

KINSHIP CARE POLICY: EXACERBATING WOMEN'S OPPRESSION THROUGH
NEOLIBERAL FAMILIALIZATION

KINSHIP CARE POLICY: EXACERBATING WOMEN'S OPPRESSION THROUGH
NEOLIBERAL FAMILIALIZATION

By

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Abstract

Under neoliberal capitalist globalization, women's poverty and the deepening of women's oppression and exploitation have been notorious. Indeed, women are facing poverty all over the world, including in industrialized capitalist countries. Women living in poverty and particularly poor single mothers have been targets of the counter neoliberal reform of the capitalist welfare state. This counter reform is a gendered, classist, and complex alteration that has assaulted the social responsibilities and budgets of the welfare state. The impact of neoliberal policies against single mothers is evident in Ontario. However, policymakers continue taking away the assistance and social welfare programs that used to support single mothers. Neoliberal governments have created provincial policies to reinforce women's unpaid caring responsibilities and to intensify the surveillance and control exerted over poor Ontarian single mothers. This qualitative case study has explores critically the role of neoliberal social policy in Ontario child welfare. Through a feminist approach and using official documentary data, this research analyzes Ontario Kinship Care Policy. The study looks at the historical and social context in which the policy was formulated, depicts the main goals of the policy, and analyzes the policy's outcomes both, for the system and for women. Possible areas of future research on this policy are listed in the conclusions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
List of tables, graphics and figures	vii
CHAPTERS	
1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	6
The social policy of the neoliberal, racially, colonialist and patriarchal capitalism: the theoretical and social context of KCP	7
Social reproduction, social policy and gender oppression	8
The impact of neoliberal social policy in women’s lives	16
Women's resistance and mobilization against neoliberal policies	20
KCP: A typical case of reinforcing intricate forms of women’s oppression through developing neoliberal child welfare policy	23
Intersectionality of gender class and race oppression in child welfare system	24
KCP: the power embedded in neutral language and blind goals	26
KCP: Transferring social reproduction costs to WKC’s	29
The impact of caregiving on WKC’s lives	31
WKC’s counteracting the impact of KCP: resistance and negotiation	33
WKC’s improving children’s lives and outcomes	33
WKC’s resisting and transforming child welfare system through legal battles	34
3. Methodology	37
Epistemology, methodology and method	38
Documentary data	42
Data collection	42
Data analysis	43
Research process	45
Phase 1 - Analyzing the context and stages of the policy and selecting the period of study	46
Phase 2 – Overview and selection of official document	46
Phase 3 – Reading the specific documents and text selected	47
4. Findings and Discussion	48
The policy context of the OKCP: Ontario neoliberal reform of welfare	48
Ontario's neoliberal reform: changing the state's role, deepening women’s oppression	49
OKCP: reinforcing women’s oppression, developing neoliberal child welfare policy	56
OKCP and the neoliberal goal of transferring toward PWW the state’s responsibility of protection and wellbeing of children	57

Familiarization: the goal of neoliberal child welfare transformation in Ontario	57
Kinship the pillar of neoliberal familiarization of Ontario child welfare:	64
OKCP pillar of neoliberal familiarization of Ontario child welfare: transferring the costs of child protection to PWW	72
OKCP: Attaining neoliberal goals and exacerbating women’s oppression	81
5. Conclusions	93
Research purpose, case study findings and future research	93
Research purpose: the validity of a feminist critical approach research social policy	93
Case study findings	95
The dilemma of familiarization	95
Future research	97
Ontario kinship caregivers’ social and demographic profile	97
Forms of resistance and organization against OKCP	98
Social policy discourse	98
Social policy advocacy, social work practitioners and OKCP	99
Research limitations	99
Self-reflection	100
References	101
Appendix A	
Questionnaire for Data Collection From Documentary Source – Reference	117

LIST OF TABLES, GRAPHICS AND FIGURES

Tables

Table 1	Documentary sources	58
Table 2	Children in Care by Placement Type, 2007 – 2009	83

Graphics

Graphic 1	Expanded continuum of family-based permanency options pillars of permanency neoliberal familialization	71
Graphic 2	Kinship care continuum	73
Graphic 3	Example of kinship modality used in Ontario previously to the 2004 Ontario Kinship Model	76

Figures

Figure 1	Change in child welfare spending vs. all other Ontario government spending 1998/99 to 2009 /2010	84
Figure 2	Ontario child welfare activity levels between 1998/1999-2003/2004 to 2009/2010	85

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Under neoliberal globalization, women's poverty and the deepening of women's oppression and exploitation have been notorious. Indeed, women are facing poverty all over the world, including in industrialized capitalist countries. Likewise, women's poverty has become of central interest to feminist research (Bakker, 2003; Bezanson, 2006a; Braedley, 2006; Brodie, 2002; Cameron, 2006; Caragata, 2003; Gavigan & Chunn, 2007; Kingfisher, 2002; Smith, 2008).

Women's poverty is a complex phenomenon related to new expressions of the relations of class exploitation, political and ideological domination, and the interlocking of multiple oppressions. Notably, during the current stage of capitalism, transnational exploitation has become dominant. The globalized capitalism has changed the centers of power from national to transnational. Nowadays, the transnational elites are seeking for the highest surplus value (both, absolute and relative surplus) around the globe (Tomba, 2007). In this seeking, they are appropriating the value created by labour power in the first, second, and third world (from blue and white-collar workers), while at the same time the global elites are eliminating any responsibility for the provisioning and welfare of the population. Likewise, during capitalist globalization, political and ideological adaptations have been developed in order to adjust the institutions and structures of accumulation to capitalist trans-nationalization. Namely, the adjustments of the state role (Kotz, 2002; Robinson, 2010) and of the dominant ideological values (Bourdieu, 1998) have been a priority. In this sense, the neoliberal deification of individualism, which involves a systematic destruction of social values and collective responsibilities (Bourdieu,

1998), has become the dominant ideology and an inspiration for the design neoliberal social policy. Furthermore, the state role has been modified to support the increase of profits instead of the reproduction of social labour power. Accordingly, the neoliberal principle of considering the market as the sovereign and only source of livelihood and economic security has been the ideological base for the restructuring, privatization, and retrenchment of social policy and welfare programs (Clarke, 2007).

In fact, these political and ideological modifications not only are required by capitalist accumulation during globalization (Kotz, 2011) but have also devaluated the social reproduction process, making the poor even poorer, which broadens the gap between classes. Indeed, one of the main goals of neoliberal social policy is to transfer to women the state responsibility for and investment in the social reproduction of labour power, which reinforces women's unpaid caregiving job, while at the same time deepening class domination, gender, race, and other oppressions. Even more, the neoliberal counter reform has destroyed the welfare state and has replaced it with neoliberal policies that are one of the main causes of the feminization of poverty in developed capitalist countries (Armstrong, 1996; Bezanson, 2006a; 2006b; Brodie 2002, Clark, 2007; Cossman 2002; Fudge & Crossman, 2002; Gavigan & Chunn, 2007; Kingfisher, 2002; Philips, 2002; Vosko, 2006). In other words, the neoliberal reform of welfare is a genderized, classist, and complex alteration that has assaulted the values of social responsibility and the budgets of the welfare state. It also increases controlling and scrutinizing poor single mothers who depend on welfare policy. As stated by Kingfisher (2002), "Such attacks, though seemingly gender neutral, are in fact gendered in nature and have particularly negative consequences for the well being of poor single mothers and their children" (p. 7). This is particularly objectionable in the design and implementation of neoliberal child welfare policies.

Poor single mothers have been overly blamed, strongly judged, and closely scrutinized by the child welfare system (Reich, 2004). Under these circumstances, the goal of neoliberal child welfare policy of transferring to women the state responsibility of the care and protection of abused children has deteriorated even more the life of poor single mothers involved in child welfare. This deterioration is amply confirmed by the existing research on kinship care policy. For instance, research has found that kinship placements have become the first option to place children in need of protection (Green & Berrick, 2002; Ingram 1996; Scannapieco, 2002). Grandmothers are the majority of kinship caregivers; the majority of these grandmothers are impoverished women from Afro-American, Indigenous, and ethnic minorities (Fuller-Thompson 2000, 2005a; Green & Berrick 2002). They are single mothers of middle or old age, who sometimes have disabilities and who have been negatively impacted in their physical health, finances, and mental wellbeing by the kinship caregiver role (Kolomer 2000; Musil, Warner, McNamara, Rokoff, & Turek, 2008). Certainly, this caregiving role deepens and reinforces intricate forms of women's oppression. Contrasting with these findings, there is a lack of critical and feminist approaches to kinship care policy (KCP), which creates a need of developing critical reviews of the policy and its consequences to women kinship caregivers (WKCs).

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the development of feminist critical analysis of social policy. The research explores critically the role of neoliberal social policy as a structural relation of gender oppression and domination, which is characteristic of the capitalist mode of production in its globalized stage. Particularly, my aim is to critically review the case of neoliberal social policy reform in Ontario to uncover relations of class domination, social inequality, and injustice based on gender and other oppressions that permeate both policy practices and policy discourse. Therefore, in the review of the formulation and development of Ontario KCP (OKCP), this study will look at how this policy is

maintaining and deepening women's oppression. The research purpose is a product of the researcher's assumptions based on the Critical Paradigm (CP) of social knowledge and a framework the foundations of which are in Marxist and Feminist analysis.

The overall questions of this research are as follows:

How has the formulation and implementation of KCP advanced the neoliberal agenda in Ontario while reinforcing women's oppression?

How has the state through formulating and implementing KCP in Ontario, (1) reduced social expenditures in child welfare, (2) has transferred to women the social responsibility of the state of protecting and caring for the wellbeing of the children, and third, (3) attempted to preserve only state's functions of control and surveillance over women and their families?

The study will use a qualitative case study design to explore and describe the main aspects of the formulation and implementation of KCP in Ontario. An in-depth review of relevant literature as well as collecting and analyzing data from official documents will assist the researcher in answering the research questions. The third chapter of the study presents the methodology details, including research strategy and the techniques for data collection and analysis.

In terms of its significance, this study could be of interest to three types of audiences: first WKC's and their families; second, advocacy organizations such as grandparents' organization and women and social justice organizations; and third, social workers' associations, as well as practitioners interested in social policy issues and in developing anti-oppressive practices. It is expected that the description of controversial aspects of the Ontario Kinship Care Policy (OKCP) will provide valuable information to advocacy organizations for negotiating with government agencies and policymakers to advance WKC's cause. Furthermore, the information and analysis in this study could initiate a debate on neoliberal child

welfare policy and the dilemmas and challenges neoliberalism brings to social workers, policymakers, and practitioners. Finally the study can offer critical issues to practitioners developing anti-oppressive practices to support WKC's, practices that would also allow them to clarify their role as allies in the social change necessary to challenge neoliberalism.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides a summary of the literature and research reviewed on kinship care policy (KCP) and its theoretical and social context. The chapter is organized in two sections. The first section presents relevant literature on feminist critical approaches to social policy. The emphasis in this section is to develop a theoretical framework to synthesize the structural changes, in which neoliberal social policy emerges. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to reviewing critically significant aspects of mainstream research on kinship and KCP. The emphasis in this section is to analyze both, the neoliberal essence of KCP and its impact on women's lives.

In my review, it became apparent that in advancing neoliberal restructuring goals, KCP reinforces intricate forms of women's oppression. Equally significant is women's resistance to this policy. However, there is a lack of feminist critical analysis of KCP and its impact on women's lives, as well as of women's agency resisting and contesting the policy. This insufficiency of critical approaches in KCP contrasts sharply with the abundance of quantitative and qualitative studies that reinforce the policy's goals. Further, the need of critical approaches becomes urgent because kinship services (KS) and Kinship care (KC) are growing rapidly, becoming the preferred option of out-home placement for children who are under the care of the state (Ingram, 1996). This study attempts to explore from a feminist lens, kinship care and kinship care policy in Ontario.

As pointed out by analysts, the neoliberal transformation of institutional forms of capitalism is destructive of the structures and arrangements that were characteristic of the welfare state in the previous

capitalism stage (Bourdieu, 1998; Harvey, 2007; Kotz, 2011). It is argued that this destruction has particularly impacted women's lives all over the world, causing what analysts call "the global feminization of poverty" (Kingfisher, 2002; Smith, 2008). In this scenario, women's caregiver role and its unpaid caregiving job needed to maintain the social reproduction of the labour power is identified as one of the causes of women's disadvantage in the global arena (Kingfisher 2002; Mosher, 2000, Smith 2008). Increasing women's unpaid caregiving job is one of the effects of neoliberal social policy. Indeed, transforming welfare policy into neoliberal social policy has the goal of transferring to women previous costs and responsibilities of the state in the social reproduction of the labour force (Bezanson, 2006, 2006a; Brodie, 2002; Kingfisher 2002; Cameron, 2006). This shift has reinforced structures of class and gender domination, while deepens and exacerbates women's oppression all over the world. Nevertheless, women are resisting the effects of this policy.

The Social Policy of the Neoliberal, Racially, Colonialist and Patriarchal Capitalism: the Theoretical and Social Context of KCP

Analysts have pointed out that to ensure the continuity of capitalist accumulation it is necessary for intervention of the capitalist state in the social reproduction process. Feminists have also remarked the crucial relation between social reproduction and gender oppression, and its intersection with other kinds of oppression. In this debate, two aspects highlighted by feminist political economy are particularly useful in understanding neoliberal social policy, first, the relation existing between reproduction of labour power, social policy and women's oppression, and second, the impact of neoliberal social policy in women's lives.

Social reproduction, social policy and gender oppression.

Feminist scholars have criticized the exclusion and oppression that the capitalist state exerts over women's lives (Baines, Evans & Neysmith, 1991; Brewer, 1994; Caragata, 2003; Lewis, 1997; O'Connor, 1996; Williams, 1989). In these critiques, the role of social policy in reinforcing gender oppression has occupied a main standpoint. From a feminist lens, the analysis of gender oppression has been considered critical understanding capitalist social relations. As Acker (1989) remarks, "Society including class structure, the state and the political economies...can not be understood without a consideration of gender...Gender is implicated in the fundamental constitution of all social life" (p. 238). Thus, gender oppression refers first, to a social construction based on power relations, which originate and reproduce patriarchal relations of "male dominance and female subordination" (Acker 1989, p. 238). Second, gender involves the inequalities in the sexual division of labour, the separation of public and private spheres, the overvaluation of the production and undervaluation of social reproduction, and consequent devaluation of women's paid and unpaid caring work (Baines, Evans and Neysmith, 1991; Mies, 2007; O'Connor, 1996). Gender also implies the relation and interaction between gender and other social inequalities, such as racism, classism, ageism, sexism and ableism (Hill, 2010; Spade & Valentine, 2011).

Historically, gender oppression emerges from a social construction based in patriarchal relations of power that give privilege to male dominance. Therefore, patriarchy is considered by feminist as one of the historical cause of gender oppression and as constitutive relation of capitalist societies (Hartman, 2003; Mies, 2007; Werlhof, 2007).

For instance, Hartman (2003) defined patriarchy as:

[A] set of social relations... in which there are hierarchical relations between man and solidarity among them, which enable them in turn to dominate women... Both hierarchy and interdependence among men and the subordination of women are integral to the function of our society (p. 146).

More specifically, based on patriarchal capitalist principles the burden of caregiving for children, the sick and the elder is assigned and performed principally by women. Thus, women caregiver's role is essential to perpetuate capitalism and at the same time is profoundly oppressive to women. In this respect, feminists have called the attention on the dichotomist essence and multifaceted aspects related with women's caring labour. Love and labour form the double essence of caregiving. Therefore the caring labour requires "instrumental tasks" and "affective relations" or "caring for" while "caring about" (Abel & Nelson 1990, p.4). However, as Picchio (1992) analyses, it is quite difficult in women's caring labour to differentiate the material tasks from the psychological and emotional, because "women's love in the family is expressed and demanded in terms of work" (p. 98). Further, as the author remarks, the gender dimension is "the enormous mass of energy which women put into others, to make them feel like human beings in a system that treats them as a commodity (whether in current use, to be used or out of use)" (Picchio 1992, p. 98).

