpretation of Rivertowne. And what I interpret is that we're kind of in like a congested space where it's mainly like a priority on like housing as opposed to, like beige and greenery for people to live and be. So in the drawing, I draw a lot of houses because like that's immediate things you see when you enter the space and only after, you know, residents speaking up and advocating from for space to be included where there was there an introduction of like a park area and some and some community space. But that space is still not enough to really compensate for the amount of people who actually live in this area so it's mostly people just living within their houses and really own their steps and having to kind of make the best of the situation and kind of still feeling like trapped within the space that they have that is like really so small and just try to exist within what is really given to them.”
MK: “I feel we need a better rec center for ourselves. The common room we have, it doesn't accommodate our needs with our elderly, disability residents that live at 50 Matilda. It doesn't accommodate all of us because . . . And also, we have everyone living it out with this community. We have Muslims, Christians, all different backgrounds of life and we all like to use the community room as well. And also, I believe it could have done more in the sense of the outside on how to make sure that the kids had a better park. That park to me, it doesn't look safe at all. I wish they could do something about that. And the road, I think they should close up our road, the road that's beside 50 Matilda right there. I think they have to close it off like how they had it before, so it kind of gives more security with the kid.”
NW: It has what New Donmount was, what Rivertowne looks like, and what Old Donmount was like. It's kind of like the same layout but there was a whole street running through there. And it was all closed off. So, this was the community... it was all... you can't... there's no street there. There's a tunnel and another community area. So, it was all closed off, where this is open, you drive through there, you drive through there. You got to cross the street to get to the park.

Yeah. So that gives you... there was a hill, which I like the fact they brought the hill, that kind of thing. There was a wading pool. It was an actual wading pool, and not a splash pad. It was like a park where they had that tetherball. There was a willow tree everyone used to play around.”
Figure 4
JK opted to draw the playground because it was more positive for her than other aspects of our community.

AE: Do you like the design of the neighbourhood? Do you like the pathways, the roads, the shared common spaces?

JK: No. No.

Anita Ewan: Can you explain why?

JK: Actually I don't like how they designed this neighbourhood because if like a criminal guy coming through the neighbourhood it's too much easy access to the highway, and too much easy access to go out. Yeah.

AE: Oh, you're the first one to make note of that. Yeah. What about the building heights and the shared common spaces? So do you like the meeting room? Because you do most of your programs there.

JK: No, the committee room is small and it's not... They didn't design it for all these set of heavy cooking and stuff we have to do.
TS: “Yeah. All right. So, I guess the main thing, particularly having the road that’s like been constructed through the community. One thing that was . . . really disheartening in the new construction of the area was the loss of the courtyard and the internal kind of design that once was with Don Mount court, which allowed for more of a community feel in the space and allowed for kids and you know adults and just residents of the area to have that outdoor space uninterrupted from cars and the roads to just you know have more leisure . . . and kind of gain that community feel. With the road that intersects now, because it’s used to connect one main street Queen to Dundas. . . . I find the traffic that comes through our street is just like hyper speed, very aggression and I don’t know if it’s just because of where it is located, but maybe . . . that social housing feel. The drivers don’t have that same respect for the people that walk in those spaces and people that have to cross the street. Like I always say like there was a lady who—an older lady—who I believe was like hit by a car here because she was crossing. . . . So, like, if you’re not extra careful, and the drivers aren’t extra careful, then a lot of accidents can happen. And so even just with the kids here, you of course there’s a park, but even that is right next to a main road. So, there's a lot of limited space in their ability to just like freely play around, which all that space once used to be the inward core of Don Mount Court, which included fields and trees and basketball courts and tetherball and a wading pool—two pools actually—there was a lot. So, for me like that road is something that, like is a main concern for me. . . . I’ve also been thinking about trying to like contact
The findings from the community mappings provided a glimpse of the co-researchers’ perspectives regarding the physical space and overall infrastructure of Don Mount Court and Rivertowne. At first glance, their artwork appears to only be visual representations of the parks, homes and their close surrounding environments. However, the excerpts from the direct-scribing provide insightful and supplemental information about what is reflected in the community mapping drawings. Most of the co-researchers critiqued the new layout of Rivertowne and compared it to some of the better features that existed in Don Mount Court. They also gave feedback about what they considered important to build a suitable neighbourhood and have a thriving community. Their critiques and feedback displayed the simple standards and requirements Black women have in order to create healthy and communal spaces for their families and neighbours.

**Additional Findings**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), it is essential that “Inconsistent, discrepant, or unexpected data are noted” (p. 9). This form of data was primarily highlighted in relation to the topic of police interactions. There were times when TCH residents stated they never had any negative interactions with the police. There were others who stated they had very positive interactions as well. Based on what I discussed regarding police brutality and negative interactions within TCH neighbourhoods and involving racialized people (Bateman, 2015; Nangwaya, 2014; Ontario Humans Right Commission, 2018; Owusu-Bempah, 2014), I was not expecting to collect this form of data.

AM discussed how the police were very friendly to the children in the neighbourhood:
AE: Anyways, have you ever interacted with police in your community?

AB: Yeah. They ride bikes and horses all around. They come high fiving kids . . .

we used to have a Mac’s across the street . . . so they’d give you like free coupons for slushies and stuff.

AE: Really? So, they sound like . . . I was going to ask what were these interactions, but you already said it. Did you feel safe? Do you feel safe talking to the police?

AB: Yeah.

Additionally, although JK spoke about sensitive issues involving her son and police interactions in the past, she has managed to develop very positive relationships with the community police in Rivertowne. As noted in our conversation:

AE: So, you do interact with the police, they come to your community programming.

JK: Everything.

AE: And you feel safe to interact with them?

JK: Very, very, very--

AE: You have a very good relationship with them.

JK: very, very helpful . . . I would say a million percent . . . Any type of help I want. I’ll say, “Yo, just come up, pick up all this stuff and bring them down there.” I was going to do Black History Month, they brought me to the dollar store, they brought me to the Greek store to buy the meat . . . they brought me everywhere they wait for me.

MW and “NW” also spoke about positive police interaction:
AE: Oh, man. Okay, so since you didn't really interact with the police for that incident, have you ever seen them around in the neighborhood? Like all “good morning officer” or anything like that?

MW: Yeah, sometimes they'll be around on their horses.

AE: Yeah. Oh!

MW: Doing a checkup? Yeah. And they'll just be roaming around the area on their horses.

AE: Are they friendly?

MW: Yupp! They're pretty friendly.

AE: Oh, that's good. And do you feel safe to interact with them?

MW: Yeah.

As for the interactions with the police involving NW’s experience:

AE: And have you ever interacted with the police in your community? While you were there, if they were driving by, have you ever stopped to say hello?

NW: My kids does.

Anita Ewan: Oh, they do? And are they friendly?

NW: Yes.

The findings above provide examples of positive interactions between the co-researchers and the police. These findings were particularly significant because I did not expect to hear this based on my preconceptions and knowledge of how the Toronto Police Service have interacted with TCH residents in the past. It was important that I highlighted these findings not only because “clear, complete, and valid representation of the data” constitutes quality markers of a findings chapter (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 10), but because it provides an opportunity to investigate how and
why positive interactions may be taking place and the possibility of these interactions in other communities.

**Conclusion**

I organized this chapter by dividing it into five sections. In the first section, I reviewed my research questions and the conceptual and analytical frameworks I employed for my dissertation research. I also included a brief discussion about my data collection method and coding approach. The second section was an overview of the codes I developed. In the third section, I revealed themes and highlighted quotations that displayed evidence for the descriptions I designated to each code falling under each theme.

There were five themes that I formulated from my data analysis. These included:

(1) TCH Housing Policy and Communities pose developmental risks for Black Children and create parenting challenges.

(2) TCH communities and policies operate to confine, police and surveil Black bodies.

(3) TCH communities and policies create barriers to upward social mobility.

(4) TCH Black women residents are strong, resourceful and resilient survivors.

(5) TCH Black women (re)create spaces that are supportive, constructive, and loving.

In the fourth section, I reviewed the findings related to the community mapping activity, which the co-researchers completed. It is notable to restate that I also included my own relevant experience into the findings. The next chapter will give me the opportunity to synthesize the results, discuss themes and patterns in addition to ambiguities and inconsistencies (as they relate to the literature and other studies).
Chapter 6: Analysis and Synthesis

In this chapter, I connect the findings to the conceptual and analytical frameworks and literature. The analysis process is multilayered and typically consists of two rounds (Volpe & Dale, 2016). The first round focuses on looking for emergent patterns and the second round focuses on whether the findings “corresponds with, contradicts, and/or deepens interpretations” (Volpe & Dale, 2016, p. 10). I begin by focusing on the FPEP methodological framework (Parker, 2016) and discuss how this framework provided a refined understanding of space and place that includes an attention to race and gender. The findings related to this framework demonstrate the effectiveness of using FPEP to highlight issues that have been often overlooked in the field of urban research (Parker, 2016). I then shift my focus to the findings that relate to the literature and Black geographies. Through this process, I identified four critical tensions; one of them includes an analysis regarding the problematics of neighbourhood revitalization.

Highlighting the effectiveness of FPEP is a way to normalize this form of research in the field of urban research, housing policy and others. It reinforces the idea that there are valid voices and perspectives outside of the white, hegemonic, middle-class, able-bodied male who primarily utilizes an economist lens to analyze issues in this field (Parker, 2016; Amoo-Adare, 2011). It provides an opportunity for residents, particularly those who are most marginalized, to be the experts of their own lives and to suggest information and solutions that would be most impactful for them. It also gives researchers the tools to collect rich and diverse data.

The Effectiveness of Feminist Political Economy of Place (FPEP)

If I depended solely on existing literature and existing housing policy projects and research to guide my own research, I would have been discouraged throughout the whole process. I also would not be able to center the experiences of the co-researchers as strongly as I did. This is
because urban and housing policy research relies on “expert centred models” (Thurber et al., 2018, p. 2) and remains “dominated by men, political economy approaches, and inattention to race, gender, and other power relations” (Parker, 2016, p. 1339). My innovative framework combined with FPEP and Black Geographies provided insight into conducting research that addresses power relations and includes the voices of those whom are most affected by the problem being studied. This combination simultaneously showed me how communities responded to recurring and historically oppressive policies and procedures. Thus, it is important to highlight the effectiveness of this framework to other researchers interested in community research that is sensitive to mechanisms of power and oppression.

I had the privilege of meeting with Dr. Brenda Parker in 2019, subsequent to reading her article entitled “Feminist forays in the city: Imbalance and intervention in urban research methods” (2016). It was in this article I learned about FPEP. I felt very connected to this approach and it was at this moment I began to feel as though my work would be valid. Our conversation reaffirmed this. After explaining the nature of my project to Parker, and having a discussion around some of the connections I made between her FPEP and my project’s purpose, we both agreed that FPEP would be a useful to use as a methodology (personal communication, 2019).