In her analysis of the politics of reproduction, Luxton (2006) asserts that, the feminist concept of social reproduction of labour has been developed towards a more complete conception, including not only economic and biological aspects, but psychological, "social and cultural realizations" (Luxton, 2006, p. 35). Luxton also suggests that Laslett and Brenner's concept of labour reproduction is one of the

most used and complete. In fact, this concept included most of the activities involved in the social reproduction process.

Laslett and Brenner's concept (1989) stated:

Feminists use social reproduction to refer to the activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and intergenerationally. Among other things social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization are provided, the care of the infirm and elderly, and the social organization of sexuality. Social reproduction can thus be seen to include various kinds of work – mental, manual and emotional – aimed to providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation (Laslett and Brenner, 1989, cited by Luxton, 2006, pp. 35, 36).

Although, there is not a unique interpretation of the social reproduction process, in feminist theories, Bakker (2003) has typified three dimensions of the process, in which there is agreement between feminist scholars: first is, the biological reproduction, second is the reproduction of the labour force, which includes daily life maintenance and education and training, and third is the reproduction of provisioning and caring needs (p. 32). While women's role in these dimensions is indispensable in ensuring social reproduction it is also the base of women's oppression. For instance, Bakker explains: "Biological reproduction or procreation refers to childbearing . . . component of the reproduction of the labour force . . . [which] consumes women physically and [is] the leading cause of death for women" (p. 77). Equally the participation of women's unpaid job in the maintenance of daily life and the

intergenerational continuity of provision of the caring needs of labour force is essential to capitalist accumulation and entails “the perpetuation of patriarchy within the family” (Bakker, 2003, p.77).

The indispensability of women's caregiving role in the continuity of the social reproduction process has been highlighted argued and fought by feminist scholars and activists. Feminists' first argument is that gender oppression is more evident in the scenario of social reproduction, family, private market and government agencies, in which women mostly and as a majority perform the duties and responsibilities of the paid and unpaid caregiver jobs. Their second argument is, that women's paid and unpaid caring labour is indispensable to the process of social reproduction, which is essential to capitalist accumulation (Luxton 2006; Mies, 2007; Picchio, 1992).

In this respect, Mies (2007) stated:

The unpaid work of women in the household . . . constitute[s] the hidden underground of the capitalist world in its accumulation model . . . without this . . . the so called free wage labour would not be able to sell his labour power and produce surplus value. Nor would the capitalist be able to accumulate capital . . . I called this devaluation of work then a process of howsewifisation. Today one speaks of precarisation of work (p. 269).

Consequently, women's caring labour is not restricted to benefit for their families. It has a role in the reproduction of the power labour that is essential to capitalist accumulation and the perpetuation of this mode of production. In this sense, Acker (2008) has called the attention to the sharp and contradictory division between the responsibilities of the corporations and the responsibilities of the families, within a capitalist system. She states, “white men created the capitalist corporation as a domain of power and production separate from the activities of household and families” (Acker, 2008, p. 106).

In similar way Picchio (1992) observed:

The accumulation of capital introduced a separation between the process of production and the process of social reproduction of the labouring population...commodities could not be produced without labour and the labouring population could not survive without wages ... wages are understood as a family wages (i.e. adequate to reproduce a family normal size and standards of life) the reproduction of the family is part of the reproduction of capital. Although it takes into consideration only the production of commodities necessities for the family wages and dismisses the house work necessary to transform them (pp. 9, 29).

Under these conditions, the amalgamation of patriarchal and capitalist practices has oppressive effects on women's lives. On one side, under capitalism the caregiver role is socially devaluated because of the overvaluation of production and undervaluation of social reproduction (Baines, et al., 1991; Mies, 2007). On the other side, the patriarchal social construction of caregiving as a morally bound and unique characteristic of women's nature, creates in women a sense of self-satisfaction and life purpose to perform the devaluated caregiver role (Fisher & Tronto 1990). These feelings are the product of the internalization of the gender expectations of patriarchal capitalist society (Evans & Swift, 2000) that are reinforced by male privilege of controlling the private and public spheres. As a result, women are socially constrained to perform the caregiver's role, consenting the devaluation and precarious conditions of their labour. In the end, patriarchal and capitalist principles work together in reducing the costs of reproduction of the labour power, which benefit capitalist accumulation, while deepens gender oppression.

Feminist critiques of gender oppression of capitalism have become even stronger through the analysis of the intersection and interlocking of multiple oppressions. Further, to explain these oppressive relations, feminist thinkers have advanced the concepts of the intersection and interlocking of oppressions, which refers to intricate forms in which the axes of gender, class, race and other oppressions interact in women's lives (Berger & Guidroz, 2009). Lately, the discussion of interlocking and intersectionality of oppression has questioned the additive and dichotomist analysis of social relations. In this vein, Hill (2010) has pointed out the need to exceed both, the analysis of oppression as a sum of inequalities and the reductionist tendency of dual conceptualizations.

Hill (2010) has exemplified this analysis with her own experience:

I am frequently asked 'which has been more oppressive to you, your status as a black person or your status as a woman?' what I am really been asked to do is divide myself into little boxes and rank my various status (p. 71).

Indeed it is certain, that the intersection between women's exploitation globally with new and old forms of social, racial and colonialist domination have impacted women's lives around the world in multiple, simultaneous and complex oppressive ways. King (1988) has clarified, "The modifier "multiple" refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism" (p. 47).

Expanding the analysis from gender oppression toward complex forms of intersectionality of multiple oppression of gender, race, class and other oppressions was a significant advance in feminist analysis of social policy. Williams (1989) has recounted, Black feminism brought not only the analysis of racism but also the need for an "understanding of slavery, colonialism and imperialism" (p. 80). In

terms of the implications of social policy to women's lives, Williams (1989) also highlighted that Black feminism has contributed to understanding the way in which social policy reinforces women's oppression through racial oppression: "welfare state... reproduces Black women's subordinate role in the racial and international division of labour, and ...the ideology of inferior Black motherhood" (1989, p. 80). Equally, Native women have been considered inferior and unable of raising their children by the colonialist and racially capitalist state. As Evans-Campbell and Campbell (2011) indicated, "The assumption that Indian children were better off with white families permeated child welfare policy . . . during the mid-20th century, thousands of Native children were removed from their homes and placed in foster care and adoptive homes" (p. 300).

Following Black feminism, Williams (1989) characterizes: "the welfare state as part of the racially, structured and patriarchal capitalism" (p. 178). Accordingly, the state develops functions in capitalist accumulation and in social reproduction while at the same time guarantees political legitimization and reinforces surveillance and social control.

In this sense Lexon and Buxton (2006) has clarified:

Social reproduction is dynamic in that most of the work involved in it, can taken up by various actors and institutions. For example, states can underwrite many of the costs associated with providing care to the frail elderly, or such care can be left to the private market for a price and/or to the unpaid labour of family (p. 3)

Thus, the state implements social policy in order to support the social reproduction process, while at the same time reinforces surveillance and social control to maintain and perpetuate the sexual, racial, and international division of labour and "forms of social control in relation to race and gender" (Williams, 1989, p.178). Analysts have also pointed out that social policy refers to both, social capital expenditures

and social expenses. Social capital expenditures are state investments in employment insurance, education, health, family allowance, child benefits, etc.

Gold, Lo and Wright (1975) has defined social expenditures as follows:

[E]xpenditures do not directly produce surplus value, but they do aid private capitalist in their attempts to increase the total amount of surplus value . . . 'social expenses' are those expenditures such as police and welfare, that are necessitated by the attempt to maintain social harmony (p. 42).

Social policy has its roots in capitalist relations of exploitation, oppression and domination. Indeed, contemporary social policy originated in economic, social, political and ideological relations characteristic of capitalism. In this sense, the Marxist dialectic helps to understand how these relations interact and are constitutive each other. Certainly, in Marxist approach the different dimensions of social reality do not have "independent status ... may be analytically distinct yet are internally interpenetrated and mutually constitutive of each other" (Robins, 2010 p. 62). Therefore, intricate and complex forms of patriarchy, racist subordination, and colonialist domination are constitutive of capitalist exploitation. Consequently, the nature and changes of state's social expenditures and expenses of social policy do not correspond to economic, politic or social issues of different spheres, systems or problems, with separate goals and measures. They are related, intricate, complex, multidimensional forms including social, political and economic historical dimensions that are constitutive of capitalist relations.

In brief, investment in social policy helps to reduce the cost of reproduction of labour power and to maintain the harmony needed to continue and perpetuate capitalist exploitation and its accumulation process (O'Connor, 1973). The accumulation process is a complex social process. Therefore, capitalist

accumulation not belongs only to the economic sphere, because the social reality is not divided into spheres, as functionalist and positivist schools argue. Accumulation process is constitutive of social relations of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, capitalist accumulation refers to multiple and complex dimensions of social relations, such as, class exploitation, political and ideological domination and oppression based in class, gender, race and other oppressions. In fact, capitalist accumulation process produces and reproduces these social relations that are essential to perpetuate the capitalist mode of production and its accumulation process. Again, social policy is part of capitalist social relations in all its dimensions, and it corresponds to goals of maintaining and ensuring the existence and continuity of the capitalist mode of production as a whole.

The impact of neoliberal social policy in women's lives.

Under neoliberal globalization, women's poverty and the deepening of women's oppression and exploitation have been notorious. Some remarkable processes related with this deterioration of women's life conditions are: first, the neoliberal restructuring of social policy that has transferred previous state responsibilities on social reproduction to women's unpaid work. Second, the emerging role of women as head and breadwinner, and third, the intensification of discriminatory practices based on class, gender race or ability in the labour market.

Smith (2008) denounced:

In our contemporary globalizing conditions, the feminization of poverty remains profound and is even deepening in many sites across the developed countries. Having achieved formal equality in most countries – with access to the vote and the adoption of anti-discrimination laws governing the labour force – women still face gendered occupational segregation in the workplace, a gendered wage gap . . . over-representation

among part-time and low-wage workers, the double burden of unpaid care work and wage earning, and inadequate . . . childcare and paid parental leave.. Deindustrialization, the downsizing of the public sector, and the expansion of the low-wage service sector continue to limit the paid labour opportunities and incomes of working women . . . Lone-parent households, which are typically female-headed, are facing a particularly difficult struggle where meeting the double burden of unpaid care work in the home and wage earning in the labour market . . . Women make up a significant proportion – in some cases, fully 50 per cent or more – of the low-wage migrant worker population; they are particularly concentrated in the paid care work sector in which . . . [they] are rarely protected by union contracts. Undocumented immigrant care workers are . . . extremely vulnerable to notorious forms of super- exploitation . . . (p. 131, 132)

Scholars have pointed out that the destructive tendencies of capitalism are the basis of its cyclical crisis and its re-composition (Kotz, 2011; Harvey, 2007; Robins 2010). For some analysts this recomposition requires from time to time changes in the social structures that guarantee the continuity of the accumulation process. In this sense, Kotz, (2011) defined: "A social structures of accumulation (SSA) is . . . a coherent, long-lasting capitalist institutional structure that promotes profit-making and forms a framework for capital accumulation" (p. 2). Consequently, the state regulation of the economy, the development of the welfare state and agreements and cooperation between capital and labour power were significant parts of the institutional structure that emerged after World War II and that could ensure the continuity of the accumulation process, during that stage (Kotz, 2011, p.2). However, around 1973 this SSA entered in a crisis and shifted to neoliberal SSA. Analysts have pointed out Some of the main

transformations that were impelled by globalization, including the changes in the state and the consequent shrink of social policy that gave birth to neoliberal SSA.

Kotz (2011) described neoliberal SSA as follows:

Main features are the removal of barriers to free movements of goods, services and specially capital, throughout the global economy; a withdrawal by the state from the role of guiding and regulating economic activity; the privatization of state enterprises and public services, the slashing of state social programs; a shift to regressive forms of taxation; a shift from cooperation between capital and labour to a drive by capital with aid from the state, to fully dominate labour; and the replacement of co-respective behaviour among large corporations by unrestrained competition. Neoliberalism has an associated ideology of worship of the so called free market along with denial of any positive role of the state apart from its coercive functions (p. 3)

The neoliberal principle of considering the market as the first and only source of livelihood and economic security has been the ideological base for the restructuring, privatization and retrenchment of social policy and welfare programs (Clarke, 2007). Accordingly, individual interest and freedoms have been proclaimed by the neoliberal discourse disregarding a market dominated by transnational corporations and its elites (Kotz, 2002; Robins, 2010). Thus, under neoliberal SSA, while transnational elites are seeking the highest profits, and appropriating the value created by labour power, they have “no legal responsibility to assure the provisioning of the population” (Acker, 2008, p.106). Likewise, the neoliberal deification of individual interest is targeted to destroy systematically both, social values and collective responsibilities (Bourdieu, 1998). Following this individualistic logic, neoliberal social policies are designed to liberate the state from its responsibility on investment in the social reproduction of labour

power (Kamerman & Kahn, 2001). More specifically, neoliberal policies are transferring almost the complete burden of social reproduction to families principally “via women’s unpaid labour” (Bezanson, 2006, p. 199). In this sense, Bakker (2003) highlights, “the macroeconomic framework of neoliberalism and its attendant governance structures expose fundamental contradictions between the formal gender neutrality of market citizenship and its unspoken reliance on women’s unpaid work in social reproduction” (p. 67). Similarly, Kingfisher (2003) in her critique of the neoliberal discourse asserts that, although neoliberal discourse pretends to be neutral, neoliberalism is a genderized and racist cultural system “Ostensibly neutral neoliberal understandings are not only ethnocentric, but also androcentric” (p. 13). One thing is certain, neoliberal restructuring has a direct impact in increasing women's poverty rates globally.

In this respect, Kingfisher (2002) posited:

[The] increasing disengagement of the state from responsibility for welfare, and the greater burden on women for remunerate and unpaid domestic work . . . becomes a problem for poor women not only in light of the kind of employment they have access to – which is often marginal in terms of pay, security, benefits and status – but also in relation to the additional pressures place on them domestically” (p. 10)

Further, analysts have remarked the decline of the model of male as breadwinner, and have called the attention about the direct relation between single mother families and poverty (Albelda & Tilly, 1997; Kahne, 2004; Kelan, 2008). Kahne, (2004) explains the poverty of single mother' families as consequence of the inequalities that women face in the labour market, which, is characterized not only by the gender wage gap, but also by “frequent lay-off, involuntary part-time work... lack of benefits and severance pay” (Kahne, 2004, p. 54). In fact, the growing of women breadwinner’s role, and the

increasing of women's unpaid work express not only the intensification of women's exploitation in the labour market and its direct effects in increasing women's poverty, but the deepening of women's multiple oppressions: classism multiplied by sexism multiplied by racism (King, 1988, p. 47).

In brief, neoliberal restructuring of social policy is transferring the burden of social reproduction of labour power from state to women's caregiving unpaid work. This has increased women's poverty and deepened gender, class, and race's domination. In addition, the location of women as head and breadwinner is another factor of women's exploitation and oppression. In accomplishing the provisioning for their families single mothers have to sell their labour force in a discriminatory labour market that devalue women work and disadvantage women of colour and those who have special needs (Wiegert, 2002). When single mothers are forced to depend on state assistance they are identified "as inadequate and problematic" (Evans & Swift, 2000). As a result, women remain the principal responsible for the unpaid reproductive caring labour, and at the same time have to face the social and cultural burden of patriarchal values, isolation and exclusion. Undoubtedly, the neoliberal restructuring has deepened women's oppression's and is challenging "women's capacities to demand and utilize social rights" (Orloff, 1993, cited by Kingfisher, 2002, p.11). Inevitably, neoliberal restructuring of social reproduction is a terrain of women's resistance and mobilization (Aronson, 2000; Cameron, 2006).

Women's resistance and mobilization against neoliberal policies.