Four areas characterize the FPEP approach: An attention to gendered, raced, and intersectional power relations, including affinities and alliances; reliance on partial place-based materialist research that attends to power in knowledge production; an Emphasis on feminist concepts of relationality to examine connections among sites, scales, subjects and to emphasize ‘life and possibility’; and the use of theoretical toolkits to observe, interpret, and challenge material-discursive power relations. I cover each of the areas below and provide examples from my data collection process and analysis that demonstrate them.
An Attention to Gendered, Raced, and Intersectional Power Relations, Including Affinities and Alliances

Gender, Race, and Black Motherhood. There were many instances where co-researchers indicated an experience or interaction that was greatly influenced by their gender. For example, AM shared that there were older boys who made sexual advances at her when she was younger. As per her recollection, “like one of them used to ask them dumb questions about, I guess, sex or whatever. And I was so young, and I didn't know anything, so I'd just run home.” Interactions like these were difficult to include in my findings because the hyper and early sexualization of Black women is not specific to TCH women residents. Black women fall victim to sexual harassment on a daily basis and in a variety of settings (Woods et al., 2009; Welsh et al., 2006). That being said, the experiences of Black motherhood allowed for a specific interrogation of how TCH housing policy impacts Black women. Parker’s (2016) call to attend to race and gender pushed me to honour the significance of motherhood and how the experience of motherhood was intricately entwined with being a Black TCH women resident. Christian (1985) affirms that the “concept of motherhood is of central importance in the philosophy of both African and Afro-American peoples” (p. 213). Black motherhood requires a careful focus on gender and race because it includes experiences that are affected by systems of gendered and racial oppression. Because of this, I was also able to effectively rely on my Black feminist lens when thinking about the ways in which Black motherhood is impacted by the housing policies I critique in my work. Despite the fact that not all my co-researchers were mothers themselves, they all spoke about how they were affected by Black motherhood in some way. Whether it be the “other-mothering” approach (Friedman & Poole, 2016) that Black women residents use in their community development initiatives or the fact that they are the children of Black mothers, it
was apparent that Black motherhood is central to the Black women resident experience. The following are a couple examples of Black motherhood intersecting with the TCH lived experience and policies.

JK highlights parenting conflicts that arise over her children being required to pay rent: “the kids [are] arguing [with] the parents because the kids [pay] rent sometimes more than the parent [pay] rent.” BH spoke about the impact of being uprooted from her community (due to tensions arising from being threatened with eviction) and the effect this had on her children: “They actually were not happy with that fact. They talk about the old house every day.” These interactions are not isolated to Black mothers living in TCH but they are notable to include in the experiences of Black mothers when applying a systemic oppression lens. Many Black mothers in Toronto have to reside in TCH homes (due to rental discrimination, affordability issues, and more) and are thus affected by housing policies and procedures. Furthermore, Black people are disproportionately represented within TCH communities (see TCH, 2018c), so it is likely that a higher percentage of their families are being affected by Toronto public housing policy as well.

**Intersectional Power Relations.** I also paid particular attention to interactions involving TCH employees where they had to advocate for themselves. There exist classed power dynamics between TCH residents who are low-income and in need of services and employees tasked with providing them. Most of the employees are well paid. For instance, there are six careers posted on the TCH website, and the average salaries of these positions is $86,000 a year, ranging from 37,814 for a cleaner’s position to $208,000 for a Senior Development Director position. I viewed co-researchers self-advocacy as acts of resistance due to the risks that come with class and gender imbalances. Many TCH residents believe that they are mistreated because they are poor and some believe they should be grateful for whatever they get. They also have limited
options when choosing how and when to interact with TCH employees (who are often passive aggressive) because they cannot simply choose a new company or organization with new representatives.

Most of the employees these women had to put their foot down with were men. Every moment they resist the actions of these men places them in a vulnerable position. For instance, when MK was required to fight for a transfer, the upper management’s direct contact was a man. Often, these managers were dismissive and discredited the needs of TCH women and mothers. This may be because they do not consider the implications of parenting through a motherhood lens because they are not women or mothers themselves. In the case of BH, while fighting not to lose her housing due to the actions of her abusive male partner, the senior manager of tenant relations commented on how women always let men come back and how this was an ongoing pattern for TCH households. He argued that an eviction was vital because if BH stayed, her live-in guest would eventually come back. With this statement he disregarded the sensitive nature of domestic violence; how victims are often forced to stay with their abusers; and why they often return to their abusers. He chose to weaponize gendered oppression against a woman who was already being abused.

**Reliance on Partial Place-Based Materialist Research That Attends to Power in Knowledge Production**

According to Parker (2016):

Critically interrogated materialist frame can . . . put ethnography in larger contexts, and chart and challenge pervasive inequalities. These approaches are essential because persistent capitalist, racist, and heteronormative, and patriarchal policies and structures
continue to create uneven geographies and amplify despair in many cities, although in clever and sometimes unpredictable ways. (p. 1348)

**Common Experiences Across Diverse TCH Communities.** One example of how the materialist research I conducted was useful is how it enabled me to conceptualize and pinpoint the ways in which Black families across many communities are being negatively affected as a result of restrictive and punitive policies. By getting concrete examples of lived experience pertinent to this issue, as opposed to relying on numbers and statistics, I could see the effects of certain policies in action. Also, the commonalities of these findings may not have been made visible if my attention to how they “amplified despair in many [families and communities]” was not refined through Parker’s (2016) guidance.

**Attending to Power in Knowledge Production.** Earlier on, I discussed how I was cognizant of who is excluded when knowledge is constructed through traditional means and methods versus collective means (academia versus community, or written versus orally), and how I understood the significance of collaborating with hard-to-reach and marginalized groups, especially when doing research about their communities. Parker (2016) encourages researchers to address these power dynamics. My way to address these dynamics was twofold. One, I thought about who would be producing the knowledge within this dissertation. As opposed to seeking and developing this knowledge on my own, I opted to include the voices of those whom are often overlooked (Ewan, 2019). Secondly, the community maps were tools that were used to allow co-researchers to articulate themselves in a way that may have felt safer do as opposed to engaging in dialogue.

Barter and Tregida (2014) found that art was an effective method for sharing findings related to scholarly subjects. Art-based methods are also often used in dissertations involving
action-based research (Jokela, 2019). I chose to utilize this method because I understood the restrictve nature of verbally elucidating thoughts, especially when there are power differences between two people. Arts-based methods proved to be useful in providing an alternative and accessible way for the co-researchers to engage in knowledge production.

One other way I attended to power in knowledge production is through expressing gratitude to my co-researchers. Similar to Cahill et al. (2010), when referring to this dissertation research, I also used the term “our” to reinforce the idea that this was a collaborative effort and that all knowledge was equally valued.

*An Emphasis on Feminist Concepts of Relationality to Examine Connections Among Sites, Scales, Subjects and to Emphasize ‘Life and Possibility’*

The third characteristic Parker (2016) calls for is relationality. Relationality allowed me to immediately recognize how Black women were leaders in almost every community. This arose with the inconsistent and unexpected finding, of the positive police interactions experienced across communities.

*The Use of Theoretical Toolkits to Observe, Interpret, and Challenge Material-Discursive Power Relations*

The final area relates to the use of diverse theories to examine power. This characteristic allowed me to pay attention to the theoretical tools the co-researchers contributed. They were very insightful and critical about many of the issues we discussed. Below are some excerpts from the interviews for when I observed the co-researchers drawing from their own theoretical toolkits.

BH made a connection between the media and its influence on public perception: “It’s a neighbourhood that I don't see on the news very often. That's very sad to say, that we actually
look at neighbourhoods and say, “Oh, this neighbourhood is not on the news. I love it living here.” This statement from BH has elements of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a method of research that is used for studying written or spoken language relative to its social context (Riley & Wiggins, 2019). Discourse analysis is particularly useful when examining how the media is influential in the development of public perceptions of social issues (Solman & Henderson, 2019).

The following comments made by “MK” alluded to the motivation and underpinnings of revitalization, critiqued the neighbourhood revitalization process, and also initiated a critical tension related to the reproductive restriction of Black families:

I feel that it took away our living spaces and it made us to the subject to be told what to do because we had to deal with property investors who have invested a lot of their money into these properties and we all have to coexist together.

Well, it's kind of hard when Toronto Housing doesn't give you the opportunity to get a transfer within your own community, right? Because it feels like, yes, you can create amazing groups with your families and a sense of home and all that. And then when your family grows, they don't give you the opportunity.

In her first statement, MK applied a political economy perspective that was supplemented with experiential and practical knowledge, making this perspective more comprehensive. In the second statement, MK critically examined the spatial relations that were occurring within her neighbourhood and critiqued the restrictive nature of how Black bodies mobilized. This form of analysis is similar to that of McKittrick’s (2006) when she uses her Black geographies lens.
This last comment also has elements of a Black geographies lens particularly regarding the concept of reimagined space. Similar to MK, SM shared information derived from her experiential and practical knowledge. However, she was also engaging with the concept of spatial formations: “I feel like you could live in the dirtiest place in the city but, the four walls that surround you, as long as it's clean, it smells good, it's fresh, the upkeep is nice, it's your space.” Through the direct-scribing process, I questioned whether each co-researcher was familiar with discourse analysis and the political economy theory and they shared with me they were not. Nevertheless, I their discussions inspired me to analyze our data through multiple lenses and to consider multiple perspectives. I also used a variety of sources including TCH policies and news stories since academia has marginalized the voices and stories of Black people thus making it unlikely that I would be able to provide substantial evidence if only relying on scholarly articles and research.

The next section presents the outcome of my analysis, which was inspired by the input of my co-researchers while simultaneously formed by concepts and literature derived from Black geographies.

**Black Geographies of Toronto Community Housing Neighbourhoods**

Black geographies enabled me to look beyond the physical structures of space and place to conceptualize how policies, practices, and interactions of TCH and Toronto Housing contribute to co-researchers’ experiences of oppression. Through this new lens, I was able to make connections between the Black geographies literature and the findings that my co-researchers and I discovered. I present three overarching themes stemming from my findings that I refer to as “critical tensions” (Friedman, 2020). These are, (1) Systemic and Systematic Segregation and Confinement, (2) A materialist and alternative review of neighbourhood revitalization, (3) Finding Solace through Reimagined Spaces and a ‘Poetics of Landscape’, and (4) (Re)creating
and expanding space through spatial-relations and activism.

The first critical tension is systemic and systematic segregation and confinement. This refers to the ways in which Black bodies have been segregated and confined in TCH through housing policy and practice. McKittrick (2016) highlighted how the field of ‘traditional’ geography fabricated a “reified ideological assumption that blackness is equated with the ungeographic and a legacy of dispossession” (p. 14). I argue that this ideological assumption is translated into practical ideals of urban planners, policymakers, and landlords. They continue to ignore how Black people’s oppression is furthered by their policies and actions. My argument derives primarily from the experiences of my co-researchers and I and is supported by the literature on the reproduction of segregates spaces (Alini, 2020; Fombo & Gupta, 2020; Hogan & Berry, 2011; Teixeira, 2008; Vincent 2019; Vincent, 2018). Manuel (2020) explains how our society views the issue of racial and economic segregation that I have discussed throughout my dissertation:

Unlike climate change, health care, education, or other social “issues” that are well-understood as requiring public intervention, racial and economic segregation operates so ubiquitously that it is often ignored as a “thing” to be solved. It just is. And, when people are asked explicitly to reflect on the high level of concentrated segregation that characterizes their communities and to consider the well-documented negative consequences of us living so separately, many struggle to “see” this as a compelling policy problem with the same shaping force of other issues requiring national attention. Perhaps most importantly, they struggle to see their stake in shaping solutions and supporting policies that cultivate more equitable and inclusive places. Because segregation
is so fully woven into the environments around us, we behave like fish—ignoring the water surrounding us (emphasis added; para. 1).

The existence of systemic and systematic segregation and confinement in the interviews with co-researchers was striking, particularly relative to the second theme “confining, policing and surveilling Black bodies.” While reviewing these findings, I realized that Black people continue to be segregated and cemented into less desirable spaces in Toronto. There were many co-researchers who were restricted from finding larger homes for their families. I specifically highlighted the experience of AM, MK, and RT. To recount, AM has an autistic brother who requires space for his healthy development. He currently shares a room with his older sisters, one of which is an adult. AM stated, “and the thing that makes it worse is that my brother’s autistic. So, he’s that type of person where he loves the outside. He likes to run around so he needs a bigger space.” She also shared how large families sharing small units was a norm in her neighbourhood:

And a lot of the Black kids that were my friends that were living in Exbury were big families in small apartments. So I had one friend, four in a two-bedroom . . . and then I had another one, a guy who had-- his mother was having a baby, two other siblings and him, and I think his stepdad.

MK has been waiting for years on a transfer within TCH. One of the issues she faces is that the offers TCH provides her will displace her and her children from the community that they grew up in. She is a single mother and relies on the support of her surrounding community and community members to help raise her children. So, she resists this displacement while having to weigh the risks that this poses to her family. MK shared earlier that:
I have had Children’s Aid come to my house because my daughter is extremely
tired and stressed out. She’s 13 years old. She finally got her period last year.
And my other daughter, they all share room. And my son, they share room. He’s
nine years old. And it’s extremely a small room. There’s no room to breathe. It's
just unacceptable. But there’s not much I can do because I don’t have the income
to cover that, right?

MK is restricted both by her income but also by the policies and procedures TCH has in
place related to priority transfers. The procedural system of priority transfers is significantly flawed,
despite the fact that in 2018, the Toronto Ombudsman recommended that TCH improve this system
immediately (TCH, 2020b; TCHC, 2018). One reason for this is because TCH has yet to find a
solution to expedite priority transfers in a uniform and consistent matter. They have changed the
procedural steps for those who are applying for a transfer, but they are still working from within an
organization that continues to lack efficiency and reliability. Second, TCH’s eligibility criteria for
priority transfers were not determined based on research or expert opinion. As it stands, TCH only
recognizes those with physical impairments, chronic illnesses, and those suffering from domestic
violence, ignoring the specific developmental needs of children and people with various mental
health needs. This was one reason I was able to file a Human Rights Claim against them; they were
unwilling to recognize my mental health as an issue requiring prioritized status (see Appendix I).
Lastly, RT was uprooted from a home that was suitable for her and her nine children. But she
asserts that the air quality was toxic, forcing her to be moved from this six-bedroom home into a
smaller unit. TCH reassured her she would be moving back into her old unit once the air issue was
fixed. But it has now been 4 years since she was transferred out of TCH. She now remains in a
home where her and her children occasionally have to use a bucket to urinate in.
MK’s, RT’s, and AM’s family living conditions are likened to the kitchenettes (Shabazz, 2015) found in Chicago in the early 1900s (Shabbaz, 2015). These three families are denied privacy and live among each other within very small spaces. Shabazz explained that the living conditions of kitchenettes have similar physical and psychological effects on Black bodies as those who experience poor living conditions through imprisonment (Shabbaz, 2015). It is disheartening to witness children in TCH growing up in conditions similar to prisons.

Even though TCH houses diverse families, it is clear that Black people are not only being confined to undesirable TCH spaces, but also less desirable spaces across Toronto. This widespread issue of racial segregation is fueled both by TCH policy and Toronto’s private rental housing policies. To demonstrate how housing segregation is systemic, Alini (2020) presented invaluable data showing the harmful outcomes of these policies.

In 2016, the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership published research revealing how Black renters and homeowners reside in particular areas in the GTA. Figure 6 displays a visual representation of Black renters in Toronto in 2016. Figure 7 shows a visual representation of Black home ownership in Toronto in 2016. Both maps show that Black people reside in similar areas—on the outskirts of Toronto.
Figure 7

Black Renter Concentration, City of Toronto, 2016

Figure 6

Black Homeownership Concentration, City of Toronto
David Hulchanski, a University of Toronto social work Professor whose research focuses on housing social policy, noted that this segregation differs from other kinds of segregation such as those facilitated through cultural and ethnic similarities and interests (such as China Town or Little Italy; as cited in Alini, 2020). Black renters and homeowners are forced to reside in these places because they are the only areas where they are provided access due to financial constraints (particularly for the renters). Manuel (2020) labels the idea that financially driven segregation is simply culturally driven (by choice rather than forced) a convenient public narrative of “consumer preference and racial difference” (para. 2).

Although there may not be overtly racist restrictions preventing Black people from residing where they wish, Alini (2020) shares multiple forms of discriminatory practices that landlords engage in that create barriers for Black people. These practices include “imposing unequal rent, fees and leasing requirements, or subjecting tenants to different degrees of scrutiny” (p. 31).

In addition to discriminatory practices, landlords hold preconceptions about Black people that influence whether or not they approve their rental applications. Hulchanski and Darden (2002) identified that “some landlords are influenced by the stereotypes when cued by an applicant’s address in a stigmatized neighbourhood” (as cited in Alini, 2020, para. 32). Furthermore, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018) states:

People of African descent have difficulty finding housing because landlords believe they are criminals or have too many children. The Commission was told that other stereotypes exist, such as that African Canadian tenants are more likely to be involved with drugs or be violent and that racialized people are dirty.
Research shows that Black women are denied housing because landlords fear that they will not have enough money to pay their fees (Ghabrial & Barata, 2010). Karafin and Tester (2009) found that Black women face housing discrimination because of negative stereotypes, which leads to property owners rejecting rental applications, refusing mortgage loan approvals, and engaging in uncivil behaviours toward Black families. This research was conducted primarily in the US but the data presented by Alini (2020) shows stark similarities for Black people in Toronto. My personal experience reaffirms the rental discrimination Black women experience.

During my search for suitable housing, I spent around two months looking for properties to rent outside of Toronto Community Housing. I viewed over 17 properties and submitted around five applications and offers, most of them were over the asking price. All of my applications were rejected, including one where a landlord blatantly ignored my partner and I. This landlord was also present during the viewing. We had a total income of over $100,000 on paper (through filing our taxes) and were able to display an additional $40,000 that we would be making this year. We also presented savings and other means to show that we would be able to cover the rent for more than half the lease in the event of an emergency. None of these strategies assisted in securing a rental home. I eventually gave up our search since the rejections were having a negative impact on my prenatal and mental health. My experience also supports the second set of public narratives Manuel (2020) rejects, “the narratives of individual responsibility and mobility (i.e., poor people wanting to move to better neighbourhoods need only earn their way there, via hard work and perseverance)” (para 3).

Black people “earning their way there” is rarely a part of our spatial journeys. Our spatial journeys and formations are typically met with, and interrupted by, systemic oppression and
barriers, creating “road bumps” and detours along the way. This type of barrier is similar to a specific and historic form of housing discrimination called “redlining” (Aalbers, 2006). This includes withholding mortgages from people who live in certain areas, such as those concentrated with Black residents, preventing them from buying homes in other areas (Aalbers, 2006). It also includes refusing Black people loans to renovate their homes, causing their homes to significantly depreciate in value (Brooks, 2020).

Brooks denotes how historical redlining and other discriminatory practices have contributed to the contemporary issues Black people face. With regards to redlining, Black homeowners in the US have lost $212,000 per person in wealth due to discriminatory practices spanning over the last 40 years (Brooks, 2020). The more obvious effects of these residual practices are the locations where Black people have been situated and how the government often neglects these places. These effects are apparent in Canada and Toronto. For example, the history of Africville where the conditions became so terrible—partly due to the methodical chaos and despair facilitated by Halifax’s government—that they were eventually forced to disband (Razack, 2002). The same issues exist for TCH neighbourhoods. There is limited information regarding the racialization of TCH neighbourhoods. However, a TCH tenant satisfaction survey indicated that 24% of the respondents were Black residents (see TCH, 2018c). This is almost three times the amount of the general Black population in Toronto, which is 8.5% (Canada population.org, 2019). Moreover, most TCH neighbourhoods are now plagued with maintenance issues (Lornic, 2018; Ombudsman Toronto, 2018) and “neglected physical environments . . . safety issues, and drug-related activities (August, 2014b, p. 1317). Interviews with co-researchers supported this, “maintenance, policy and practice issues” was the highest referenced code (n=171).
Current TCH and Toronto Housing policies are the current iteration of a historical continuity of systemic and systematic segregation of Black people into destitute and unhealthy spaces. TCH and the city of Toronto have attempted to alleviate some of the harmful outcomes of historically oppressive housing policies through neighbourhood revitalization (August, 2014a). However, these new mixed neighbourhoods fail to address the issue of racial and economic inequities and instead serve as sites of social control and surveillance.

A Materialist and Alternative Review of Neighbourhood Revitalization

Part of my data collection included a subset of co-researchers who lived in a revitalized neighbourhood, Rivertowne (formerly known as Don Mount Court). Their participation highlighted some of the challenges that face residents who have gone through neighbourhood revitalization. It was also necessary to explore the effects of mixed neighbourhoods and whether living in these neighbourhoods provided a more positive experience than living in neighbourhoods that entirely consist of public housing. I wanted to focus on this matter since neighbourhood revitalization is touted as an effective solution for concentrated poverty as a result of segregation (August 2008; 2014b). However, the data I collected from these co-researchers provided an alternative perspective. The community mapping (NCMI, 2019) activity and subsequent direct-scribing method (Martin, 1998) was effective in revealing that the majority of co-researchers (three out of four) were dissatisfied with the outcome of neighbourhood revitalization as it relates to the infrastructure:

That space is still not enough to really compensate for the amount of people who actually live in this area so it’s mostly people just living within their houses and really on their steps and having to kind of make the best of the situation and kind of still feeling like trapped within the space that they have. (LS)
I feel we need a better rec center for ourselves. The common room we have, it doesn't accommodate our needs with our elderly, disability residents that live at [address redacted]. It doesn't accommodate all of us. . . . And also, we have everyone living it out with this community. We have Muslims, Christians, all different backgrounds of life and we all like to use the community room as well. And also, I believe it could have done more in the sense of the outside on how to make sure that the kids had a better park. That park to me, it doesn't look safe at all. (MK)

Many of the co-researchers shared how they still felt segregated and overwhelmingly watched by their condo neighbours and the homeowners who lived across the street. For instance, when speaking of feeling both surveilled and segregated, “MS” said, “I just sense of that we’re so separated. Even though we’re close, but we’re still separated.” In her interview, LS stated:

And even the relationship between TCHC and Hamilton, it's horrible. Before, because we were slightly off to the left, we weren’t as close to the street so they couldn’t complain. But because we’re in direct contact, they find any excuse.

MT discussed experiencing a physiological and psychological reaction to walking on the property designated for condo owners, albeit still technically a part of Rivertowne: “If I even walk on the condo’s side, I don't feel ownership. Oh my God, I feel out of place.” TS spoke about surveillance from both TCH residents and surrounding homeowners in Rivertowne. First, she talked about how the townhouse walls were thin: “Mostly just like privacy. You kind of always feel like you might be in a different room but you’re not away from anyone ever.” She then discussed the surveillance from homeowners and the lack of privacy overall:
It just plays into the privacy of it all. It's like on one end, it's like you want people to keep to themselves and nobody wants to hear or see what TCHC residents are doing. Then in the same vein you’re not giving people the appropriate amount of privacy and space to remain separate.

There was also a common theme regarding lack of social cohesion between TCH residents and homeowners. Two of the Rivertowne residents stated that they do not socialize with the condo owners. TS eloquently described the overall effects of neighbourhood revitalization, which includes a sentiment that was shared among all the Rivertowne coresearchers who experienced the revitalization process.

I don't really like how it’s very evident and obvious who is a homeowner and who is a renter. I know I read some of the research papers that were written about Donmount and the redevelopment. The terminology and geography and planning of mixing socioeconomic classes and mixing people, and how it will foster all this miraculous growth between the haves and the have-nots or whatever, but to me, I think because it’s so obvious and evident, I think it does more harm than good. It lets people know who has something and then who doesn't, who's valued, who isn't.

Another form of social control is reinforced by the punitive policies (Wacquant, 2008) enforced on residents, particularly mothers, who do not maintain social order within their households. These policies result in households being evicted due to the action of one individual. Mothers are still viewed as primarily responsible for maintaining behaviours and morality (Cook, 2020), and are also held responsible for what happens within a home as the leaseholders (particularly single mothers).