Resistance has been defined in different contested ways. For instance, Sage, (2007) defines resistance as the response that oppressed groups develop to contest social, institutional, and cultural practices of hegemonic domination. In defining resistance, Scott (1986) has pointed out that resistance not only refers to forms of socially organized actions, but the everyday forms of individual reaction against domination. Accordingly, social and individual forms of resistances are means to achieve social

change. They are different expressions of the same justice seeking. In this sense, individual's everyday forms of resistance combine self-interest and strategies to survive that are "vital force to animate political action" (Scott, 1986, p. 295). Further, in defining resistance the importance of the actor's motivation and intentionality of the action of resistance have been pointed out. In this claim, Seymour (2006) has defined: "resistance refers to intentional, and hence conscious, acts of defiance or opposition by a subordinate individual or group of individuals against a superior individual or set of individuals. Such acts are counter-hegemonic, but may not succeed in affecting change" (p. 304).

Certainly feminist critiques and women's resistance against social policy did not start with neoliberal restructuring. For instance, Schiele (2011) has identified how people of color, African American, Native, Asiatic and Latino/Latinas have resisted the racist, classist, and colonialist genderized social welfare policy by decades. As Schiele (2011) has asserted "People of color resisted...racial policy control in numerous ways . . . Three of which are . . . (1) Non-violent direct action, (2) counter violence, and (3) group self-help and mutual aid" (p.11). The women's action in these forms of resistance varied from individual acts group meetings to community organizing and mobilizing. Women's role in resistance acts include: the leading of clubs and activities of individual and community support, such as the "African American women's club movement", the "Asian American women survivors of domestic violence", the Latinas community-based-organizations, and the Native women's resistance against residential schools and Eurocentric practices of child rearing (Schiele, 2011, p. 18, 19).

Indeed, women's resistance against neoliberal oppression is present. As Smith (2008) has recounted, feminists and women are developing from different flanks, various forms of resistance against neoliberal oppression. These forms include the feminist critique of neoliberal social policy, the individual everyday

women's resistance against the policy impact in their lives, as well as women's organization and activism to social policy changes.

In this sense, Evans and Wekerle (1997) has stated, "We find that women globally and in Canada, are actively engaged in developing sites of resistance, both to the dominant restructuring discourse and to the impacts of restructuring in women's lives" (p.14). Likewise, Daenzer (1997) has described: "In the 1990's, Black women . . . Against great odds and limited resources . . . are organizing to create changes in welfare services and other institutional arrangements" (p. 269)

From a different approach, Neysmith (2000) highlighted feminist advances of the concepts of power and agency. According to her, feminist literature has introduced Foucault's perspective of power "as enacted and relational" and human agency as the capacity of individuals to act independently according his/her choices (p.14).

Neysmith (2000) has also explained:

The primary locus of agency lies in the contextualization of social experience . . . This means that actors can gain in their capacity to make decisions that ...challenge their usual patterns of action, daycare boards, older women's networks, community projects, labour force readjustment committees . . . can promote social change in so far as they are arenas for participants to examine jointly how power is exerted and provide an experiential basis for articulating alternatives (p.16).

In the same way, in her study of older women's resistance Aronson (2000) classifies different levels of women's action to restructuring caring labour. From the analysis of "Being managed" to "Making demands" (Aronson, 2000, p. 54), her research helps to understand women's agency and forms of daily resistance to the effects of neoliberal restructuring.

In concluding this part, I have found that, the restructured social policy is part of neoliberal SSA. As such, it accomplishes legitimization and accumulation functions of capitalist state. Social policy also embeds relations of gender, race and class domination. Consequently, a feminist review of a specific social policy is attentive to focus the analysis on the interaction of different forms of exploitation and oppression that converge with gender to perpetuate capitalist structures of domination. One of the central goals of neoliberal social policy is transferring the burden of social reproduction of power labour to women's unpaid caregiving job, which deepens women's oppression. Although, the neoliberal discourse pretends to be neutral it is profoundly racist and androcentric. However, historically women have resisted the capitalist state. Currently women are resisting the neoliberal policies, and they are creating not only intentional daily acts of defiance but also they are confronting the capitalist state through different levels of resistance.

KCP: A typical case of reinforcing intricate forms of women's oppression through developing neoliberal child welfare policy

KCP comprises the legislation, standards and child welfare practices that have been implemented to place children, who are in state custody, under the care of their relatives. KCP is also an example of typical neoliberal child welfare. As such, KCP emerges in the context of the gender oppression characteristic of child welfare system, which amplifies women's caregiving role and reinforces intricate forms of oppression. Second, using gender-neutral language, KCP develops the neoliberal goals of transferring social reproduction costs to racial and impoverished women of middle and older age. Thus, KCP impacts dramatically all aspects of women's lives while it deepens women's oppression.

Intersectionality of gender class and race oppression in child welfare system.

As a component of the capitalist welfare state, child welfare reinforces gender oppression through biases of gender, class, and race that are characteristics of the system. Thus, women are overrepresented in the system and their role as caregivers of children is amplified and scrutinized by the state. Essentially, KCP emerges within this oppressive context.

The overrepresentation of women in child welfare caseloads is related first, to the fact that women continue to be the primary caregivers of children (Rice & Prince 2000) and second to the gender biases of the system. In this sense, Risley-Curtiss and Heffernan (2003) have pointed out that laws, practices, and child welfare research continue being gender biased. According to the authors, women continue to be blamed for child abuse. Mothers are blamed even when fathers or partners cause the abuse, as in sexual abuse cases where mothers are blamed for lacking responsibility in their role of caring for their children (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003, p. 398). Women's over-representation in caseloads is also associated with the fact that laws and practices are based on assumptions typical of Western social construction of mothering, such as the assumption of mother's natural caregiver role and essentiality to child development (Featherstone, 2006 p. 306). As a result, "If a child is having problems, it must mean that his or her mother is not functioning adequately. This belief is widespread and continues to be substantiated via professional practice and publications in the social services" (Risley-Curtiss & Heffernan, 2003, p. 40).

Information about over-representation of children of colour living in poverty has enriched the understanding of gender oppression in child welfare. Specifically, studies have found that in the USA, Afro-American, Native American and Hispanic children are more likely living in poverty, and are over-represented in the child welfare system (Hill, 2008; Dennette, Derezotes & Poertner, 2005). Likewise,

the over-representation of impoverished indigenous children is highly significant in Canadian and Australian child welfare (Swift, 1995; Tilbury, 2008). Similarly, the “disproportionate number of minority ethnic children” is a characteristic of UK’s child welfare (Chand, 2008, p. 8). As obvious conclusion, the mother’s of those children are women from Afro-American, Indigenous and ethnic minorities whose class status is poor, and who are overrepresented in the system.

However, Swift (1995) found in her critical review of child neglect that the concept of neglect conceals structural social problems such as women's poverty and race discrimination. Thus, the standards and practices used to assess and intervene in situations related to neglect are addressed through caregivers’ responsibilities and individual solutions. In this way, the state shifts the responsibility of children’s poverty from society to women “...Virtually all people accused of neglecting their children, both historically and at the present are mothers...The study of child neglect is in effect the study of mothers who 'fail'” (Swift, 1995, p. 101).

In essence, intricate forms of oppression are reinforced by the child welfare system. Chiefly, race and class oppression intersects with gender oppression. In particular, women of colour who are poor are over-represented, blamed, judged, and closely scrutinized by child welfare system.

Reich (2004) illustrated in comments on Robert’s book *Shattered Bonds*,

[S]tereotypes of black maternal unfitness permeate child welfare practice . . . these images of black women as careless, as an overbearing matriarch, or as the welfare queen- so deeply penetrate the American psyche that they confirm the need for state intervention into black homes ‘to ensure that children do not follow their dangerous example’ (Roberts, 2002, p. 61, cited by Reich, 2004, p. 92).

In short, structural causes of neglect and abuse are related to male dominance and poverty. However, child welfare system accuses women of neglect, reinforcing gender oppression. The state has increased its surveillance of women of colour to control the fulfillment of caregiving functions in accordance with state expectations. Consequently, women from Afro-American, Indigenous and ethnic minorities and their children are overrepresented in the system, and women's caregiver role is amplified and scrutinized. KCP has emerged in this context.

KCP: the power embedded in neutral language and blind goals.

KCP is essentially a neoliberal child welfare social policy that transfers social reproduction costs to women, using gender-neutral language and gender-blind goals. However, women involved in kinship caregiving not only are experiencing gender, race and class oppression, but also ageism and ableism. Consequently, KCP impacts dramatically all aspects of women-kinship-caregivers' lives. That is to say, KCP is deepening women's oppression.

Scannapieco and Hegar (2002) pointed out that KC practices are relatively new in child welfare and are growing rapidly. According to the authors, KC became an issue in child welfare in USA in the late 1980's and only to the mid-90s; it did become formal out-of-home care. Between 1990 and 1998, children in the care of relatives almost reached the average of children in foster care. Thus, the average of children in KC was 37% while in foster care was 38%. Additionally, during the same period, there was a significant increase in the use of kinship placements in some states. "For example, California has placed approximately 51% of the foster care population in kinship care, while Illinois has placed 55%" (Scannapieco & Hegar, 2002: 316). In this precipitate development of kinship care, the over-representation of Afro-American and Indigenous women has been hidden by the characteristic use of gender-neutral language within child welfare policy (Featherstone, 2006).

As Jaffe reiterates, “Bourdieu illustrates that the social power of dominant groups lies to a great extent in their ability to employ discourses that deny or mask their social and political content” (1993, p. 155). The KCP discourse that is also used in research and practice exemplified Bourdieu analysis. Two aspects of that discourse have been critical in deepening women's oppression: first, the foremost and paramount place social policy gives to children, while denying women's needs and second, the construction of kinship discourses based on gender-neutral language terms, such as "kinship caregivers", “custodial grandparents" or "grandparents". In the end, both aspects of KCP's discourse converge in ignoring women's needs and rights, and creating gender-blind policy goals useful to neoliberal objectives.

Analysts have discussed the use of children as the foremost and paramount target of neoliberal policy to mask the transferring of social reproduction costs to families and women (Dobrowolsky & Jenson, 2004; Featherstone, 2006; Lister, 2006). In this sense, Dobrowolsky and Jenson (2004) have pointed out that under neoliberal restructuring, social expenditures on children have become a priority, thus relegating the needs and rights of women. Further, although women are the family's breadwinners, primary caregivers and principal responsible for housework (Demo & Acock, 1993; Fuwa, 2004; Rice & Prince, 2000), women are facing more restrictions when claiming their right. As Dobrowolsky and Jenson (2004) highlight, "Those advocating in the name of women find themselves increasingly excluded or find themselves compelled to use language of children's needs" (p. 155). In this respect, Featherstone (2006) describes, “children becoming increasingly viewed as almost sacred beings whose well-being trumps all considerations of adults' well-being" (p. 307). However, this mystification of children, is not favouring them. It is used principally to advance neoliberal cutting of family benefits.

The use of gender-neutral language, such as “kinship caregiver”, “Kin-caregiver” or simply “caregiver” is everywhere within KCP discourse, which includes kinship legislation and standards, and child welfare practices. Because of this gender neutrality, only recently has research focused on the fact that the majority of kinship caregivers are grandmothers (Dolbin-MacNab 2006; Dolan, Casanueva, Smith, & Bradley, 2009; Gibson, 1999; Simpson & Lawrence-Webb, 2009). However, the real number of women involved in kinship care such as step-grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and family’s girlfriends is unknown or hidden by gender-neutral terms.

Principally, research has found that grandparents’ role of caregivers children has grown considerably. Simpson and Lawrence-Webb (2009) noted that in the USA, in 2000, approximately 4.5 million children less than 18 years of age resided with their grandparents. This represents a 30% increase compared to 1990. The authors also pointed out that in 2000, half a million African American grandparents were raising their grandchildren and those grandparents were mostly grandmothers (p. 25). In the USA, Cox (2009) reported that in 1999 the income of 19% of grandparent caregivers was below the poverty line and “In some states the proportion of these families living in poverty was as high as 30%” (p. 178).

In the study “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Canada”, Fuller-Thompson (2005b) found that between 1999 and 2001 the number of Canadian children under 18 who resided with grandparents increased by 20%. In 1996, 26,970 grandparents were in the role of caregivers in "skipped generation families" and 60% of grandparents were women. The income of those grandmothers was considerably less than the annual income of grandfathers (\$14,131 versus \$25,799) and grandmothers expended 30 or more hours per week in house work (Fuller-Thompson 2005, pp. 2, 4, 34).

Regardless of the neutral terms of KCP discourse, research has found that grandmothers are the majority of kinship caregivers. Specifically, the majority of these grandmothers are impoverished women from Afro-American, Indigenous, and ethnic minorities. They are single mothers of middle or old age, who sometimes have disabilities. In addition, kinship grandmothers undertake the care of their grandchildren, receiving at the same time a new portion of the unpaid caregiver job, nearly on a full time basis (Fuller-Thompson 2000, 2005a; Green & Berrick 2002). However, the use of gender-neutral language in KCP discourse is consistent with the gender oppression within child welfare, which reinforces the intricate forms of oppression endured by kinship-grandmothers. Naples (1991) has highlighted, “gender-neutral language... institutionalizing men’s power over women... in gender-neutral language, women’s differential needs and experiences are hidden” (p. 25).

KCP: Transferring social reproduction costs to WKC.

KCP deepens women’s oppression through achieving the neoliberal goal of transferring social reproduction costs to WKC, who endure intricate forms of oppression including gender, racism, classism, ageism and ableism. Consequently, KCP impacts dramatically all aspects of kinship-women-caregivers' lives.

Quinn has demonstrated in her analysis of the outcomes of two mental health policies that although “Most social policies are written in gender-neutral language... their effects are frequently different for men and women” (1996, p. 195). The difference is based principally in the caregiving role of women, which is always ignored by gender-blind goals. Quinn (1996) has affirmed that social policy goals of returning mental health patients to families never “stated explicitly that when these patients returned home, their care would be provided by women” (p. 198). However, the state’s hidden objective of

"saving money by closing large state-funded institutions" (p. 199) was achieved by transferring patients from hospitals (state funded) to women (care provide by relatives women at no cost).

A similar analysis can be applied to KCP. First, the goal of KCP is to place children who are in state custody under the care of their "relatives". As indicated above, KC placements are spreading quickly. The great majority of "relatives" are Afro-American and indigenous grandmothers. Second, the neoliberal objectives of reducing costs of children's out-home-placement via transferring costs of social reproduction to families/women are being achieved by KCP. In addition, KCP reduces financial resources to kinship-caregiver-women in oppressive ways. To this purpose, KCP has tied the apportioning of financial resources with state surveillance and for a limited time. This means that to be eligible to receive the same payments that traditional foster-care provider receive, WKC's have to "become part of the foster care system" (Cox, 2009, p. 179). This requires being under the strict surveillance of a genderized, classist and racist child welfare system. WKC's only receive state payments until they obtain custody of their grandchildren or until the state apprehends them. Thus, the objective of state surveillance of KC placements is to ensure that grandmothers fulfill their caregiver role in accordance with western welfare expectations and that kinship adoption happens. After that, grandmothers would be out of the system and would assume all costs related to the caregiving of their grandchildren. Otherwise, children could be apprehended. Nevertheless, one thing is certain; WKC's cannot receive state support forever.

As a masterpiece of neoliberal measures, these requirements of KCP have provoke that kinship-grandmothers and other kinship caregivers move away from the system rather than be involved with it. Thus, they try to assume themselves the entire cost of reproduction early in the process. Singularly, KCP achieves both neoliberal goals: reducing the cost of out-of home placements of children and transferring

all costs of social reproduction to women. Additionally KCP is doing this quickly. Thus, the neoliberal state is leaving almost the complete burden within families and on women. Subsequently, the drastic impact on kinship-grandmothers' lives is apparent.

The impact of caregiving on WKC's lives.