The next issue related to maintaining social order is how TCH restricts women’s reproductive rights. When residents require larger spaces for their families, they are placed on the
extensive waiting list. As previously noted, the priority transfer list coupled with the draconian Toronto occupancy standards (which disregards the conflicts that may arise when gender and age are overlooked in determining eligible roommates) makes it next to impossible to qualify for a transfer to a larger space in a timely manner. With over 100,000 individuals on the waiting list, wait times average 5-10 years or more (The Star, 2019). Currently households are required to be short two bedrooms—based on the occupancy standards—in order to be moved within a year. So, for example, if you are a single mother living in a one-bedroom apartment, you would need to have three children to be placed on the priority housing transfer list. This is because a second bedroom would only be able to hold two of those children, which makes it two additional rooms that need to be required overall.

The underhoused co-researchers that were eligible for a priority transfer (n=2) were prioritized for medical issues. However, as one of them, *I had to open a Human Rights Tribunal claim in order to have a somewhat (it’s been going on 4 years) expedited process.* All of the underhoused co-researchers have been waiting for larger units for over 2 years. When growing families are denied adequate housing it sends the message that they should not reproduce. Taking into consideration the disproportionate number of Black families in TCH, this outdated policy and extensive wait list restricts Black reproduction and is an example of how Black people are systemically oppressed and controlled.

There are various systems and procedures in place (redlining, rental discrimination and punitive housing policy) that actively confine Black bodies to certain spaces within TCH and the city of Toronto in general and discourage Black reproduction. I am skeptical of revitalization being utilized as a solution to concentrated poverty, based on the literature and the experiences of my co-
researchers and I. Lipsitz (2011) cogently summarizes the outcomes of housing discrimination, problematic polices, and the designs of mixed neighbourhoods that I aimed to delineate earlier.

Seemingly, race-neutral urban sites contain hidden racial assumptions and imperatives. The design, construction, administration, financing, and policing of [public housing neighbourhoods] follow the racial logics of hostile privatism and defensive localism. . . . These sites serve to produce and sustain racial meanings; they enact a public pedagogy about who belongs where and about what makes certain spaces desirable. (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 15)

Part of Lipsitz’s work is also essential in describing the spaces created by co-researchers and other Black women in TCH.

Finding Solace through Reimagined Spaces and a ‘Poetics of Landscape’

Black geographies, the concept of ‘reimagined spaces’ and Glissant’s (1987) concept of a ‘poetics of landscape’ were evident in many interviews where the co-researchers discussed how Black women created safe spaces for their family members and communities. These spaces were typically in the form of programs and events. All of these programs and events included Black people gathering together, listening to music, and at times engaging in other forms of art.

According to Glissant, space and place are interconnected to sensations and feelings, imagination and poetry, or a “poetics of landscape.” Ramirez (2015) articulates the reimagining of space: The alternative geographies of the marginalized are embedded in the neighbourhoods [residents] seek to transform, and their differential knowledge reimagines the politics of place (as cited in Mckittrick & Woods, 2007, p. 749).
At times, Black women had to utilize strategies that would politicize their spaces to appear more valid (according to policy standards) and safe for others around the community. They would do so by officialising events where the authorities were mandated to be present and where all would be welcome to attend. Adkins (2016) explains that:

Poetics of landscape (comprised of storytelling, folklore, literature, black feminist theory, poetry, theater, music etc.) gives black women the platform to be recognized and taken seriously as geographic knowledge holders and subjects who offer clues and insights on how to create an entirely new society, one that is outside of domination and political violence. (p.20)

Once these events and programs are officialized, they no longer have to worry about being reported on, overly surveilled, or forced to disband. Some examples include the programming co-researchers discussed that Black women created and facilitated for children in their community (such as JK in Rivertowne and the Black program coordinators in AB’s neighbourhood, Driftwood) and the annual BBQ and fun fair, both run by the same communities, respectively.

Black mothers often create safer and more welcoming spaces within the walls of their homes, resisting the deterioration of property as much as possible, and allowing TCH children to consider their house a home. SC spoke of how her mother transformed her space in Cataraqui, and DW and JN spoke about how their mothers were “handy women” who fixed maintenance concerns at times faster than the maintenance workers would appear. Creating events integrated with arts and music, and transforming household space for the comfort of one’s family are politicized acts that develop surroundings of safety and belonging to counter the feelings of surveillance, isolation and degradation.
(Re)creating and Expanding Space Through Spatial-relations and Activism

Despite the effects of confined and restricted physical environments Black TCH families endure, Black women continue to push out and expand their borders through spatial-relations and activism. Their self-advocacy and leadership pave the way for themselves and others in the neighbourhood. The book titled, “The Politics of Public Housing” is an account of the spatial-relations of Black women who thrived in the inner-city projects of Baltimore while resisting problematic policies and engaging in activism (Williams, 2008). Williams documented many engagements and contestations of space.

One example of these interactions includes the integrated Activists for Fair Housing (Activists Inc.) members criticizing and exposing the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency (BUHRA) for extensive wait times and “double digit vacancies in O’Donnell, Brooklyn, and Claremont . . . especially with eight times more Black applicants on the waiting list than white applicants” (p. 114). Eventually public relations chaos erupted and the BUHRA was accused of perpetuating a spatial-racial divide via the mechanisms of neighbourhood segregation (Williams, 2008). As a response to the outcry of Black residents and activists, white supremacists within and outside public housing neighbourhoods enacted violence towards them. Williams writes “Black families not only endured demonstrations, verbal obscenities, leafleting campaigns [and] youth intimidating their children” (p. 117). The response of Black women was fierce and courageous. A twenty-five-year-old mother named Marian Johnson wielded a shotgun to stand her ground and protect her children from anti-Black violence. She was later headlined in the newspaper: “Mother of 4 with Shotgun Vows to Stand up to KKK (Williams, 2008, p. 118).
This occurred after “fifty robed [KKK] demonstrators paraded and made speeches” (p. 117). Another mother named Clara Morant filed a complaint with the Baltimore NAACP to protest the ways in which her children were mistreated and intimidated by white people. This resulted in Juanita Jackson Mitchell, a representative of the NAACP alerting housing officials and visiting Morant.

The cartoon displayed in Figure 8 representing Johnson’s resistance conjures up TS’ account of Rivertowne residents’ interactions with and harassment from the white homeowners:

Yeah. I don't know why they play this game but they love to like in the summertime, try to enforce people's use of their barbecues and their balconies. Their balconies, they'll even be like, “You can’t do this on your balcony. If you do this you are subject to this. . .” I don’t like how they try to enforce how people should use-- you know, how can you enforce how people socialize when you’ve (TCH) only given us so much room to socialize? People are going to
figure it out, they’re going to have to stand back because you (TCH) didn’t give them a back porch. You put a parking lot there, so that’s on you.

Rivertowne residents became frustrated and tired of police showing up at their homes with noise complaints while they tried to socialize with each other. They brought up their concerns in neighbourhood meetings and demanded protection and change. Despite interference from white homeowners, they continued to congregate with each other, especially in the summertime when the women often came together to unwind after their long days. Their resistance to the consistent calls of white antagonists enabled them to gain support from Toronto Police Services and TCH who informed these white residents to stop their practice of policing and surveillance. This created more space and freedom for them to exist without having to worry about being criminalized. LS commented on the same situation, “it even went to the extent where they had to sit down, police and Hamilton people, and have a discussion being like, ‘You need to stop calling the cops for this because people are allowed to live and be in their space.’”

Other forms of advocacy include JK demanding more time in Rivertowne’s underwhelming recreation room to facilitate her community programming. Recently, TCH just approved her request for extended time in the meeting room. However, JK questions why she is not granted the same privileges as TCH, City of Toronto and other employees who run programming in Rivertowne:

One of the polic[ies] I would change is that if somebody’s doing all these program in the committee room, you shouldn’t have on a time limited, just as an agency have keys to get into the room and they don’t live here, but you who live in your neighbourhood and put you on a time limit.
These examples demonstrate how TCH Black women (re)create and expand on the spaces they have been confined to in order to exist more peacefully. I have also documented historical patterns of how Black women advocated for the right to exist in public housing spaces. Both examples display how Black women recreate and expand spaces through taking a stand and asserting themselves. They challenge norms and demand for change, which results in new expectations and setting new standards of treatment.

**Conclusion**

I started this chapter by outlining the effectiveness of using FPEP as a methodological framework. I provided examples for how each of the four characteristics of this approach assisted in directing my data collection and analysis. I then presented prominent critical tensions that developed throughout my dissertation research and findings. The three critical tensions included: (1) Systemic and systematic confinement and segregation; (2) a materialist and alternative review of neighbourhood revitalization; (3) finding solace through reimagined spaces and a ‘poetics of landscape’; and (4) recreating and expanding space through spatial relations and activism. The FPEP approach provided an effective and framework for me to collect cogent data and, subsequent to my analysis, to apply the four critical tensions accordingly. The first critical tension focused on how Black bodies are controlled and politicized in TCH communities. The second one included an alternative perspective on neighbourhood revitalization, the reason for its existence, and the effects this procedure has on TCH residents. The third critical tension underscores how Black women TCH residents create spaces that embrace, nurture, and protect their community members while simultaneously resisting the toxicity of some TCH spaces. And the last tension speaks to the advocacy, strategies, and resilience of TCH women and how to shift the paradigm of spatial interactions between TCH employees, residents, and other stakeholders.
The final chapter will serve to present my concluding statements and recommendations and a proposed plan of action.
Chapter 7: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Action Plan

This dissertation examined the relationship between race, gender and space and its connection to housing policy. It addressed a significant gap in geography and urban research literature (McKittrick, 2006; Parker, 2016), which currently fails to attend to the topics of race and gender. It contextualized the current Canadian affordable housing crisis (Armstrong, 2020; Gaetz, 2020; Gordon, 2020) by illuminating the impact this crisis has on Canadians who have been increasingly restricted in accessing affordable housing. This issue was highlighted through centring the lived experiences of one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in Canada, Black women (Adjei, 2018; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018; Taylor & Richards, 2019).

Recapitulation of Findings and Purpose

The purpose of my research was to explore the spatial and racial-gendered lived experiences of Black women living in TCH to examine the effects of housing policy and procedures (including neighbourhood revitalization) on their lives. This research comes at a time when there is an affordable housing crisis in Canada (Armstrong, 2020; Gaetz, 2020; Gordon, 2020) and begins to address the lack of Canadian research focusing on the spatial and racial-gendered experience of women living in public housing. Furthermore, the field of geography, and urban research lacks an attention to race and gender when exploring issues related to place-based and spatial matters (Parker, 2016).

My co-researchers and I found that based on the data collected from this study, Black women and their families are affected by Toronto housing policy in complex and often detrimental ways. However, we also found that Black women have tools of survival that allow
them to (re)create spaces of solace for their families and communities. There were five themes that emerged from our findings:

1) TCH housing policy and communities create parenting challenges and pose developmental risks for Black children.

2) TCH communities and policies operate to confine, police and surveil Black bodies.

3) TCH communities and policies create barriers to upward social mobility.

4) TCH Black women residents are strong, resourceful and resilient survivors.

5) TCH Black women (re)create spaces that are supportive, constructive, and loving.

A synthesis of the findings and themes resulted in interrogating four critical tensions: 1) Systemic and systematic confinement and segregation; 2) a materialist and alternative review of neighbourhood revitalization; 3) finding solace in reimagined spaces and within a ‘poetics of landscape’; and 4) recreating and expanding space through spatial relations and activism.

**Relating to Previous Research**

Given the distinctive nature of this project, there were no single research projects that could be used to holistically compare the findings to within the Canadian context. However, there were a variety of topics covered in this project that align with what past research has demonstrated. For instance, this project illuminated the poor material conditions of public housing residents (Grant et al., 2019) and the troubling realities of rental discrimination for Black people (Alini, 2020; Fombo & Gupta, 2020; Roscigno et al., 2009; Teixeira, 2008; Vincent 2019; Vincent, 2018). The findings of this project broadly align with studies conducted in the US on public housing with a focus on race and gender. Reilly et al. (2019) found that individuals with precarious housing conditions are more likely to be Black women. Roy (2019) noted the highly disproportionate percentage of Black homeless people in Los Angeles (40%) compared to their representation in the general population.
(9%). Williams (2008; 2020) documented the historical oppression of Black women in public housing and how their advocacy and activism were embedded in their survival. All of these findings have one thing in common. They point to the tumultuous spatial relations and interactions of Black women and the restrictions and barriers they experience while navigating space and place (McKittrick, 2006).

The findings of this project also support research and literature that recognizes how historical racial-gendered oppression and inequities influence contemporary housing issues (Lamb, et al., 2016; McKittrick, 2006; Reid, 2013; Shabazz, 2015; Urban Promise, 2015; Williams, 2008). In other words, systemic gendered racism continues to create severe consequences to the lives of Black women and their families (Broussard, 2013; Driscoll, 2019; Lopez-Littleton & Sampson, 2020; Melaku, 2015). Another noteworthy area relates to neighbourhood revitalization. This project’s findings correspond with literature and research in the field of urban research and geography that critiques the notion that neighbourhood revitalization is the grand solution for solving contemporary public housing dilemmas (August, 2014a; August, 2014b; August, 2008; Bunce, 2018; Silverman et al., 2019). It explored how revitalized spaces serve to further marginalize, confine, and surveil Black bodies.

**Limitations**

The findings of this study are limited to the context of Toronto housing policy, with a greater focus on policy related to the TCHC. The lack of available statistical data about the racial composition of Toronto Community Housing residents is further limiting although the lack itself might be considered suggestive. Additionally, my analysis concerning neighbourhood revitalization and residents who have experienced the processes and outcome of this procedure is limited to only one revitalized neighbourhood in Toronto. Another limitation included the methods used in this
study. This study called for “alternative ways of knowledge production” (Shanbhag, 2006) while using only two methods: interviews and community mapping (NIMC, 2019). Increasing the number and diversifying the methods of this study would provide more opportunities to collect data with multifaceted knowledge (Van der Vaart, van Hoven, & Huigen, 2018). Some of these methods include photovoice, (Tsang, 2020); sound art—where co-researchers produce music to express their experiences (Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund & Hannes 2017; and literary arts such as creating poems that represent one’s experience (Wang, et al., 2017). The aforementioned methods fall under the umbrella of arts-based methods which, Barone & Eisner (2012) affirm align with “social activist views positing values of aesthetic power, emotional illumination, social accessibility, and radical discourse” (Gerber, et al., 2020, pg. 15). Moreover, the community mapping method was restricted only to six out of the 21 co-researchers. Allowing more co-researchers to participate in the community mapping activity could have potentially produced more rich data. Finally, this study focused on the lives of twenty women across Toronto Community Housing neighbourhoods. This number was substantial enough for a qualitative approach, but could also have been increased to gain more information. Nevertheless, a qualitative approach allowed me to collect rich data. There were countless similarities that intersected across the data the co-researchers provided that it would be implausible to deny the validity of these findings.

I should stress that my study was primarily concerned with Toronto housing policy and that I utilized an alternative approach in exploring this issue. Thus, I do not have a comprehensive political economy analysis of Canadian housing policies. Furthermore, the basis of my findings and analysis is predicated upon an understanding of what systemic (gendered) racism entails. Therefore, if one lacks an understanding of these concepts, they may find it difficult to also understand the findings I have highlighted and the conclusions I have drawn. Lastly, I should make clear that I
deliberately decided to focus on Black women as opposed to all women or people living in Toronto Community Housing. My purpose for this was to highlight the intersection of race and gender as it relates to housing policies. It is hoped that a focus on those who are most marginalized will provide invaluable insight for providing effective solutions for all TCH residents. That being said, interviewing TCH employees, Toronto housing policy analysts and politicians may have provided a wider perspective related to the spatial relations of TCH neighbourhoods and the rationales for some of the policy development.

**Implications of Findings**

This study supports the necessity for an immediate change in Toronto public housing policy and TCH policy. From the basis of this study, there is overwhelming evidence to show that Black women and children are suffering under the current conditions and through the operations of Toronto public housing. This study also reaffirms McKittrick’s (2006) suggestion to reconceptualize the way we think about space and place to allow for a clearer understanding about how race and systemic oppression are influential in how these concepts are socially produced, and the material and discursive consequences our conception of space and place has on the lives of poor and racialized people, particularly Black women and children.

Finally, this study is a testament to the importance of conducting research in the field of geography and urban research that characterizes what Parker (2016) calls for in her FPEP approach. It reveals the critical and relevant data that this approach can uncover. It also shows the effectiveness of centering the voices of marginalized people and those whom are most detrimentally affected by social and housing policies (Adjei, 2018; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018; Taylor & Richards, 2019).
Recommendations

In collaboration with the co-researchers of this project, I have developed four recommendations.

(1) Centre the voices and participation of TCH residents when considering policy and procedural changes and allow for ways for them to oversee and be included in the implementation process for the solutions they propose.

As mentioned, centering the voices of TCH Black women enabled me to discover and uncover critical information about the consequences of problematic housing policy. It also provided insight into the resourcefulness, resilience, and strength of Black women residents, some of whom are also leaders within their communities. Although this project focused specifically on the lives of Black women, it has created a window of insight into the lives of other marginalized and racialized residents living in TCH communities. This information is necessary when creating policies and procedures that are supposed to support the lives of vulnerable and marginalized groups. It needs to be considered when creating effective changes and solutions as well. Therefore, it is essential that TCH residents, and Black women residents in particular, are involved in developing policies with official policy makers, but also establishing a framework or board of directors to ensure that these polices are being effectively implemented. Black women being present throughout this process will also ensure that attention to both race and gender are considered when policies are developed.

An approach encompassing what I detailed above and that is also utilized and community development, policy, and academic spaces is called ‘inclusive development’ (Gupta et al., 2015). Gupta et al. (2015) define inclusive development as a “development that includes marginalized people, sectors and countries in social, political and economic processes for increased human well-
being, social and environmental sustainability, and empowerment” (p. 542). Johnson and Anderson (2012) also express similar sentiment to what I described above:

A process of structural change which gives voice and power to the concerns and aspirations of otherwise excluded groups. It redistributes the incomes generated in both the formal and informal sectors in favor of these groups, and it allows them to shape the future of society in interaction with other stakeholder groups.

(p. 10)

An inclusive development approach that involves Black TCH residents, housing policy makers, politicians, and other stakeholders would be instrumental in directing systemic and systematic change related to housing policy and procedures.

(2) Support Black women/ hire more Black women to work within TCH communities.

Black women have been documented in historically and presently making effective change in their communities (Domingue, 2015; Lerner, 1974; Hatch, et al., 1993; Williams, 2008). This project demonstrated the efforts and dedication of Black women to the TCH communities where they work and live. They also are responsible for spearheading and facilitating many of the programs, events and action groups in their communities. Many of the co-researchers discussed the success of programs and events implemented by Black women. They also spoke about how these programs and events supported social cohesion and a sense of community for residents. These programs also support the healthy development of TCH Children. It is notable to mention that Black women’s advocacy and money sustain many of these programs and events all of which need to be fully funded. This means that they have tremendous potential to bring a positive impact to their community.
(3) **Immediately change the Toronto occupancy standards influential to TCH policy, and reevaluate the priority transfer process and eligibility requirements.**

The third recommendation is related to findings that were negatively affecting many of the co-researchers and their families. The Toronto occupancy standards (see City of Toronto, 2016) are creating several restrictions for TCH families to become eligible for safe and healthy living spaces. Currently, these standards do not take into account how age and gender influence the socialization, coexistence, and dynamics of families. For instance, children need adequate spaces for their growth and development (Bradbury, 2007). It also does not consider the effects of high-density housing (Mitchell, 1971) on the health and wellbeing of poor and racialized people who face challenges in other areas of their lives due to systemic racism (Kwok & Wallis, 2008). When it comes to high housing density where homes are overcrowded with too many residents (Mitchell, 1971), research suggests that congested homes create high stress levels for families. Krapf and Wagner’s (2007) research found that housing affordability issues are associated with broken relationships and the dissolution of unions. All of these factors must be taken into consideration when housing policy is developed.

Additionally, despite the fact that TCH was recently required to renew their priority transfer housing process (TCH, 2020b), their new process is significantly flawed and has become much more restrictive than before. An evaluation for the effectiveness of this new process, which includes feedback from residents who have undergone it, is necessary. This includes those who have been accepted onto the priority transfer list and those who were denied. I noted earlier that I was denied because my mental health challenges were not being recognized as legitimate barriers (see Appendix I). A thorough examination of which residents are approved, and for which reasons, would assist in highlighting and fixing issues that co-researchers and I shared.
Future Research

More research on TCH children is essential to explore how the home environments created by TCH housing policy affect their development. Based on the findings of our project which emphasized how housing policy and procedures create disadvantageous child development environments for Black children, I recommend that more research examine the effects of Toronto housing policy and procedures on child development. This recommendation also relies on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory that explores how the social environment affects human development (as cited in Tudge & Rosa, 2019). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory distinguished systems that affect human development based on how they interact with these systems (as cited in Tudge & Rosa, 2019). The system related to the family is referred to the microsystem and the one related to housing policy is the exosystem. The system that best relates to systemic racism is the macrosystem. This framework would be effective to explore the interconnection between housing policy and child development, alongside the frameworks I utilized for this dissertation to better understand how race and gender intersect with child development issues related to housing policy.
My analysis of confinement via public housing extended to include a brief examination of systemic racial segregation within the private market in Toronto. However, a thorough examination of this issue is warranted. Research needs to explore rental-housing policies that reinforce rental discrimination. Research is also needed on how systemic racism plays out in the context of home ownership for Black people, including access to loans and housing costs. This can identify ways in which Black people are being systematically segregated and create space for solutions that can
increase access for Black people to occupy more space outside of oppressive public housing neighbourhoods.

Urban geographers test for rental discrimination using a method called “paired testing” (Hanson et al., 2011). Alini 2020 describes this method as:

Analysts select[ing] two volunteers with similar characteristics (such as gender, occupation, family status, income, etc.) except for the one to be tested for discrimination. Then, both candidates apply for the same rental unit and closely monitor the treatment they receive. Finally, they compare notes. (para. 10)

Essentially, this method manipulates an independent variable (discrimination) by presenting one group with a treatment condition (giving this person characteristics of an undesirable tenant, which has been proven through previous research) and withholding it from the other (making this person a more suitable candidate, according to previous research and findings).

David Hulchanski proposes we conduct paired testing in Canada to determine the extent to which rental discrimination has been affecting Black people. So far, there are no government bodies or organizations that participate in this method of testing (as cited in Alini, 2020). I believe this would be an effective tool to use in a mixed method study that would also collect stories from Black people to share their experience and reveal the impact rental discrimination has had on their lives.

**Action Plan: Working to Find Individual Solutions with Co-researchers and Mobilizing TCH residents**

While direct scribing, I had the opportunity to reflect on what many of my co-researchers shared with me regarding some of the hardships they were facing. It was during this time I asked them what changes they would like to see come from this research. I also reminded them that
although I remain optimistic that changes will eventually come, I cannot guarantee that they will happen right away. Instead of deciding to tackle a wider systemic policy issue, I thought it would be most effective to work one-on-one with co-researchers who were experiencing longstanding and ongoing issues within their household related to TCH policy and procedures. So, I asked each co-researcher what their main contention with TCH was that we could address immediately after my dissertation is complete. I jotted down notes from those who were able to share with me their concerns during this process and plan on following up with the rest. What I intend on doing with this information is walking through similar processes I took to deal with my concerns (such as contacting upper management or filing a complaint with the Toronto ombudsman or the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario) and assisting them in doing the same.