Lately, the research on kinship-grandmothers is flourishing. However, it has focused principally on two aspects of the situation. One is the parenting role of grandmothers; the other is the outcome of grandchildren raised by grandmothers (Dolan, Casanueva, Smith, & Bradley, 2009; Dolbin-MacNab 2006; Gibson 1999; Simpson & Lawrence-Web, 2009). Nevertheless, the impact of caregiving on grandmothers' lives has been of interest only for some research projects (Kolomer 2000; Musil, Warner, McNamara, Rokoff, & Turek, 2008). Although, there is not abundant literature on the impact of caregiving on grandmothers' lives, certainly some researchers have been concerned about this issue. Thus, the research in this area has two principal characteristics. First, the language is generally gender-neutral, using kinship or grandparent categories. Second, one of the major concerns of research in this area is how grandchildren are affected by the consequences of the impact of caregiving on their grandparents. Thus, the research has centered principally of caregiving in the physical and mental health of grandparents and how this affects their grandchildren.

For instance, the research reviewing on the health of caregiving grandparents, done by Grinstead, Leder, Jensen and Bond (2003) is a great illustration of this content. The authors provide a critical review of the literature on "the health of grandparents raising grandchildren" (p. 318). This review has found that, "Relatively few studies in the grandparent caregiver literature have addressed the health of grandparents as the central concern" (Grinstead, Leder, Jensen & Bond, 2003, p. 319). Particularly, the literature reviewed by the authors has found evidence of the growth of health problems among

grandparents also, "Descriptions of stress experienced by grandparent caregivers were commonly found in the literature" (Grinstead, Leder, Jensen & Bond, 2003, p. 320). According to the reviewers, stress, anxiety and depression are some of the most visible effects on the impact of caregiving on grandparents' mental health. These findings coincide with those of the research of Everett, Hall and Hamilton-Mason (2010) on stressors and coping responses of Black women. In which, the authors found that "Racism and sexism, as contextual factors, directly affect the socioeconomic status of Black women, their access to resources, their opportunities for self-actualization, and the manner in which they manage stress—all of which may have detrimental effects on mental health" (p. 40).

In the same matter, Grinstead et al., (2003) review provides a formidable overview of the research done in this area. However, it has the weakness of being done from a gender-neutral approach and with the main concern of examining the effects of grandparent's health issues on their caregiving role. Therefore, the authors call for more research based on the role of caregiving. Thus, Grinstead et al., (2003) state, "As the health and wellbeing of grandparents may affect their ability to fulfill the parenting role, continued development in this field of research is essential" (p. 24).

From a different standpoint, research done by Musil et al., (2008) provides a picture of the views of grandmothers on the impact of caregiving on their lives. The report discusses the views of grandmothers on financial strain, the challenges related with health problems and age, as well as custody issues, and difficulties parenting their grandchildren. Although the study was done with grandmothers, gender challenges are not part of the study, and conclusions are referred to grandparents in general. Nevertheless, the study presents a more complete overview of the caregiving impact on grandmothers' lives because the research data comes from 141 grandmothers.

In brief, the life of WKC's has been impacted dramatically by KCP. Research has found that physical health, finances, and mental wellbeing of grandmothers are being affected. In the end, all these aspects of KCP are deepening and reinforcing intricate forms of women's oppression. However, kinship-grandmothers are developing forms of resistance to confront this neoliberal policy.

WKC's counteracting the impact of KCP: resistance and negotiation.

The impact on grandmothers' lives of KCP combines gender, class, and race practices of oppression and surveillance, social control and domination. As a result, WKC's could be located among the most oppressed groups. However, as Musil et al., 2008 has pointed out "Grandmothers raising grandchildren have had a powerful and influential voice in generating support for themselves and their families... and a network of supportive others..." (p. 113). The ability of kinship-grandmothers to survive, resist, negotiate and reconstruct their own lives against inequalities has manifested in three aspects of their resistance. First, WKC's have improved the lives and outcomes of the grandchildren they are raising. Second, they have developed legal battles against the abuse of the policy and they have won. Third, they have come together to support one another and to create organizations to advocate for their rights.

WKC's improving children's lives and outcomes.

Maintaining the children in the family is a form of resistance by WKC's. When Afro-American and Indigenous children remain in their families, they have the opportunity to reinforce family ties, develop culture identity, and have the space to question racism.

Berry (2009) illustrated the black family's role in resisting racism as follows:

The black family—including not only mothers and fathers but also grandparents, extended relatives, and other adults in the community—played a crucial role in helping children to navigate through these racial ideologies and practices. Oral histories and

memoirs reveal a world of racial lessons in which black children learned both physical and psychological survival...black adults taught children a meaning of blackness rooted in racial pride and struggle (p. 65)

Similarly Wright, Hiebert-Murphy, Mirwaldt and Muswaggon, (2005) conclude on indigenous, "... emotional bond... and the child's or youth's connection to culture, language, and community. The majority of children...reported being able to communicate in their indigenous Cree language" (p. 20). Therefore, children's outcomes are better in kinship care placements than in traditional foster care (Farmer, 2010; Kang, 2007; Koh, 2010; Metzger, 2008). Moreover, Kinship family ties create positive acceptance, and feelings of love and commitment to care for children regardless the financial strains and personal consequences (Kan, 2007; Metzger, 2008).

WKC's resisting and transforming child welfare system through legal battles.

One of the biggest struggles of WKC's is dealing with the legal system to discern their rights (Cox, 2009). However, these legal battles are not only the expression of grandmother's resistance to KCP but also a way to obtain important changes in implementing the neoliberal objectives of KCP. As an illustration, Gleeson (1999) has recounted the history of kinship caregiver's legal battles in Illinois. Accordingly, only after the Supreme Court decisions (1977, 1979) in the case *Miller v. Youakim*, the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS) recognized foster care rates to relatives caring for children in state custody (p. 30). Then after "several lawsuits...in 1988 the Children and Family Services Act was amended to require that relatives "be selected as the preferred caregiver" (p. 31). Moreover, WKC's continue making progresses in changing the legislation; by 1990 significant improvements in Illinois legislation were obtained by grandmothers-kinship caregivers.

In this respect, Glen (1999) cited parts of the *Reid v. Suter* case:

IDCFS was enjoined from 1) Failing to inform their relatives about the right to become foster parents and receive foster payments; 2) using intimidation, harassment and threats to force their relatives into becoming private guardians, rather than foster parents; 3) failing to inform relatives about the right to seek waiver of certain foster home licensing standards; and 4) failing to provide adequate written notes of IDCFS' decision concerning foster care (Reid v. Suter, 1992, Cited by Gleeson 1999, p.31)

Other forms of resistance and negotiation WKC's are developing include individual acts of self-help, local support groups and state and national advocacy organizations. These organizations are providing support to kinship-caregivers at local, provincial and national level.

Certain aspects of this literature review are particularly significant to this study. First, the revision about the theoretical and social context of KCP emphasizes the historical and structural causes of social policy. Accordingly, structural causes related with the capitalist accumulation process and the needs of capital globalization have shaped social policy. Either through welfare policy or neoliberal social policy the state intervenes in the social reproduction of labour to support the continuity of capitalist accumulation. Consequently, both, welfare and neoliberal policy are part of the classist, exploitation and the racist and gender oppression and domination of capitalist system. However, through dismantling welfare policy and transferring state responsibilities and costs of social reproduction to families/women, neoliberal policy exacerbates even more the disadvantages that women face inside patriarchal capitalism.

On the other hand, in this review we found that quantitative and qualitative research on KCP and kinship caregivers is abundant. The quantitative research shows that kinship caregiving has increased considerably in last decades, the majority of kinship caregivers are grandparents and the majority of those grandparents are Black, Latinas, or Native women, of middle or old age, who live in poverty and

sometimes have a disability. Recently, qualitative research on kinship grandmothers has flourished focusing principally in assessing grandmothers' capacity to parenting their grand children, or in evaluating the outcomes of children being reared by them. In other words, the qualitative research in kinship is about how policy goals are been achieved and what changes need to be done to attain better policy achievements. Beyond these results, it has been apparent that KCP is making a negative impact physical health, finances, and mental wellbeing of WKCs. But even so, women are resisting the policy and they are fighting and making changes in its implementation.

All in all, one of the most surprising issues in this literature review is the lack of critical and feminist approaches in kinship research. This is a very unexpected result having in account the impact of neoliberal social policy in women's lives. At the same time, it opens a broad room to develop critical reviews on specific neoliberal policies such as KCP. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the development of feminist critical analyses of social policy and its impact on women's lives. Specifically, this study examines the case of Ontario kinship care policy. The next chapter presents significant aspects of the research methodology used to develop this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter summarizes significant methodological aspects of this study including the process of gathering and data analysis. The chapter is divided in two sections; the first introduces a discussion about the research methodology and its epistemological foundations. The second part consists of an exposition of the methodology selected, a description of the main decisions in relation with data sources, collection and analysis, and a summary of the research process.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the development of feminist critical analysis of social policy. The research will explore critically the role of neoliberal social policy as structural relation of gender oppression and domination, which is characteristic of the capitalist mode of production in its globalized stage. Particularly, my aim is to critically review the case of neoliberal social policy reform in Ontario to uncover relations of class domination, social inequality and injustice based on gender and other oppressions that permeate both, policy practices and policy discourse. Therefore, in the review of the formulation and development of Ontario KCP (OKCP), this study will look at how this policy is maintain and deepening women's oppression. The research purpose is product of researcher's assumptions based on the Critical Paradigm (CP) of social knowledge and a framework which foundations are Marxist and Feminist analysis.

Marston (2004) has observed that from CP the researchers "necessarily make certain assumptions about the world they study and thus are not...value free" (p. 17). This study reflects this statement. As researcher I have had particular interest in this research that goes beyond the academic requirements of my MSW, though it is very related to my social work profession, education, work experience and

specifically with my commitment with a feminist and anti-neoliberal position. Therefore, these values have influenced each research decision, from choosing the research topic to writing the final report.

Cooper (1997) remarked:

[T]he "voice" chosen by the researcher is intended to align their stance with the demands of the research paradigm. The overriding purpose of the construction of ethos in research writing is not textual self-representation but the representation of the goals and standards of the research paradigm (which, like all other social practices, are ideological but at the same time systematic) (p.560).

Epistemology, Methodology and Method

The epistemological assumptions of this study are grounded in the Critical paradigm of social knowledge and a framework which foundations are Marxist and Feminist analysis. Qualitative case study methodology is the research strategy that will guide the process of collection and data analysis. The research will draw in secondary data from official policy documents and feminist literature. This section presents the rationale of the methodology suggested.

In essence, social research methodologists have pointed out the crucial interconnection between philosophical assumptions, methodology and methods in the production and communication of knowledge (Carter & Little, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Kovach, 2005; Newman, 1997; Yin, 2003). Creswell (2007) for example, has stated that there is coherence between qualitative methodologies and specific philosophical assumptions, particular paradigms and determined frameworks. In this sense, Carter and Little (2007) consider methodologies as "the connectors of research with theory and methods" (p. 301). Yin (2003) observes that the consistence in a Case Study lies mainly in the theoretical assumptions and

concepts. Accordingly, the researchers' philosophical and theoretical assumptions have implications in the selection of methodologies and research practices and give coherence to the research design and results.

In general methodologists identify positivism, neo-positivism, critical theory and constructivism as the main philosophical and theoretical approaches to research (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Kovach, 2005; Morris, 2006; Newman, 1997). In relation with the philosophical and theoretical roots of Critical Theory, Marston (2004) asserts that those roots are grounded on Marxism and Hegelianism (p.15). Therefore, according to this paradigm the production and dissemination of knowledge are mediated by historical power relations of exploitation and domination, which are constructed socially and historically. So that, domination "is achieved through external exploitation and internal self-deception" (Fook, 2003, p.124). Consequently, self-reflection and interactions are considered essential to produce knowledge. In essence, from Critical Theory the knowledge construction, presupposes an active relationship between the object and the subject of knowledge. Furthermore, critical thinking sees the real value of knowledge in the change and transformation of the subject and object.

Scholars have pinpointed the need of developing critical approaches within social policy research (Grebe, 2009; Marston, 2004). In this content four arguments are relevant to the consolidation of my philosophical approach. First, as Marston (2004) points out the majority of social policy research is influenced by positivist epistemologies and quantitative methods including evidence-based policy. Further, the author also concludes "The enthusiasm for "evidence-based policy among government and some policy researchers is a contemporary expression of the dominance of the positivist paradigm" (Marston, 2004, p. 13). This assertion has been confirmed in the previous chapter of this study. In my

review of KCP research, it was found that quantitative methodologies and evidence-based research, evaluating the outcomes of kinship placements, conform the majority of KCP studies.

Second, the positivist paradigm lacks understanding of both, the complex aspects of the political context of policy making, and the power relations involved in policy implementation, practices and discourses. This is a consequence of positivist postulates about "...'objective' outcomes and grand narratives of 'progress', 'rationality' and 'truth' (Marston, 2004, p.14). Third, the analysis of social policy from the critical paradigm requires structural and historical interpretation of complex social relations of power and domination that permeate and contextualize the processes of policymaking and implementation. Furthermore, from this paradigm, social policy discourses are analyzed as constituent of social practices. Accordingly, policy discourses are both product of social relations of power, gender inequality and ideological hegemony of dominant social classes and they shape and reinforce social practices (Lazar, 2005; Marston, 2004; Wodak, 2005). Last, as Grebe, 2009 pointed out "In a society structured on the basis of gender, gender is an epistemically relevant category" (p.74). Therefore, in seeking for critical approaches in social policy research, Critical paradigm and feminist analysis can be combined to provide an enriched analysis of the neoliberal welfare reform that increases women's disadvantages and oppression "in a male-dominated society" (Grebe, 2009, p.76). Specifically for this study, feminist analysis is considered essential because as it was found in the research reviewed that; there is a lack of research using feminist approaches to analyze the effects of KCP in women's lives, though the majority of kinship caregivers are women.

In terms of the methodological approach Case study was selected as the inquiry strategy of this research. This decision was based on three considerations. First, the consistency between qualitative methodologies and the epistemological assumptions of this research, second, the appropriateness of case

study in researching social policy (Marston, 2004) and third, the technical adequacy of case study to both, the exploratory research design and the research questions of the study.

Qualitative methodologies are consistent with critical approaches to research (Agger, 2006; Carter & Little, 2007; Kovach, 2005). As Agger (2006) established Critical paradigm confers special value to qualitative methodologies. According to the author, this paradigm sees "qualitative research as legitimate and necessary" to gain a deep understanding of the research matter under study (p. 176). Further, Case study, one of the five qualitative strategies of inquiry (Creswell 2007) is considered particularly useful in obtaining in depth understanding of the researched phenomenon. In this respect Yin, 2009 observes, "the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena" (p. 4). In relation to the suitability of choosing case study in researching social policy, Marston (2004) has indicated that this qualitative strategy is particularly useful to explore the complexity of policy making.

Marston (2004) asserted:

We need case studies to appreciate the complex narratives of policy change. Case studies can provide better access for policy intervention than the present science of variables...Case studies of policy change, explored using the interpretations of policy actors, policy documents and the voice of the researcher can reveal a great deal about the politics of policy making (p. 49).

Finally, behind the selection of case study as the inquiry strategy, there are also technical reasons related with the inquiry level and this study research questions. Thus, Case study is suitable for the exploratory level of this study. That is to say that, this methodology fits well to explore the relation between neoliberal KCP and women's oppression. Case study is also appropriated to answer How questions, which are the kind of questions of this research. As defined by Yin, 2009, case study is

appropriate to exploratory research designs and it has specific advantages to answer, "...how questions ... [of] contemporary set of events...over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 13).

Documentary Data

Documentary data has been a significant source on critical research of social policy. (e.g. Atkinson, 2000; Grebe, 2009; Jacobs, Kemeny & Manzi, 2003; Marshall, 2000; Marston 2004). For instance, in his critical research on social policy of paid employment and care work, Grebe (2009) draws on official documents, and feminist theoretical analysis of the policies. Feminist literature is used in Grebe's work as part of documentary data. According to the author, feminist documentary literature provides both, a critical interpretation of the policy and also it represents an alternative voice to mainstream official documents. Similarly to Grebe (2009), this study will draw on documentary data from both, feminist literature and official documents. There is array of meaningful feminist literature on neoliberal reform in Ontario that literature will be used to contextualize the case study. At the same time feminist literature will represent an alternative voice in understanding and contesting the Ontario KCP official documents.