I believe this will be a concrete, effective and educational process for most of the co-researchers since many TCH residents are unaware of the avenues they can use to have their concerns addressed. Also, there are a few co-researchers who have language and technology barriers, which I will be able to help them navigate.

*The Steps*

1) Follow up with each co-researcher and inquire about the personal issues with TCH they would like addressed.

2) Document detailed notes about each concern.

3) Draft a follow-up plan, including the names of TCH or other organizations (i.e. the Toronto Ombudsman or the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario) that will need to be contacted.

4) Set a meeting to connect with each co-researcher to review the follow-up plan. Set dates to either fill out applications, make phone calls, or write letters to required contacts.
5) Document the process in writing and give it to the co-researcher in the event they need to advocate for themselves again.

**Mobilizing and Organizing with TCH Residents**

In the next year, I plan on beginning a group with TCH residents that will allow us to depend on each other to mobilize and organize for change. Once formed, I will propose collectively presenting my work with city councillors, Members of Parliament, and Toronto housing policy developers. This plan is only in the conceptual stage and I will need to formalize and finalize it subsequent to speaking with my co-researchers.

**Way Forward**

Today is July 14th, 2020 at 5:55am. I just received feedback from my supervisor regarding this dissertation yesterday. I am finalizing my revisions and will soon prepare for a defense. It feels surreal; at times I feel as though I am dreaming; but my physical surroundings bring me back to reality. Two days ago, I was hospitalized due to overwhelming stress of confinement and hopelessness. This stress was triggered by yet another decision by TCH through our mediation process with the Human Rights tribunal claim I filed. They offered me a 4-bedroom apartment in three neighbourhoods notorious for high drug use and trafficking, and pest and rat infestations. Due to restrictions from the legal proceedings, I am unable to disclose certain details regarding their offer (such as the specific names of the neighbourhoods they offered).

I almost accepted an offer to relieve myself from the physical confinement. However, I quickly realized that the psychological and physiological confinement that I wrote about in chapter 3 (under the alias of Alexis) would still remain. I was also terrified to think that I would have to bring my children into such unsafe and deplorable conditions. I feared that I would be
faced with the same distress as the Mohamed-Obiyse family, whose eerily and strikingly similar experience was reported by the Globe and Mail over 15 years ago (Lornic, 2005) but is still relevant today. This news story encapsulated the heart wrenching journey of the Mohamed-Obiyse family of eight (two parents, six children), who were on a waiting list for nine years only to be placed within a home located in a drug and pest infested neighbourhood. Here are some excerpts detailing their experience:

The family took possession in early November, having moved to the 460-unit Blake-Boultee public housing complex near Pape and Gerrard from a tidy but cramped two-bedroom apartment in another subsidized building in St. James Town. They'd been on a waiting list for a larger unit for almost a decade, but were given priority status last year after the birth of twin sons. Most of the 65,000 people currently on the waiting list just to get into subsidized housing will wait even longer -- the average is nine to 18 years. (para 4 and 5)

The four-bedroom townhouse had received a fresh coat of paint, as well as new kitchen cabinets, a stove and a fridge. Despite those improvements, the family says they found the unit in atrocious shape. They say it was infested with cockroaches and rats. The closet doors were missing, and some windows were broken. The plumbing leaked. There were holes in the walls. Heaps of junk were strewn in the backyard and in the filthy crawl space beneath the laundry room.

Nothing prepared them, however, for what they discovered in the heating ducts: garbage, dirty diapers, condom wrappers, juice boxes, dead mice, all crammed in so deep that the technician with the first of two duct-cleaning companies they were forced to hire said he'd never seen anything like it in 25 years in the business. (para. 5-6).
“The kids don't have a place to do their homework,” says Mr. Mohamoud, a taxi driver who immigrated to Canada from Mogadishu, Somalia, in the late 1980s. “They can't sleep. When they see the rats, they cry and come on my bed. We live like a nightmare.” (para. 16)

I touched base with one of the co-researchers whose mother still lives in the neighbourhood discussed in this news article above. She confirmed with me the conditions are very much the same. She also grew up in this neighbourhood and recalls her younger siblings convening with mice in their rooms due to being used to their presence and also an inexorable presence of roaches, too.

While discussing my concerns with my lawyer, she stated that TCH may argue that it is impossible to find a neighbourhood that meets the standards of what my medical professional has outlined in my supporting documentation. Their only requirement was that I not to be in a building with drug use/dealing (TCHC, 2018).

Notwithstanding that the majority of TCH neighbourhoods are inundated by the problem of drug trafficking and use, as with many public housing neighbourhoods around the world (Wacquant, 2008). I want to bring attention the issue of how Black and other TCH residents who are limited to living in these neighbourhoods are expected to live in these conditions. If a disproportionate amount of the Black population is relegated to these living spaces, Toronto and Canada has a civil and moral duty to ensure that they are not subjected to conditions that are detrimental to their wellbeing and health. Otherwise, this will continue to be a blatant issue of systemic racism and discrimination that I have discussed throughout this dissertation.

These recommendations and action plans are another form of spatial resistance and contestation for TCH Black families and other residents suffering within these sites of marginalization. I call on academics, urban researchers, politicians, community activists, social
workers, early childhood educators and TCH residents to work together to create this change. This dissertation initiated a timely and critical discussion about race, gender and space in the context of Toronto Community Housing. My hope is that the valiant work of my co-researchers and I will pave the way for others to continue this discussion. I also hope that others will be inspired to reimagine and recreate Black geographies that include equitable spaces for Black mothers and their families to live, thrive, and grow.
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Appendix A
This isolated space only includes the Rivertowne condominiums. The property managers always maintain the area well.

Across the street from the condominiums are the homes operated by Toronto Housing. The structure and scenery are different from the homes in the picture above. Behind these homes remain the rest of the TCH homes. There are also homes to the left of this block and across the street for half a block. None of the condominiums exist in the spaces of the TCH homes.
Appendix C

Recruitment Poster

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH ON LIVING IN TORONTO
COMMUNITY HOUSING

We are looking for volunteers to be interviewed.

If you are someone who:

1) Identifies as a woman
2) Identifies as Black
3) Lives in Toronto Community Housing
4) Are 18 years and older

You qualify to participate in this research!

As a participant of this research, you would be asked to complete a 1.5-hour interview asking you about some of your experiences as a Toronto Community Housing Black woman resident. You may also have the option to participate in an activity where you create a map of your community with a group of TCH women residents.
-The interview will take about approximately 1.5 hours each.
- The Community Mapping will be 2 hours.

If you are interested and/or would like more information, please contact PhD candidate Anita Rachel Ewan at

647-289-7790 or ewan5400@mylaurier.ca.

Thank you!
Appendix D

Interview Guides and Question Rationales

General Interview Protocol 1

Housing and Neighbourhood/Area Satisfaction

1) Tell me about how you feel about this neighbourhood
   a) Do you feel comfortable/at home in this neighbourhood (why or why not?)
   b) Are you proud to live in this neighbourhood? Why or why not?
   c) Do you like the design of this neighbourhood? - Pathways/roads? Shared common spaces? Building heights? “Look or feel”?
   d) Are you proud to live in this neighbourhood? Why or why not?

Rationale: This question was asked to initiate the co-researcher’s conceptualization about their sense of community and to also gain a better understanding about how they felt about the physical surroundings and material conditions within their neighbourhood. The discussions from this question would also help for me to conceptualize Black Geographies and spatial imaginaries.

2) When you first applied for housing, did you get into the unit you wanted?
   a) What do you like about your unit?
   b) From 1-10 how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your unit?

Rationale: Although this question was used to highlight displacement and other issues related to revitalization relocation, I thought it would be useful to ask this question to also display how Black bodies are positioned in spaces that they do not wish to be.

3) Is your superintendent competent and effective?
   a) Are your repairs fixed on time?
   b) Do you feel comfortable interacting with your super?
   c) Are you comfortable allowing your super/maintenance workers to enter your unit while you are home alone/the only adult in the unit?

Rationale: This question was used to reveal power relations and potential challenges related to policy, practice and maintenance issues.

Safety

4) Is this a safe neighbourhood?
   a) Is this neighbourhood safe for Black kids?
   b) Which parts of the area are safe and which are not? (eg. pathways vs. main streets)

Rationale: This question was used to examine whether the co-researchers felt safe living in their neighbourhood. I asked the question about Black children to see whether they were at a
particular risk living in TCH neighbourhoods and whether there were any measures in place to mediate these risks.

**Sense of Community, Social Capital, Relationship**

5) How do you feel about the people living in your community?

a) Do you have friends here? (How many?)

b) Do you know your neighbours? Do you chat with them? How often (Daily? Weekly?)

c) Do you socialize with people from this neighborhood? How many? How often?
   Where?
   - In people’s homes? In community centres? Local businesses? In Common spaces?

6) Do you think this area has a “strong sense of community”? Explain.

a) How have your kids developed relationships with other kids/people in the community?
   - Do they have friends?

Rationale: This question was asked to extend the conversation and gain more detail about the coresearcher’s sense of community. I was also interested in the social relationships their children developed within their neighbourhoods and whether they had similar experiences when it came to community interaction and engagement.

**TCHC Relations**

7) Do you attend any of the meetings TCHC holds for consulting residents about community issues? Community Update, Park Planning meetings, etc? Why or why not?

a) What is your impression at these meetings?

b) Do you feel like tenants have a say in these matters?

c) Do you feel like you are adequately consulted about the decisions related to your community/neighbourhood?

d) Does TCHC listen to tenant input and concerns or ideas?

e) Are you adequately informed about what is going on?

8) Do you trust the TCHC? What are your feelings for TCHC?

a) Are TCHC staff (tenant service coordinator/neighbourhood revitalization assistant/community workers, etc.) competent (knowledgeable about policy, respectful, helpful)?

b) How does your community/neighbourhood feel about TCHC? Why?
Rationale: This question was created to further understand the spatial and power relations and interactions that exist within neighbourhoods. It was also used to see how power (and oppression) was distributed and enacted through policy and practice. I also asked this question to see if the co-researchers felt they had a voice in their communities and whether their voices were valued.

**Employment Related Questions:**

9) Are you working?
   a) Where do you work?
   b) For how long have you been working there?
   c) Is it a good job in your opinion? How did you find out about the job?

Rationale: This question was asked primarily for those who lived in a revitalized neighbourhood to see if there were any economic benefits related to revitalization for residents. It was a useful question to gain a better understanding about the social location of all co-researchers as well.

**Policy/ ‘Rules’ Questions:**

10) Are there any TCHC policies/rules that have affected your /your family’s lived experience/experience as a TCH resident(s)?

   a) Which policy is this?
   b) How did it affect you and/or your family?
   c) Are there any policies you would change?
   d) Have you ever been evicted or threatened with eviction?
   e) Why were you evicted/threatened with eviction?
   f) Are you aware that the police are considered landlords of TCH properties?
   g) Have you ever interacted with police in your community?
      • What were these interactions about?
      • Did you feel safe?

Rationale: This question was asked to see the ways in which Black bodies were politicized through policy and the how oppression was perpetuated through policy and practice. I also wanted to see the relationship co-researchers and their community members developed with the police as they are agents that reinforce confinement, criminalization, and other oppressive practices for TCH residents.
Appendix E

Interview Guides and Question Rationales

General Interview Protocol 2

Housing and Neighbourhood/Area Satisfaction

11) Tell me about how you feel about this neighbourhood
   a) Do you feel *comfortable/at home* in this neighbourhood (why or why not?)
   e) Are you *proud* to live in this neighbourhood? Why or why not?
   f) Do you like the *design* of this neighbourhood? How do you feel about the *changes*? - Pathways/roads? Shared common spaces? Building heights? “Look or feel”?
      - Do you prefer the way they are changing it to the way it was before?
   g) Do you feel *comfortable/at home* in this neighbourhood? (why or why not?) - Do you feel *more, the same, or less* at home than pre-relocation?
   h) Are you *proud* to live in this neighbourhood? Why or why not?
      - Do you feel *more, the same, or less* proud than pre-relocation?