Data collection.

Scott (1990) has pointed out that official documents are "The single most important category of documentary sources used in social research [and]...they reflect the organization and interests of state agencies" (p. 59). Thus, the Ontario KCP official documents are central to answering the research questions of this study as they represent the state discourse of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of KCP in Ontario. On the other hand, the official documents selected have been reviewed according to Scott's (1990) four criteria of documentary data quality assessment. Thus, the documents were selected according to their authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning.

Authenticity. The evidence's authenticity was ensured by using documents produced by agencies, such as Ontario association of Children Aid's Societies (OACAS) and the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (OMCYS). Those documents have also been "published and even more are available in public archives" (Scott, 1990, p. 59).

Credibility, although, the information contained on these official documents represents the state interpretation of the reality, this data is apparently reasonable and truthful. However, it can be impugnable, which is part of the purpose of the analysis of this research.

Representativeness. This criterion has been achieved through selecting what Scott, (1990) defines as "typical evidence" (p. 7). Therefore, the official documents selected for this research were those created to formulate, implement and evaluate KCP in Ontario.

Quality. This criterion is the meaning. It "refers to the extent of which the evidence is clear and comprehensible to the researcher" (Scott 1990, p. 8). This criterion has been ensured in an ongoing basis through the questionnaires applied to official documents in selecting them and also within the multiple readings required to data gathering and analysis.

Finally, based on the research questions I have established four theoretical prepositions. I rely on these theoretical prepositions to data collection and analysis.

Data analysis.

A general analytical strategy is necessary in order to build a coherent case study analysis. This strategy helps to define priorities about "what analyze and why" (Yin 2009, p. 128). In regards to the proper data analysis methods and techniques to Case study, Yin (2009) has identified four analytical strategies and five specific techniques: " [The] four strategies are, relying on theoretical preposition, developing case descriptions, using both quantitative and qualitative data, and examining rival

explanations" (p. 128). From this classification, relying on theoretical prepositions is the analytical strategy selected to this research. For this purpose, the following are the theoretical prepositions established in the study:

First, the formulation of KCP is based on changes in the state role from preserving collective values and assumption of social responsibilities to "The central operating principle ...that is up to families to look after their own and is up to the government to make sure that they do: (Brodie, 2002, p.107). So, the OKCP was formulated to transfer the social responsibility of protection and wellbeing of the children from the state to women.

Second, OKCP has been formulated and implemented with the neoliberal goal of cutting down social expenditures in Ontario child welfare. Transferring the care of the children from the state to kinship women caregivers (WKC) will reduce the use of foster care and other out-home care placements, which will bring down the state investment in child welfare in Ontario.

Third, OKCP has been designed and implemented to maintain the state control and surveillance over WKC and their families.

Fourth, the implementation of OKCP deepens women's oppression. KCP has transferred more responsibility of the care, protection and wellbeing of children in Ontario to WKC without providing them with adequate resources to fulfill this responsibility but exerting the control and surveillance to make women exhaust all their resources in accomplishing this caregiving responsibility.

From the five analytical techniques identified by Yin (2009), the explanation building technique was chosen for this study. Through this technique, data is analyzed to build an explanation about how OKCP has advanced the neoliberal child welfare policy in the province; while at the same time deepens women's oppression. As clarified by Yin, (2009) "to explain a phenomenon is to stipulated a presumed

set of causal links about it or 'how' or 'why' something happened. The causal links may be complex and difficult to measure in any precise manner" (p. 141). Moreover, as this is an exploratory case, in using the explanation building technique 'the goal is not to conclude the study but to develop ideas for further study" (Yin, 2009, p. 141). In analyzing official documents, from a CP and through feminist lens, the social policy texts are not considered neutral they represent dominant ideologies to sustain a hierarchically classist and genderized order (Lazar, 2005). As Coffey (2007) has asserted "Texts are not neutral in themselves, but can be used to exert, confirm, give or take power. Text can be disempowering or empowering, can exploit or give voice" (p. 134). Therefore, discourse analysis contributes in this research to do a critical exploration of the assumptions existing behind of the definition of the problem and the solutions for what OKCP is designed and implemented

Research Process

The process of conducting this study starts with the identification of significant events in the development of the OKCP and also with decision making about sources of data, time frame, and selection of specific texts. Secondary literature of feminist analysis about the neoliberal reform in Ontario's welfare was reviewed in the light of the research prepositions to contextualize the case study and to problematize the selected official documents. The official documents were read and reread to collect empirical data related with the prepositions. Then the collected data was reviewed and synthesized. The evidence was examined again from the new perspective. Words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs were reviewed to discover assumptions and meanings embedded in the policy statements. After, causal links between data was discovered it was analyzed in relation to the research questions and

propositions to build a final explanation of the case. Four distinct chronological phases can be distinguished in the conduction of the study

Phase 1 - Analyzing the context and stages of the policy and selecting the period of study.

This first phase consisted on analyzing the context, development stages of KCP policy in Ontario as well as choosing the period to study. With the goal of contextualize the changes in child welfare in Ontario, secondary literature produced by feminist research on neoliberal welfare reform in the province was analyzed in the light of the prepositions of the research. The stages of the policy analyzed were defined after a general review of OACAS and OMCYS documents. The decisive criteria were based on significant events of OKCP history, such as origin and formulation of the policy, its implementation and first evaluation that correspond to the period between 2003 and 2010.

Phase 2 – Overview and selection of official documents.

The second phase consisted on the selection of official documents to analyze. At first more than 10 documents related to OKCP were overviewed. Following the model proposed by Crinson and Leontowitsch (2006), the Questionnaire for Data Collection From Documentary Source – Reference (Appendix – A) was developed and filled out with general information of the overviewed documents. Then, three kinds of those documents were selected according to their role in the development of the policy. First, the OACAS publications on KCP, second, OMCYS directions on child welfare transformation and third, the legislative Act that regulate the KCP in Ontario: the CFSA. Finally, the number of documents selected for detailed analysis was reduced to four. One document produced by the MCYS: Child Welfare Transformation 2005 (ChWT-2005). The other three documents from OACAS: Supports for Extended Families Caring for Children – (SEF-2003), Ontario Kinship Model, 2004 (OKM-2004) and Ontario Child Welfare Survey on Kinship Services (OSKS-2010).

Phase 3 – Reading the specific documents and text selected.

The process of reading the selected documents consisted of three steps. In the first step a prepositional matrix was created to collect data from each document related with each preposition. In this step the documents were read and analyzed to matching and compare data with the theoretical prepositions. In the second step the data was read and re-read looking for connections and causal links between the official data and feminist analysis of neoliberal context in Ontario. In the third step, the main assumptions of the OKCP discourse that define the problem and policy goals were explored to generate questions on how the policy goals can be thought out of the neoliberal goals.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussion of my exploratory and documentary case study on the impact of neoliberal child welfare policy on women's lives in Ontario.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides an overview of the findings of the case study research on OKCP and women's oppression. The chapter is divided in two sections. The first part is dedicated to positioning OKCP within the social and historical context in which the policy has been formulated and implemented. In this section, secondary literature produced by feminist research is used to contextualize the changes in child welfare in the province. The second section is dedicated to the discussion of the documentary analysis of the OKCP. The discussion of the findings is organized in three relations, first, the relation between OKCP and the goal of neoliberal familialization of child welfare. Second the relation between OKCP and the familialization goal of transferring the state responsibility of child protection to PWW and third, the relation between OKCP and the familialization goal of transferring the costs of child protection to women. Conclusions about the relation between OKCP and women's oppression are presented at the end of the chapter.

The Policy Context of OKCP: Ontario Neoliberal Reform of Welfare

The OKCP emerges in the context of the Ontario neoliberal reform of the welfare state. Indeed, OKCP is a component of the neoliberal transformation of child welfare in Ontario, which, in turn is part of the neoliberal reform of the Ontario's welfare policy. The neoliberal welfare reform is a genderized, classist and complex alteration that has assaulted the social responsibilities and budgets of the welfare state to create "particularly negative consequences for the wellbeing of poor single mothers and their children" (Kingfisher, 2002, p. 7). Consequently, the neoliberal reform in Ontario has deepened women's

oppression. This research has found that OKCP is not only a pillar of the neoliberal transformation of child welfare in Ontario, but that this policy exacerbates women's oppression in the province creating significant dilemmas to child welfare policy advocates.

Ontario's neoliberal reform: changing the state's role, deepening women's oppression.

In Canada as in many other OECD countries, neoliberal and neoconservative governments have implemented the changes required to shift from Keynesian to neoliberal social structures of accumulation (SSA). In order to do these changes, they have reformed the tax system, cut back the social expenditures, and redefined the state functions and the state and families responsibilities. The shift from Keynesian to neoliberal SSA was undertaken by Canadian elites during the 1980's (Cameron, 2006, p. 66). At that time, the Macdonald Commission was in charge of devising the strategies to impose the elites neoliberal agenda in Canada.

In this respect, Cameron (2006) analyzed:

At the center of the Macdonald Commission proposal was a shift away from Keynesian approaches to regulating the relationship between capital accumulation and social reproduction... Within this model the role of the state is no longer to manage the relationship between social reproduction and capital accumulation to ensure a national market for domestically produced goods but to lower the cost of labour and the expectations of the population with respect to living standards... increasing the flexibility of labour through deregulating employment standards, outsourcing production and eliminating social programs (p. 66)

This transformation not only marks the end of Keynesianism but is part of the process that sets up and naturalizes more and more the transfer of the state social reproduction responsibilities toward the

private sphere family/voluntary sector and market via women's unpaid work (Cossman 2002; Evans & Swift, 2000; Mosher, 1999). In this sense, the neoliberal reform of welfare policy has been analyzed by feminist political economy as essential in restructuring the capitalist Canadian State's role in the social reproduction process (Bezanson, 2006a; 2006b; Cossman 2002; Vosko, 2006).

Philips (2002) asserted:

[G]overnments in Canada are revising their income tax laws to promote and enforce a norm of private self-reliance...one of the core features of which is to reprivatize social reproduction, the work of sustaining and nurturing human life...recent reforms deepen a historical tendency of the tax system to impose the costs of social reproduction on women, undermining women's economic security, autonomy, and equality (p. 41)

Gavigan and Chunn (2007) has qualified the neoliberal reform of the social policy in Ontario as the "most dramatic in the Canadian context" (p. 734). In fact, the neoliberal counterattack of the welfare in Ontario has dramatically affected "single mothers, disabled persons, recent immigrants, Aboriginal people and elderly women living alone" (Brodie, 2002, p. 105). First, Ontario's neoliberal reform has changed the state role and has diluted the state social responsibility in reducing the capitalist inequalities that are experienced by disadvantaged and marginalized population, in which poor single mothers amply represent women. Second, the neoliberal policy has not only "cut welfare benefits to a minimum subsistence" (Brodie, 2002, p. 108) but it is forcing recipients of welfare such as single mothers to get a job, as unavoidable requirement to receive the minimal welfare benefits that are entitled, after the neoliberal assault. Third, Ontario's neoliberal policy has increased the surveillance and control over the poor specifically over single mothers who are seen by the system as cheaters of benefits (Bezanson, 2006a).

In respect to the changes in the state role, Brodie (2002) remarks "At the heart of the new governing philosophy is a tidal shift away from notions of collective values ... to those of individual responsibility" (p. 107). Furthermore, the state has clearly taken the market side, contributing largely to broadening and increasing the inequalities between rich and poor.

Philips (2002) pointed out:

The Ontario experience with tax cutting shows clearly that privatization is less a matter of deregulation than a new regulatory project to produce a more market-oriented society.

While the provincial government is not occupying any less space in the private economy, it now does less to redistribute and more to reinforce the market distribution of income...to the extent that women are concentrated in lower income brackets, this shift will tend to exacerbate both class and gender economic inequalities (p. 58)

The cuts of welfare benefits in Ontario were one of the primary measures of the neoliberal agenda. In relation to this process, Bezanson (2006a) identifies the period from 1995 to 2003 when the Conservative party was elected and re-elected, as the historical moment in which the neoliberal reform was put in motion within the province. Under those circumstances the Conservatives made significant changes to the state's role. In addition, the introduction and development of the neoliberal model of social and economic policy included the interconnected processes of "privatization, familialization, decentralization and commodification" (Bezanson, 2006a, 41). Indeed, during the Conservative mandate of Premier Mike Harris, the action of the public sector was reduced in Ontario to support, without the "taxation burden" the free development of the private capital. Therefore, the government highlighted "the need to increase individual responsibility... eroded by excessive social expending and state regulations" (Bezanson, 2006a, p. 3).

Bezanson (2006a) highlighted:

One of the first acts of the Ontario government in 1995 was to cut social assistance rates in the province by 21.6 per cent... The government's insistence on individual responsibility rested on a deeply familialist discourse about gender, kinship ties, and community life ... The Ontario Conservative government's neo-liberal policies exacerbated the tension between social reproduction and paid work. It reduced labour market and other regulations along with taxes, and imposed increasing responsibility for social reproduction on individual households (pp. 4, 5)

At the same time that Ontario's neoliberal agenda cut welfare benefits it institutionalized workfare. As a result, to receive their welfare benefits recipients have to meet the participation requirements such as training, rehabilitation, work experience, and unpaid or low-paid jobs as form of contributing to society. This neoliberal vision has affected particularly single mothers, who previously had the right to receive benefits without employability requirements, which had allowed them to care for their children until school age.

However, Brodie (2002) asserted that under Ontario workfare, single mothers:

[A]re framed in policy as potential employable(s) who need surveillance and discipline in order to make them take personal responsibility for their children or find a man who will. To this end the Ontario government has revived the "spouse in the house" rule which dictates that single mothers lose their benefits when they live with a man" (p. 108).

The increasing control and surveillance over single mothers is characteristic of the neoliberal attack of welfare in Ontario. In this sense, Bezanson (2006a) has declared "a criminalization of the poor, particularly of single mothers receiving social assistance accusing them of widespread cheating and

welfare fraud... [and] government snitch lines that urge people to identify cheaters fuelled the hostile climate towards social assistance recipients” (p. 42).

Altogether, the perverseness of neoliberal policies against single mothers is evident in Ontario's neoliberal reform. Although, it is widely known that single mothers are "the poorest among the poor in Canada" (Brodie, 2002, 109) policymakers continue taken away the assistance and social welfare programs that used to be supporting single mothers. Not only this, but also the neoliberal governments have created provincial polices to reinforce women's unpaid caring responsibilities and to intensify the surveillance and control exerted over poor Ontarian single mothers.

In this sense, Brodie (2002) pointed out:

The idea that the single mother should take care of herself and her children at the same time as the government is systematically withdrawing support for her to do so would deem to be, at best counterintuitive. However, neoliberal policymakers seem unconcerned about realities of sole parenting or the material condition of women and children caught on the distortion of extreme poverty in a highly unbalanced gender order (p. 109).

Under this gender order, the neoliberal process of familialization affects more aggressively to women. “Familialization refers to the process whereby once public goods and services are being reconstituted as naturally located within the realm of the family It involves the normative claim that families ought to take care of their own” (Fudge & Crossman, 2002, p 21). Specifically, through familialization the state has transferred its responsibility and has shifted the costs of social reproduction toward women's unpaid labour. Social reproduction “encompass a broad range of activities, in an array of locations, which combine to ensure the daily and generational reproduction of the population” (Bezanson, 2006a p. 250). Concretally, the neoliberal familialization refers to the processes in which

“the costs of social reproduction are being shifted from the public to the private spheres, in this case, from the state to the family” (Cossman, 2002 p. 169). Unequivocally, single mothers have to assume this shift. Additionally, the neoliberal familialization increases the pressures over women "to provide care for household and extra-household member. For example, in the case of health care reform, services were removed from hospital...[and] women in particular were called to make up for this gap with their unpaid caring labour " (Bezanson, 2006a, p. 42, 43).