Rationale: This question was asked to initiate the co-researcher’s conceptualization about their sense of community and to also gain a better understanding about how they felt about the physical surroundings and material conditions within their neighbourhood. The discussions from this question would also help for me to conceptualize Black Geographies and spatial imaginaries.

12) Did you get into the unit you wanted?
   a) What do you like about your unit?
   c) From 1-10 how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your new unit?
   d) From 1-10 how would you rate your overall satisfaction with your old unit?
   e) Do you like your unit the same, less or more than your old one?

Rationale: Although this question was used to highlight displacement and other issues related to revitalization relocation, I thought it would be useful to ask this question to also display how Black bodies are positioned in spaces that they do not wish to be.

Safety

13) Is this a safe neighbourhood?
   a) *For Black kids?*
   b) Has it become more, the same, or less safe (and for Black kids)? Why?
   c) Which parts of the area are safe and which are not? (eg. pathways vs. main streets)
   d) Have any parts of the community become safer than they were before? Less safe?
Rationale: This question was used to examine whether the co-researchers felt safe living in their neighbourhood. I asked the question about Black children to see whether they were at a particular risk living in TCH neighbourhoods and whether there were any measures in place to mediate these risks. The added sub-question was to focus on the claim that revitalized neighbourhoods are safer despite the fact many residents report feeling less safe because of the surveillance and mistreatment they experience at the hands of their more affluent neighbours.

**Sense of Community, Social Capital, Relationships**

14) **Don Mount Court:** Thinking back to the pre-redevelopment Rivertowne (Don Mount Court): tell me how you felt about the community of people there.

a) Did you have friends there? (How many?) Did you have *family* there (how many)?

d) Did you know your neighbours? Did you chat with them? How often (Daily? Weekly?)

e) Did you socialize with people from this neighborhood? How many? How often? Where?

- In people’s homes? In community centres? Local businesses? In Common spaces?

**Rivertowne:** How do you feel about the people living in your community?

a) Do you have friends here? (How many?)

b) Do you know your neighbours? Do you chat with them? How often (Daily? Weekly?)

c) Do you socialize with people from this neighborhood? How many? How often? Where?

- In people’s homes? In community centres? Local businesses? In Common spaces?

15) **Don Mount Court:** Do you think this area had a “strong sense of community” prior to redevelopment? Explain

a) Do you think redevelopment has affected the sense of community in Rivertowne?

b) How did relocation affect your friendships, relationships, and connection to Don Mount Court / Rivertowne?

c) How have your kid’s relationships been affected by redevelopment?

- Did they lose friends? Did they lose mentors, sense of community? Miss home?

**Rivertowne:** Do you think this area has a “strong sense of community”? Explain.
a) How have your kids developed relationships with other kids/people in the community? Do they have friends?

Rationale: These questions were asked to extend the conversation and gain more detail about the co-researcher’s sense of community. I was also interested on the social relationships their children developed within their neighbourhoods and whether they had similar experiences when it came to community interaction and engagement.

Social Mix

16) How did/do you feel about the decision to build condos for higher-income individuals in Rivertowne? Why do you think this is part of redevelopment goals?

a) How did you feel about having higher income people move into the community?
   • Did this have any benefits for Don Mount Court residents?
b) Do you feel any problems occurred because of the mixed-income design?
c) Have there been any positive effects with this new mixed-income design?
d) Does it still feel like Don Mount Court?
e) Do you ever interact with the new condo residents? Why or why not?
f) How has the higher-income community change Don Mount Court from what you remembered it to be? (shops? socializing? Community services?)
g) Do you feel your ‘sense of ownership’ here has changed? How about the ‘sense of community’?

Rationale: This question would allow me to further analyze spatial interactions, relations, and imaginaries.

Process of Redevelopment and TCHC Relations

17) During Redevelopment: Did you attend any of the meetings TCHC held consulting residents about redeveloping Don Mount Court? Community Update, Park Planning meetings, etc? Why or why not?
   a) What was your impression of the meetings?
   f) Do you feel like tenants had a say in this redevelopment?
   g) Do you feel like you were adequately consulted about the decision to demolish and rebuild Don Mount Court?
   h) Does TCHC listen to tenant input and concerns or idas?
   i) Were you adequately informed about what was going on with the revitalization?
Currently: Do you attend any of the meetings TCHC holds for consulting residents about community issues? Community Update, Park Planning meetings, etc? Why or why not?

a) What is your impression at these meetings?
b) Do you feel like tenants have a say in these matters?
c) Do you feel like you are adequately consulted about the decisions related to your community/neighbourhood?
d) Does TCHC listen to tenant input and concerns or ideas?
e) Are you adequately informed about what is going on?

Rationale: This question was asked to learn more about the level of participation and decision-making residents had in the revitalization process. It was also asked to see whether any of this changed once moving into a revitalized neighbourhood.

18) Do you trust the TCHC? What are your feelings for TCHC?

a) Is your superintendent competent and effective?
d) Are your repairs fixed on time?
e) Do you feel comfortable interacting with your super?
f) Are you comfortable allowing your super/maintenance workers to enter your unit while you are home alone/the only adult in the unit?
g) How do tenants in general feel about redevelopment?
h) Were people in favour? How do they feel about TCHC? Why?
   • If people disagreed with redevelopment, who did they tell?
   • Were there organizations that oppose revitalization?

Rationale: This question was created to further understand the spatial and power relations and interactions that exist within neighbourhoods. It was also used to see how power (and oppression) was distributed and enacted through policy and practice.

I also asked this question to see if the co-researchers felt they had a voice in their communities and whether their voices were valued.

Employment Related Questions:

19) Are you working?

a) Where do you work?
d) Is it different from where you were working in Don Mount Court?
e) For how long have you been working there?
f) Is it a good job in your opinion? How did you find out about the job?
g) Has redevelopment had any impact on your employment situation? Your families?
h) Has redevelopment had any impact on your income/financial situation?
i) Has your redevelopment had any impact on your health?

Rationale: This question was asked primarily for those who lived in a revitalized neighbourhood to see if there were any economic benefits related to revitalization for residents. It was a useful question to gain a better understanding about the social location of all co-researchers as well.

**Policy/ ‘Rules’ Questions:**

20) Are there any TCHC policies/rules that have affected your /your family’s lived experience/experience as a TCH resident(s)?
   a) Which policy is this?
   h) How did it affect you and/or your family?
   i) Are there any policies you would change?
   j) Have you ever been evicted or threatened with eviction?
   k) Why were you evicted/threatened with eviction?
   l) Are you aware that the police are considered landlords of TCH properties?
   m) Have you ever interacted with police in your community?
      • What were these interactions about?
      • Did you feel safe?

Rationale: This question was asked to see the ways in which Black bodies were politicized through policy and the how oppression was perpetuated through policy and practice. I also wanted to see the relationship co-researchers and their community members developed with the police as they are agents that reinforce confinement, criminalization, and other oppressive practices for TCH residents.
Appendix F

Locations of the neighbourhoods where Co-Researchers live
GENDER, RACE AND SPACE IN TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING

246

Map data ©2020 Google
GENDER, RACE AND SPACE IN TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING

Cataraqui Crescent - Google Maps

2020-06-18, 10:16 AM

Map data ©2020 Google

https://www.google.com/maps/place/The+Esplanade,+Toronto,+ON/@43.6622623,-79.3897233,13z/data=!4m5!1m1!4s0x88f0e45f19466645:0x704086b40f3e78cd!3m2!1d-79.3897233!2d43.6622623
Appendix G

Codes, Code descriptions, and References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| [The Use of] Theoretical Toolkits*      | To observe interpret and challenge material and discursive power relations (Parker, 2016, p.1338).  
This also includes the use of theoretical toolkits/theories by the co-researchers. Their theoretical positioning will be taken into account as well.  
(Annotation will make note of which theoretical tool is being used). | 50         |
| Black Geographies                       | “Subaltern or alternative geographic patterns that work alongside traditional geographies and a site of terrain of struggle” (McKittrick, 2006, p.7).  
Traversing across space and time  
Resisting oppressive policies and practices  
The ways in which Black bodies are politicized.  
The spatial interactions of Black bodies and how these interactions are influential to how space is created and reimagined. | 57         |
| Reimagined Space (aggregated)           | Space that is conceptualized in a way that is liberating and used as a form of resistance.  
Space that is physically recreated to better fit the needs of residents and their families | 17         |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Spatial Imaginary</td>
<td>“Oppos[ing]’ land use philosophy that privileges profits over people and instead to create new “use values” in places that have little “exchange value” (Lipsitz, 2011, p.11). Influenced by the strength of the Black diaspora community, their survival and their resistance. Creating space that is formed by supportive relationships. Community programming and events that happen in Rivertowne.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women Support</td>
<td>Any community programming ran or developed by a Black woman Any emotional or situational support provided by a Black woman.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackness and Disablement</td>
<td>“[G]overnance systems, rapidly deteriorating social services, all of which have culminated in spiraling poverty..leading to disability” (Kissi, 2018, p.156). Disability intersecting with other forms oppression and that is influential to their spatial formation or how they interact with space. Any form of policy or practice that disables a Black person or accentuates their disablement.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development Risks and Parenting Concerns</td>
<td>Policies or practices that pose risks to child development Incidents that occurred in housing neighbourhoods that pose risks to child development Descriptions of the environment that may pose a risk to child development Concerns parents express about their children’s development and overall wellbeing</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>Criminal activity “behavior that is contrary to or forbidden by criminal law” (“Criminality”, n.d). This node may also include the criminalization of Black women/residents. For instance, when they are required to go to court due to not paying rent or when they are penalized for the behaviours of their children. Penalization due to violating problematic policies also constitutes criminalization.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derelict Conditions</td>
<td>Any indication of property being neglected by TCH or the government Any discussion about material conditions getting worse due to TCH’s delay (or outright refusal) in providing maintenance. Any discussion of criminal activity that are not addressed by TCH or police</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>No connection with neighbours No socialization Feelings of loneliness Being uprooted from community into a foreign space due revitalization practices and policy</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and Relocation Policy and Practice</td>
<td>Any policies related to relocating and transferring units Any policies related to neighbourhood revitalization such as being required to vacate your space due to the destruction (and restructuring) of property.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Maintenance, Policy and Practice Issues | Any discussion that highlights maintenance issues within TCH.  
Malpractice committed by TCH staff  
Areas of practice that need improvement (indicated by the challenges or barriers they cause for residents)  
Inconsistent actions by TCH staff (such as holding neighbourhood debriefs for shootings in some communities but not others). | 171 |
| Oppression and Exploitation | Any discussion surrounding being mistreated, abused, exploited or marginalized as it relates to being a Black woman and/or TCH resident.  
Any discussion that speaks to the inequalities and challenges they are facing due to their identities/social location or living circumstances. | 64 |
| Placelessness, Dispossession and Displacement (McKittrick & Woods, 2007) | Any discussion that involves an individual who may not feel like they belong or that they do not feel “at home”. Or any mention of someone discussing how they do not own their space (and that the government does).  
Discussions around space or ownership being taken over by condo owners or other businesses falls under this as well.  
Any discussion of being displaced because of housing policy or processes, financial challenges, or safety concerns. | 41 |
<p>| Power Relations* | An attention to gendered, raced, and intersectional power relations including affinities and alliances (Parker, 2016, p.1338). | 148 |
| Inter-neighbourhood spatial relations and | Relationships, interactions and conflicts that occur between TCH neighbourhoods OR between a TCH employee and resident. It may also include interactions with community |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>interactions (aggregate)</th>
<th>stakeholders (police and politicians) and residents as well.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationality*</td>
<td>Connections among sites, scales, and subjects and to emphasize “life and possibility” (Parker, 2016, 1338).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance and Resilience</td>
<td>Speaking up against any issues they may be experiencing (especially multiple times). Reaching out to upper management or politicians. Indicating that they are living in poor material conditions and making use of what they have. Any discussion of survival mechanisms or enduring unfair treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>Anything that articulates or describes one’s personal connection to their community. Any expression of support provided by, or given to, another member of a community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Spatial Marginalization and Inequality (aggregate) | Two guidelines drawn from Wacquant’s ‘Advanced Marginality’ (1996)  
- the functional disconnection of neighborhood conditions from macro-economic trends;  
- territorial fixation and stigmatization; spatial alienation and the dissolution of place (Wacquant, 1996, p.121).  
Anything that produces marginalization by way of, or within, the spatial borders within a TCH neighbourhood.  
| | Any discussion surrounding living within a space that is too small for an individual or their family  
Being underhoused (not enough rooms for the family).  
TCH houses contained within a secluded space from the overall neighbourhood. | 53  
<p>| | 54 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Spatial Imaginary</th>
<th>“Spatial imaginaries are socially held stories, ways of representing and talking about places and spaces” (Said, 2003).</th>
<th>82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance (aggregate)</td>
<td>Hidden racial assumptions and imperatives. The design, construction, administration, financing, and policing of [public housing neighbourhoods] to produce and sustain racial meanings; they enact a public pedagogy about who belongs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Widespread, costly, and often counterproductive practices of surveillance, regulation and incarceration ... forms of frontier defense against demonized people of colour” (Lipsitz, 2011, p.13).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes with the asterisks beside it derive directly from the FPEP methodological framework explained in chapter 4.</td>
<td>Any form of surveillance of Black bodies by technology or people (i.e. neighbours, police, surrounding public, etc.).</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Red numbers= highest referenced codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H
Toronto-Danforth MP recognizes exceptional east Toronto volunteers