In advancing the familialization goals, the role played by the neoliberal policy discourse is crucial. With this intention, two main strategies are used by the neoliberal policy discourse. On one hand, this discourse uses rhetorical strategies that magnify the values of “individual responsibility, autonomy, self sufficiency and independence [which] signal a shift in the relationship between poor women and state provision” (Kingfisher, 2002b, p. 27). On the other hand, it emphasizes the caregiving role of family and community, hiding and denying women’s caregiving role.

Armstrong (1996), illustrated this last point clearly:

Study after study in Canada and abroad has demonstrated that care by family members and community is really another way of saying care by women. Women are the overwhelming majority of caregivers and they provide the overwhelming majority of care...a variety of time-budget studies indicate that it is women who regularly prepare the meals , do laundry, clean the house and maintain social contacts...Women still do such work even if they have another job in the labour force. They simply reduce or eliminate their leisure time...in dual-earner households women contribute almost 30 hours a week more than men to meeting domestic responsibilities...It is primarily women’s cooking, cleaning, laundry and emotional work that increases when care is sent closer to home

...and it is women who give up lunch hours and vacations in order to care for sick children (pp. 231, 232)

To put it briefly, the social context of OKCP includes the deterioration of PWW's life standards and the exacerbation of their oppression. Three processes have contributed directly to create this profound classist gender inequality, first, the restructuring and cutting on Ontario social assistance. Second, the process of neoliberal familialization, which transfers state responsibilities and costs of social reproduction to PWW and their families and third, the criminalization of single mothers and consequently increasing of surveillance and control over them.

As observed in the literature review, child welfare is a genderized, classist and racist system (Barn, 2007; Kerr, & Beajor 2001; Reich, 2004; Rivers, Trocmé, Goodman & Marwah, 2002; Trocmé, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004). This analysis is essential to our study of the development of OKCP because this policy emerges within this oppressive context. Specifically, OKCP is a significant component of the neoliberal child welfare transformation in Ontario and as such, it will continue exacerbating women's oppression. Moreover, the profile of the population affected by OKCP is formed, in its vast majority, by poor working women and their children. In fact, PWW, including women who are the head of single mother families, and women who share responsibilities inside of couple households, are the majority of primary caregivers in child welfare cases both, in Canada and in Ontario. This tendency is confirmed in the most recent information available with respect to the whole country and to Ontario in particular. For instance, the 2008 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect found that women were the primary caregivers in 86 % of 85.440 cases of substantiated maltreatment. 61% of these women were working full-time or part time and 33% of them were recipients of social assistance. Further, in 62% of the cases the families were living in private rent, public housing rent, band housing or

in shelter (Public Health Agency of Canada, pp. 36, 41, 42). In sum, the vast majority of Canadian child welfare primary caregivers are PWW. The majority of them work fulltime or part time and a third part of them are recipients of social assistance.

Similarly, Ontario's most recent information available collected by the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect in 2003 confirms that the tendency in the province is the same as the one in the country. Thus, the OIS 2003 found that women were the primary caregivers in 92% of 58,423 cases of substantiated maltreatment. 45% of these women were single mothers, 75% were working full-time or part time and 19% were depending on social assistance. 52% of the families were living in private rent, public housing rent, band housing or in shelter (Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, 2005, pp. 96, 103, 104). Again, the same as in Canadian child welfare cases of substantiated maltreatment, in Ontario PWW are the vast majority of primary caregivers 92%. 45% of them are single mothers. However, in Ontario the proportion of women who are working increases to 75% and the proportion of women who are recipients of social assistance decreases to 19%.

OKCP: Reinforcing Women's Oppression, Developing Neoliberal Child Welfare Policy

This study has explored the relation between OKCP and women's oppression in four official documents, three of them produced by Ontario Association of Children's Aids Societies OACAS and one produced by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS). The Ministry regulated and funded the 53 individual Children's Aid Societies that are in charge of the child welfare in the province. OACAS represents children's Aid Societies in Ontario and defines itself in the following terms, "We are the voice of child welfare in Ontario" (retrieved on August 8, 2011 from <http://www.oacas.org/about/index.htm>). The Ministry document, Child Welfare Transformation

2005 (ChWT-2005) contents the main points of the neoliberal child welfare transformation agenda in which OKCP emerges. The three OACAS' documents, SEF-2003, OKM-2004, and OSKS-2020, correspond to three different moments of the implementation of OKCP. In Table 1 the official documents are organized by year of publication and author. The documents were interrogated in the light of the prepositions of the study expose in the methodology chapter. The discussion of the findings is organized in three relations, first, the relation between OKCP and the goal of neoliberal familialization of child welfare. Second the relation between OKCP and the familialization goal of transferring the state responsibility of child protection to PWW and third, the relation between OKCP and the familialization goal of transferring the costs of child protection to women. Conclusions about the relation between OKCP and women's oppression are presented at the end of the chapter.

OKCP and the neoliberal goal of transferring toward PWW the state's responsibility of protection and wellbeing of children.

Familialization: the goal of neoliberal child welfare transformation in Ontario.

The neoliberal transformation of child welfare in Ontario that was launched officially in 2005 by the MCYS in the document Child welfare transformation 2005, (ChWT-2005), marks a redirection of the course of the neoliberal restructuring of child welfare that was initiated by the Mike Harris's government. This redirection was of vital importance to achieving the neoliberal goals of transferring responsibilities and shifting costs of child protection and child wellbeing from the state to families/PWW. In fact, familialization is the goal of the neoliberal transformation agenda of child welfare in Ontario. Therefore, regulations and legislation have been adapted to involve families/PWW in delivering services at any stage of the child welfare intervention, with special emphasis in achieving a permanent placement to children that need of protection out of the care of the state. Furthermore, the familialization discourse has

been an essential component of the transformation agenda to gain social consensus in the achievement of these restructuring goals. In this environment, kinship became a pillar of child welfare familialization and the OKCP became a reality in 2006. More importantly, the goals of the neoliberal transformation agenda are that the state transfers its responsibility of child protection to families/PWW for them to assume the majority child protection costs. So, the state will only maintain the control over the families/PWW.

Table 1*Documentary Sources*

Official Documents	Author	Year
SEF-2003 Supports for Extended Families Caring for Children	OACAS	2003
OKM-2004 Ontario Kinship Model	OACAS	2004
ChWT-2005 Child Welfare Transformation 2005	MCYS Child Welfare Secretariat	2005
OSKS-2010 Ontario Child Welfare Survey on Kinship Services- Responses and Findings	OACAS	2010

Table 1

The need of a transformation agenda to redirect the neoliberal restructuring of child welfare in Ontario emerges from two outcomes of the neoliberal reform initiated by Harris that have been of major concern to policymakers. First, the expansion of Ontario child welfare system in the last fifteen years and second, the complexity of child protection situations in which, the system has seen involved, since the standardization was implemented, during the same period. These outcomes have been marked as "dramatic expansion" or "unintended results of the child welfare reform".

In respect to the expansion of child welfare in Ontario ChWT-2005 charges:

The number of child abuse and neglect investigations conducted in Ontario has nearly tripled since 1993, expanding from an estimated 45,000 investigations in 1993 to close to 130,000 in 2003. The number of children in care has increased from 10,000 in the early 1990s to over 18,000. The province spends over \$1.1 billion dollars a year on direct child welfare services, more than twice as much as it spent in the late 1990s. While a number of factors may explain this expansion – including increased public awareness, expanded legislation, changes in investigation procedures and a more responsive funding framework – *it ultimately represents a dramatic expansion of the types of situations in which child welfare services become involved* in particular with respect to child neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence (p. 3)*

Similarly, OKM-2004 states,

Child/youth protection services are delivered within the parameters of the Risk

*Italics added

Assessment Model, developed and implemented in 1998 as a result of Child Welfare Reform. As with any new initiative, *there were unintended consequences of this Reform ...[o]ne such consequence, was an increased number of children and youth in the care of Children's Aid Societies (p. 4)**

About the complexity of child protection cases, ChWT-2005 claims

...it ultimately represents a dramatic expansion of the types of situations in which child welfare services become involved, in particular with respect to child neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence. The profile of children and families served by the child welfare system has changed dramatically. While the typical child welfare case in the early 1990s involved acute problems such as sexual and severe physical abuse, child welfare service providers are increasingly addressing more chronic and multi-layered problems associated with neglect, exposure to domestic violence and socio-economic disadvantage (p. 4)

ChWT-2005 also clarifies that this "dramatic expansion" is related with the neoliberal standardization of child welfare:

The policy and service response to the expansion in child welfare services has been shaped by a number of events. In 1996, the Provincial Coroner's office launched series of inquests into the deaths of children who had received child welfare services. These were followed in 1997 by a report of the provincial Child Mortality Task Force and in 1998 by

*Italics added

the Minister's Panel of Experts report. Recommendations from these inquests and reviews touched on many aspects of child welfare service delivery, but most notably pointed to the need for an expansion of the legislation, especially with respect to neglect and emotional maltreatment, standardization of investigation procedures with an emphasis on child safety, and streamlining court procedures to ensure timely decisions (p.4)

About the standardization of child welfare in Canada, it is interesting to note that in at least three provinces, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, the initiation of standardization followed the same process. First, the media focused on children's death to criticize and question the capacity of the child welfare system (Dumbrill 2006). Then, to respond to the media and public questioning, the provinces started the standardization of child welfare. This rare coincidence could be interpreted as a useful justification to start the neoliberal reform of child welfare in the country. Further, in Ontario the neoliberal cuts and restructuring of child welfare started in the 90's. In this respect, Dumbrill (2006) asserts, "In the 1990s the services and supports needed to make a least intrusive approach viable were first by Bob Rae... and secondly by Mike Harris as it slashed already diminished services in a 'common sense revolution' (p. 8). Moreover, it is at the end of the 90's that Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services responded to the public questioning of child welfare activity, with the introduction of main aspects of the neoliberal child welfare reform.

ChWT-2005 recounted how this process happened in Ontario in the following excerpt,

The Ministry of Community and Social Services responded to these calls for change with a series of reforms, including legislative amendments, a new funding framework, the introduction of mandatory risk assessment tools, increased accountability measures, better

information sharing through a province-wide Fast Track Information System, and a revitalization of the foster care system. Legislative changes which were proclaimed in March 2000 confirmed the primacy of the child's best interests, included neglect as a condition for which a child requires protection, established tighter child protection standards, and clarified reporting requirements for professionals. One of the most significant aspects of the reform package was the development of a structured and standardized approach to case decision-making through the introduction of the Ontario Risk Assessment Model... (p.4)

As would expect by the public, all these measures would be necessary in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Ontario children. These measures also would ensure that children safety and protection continue to be a government priority especially on times of economic hardships due to the negative repercussions of the new global order in the province. Therefore, taking those measures would make sense for the public. Accordingly, the changes would help to carry out the state responsibility for the wellbeing of disadvantaged Ontarian children, and they would ensure that the work of child protection would be well done. Of course, from this perspective the outcome of system expansion, both in numbers and in supports and specialized services for families/PWW would be a normal, predictable and desirable outcome. However, as Dumbrill (2006) clarifies, at the same time that standardization reduced services to prevent child abuse it decreased the capacity of child protection workers to support the families, making the "removal of children from their families became the primary mean of protection" (p. 12). Therefore, the standardization produced these specific financial outcomes. Dumbrill (2006) has pointed out significant aspects of the financial outcomes, "from 1998-1999 to 2003-2004, the number of children brought into care increased by 65 per cent, from 11,609 to 19,105, and the cost of Ontario's

child welfare system escalated by 100 per cent, from \$542 million to \$1.085” (p. 12). But, precisely these outcomes are totally contrary to neoliberal goals of restructuring services, cuts of expenditures, and downsizing. For this reason, a prompt evaluation that will redirect the reform was initiated on 2002.

ChWT-2005 refers to the evaluation results in the following excerpt:

Following this first set of reforms, a comprehensive evaluation of the child welfare program was initiated in 2002 resulting in a series of recommendations in the areas of child and system outcomes, integration, accountability, efficiency and sustainability.

Noting that many advances were made through the 1998-2000 reforms, the evaluation focused on a number of areas that could be addressed and drew attention to some of the unintended consequences of the earlier reforms. The evaluation concluded that Ontario’s child welfare system was not sustainable without modifications to the funding framework, to government policy, and to the children’s aid societies’ approaches to service delivery(p. 4)*

In this assessment, it is evident that the evaluation gives good value to the neoliberal standardization and its recommendations are mainly related with financial and administrative issues such as system outcomes, integration, accountability, efficiency and sustainability. The actions taken in these matters were expected to produce the contraction of child welfare system considered the unintended consequence of standardization. In other words, the crucial concern for the comprehensive evaluation of the child welfare reform was financial and it recommended a series of financial and administrative measures to contract the system. However, beyond the financial measures, the MCYS redirect the reform toward child welfare neoliberal familialization, which has been relevant to achieving the goal of shrinking the system.

ChWT-2005 reported this redirection:

To achieve this vision and improve outcomes, the ministry will build a new system that fosters *healthy development for children and youth in the context of their families* and communities. At the core of Ontario's vision is the belief that early intervention will reduce the need for *more intrusive and costly public services* later and will lead to better outcomes for children and youth (p. 2)*

This redirection toward families and communities/PWW fits also with the neoliberal "principle that is up to families [alone] to look after their own and is up to the government to make sure that they do it" (Brodie, 2002, p.107). In fact, familialization is the base of the restructuring of child protection services and of the cuts and reductions on child welfare expenditures. To do this, Families/PWW have been engaged in the provision of child welfare services through the whole services delivery process, from the initial intake stage until the final permanency planning stage. This familialization of the child protection process liberates the state from its child protection responsibilities while at the same time reduces costs and government investments in child welfare. In fact, Familialization is the goal and central strategy of the neoliberal child welfare transformation agenda in Ontario. Not surprisingly, kinship is considered by the transformation agenda as pillar of the permanency continuum proposed by the agenda. Indeed, kinship has become pillar of the neoliberal familialization of Ontario child welfare.

Kinship pillar of neoliberal familialization of Ontario child welfare

The goal of neoliberal familialization of Ontario child welfare is transferring the state responsibility and the costs of child protection and child wellbeing to families/PWW. Therefore, the three first key

*Italics added

priorities or intervention stages of the neoliberal transformation agenda are directed to involving families/PWW in delivering services at each stage of the child welfare intervention avoiding as much as possible the costs of both, the out-home care placements, and the court procedures. In fact, within the transformed Ontario child welfare, families/PWW are the preferred caregivers, planners, and negotiators of the child protection decision, all of course, under the state surveillance and control. On the other hand, this has become the very core of the dilemmas that this neoliberal transformation arises to social workers and women's advocates, which will discuss later.

To get back to the point, ChWT-2005 reports the three key priorities-stages of the transformation agenda in this excerpt:

The transformation agenda is organized around seven key priorities that emerged from the Child Welfare Program Evaluation. Building on the reform policies that helped to refocus child welfare services, this transformation focuses on an expanded array of intervention options...The expanded intervention options relate to three key stages in the service delivery system: (1) A more flexible intake and assessment model, (2) A court processes strategy to reduce delays and encourage alternatives to Court, (3) A broader range of placement options to support more effective permanency planning

The intervention process of involving families in the delivery of services while avoiding the court process boosts three main familialization practices. First, maintaining the children under their parents' caregiving as much as possible and without court procedures (Intake and assessment, differential response).

In this respect ChWT-2005 stated:

Once eligibility is determined, children at high risk of maltreatment will continue to receive a full protection investigation and risk assessment. Lower risk situations will receive a modified response which will focus less on evidence gathering and more on engaging families during the investigation....To further Ontario's differential response model, a number of alternatives for involving families as partners in case planning and decision making, including family conferencing, wraparound, concurrent planning and mediation could be considered at any stage of the case planning or intervention process (p.10)

Second, maintaining the children under their parent's care but involving the extended family, friends or communities, as part of the protection plan, and as alternatives of court procedures. Policymakers prioritize the use of these alternatives. Although, many reasons are given for this preference, it is important to keep in mind that the financial goals of the transformation agenda are better achieved using family alternatives to court procedures, because their cost is very cheaper compared with the traditional court procedures.

In reference to this alternatives ChWT-2005 observed:

A number of provinces and states offer a range of alternative dispute resolution options (ADR) that include: mediation, family conferencing, mediation circles and settlement conferences. Evaluation of these options have consistently produced positive results including: more timely resolution, higher settlement rates, higher satisfaction rates, better communication, *more effective client engagement and lower costs.*

Family conferencing is increasingly popular as an ADR option. With this approach,

intervention plans are developed through a case conferencing process that brings together extended family and other potential community supports. Evaluations consistently report high rates of satisfaction from participants and increased involvement from extended family and community supports (pp.11-12)

Third, involving as much as possible the extended family, friends or community members to become kinship caregivers of children in need of protection who are in the care or out of the care of the state (Permanency planning options). Of course, the policymakers' permanent preference is that the kinship caregiving decision be made without court procedures. In cases where court is not avoidable, the preference is kinship care placements that quickly become legal guardians or legal custodians of the children they are caring for. ChWT-2005 adduces again the dramatic expansion of the system as the reason for not providing adequate care of the children in their care. This incapacity for providing good care of for the children is now claimed as a significant reason to transferring the responsibility of the state to family/PWW- based permanency

With the dramatic increase in admissions to out-of-home care, it has been increasingly difficult to provide stable and permanent placements for children and youth in a timely manner. Placement instability and multiple moves often impact the emotional well-being of children and youth and other child welfare outcomes and may contribute to requiring more expensive specialized placements. An expanded continuum of family-based permanency options would help children's aid societies to determine individual plans that are best suited for each child (p.13)

Altogether, what **the** neoliberal transformation agenda pretends to achieve in the long term is to transfer the maximum of protection responsibilities to families-PWW and to reduce at the minimum the

state responsibilities and investments in child welfare. This can be deduced from reading continuum of family-based permanency options presented by ChWT-2005

An expanded continuum of family-based permanency options would help children's aid societies to determine individual plans that are best suited for each child. The proposed continuum, referred to as Pillars of Permanence, includes: admission prevention, kinship care, customary care, legal custody, family foster care, adoption and youth leaving care (p.13).

The neoliberal transformation agenda launches this continuum of permanency with a solid confidence that this family/PWW-based continuum would reduce by a significant amount the number of children in the care and custody of the state. Thus the continuum would prevent admissions, promote the use of kinship placements, implement the legal custody of the children by kinship care and foster care and would expand and expedite the adoptions.

These are some selected quotes extracted from ChWT-2005 in this respect:

Admission Prevention ... the ministry is considering a number of options including: additional supports to families where such assistance would enable *children to remain in, or return to, the care of the birth family...* and greater involvement of extended families *Kinship Care...* a formal admission to care may be prevented through the use of kin as a temporary care provider placements. *The ministry will support the expanded use of kinship care* (p.13)*

Legal Custody... option where a child or youth would be cared for by a relative or someone else close to them ... For example, for children who are Crown wards and have

*Italics added

been living continuously with a foster parent for a significant period of time, it would be possible for custody of the child to be transferred to a foster parent under a legal custody order... *In such cases, the child or youth would be discharged from care* (p.14)*

Family Foster Care ... Revised standards and regulations ... to afford more flexibility for children's aid societies... would allow children to be placed with kin in situations where existing rules prevent children's aid societies from doing so. (p.16)

However, the role that plays this continuum of family/PWW-based permanency in reducing child protection costs needs to be exposed. Graphic 1 represents our view of the mentioned goals that are part of the continuum. Further, the clarification provided by Dumbrill (2006) clear ups any doubt in this respect.

Dumbril (2006) asserted:

Unsurprisingly, most of the transformation measures have cost-saving potential. Open adoption (allowing adoption with access to birth families) is likely to reduce legal challenges to adoption. Increasing post-adoption support may enable children to move more easily from state care to adoptive homes. Placing more children in kinship care should reduce in-care rates and costs. Developing alternative dispute resolution processes is likely to save legal costs. Coordinating child protection with other forms of service delivery should increase the overall cost-effectiveness of services (pp. 12-13).

On the other hand, the MCYS has nominated the components of the continuum of family-based permanency as "Pillars of Permanence". Inside of these permanence pillars, Kinship stands out, not only for its flexibility, but also for its suitability with the familialization goals. In fact, through kinship placements, PWW are assuming the state responsibility and the costs of child protection. This can be

observed in Graphic 2, (p. 64) the kinship Care Continuum. This continuum was developed by OACAS in the Ontario Kinship Model, OKM-2004. In this continuum the flexibility and availability of kinship to assume the state protection responsibilities at any stage of the protection process is apparent. In fact, kinship can be shifted to replace almost any child welfare care option. This means that in 6 out of the 12 moments of the permanence continuum, the recommended and preferred option of the government is the kinship placement. This special role that kinship plays in Ontario child welfare is summarized by OKM-2004 in the following excerpt:

The file will close from protection services with or without a referral to community service providers and no further child welfare involvement; or the file will be closed from protection services and be reclassified to “other child welfare” services to provide early intervention services to prevent future protection services (A Differential Service Response for Child Welfare in Ontario, September 2004).

The file will remain open with the child/youth remaining with the current caregiver. A risk assessment and Strengths-based Child and Family Assessment will be completed.

Engaging the caregiver, agency, Kin, and community supports to keep the child/youth safe will develop a service plan.

The file will remain open subject to a protection investigation and a risk assessment together with a Strength-based Child and Family Assessment within the context of community and cultural identity will be completed. As a result of this assessment, the child/youth cannot remain with the current caregiver three service options will be considered:

- A. Placement out of care with Kin
- B. Placement in a Kin foster home
- C. Placement in an agency approved foster home
- D. Assessment of a Kin adoption plan” (pp. 16-17)

Above all, the preference for using kinship as pillar of neoliberal familialization has not only been related with its versatility and availability. The Kinship's more valuable asset that has made it to be nominated and used as pillar of familialization is the great potential it has to reduce the state costs and expenditures within the Ontario child welfare system.

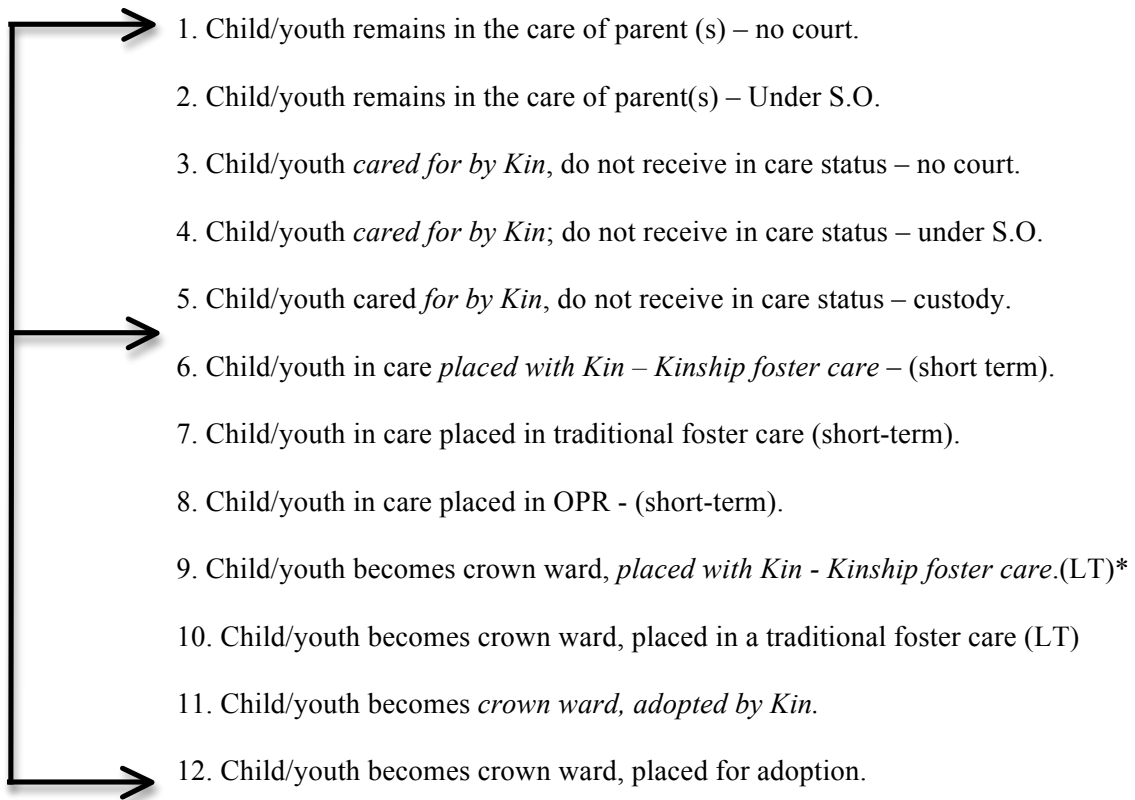
OKCP pillar of neoliberal familialization of Ontario child welfare: transferring the costs of child protection to PWW.

One of the premises of familialization of Ontario child welfare is that kinship placements reduce child protection costs. Analysts and official documents have pointed out this potential asset of kinship care placements. As mentioned before, Dumbrill (2006) considers that “Placing more children in kinship care placements. As mentioned before, Dumbrill (2006) considers that “Placing more children in kinship care should reduce in-care rates and costs” (p. 13). In the same way official documents have remarked this kinship benefit.

For instance, SFE-2003 declares:

Canadian child protection authorities...seem willing to consider kinship care beyond their regular practices for ... cost saving....kin family care for the child without the full cost of foster care (p. 3)

Graphic 2- Kinship Care Continuum



(Brant CAS Kinship Care Procedures)

*LT – Long-term -

Italics added.

Taken From OACAS, 2004 Ontario Kinship Model, p. 16

From a similar point of view, OKM-2004 in the section Projected benefits of an Ontario approach to Kinship care states:

[kinship has] A potential reduction in the numbers of children/youth in Society operated resources such as group care and agency operated non-relative foster care.

[kinship generates] A reduction in litigation costs through use of Family Group conferencing and other forms of mediation. [kinship] Has the potential to address a shortage of traditional agency foster care resources. With the adoption of financial subsidies for out of care plans will be an overall reduction of the costs of care for those children/youth (p.23)

In order to exploit the most of the kinship's potential of reducing child welfare costs, it was necessary that the natural kin family practice will be transform into a child protection regulated practice. As discussed in the literature review, in many cultures there is a family practice in which relatives and members of the extended family will help and even provide direct caregiving for the children of their relatives as necessary. This informal practice is even honoured in some cultures. But, it was just recently that the capitalist state has been interested in this practice, incidentally, or not, the state "discovered" this practice around the same time neoliberal familialization was introduced, between the 80's and 90's. Since then, the State has redefined this informal family practice as kinship and has converted it in a neoliberal policy and in a child protection modality, through legislation and regulations. Policy makers therefore appear to have shaped kinship in a special modality that exemplifies the familialization process in Ontario child welfare system.

OKM- 2004 refers to this process in Ontario in the following excerpt

The use of relatives to care for children/youth has in many cultures been a time-honored tradition. “Although kinship care’s historical roots as an informal practice are deep, it’s use as a child welfare service is relatively new and brings to the forefront issues that were not present in the informal family arrangements that existed in past years”(Charlene Ingram, 1996). This is true of the Ontario experience ... Individual Societies have developed a number of responses ... including increased use of kinship placements. (p. 5)

In reference to the practices of kinship in Ontario before regulations, Graphic 3 presents a modality developed by the Toronto Children’s Aid Society (Toronto CAS) and compiled by OKM- 2004. As expressed by the authors in the graphic “this model demonstrates the effectiveness of a formal approach to kin ...and the efficient utilization of public funds” (p. 43). Based on this and other CASs experiences in the province (Niagara, London, Simcoe), and to establish a provincial framework, Ontario neoliberal transformation (2005) moved quickly toward regulating kinship care. In 2006 Bill 210 legitimated all the neoliberal measures to the continuum of permanency and regulated the Ontario kinship model in the province. In addition, the regulatory Policy directive CW004-06 from the Ontario MCYS came into effect on December 2006, giving birth to OKCP.

The importance of this move towards provincial regulations and to OKCP formulation is that kinship was defined in the best interest not only of “the child” but also of neoliberal transformation agenda. In this reference two aspects of the regulation become crucial to our analysis of OKCP. First, the definition of kinship and its division in kinship services and kinship care, second, the establishing of parameters to control and surveillance over kinship caregivers/PWKC through Ontario kinship standards.

Graphic 3
Example of kinship modality used in Ontario
Previously to the 2004 Ontario Kinship Model

MODEL IN PLACE IN TORONTO CAS	
STAFFING	
Supervisor	1
Workers	2
Researcher	1
Post kin placement support	2
Administrative Assistant	1
OUTCOMES OVER 15 MONTH PERIOD	
Home studies Completed	80
	Revenue generated 20 hours Per study
Placements with Kin	71
Placements resulted in leaving care	25 (Of the above 71)
Move from OPI resource	9 (Of 25)
Moved from OPI to Kin Adoption with subsidy	2
Placements remaining in care	46 (Of 71 total)
<p>“The above model demonstrates the effectiveness of a formal approach to kin as an alternative to children and youth already in the in-care system. The benefits to children/youth as previously outlined, and the efficient utilization of public funds results in a win-win for all, especially the children, youth and their families.</p> <p>A concurrent model examining kin options at the outset of a child’s/youth’s entrance to the in care system, would incorporate the placement plan in the Service planning through a Family conferencing process, and move to the identification of a permanency plan in a timely way.</p> <p>*Expected Outcomes of this service strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of kinship families as the first placement choice when a child/youth requires out-of home care, • the timely development of permanent plans for children/youth in formal kinship care, • the delivery of supportive services to kinship families within their communities, and, • the smooth transition for children and youth and kin families who remain together but leave the formal system. <p>*(Ingram, Charlene, Foster care Families and family Life, Sep Oct 1996)</p>	

Taken from OACAS. 2004 Ontario Kinship Model. (pp. 43). 44

First, with the definition of kinship and its division on Kinship Services (KS) and Kinship Care (KC) it has legitimized the division of PWKC in two groups. One is the majoritarian KS group, who provides the protection of children at no cost or with a minimum support from the government. The other KC, is a selected and reduced group of caregivers who must pass strict standards of selection, accepting also, the close and state surveillance and control in order to receive almost the same support given to regular foster parent.

This is the definition of Kinship proposed by SFE- 2003

Kin: Includes parents, siblings, relatives, and persons beyond blood ties including godparents, tribe or clan members and best friends – some one who is important to the child [Relatives Raising Children. An Overview of Kinship Care]

Kinship care: “The full-time nurturing and protection of children who must be separated from their parents, by relatives, members of their tribe or clan, godparents, step-parents or other adults who have a kinship bond with a child” [CWLA 1994: 2].