COMMUNITY Nov 01, 2017 by Joanna Lavoie East York Mirror

Toronto-Danforth MP Julie Dabrusin (centre) presents her Exceptional Volunteer Awards to officers from Toronto police 55 Division, Joan Smith and Neeka Allison during a recent ceremony at the East York Civic Centre. - Peter Visinai/photo

Toronto-Danforth MP Julie Dabrusin has recently given special recognition to some volunteers of note from the community.

The local member of Parliament honored her inaugural Exceptional Volunteer Awards at the East York Civic Centre Saturday, Oct. 21

The ceremony honored 43 east Toronto residents for their hard work and commitment to enriching the community in 2016 and 2017.

Recipients were nominated by members of the community and local organizations.
Appendix I

URGENT living condition/ Housing Transfer Concerns

10 messages

Anita Ewan Thu, Nov 22, 2018 at 4:13 PM
To: Kathy Millsom <Kathy.millsom@torontohousing.ca>, councilor_fetche@toronto.ca, ombudsman@toronto.ca, mayor_daly@toronto.ca

Hello,

I am currently living in a 2 bedroom house with 3 children and one on the way. There are barriers that are causing me serious health issues, for which I have provided medical documentation. I applied for a transfer via the crisis transfer method and found out today that my application was denied.

The housing specialist informed me that although my doctor provided additional information about my health conditions, that transferring me would cause undue hardship for TCHC. He went on to state that it would be too difficult for TCHC to transfer all individuals with mental challenges and that only a physical disability is likely to be considered for a crisis transfer for someone whom is seeking medical accommodations.

The transfer system was recently revitalized due to an investigation by the Toronto Ombudsperson. Clearly this system is still very flawed. There are too many residents suffering in these conditions and too many people left without any information or without any support from TCH staff. This issue needs to be addressed. It is unacceptable. The process of applying for these transfers is difficult enough. Our applications are misplaced or lost. We spend so much time retrieving so much information and obtaining so much supporting documentation only to be denied. We are given the run around and treated with no respect.

This is the first major escalated step I am taking to fix my issue. I have fought for many other residents in the past but now I am fighting for my own children.

I would very much appreciate if someone could follow-up with me for this matter.

Regards,
REQUEST FOR PROCEDURAL REVIEW

If you feel that there was a procedural error in how your application was reviewed (for example, if you submitted requested documentation by the deadline, but the Intake Specialist's or Accessibility Coordinator's decision said no documentation was received), complete this form and contact the Intake Specialist or Accessibility Coordinator who managed your application to request a procedural review within 20 business days of receiving your decision.

Reason for Request (please check one):

☐ I think the Intake Specialist or Accessibility Coordinator missed a key document or piece of information (explain below).

☐ The units offered do not meet my bona fide needs (explain below).

☐ I think the Intake Specialist, Accessibility Coordinator or the decision making process was biased against me (explain below).

☐ Other (explain below).
Hi Anita.

Thank you for sending this to Councillor Paula Fletcher. Paula would like to assist if she can find a way.

As we discussed although you have already made every effort to secure a transfer including contact with the Ombudsman I would like to try a slightly new approach. I am asking our contacts among tenants to find unoccupied three bedroom or larger units at TCHC. If we can find some you could contact the Ombudsman with a double request:

1. To review your situation including all the documentation you have provided.

2. To request that the Ombudsman obtain an explanation from TCHC why these large units are vacant – and how long they have been vacant- when you need this transfer.

I will let you know as soon as I identify one or more of these units. I hope this is helpful. Let me know if this approach makes sense to you.

Sincerely,

Richard Decter
Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>

Vacant homes
3 messages

Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>  Fri, Sep 13, 2019 at 4:58 PM
To: Richard Decter <rdecter3@toronto.ca>

Hello Richard,

I hope you are well. Just following up from our last email. I've been informed about the following vacant 3 and 4 bedroom townhouses in Rivertowne:

71 Munro unit 1
71 Munro unit 3
69 Munro unit 4.

I've also been informed that there are 5 empty units in total on Munro street.

If possible, can you update me on the status of my complaint?

Regards,

Anita

Richard Decter <rdecter3@toronto.ca>  Fri, Sep 13, 2019 at 5:28 PM
To: Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>

Thank you, Anita.

This list is helpful. We are trying to get TCHC to re-consider your transfer request and I have spoken to Councillor Fletcher directly about it.

Sincerely,

Richard Decter

Constituency Assistant

Councillor Paula Fletcher
Toronto-Danforth
NOTICE OF MEDIATION

Anita Rachel Ewan
46 Hamilton St, Unit 3
Toronto, Ontario  M4M 3K4
Via Mail and Email: aewan@ryerson.ca

Re: Anita Ewan v. Toronto Community Housing Corporation

September 20, 2019

HRTO FILE: 2019-36525-I

The parties have consented to mediate this Application. Mediation has been scheduled for February 19, 2020 at 655 Bay Street, 14th Floor, Toronto, Ontario from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM EST.

ATTENDANCE

If you cannot attend the mediation on the date scheduled, you must act within 14 days of the date of this Notice or by October 4, 2019 to arrange for rescheduling. After that, the mediation will be rescheduled only in exceptional circumstances upon approval by the Registrar, even if both parties agree to reschedule. Retaining a new representative who is not available or prepared to proceed on the scheduled date is not considered an exceptional circumstance. If there are no exceptional circumstances and one or both parties decide to withdraw their consent to participate, the mediation will be cancelled and next steps will be communicated in due course.
Update

Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>  
To: Emily Shepard <EShepard@hrlsc.on.ca>  
Wed, Apr 1, 2020 at 2:07 PM

Hello Emily,

I am okay with you communicating to housing the initial part of your email that speaks to why I turned down their garbage unit and why I am now in need of a 4 bedroom unit.

However, why do my healthcare providers need to repeat the information you requested in the latter half of your emails (except the drug related issues)?

I'm tired of getting them to write down the same information over and over. And this also causes a lot of stress for me. I don't like feeling like I am a bother. They've gone over this many times and these notes should already be in my file. They've already explained all of this in detail to housing and have written it down in my applications.

Anita

[Quoted text hidden]
Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>

Housing Transfer
1 message

Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca> Wed, Jun 3, 2020 at 3:02 PM
To: "Kevin.Marshman@torontohousing.ca" <Kevin.Marshman@torontohousing.ca>
Cc: "Sheila.Penny@torontohousing.ca", Councillor Fletcher <councillor_fletcher@toronto.ca>, Solutions <solutions@torontohousing.ca>
Bcc: Rebeca Meza-Yanes <Rebeca.Meza-Yanes@torontohousing.ca>

Hello,

I have written 3 months ago regarding a transfer I am in desperate need for me and my children. I am still awaiting a new home and continue to suffer and die slowly every day.

I am still in the same situation. Your legal team attempted to offer me a three bedroom located in a drug ridden building. My doctor provided documentation for why this was not a viable solution and why this would further contribute to my mental health challenges.

I have been trying to receive a transfer since 2016. I have been unable to do so because of the inadequacy of your employees. My documentation has been lost and I have denied priority housing transfers despite the fact many medical professionals have supported my need for a transfer.

I am now in the process of fighting for a suitable space for me and my 4 going on 5 children. My home is overheated and overcrowded. I’ve had to rely on the assistance of others to help me care for my children, leaving even less space in my home. My health worsens every day. I am fatigued and stressed. My body is shutting down. Me and my children need a healthy home. These living conditions are not okay.

There are obvious racial disparities that exist within housing despite the fact that most communities are a majority of racialized peoples. This cannot and will not be ignored. In my role of a tenant representative, I have advocated on behalf of many tenants and have seen inequitable treatment towards some in comparison to others. I am a Black woman with four Black children and I am certain that I would not be in this situation if I were one of your white tenants. My white neighbour reminds me every time they see me of how they have been treated much better and have successfully transferred into a larger space. I have helped white tenants successfully transfer into the most sought after TCHC neighbourhoods in a matter of months. My doctoral work focusing on 20 Black women who have lived in Toronto housing displays differential treatment.

I demand justice and fairness for me and my children. If my children are without their mother, I will ensure that each person I have cried out to for help will be held accountable for this in one form or the other.

And for the individual who decided to call the police to my home during one of my pleas for help, I am stating in this email that the police or crisis team will NOT help. The death of Regis is a perfect example as to why this is the case. The only crisis I am in is being wrongfully treated by your organization and the other systems involved in oppressing me and my children.

I have withheld reaching out to advocacy groups and organizations, including academic institutions I am connected to, in fear of the stigma that is attached to mental health. But my fight for survival becomes more desperate each day. I will make sure that my story is publicized if I am unable to receive fair treatment for me and my children.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=a5db2e42ba&view=pt&search=all&ui=2&ct=rs&tf=a&rs=1# inbox
Anita Ewan <aewan@ryerson.ca>

Hello Emily,

After having some time to think about it and do some research on all the areas, I am not happy with any of the offers. Toronto Housing knows what they are doing by offering me these deplorable spaces. Each of these areas are plagued by drug use.

What I want to know is, why couldn't I negotiate for one of the vacant units in my neighbourhood? They remain vacant. And despite the fact that they have been "reserved" for other tenants, TCH made the error of denying me my human rights and providing me a transfer within a reasonable time frame. I have been asking for a transfer since 2016. Have you articulated this to them?

I am making it very clear, that if I am forced to choose one of these units, A) my health will still be at risk and B) I am NOT agreeing to remain silent.

I thought you should know this information prior to us speaking.

Thank you,

Anita Ewan, PhD (c), MEd, RECE
Instructor and Faculty Advisor, School of Early Childhood Studies
Faculty of Community Services
Ryerson University
aewan@ryerson.ca
437-228-5597