Formal kinship Care: Formal kinship care occurs where the child has “in care status” with the Society through Temporary Care by Agreement or by court order and is placed by the Society with kin. Also known as “kinship foster care” in some U.S. studies”

Informal kinship care: Informal kinship care occurs where the child is being cared for by kin but does not have “in care status” with the Society. The Society may be involved in a supportive role (pp.1,2)

As it can be observed, the definition of Kin is adjusted to broaden amount of caregivers. Thus, the definition includes close relatives godparents and it expands to best friends or even community members, as it was legislated by Bill 210 in 2006. The effect of this wide definition of kin is a strategy to ensure

availability of kinship caregivers. In relation to financial issues, it is important to highlight that according to the continuum of permanence and standards; the seeking of a kinship caregiver has become an early task of child protection workers. This frequently culminates with an early kinship placement. Which means that PWKC assume frequently the caregiving of a child in need of protection without a court procedure. In other words, without the child being declared "in need of protection". Therefore, most of the kinship caregivers become KS at no cost or at minimum government support through Ontario Works. This situation is described by SFE-2003 as follows

...the financial support available to grandparent (and other kinship) caregivers is insufficient. Under Ontario Works, for example, any non-parental caregiver is entitled to approximately \$200 per month for one child (and \$174 for each additional child) and this payment is available as long as necessary to the caregiver. Such payment, however, is significantly less than the minimum foster care rate for one child at \$750 per month. If the child is already in care, or is found to be in need of protection, a kinship care arrangement might be assisted by way of the foster care system and the "provisional foster home" concept. In such cases, the family can be approved as a home for a particular child and would then receive a closer approximation to the financial and other support offered to foster parents (p. 2)

By 2004, OKM-2004 offered a new definition of kinship, which basically corresponds to the one currently used by Ontario child welfare system. This definition emphasizes the aspects of "in care" and "out of care" status of the child, as point of difference between the two groups in which PWKC were divided, women kinship care (PWK-C) and women kinship services (PWK-S). It also introduces the requirement to be approved as KC establishing a unique condition for KC. According to this condition

PWK-C are only allowed to care for their kin children. This marks a clear difference between KC and foster care. Thus, although both have to meet the same requirements asked by the government to become foster parent, only foster parents are allowed to obtain income for caring children from different families.

This is the definition offered by OKM-2004,

Kinship Services – Out of Care

Kinship services...“occur when the family and in some cases the agency decide that the child will live with relatives or other kin. In this kinship arrangement, a child welfare worker may be involved in helping family members plan for the child, *but a child protective service agency does not assume legal custody of or responsibility for the child. Relative caregivers are not approved as foster home providers. There may be a custody order, supervision order, and/or voluntary/protection services agreement with kin. These children would not have ‘in care’ status”* (Hamilton/Niagara Regional Kinship Care Initiative, 2004).

Kinship Care – In Care

Kinship care...“involves the parenting by kin as a result of a *determination by the court and the protective service agency*. The courts rule that the child/youth must be separated from his or her parents because of abuse, neglect, dependency, abandonment or special medical circumstances. The child/youth is placed in the legal custody of the child/youth welfare agency, and the kin provides the full time care, protection and nurturing that the child/youth needs. *To provide this care, kin must be approved foster home providers.*

These homes will have only the ‘related’ children/youth placed there and will not be open to other foster children. These children/youth would have ‘in care’ status”

(Hamilton/Niagara Regional Kinship Care Initiative, 2004) (p.15).

The second aspect that OKCP regulated is the parameters of control and surveillance over kinship providers. Therefore, OKCP includes the Ontario kinship services standards, which regulate all the process of kinship services and the entire kinship continuum. These standards achieve the goal of cost reduction of care placements by two ways. One, the standards can provoke in PWK-S a rebellious attitude which makes them prefer to be independent of the government renouncing to any support from the system. In this way, women avoid the state intrusion, control and surveillance exerted through kinship standards. Second, if WKC submit themselves to the standards, they could receive some financial support (like sporadic food vouchers or children's clothing) and some group support. However, through the standards many PWK-S are denied financial support. Kinship services standards cover six process of kinship services intervention. They regulate 1) the searching for Kin: Collaboration with the Extended Family and Community Members, 2) the Initial Screening and Assessment of Kinship Service Home, 3) the Comprehensive Assessment of Kinship Service Family, 4) the Kinship Service Plan, 5) the Kinship Service File Opening and, 6) the Kinship Service File Closure.

Indeed, with the formulation of OKCP (definition, standards, and legislation), which regulates the role of kinship in the best interest of the neoliberal reform, Kinship became completely adequate to familialization. Furthermore, OKCP has provided the tools for exerting state control and surveillance over PWKC maintaining and perpetuating the genderized and classist system of child protection. In doing this OKCP has become pillar of neoliberal familialization in Ontario child welfare. While at the same time PWW who need more support and investment from the state, have become the perfect cheaper placements for Ontario's abused children. Indeed, PWKC are doomed to assume child protection responsibilities at a lower cost or no cost to the government as the only mean of protecting the children of

their relatives. This has favoured dramatically the neoliberal restructuring and cutting of expenditures, in child welfare.

OKCP: Attaining Neoliberal Goals and Exacerbating Women's Oppression.

As have been denounced by feminist scholars (Armstrong, 1996; Bezanson, 2006, 2006a; Brodie, 2002; Cameron, 2006; Cossman, 2002; Gavigan & Chunn, 2007; Kingfisher, 2002) and acknowledged by this study, PWW are the most affected by neoliberal policies. However, in developing this research we have found that specific information about kinship placements and kinship caregivers is very scant in the Ontario; this in some way creates limits for our conclusions. Although, this can be part of the limitations of an exploratory design, the strengths of the information we have reviewed on OKCP as well as some of the last reports on child welfare, will help us to make useful conclusions about women's oppression. This will also suggest many questions for future research on neoliberal agendas, specifically on OKCP. With this limitation in mind we will explore the effects of OKCP in women's oppression

In reviewing kinship services in the province, OSKS- 2010 found a lack of research and information about Ontario kinship model developments and its contribution to the goals of the transformation agenda.

This is pointed out by OSKS-2010 in this excerpt,

In November 2006, Ontario Kinship Service Standards were introduced to the province as part of the Ministry of Children & Youth Services (MCYS) Transformation Agenda (2005). Although kinship service has become one of the fastest growing resource placements for children who come to the attention of a children's aid society, little is

known about the impact of the new standards on practice, what the current practices are, and which models of kinship service are in use across the province (p.1)

Certainly, there is a lack of information on OKCP specific achievements, and the number of kinship services placements is unknown. Also, the number of kinship care placements is not clear because normally it is amalgamated with the number of foster care. Equally, there is not information about the profile of Ontario kinship care and kinship services caregivers. Some information related with kinship care has recently appeared in OACAS 2009/2010 Report. This information refers to the number of children in care between 2007 and 2008 by placement and it is presented in Table 2. As it can be observed in the table, while the number of children in foster care, group homes institution, and on independent living is decreasing, the number of children in kinship care is growing consistently during the period cover by the information of the table. In relation to information about kinship services, Richardson (2009) has pointed out that until 2009 “No Ontario statistics could be located that specifically addressed the number of children currently residing in kinship services” (p. 3). The author also concludes “the majority of kin providing substitute care are doing so on an informal kinship services basis” (Richardson, 2009, p. 4). The analyst came to this conclusion using information from the 2003-OIS, in which out of 5, 628 child abuse investigations, kinship services placements were utilized in 4% of the cases, equal with the 4% of the traditional foster care, the 1% of group homes and the 1% of kinship care (Richardson, 2009, p. 4). Similarly, OSKS- 2010 stated, “kinship service has become one of the fastest growing resource placements” in the province (p.1).

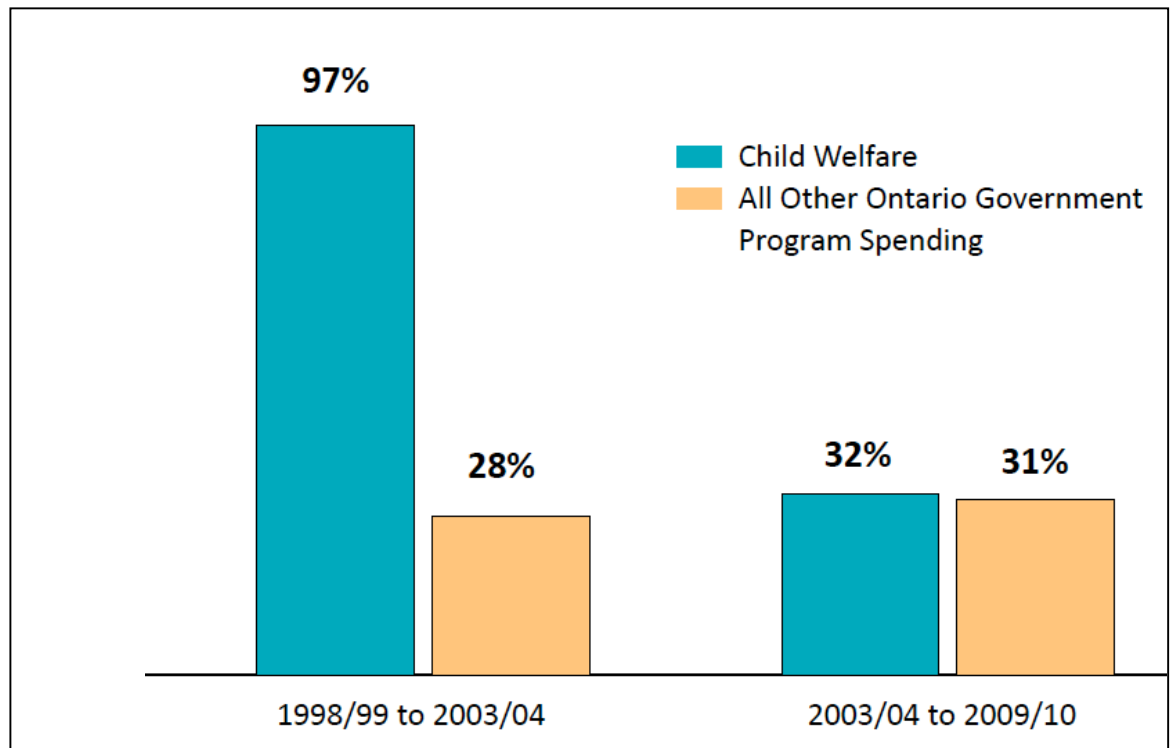
Table 2*Children in Care by Placement Type, 2007 - 2009*

<i>Placement Type</i>	Number of Children in Care				Change from 2008 to 2009 March 31st
	2007	2008	2009	%	%
Family-based Foster Care	10,698	10,292	10,081	56.5%	-2.05%
Kinship Care	963	1,003	1,042	5.8%	3.9%
Adoption	803	748	865	4.8%	15.6%
Group Homes/ Institution	2,931	2,926	2,789	15.6%	-4.6%
Independent Living	2,351	2,596	2,596	14.6%	-1.0%
Other	530	310	471	2.6%	51.9%
Total	18,277	17,945	17,844	100%	-0.5%

Table 2

The Commission to promote sustainable child welfare in Ontario launched its first report, *Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario*, on June 2010. The report has significant data about the changes achieved in the system after the implementation of the neoliberal transformation. In this information is apparent that OKCP and more specifically PWKC have contributed directly to this change. For instance, Figure 1, shows the dramatic reduction of 65% of child welfare spending compared with Ontario government spending occurred after the neoliberal transformation.

Figure 1 - Change in child welfare spending vs. all other Ontario government spending 1998/99 to 2009 /2010 -

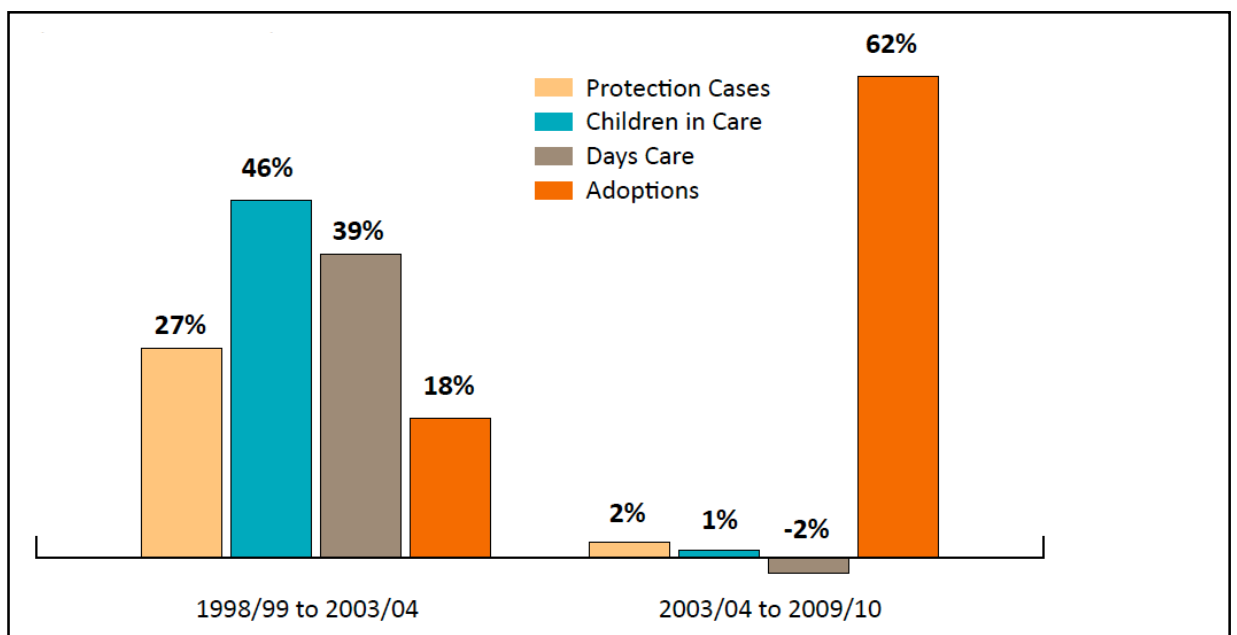


Taken from Commission to promote sustainable child welfare (2010, p. 11)

This is also the result of the dramatic intended changes, which have occurred in child welfare activity during the neoliberal transformation. As explained by the sustainability report “ [during] the five years following...the transformation agenda new policy direction including differential response, increased emphasis on kinship more focus on permanency arrested further grow of the number of children in care” (p.10). Similarly the OACAS 2010 Child Welfare Report Stated “Changes to legislation and policy in 2006 require agencies to first look to kin homes as options, which is why the

number of children cared for by family members is increasing and the number of children in care is decreasing” (p. 24). The magnitude of some of those changes is showed in Figure 2. In fact, almost the

Figure 2. Child welfare activity levels between 1998/1999-2003/2004 to 2009/2010



Taken from Commission to promote sustainable child welfare (2010, p. 11)

whole child welfare activity decreased dramatically between 2004 and 2009. For instance children in care decreased 45%. Changing from 46% to 1%. Days in care reduced 41% changing from 39% to -2%. Protection cases lowering 25% from 27% to 2%. The only activity that grows dramatically during the five years was adoptions, which increased 44%, changing from 18 % to 62%. This data confirms the affectivity of neoliberal familialization in Ontario.

Noticeable quantitative and qualitative research about Ontario kinship caregivers and OKCP is very scant. This combined with the use of gender-neutral language that is characteristic of child welfare system exacerbates even more women's oppression in the province in that their rights have been erased and denied in Ontario child welfare system by claiming the paramount of the best interest of children and youth that, as we have seen, nowadays refers as much to the supreme interest of neoliberalism. Therefore, the essential role-played by women in caring for and improving children's outcomes is obfuscated by the OKCP discourse. Equally, women's role in the dramatic reduction of child welfare spending is hidden. Certainly, women's needs and their rights are not recognized by the system. On the contrary, women are submitted to a strict series of control and surveillance to ensure they are looking after their families and that they are doing it according with the state standards.

Despite of the lack of research and data about kinship services, some information about the struggles of PWKC can be deduced from the official reviewed documents. For instance, information about the urgent and persistent need of financial support and resources experienced by kinship caregivers and its relation with OKCP divisions and regulations has been part of OKM-2004OSKS-2010. OKCP regulations have created part of the urgent and persistent need of financial support and resources experienced by women providing kinship services. As we have seen in the literature review, the majority of kinship caregivers are women in poverty. Also, as we have analysed neoliberal agendas and its kinship policies have been created to restrict the financial support and resources that kinship caregivers need. In this sense, Cuddeback (2004) asserts, "There is evidence that kinship foster families have fewer resources and receive less training, services, and support" (p. 623).

This is described by OKM- 2004 in the follow excerpt,

In situations where a child/youth, without in care status, is placed with a relative either

voluntarily by the parent, or through a supervision order, there is no funding allocated to these days of care. Families are required to ensure the proper care of the child/youth within their own means. ... these families are usually at the lower economic scale and experience financial hardships (pp. 5, 6)

In order for kinship care giving arrangements to be successful, adequate financial supports must be made available. If the arrangement is through kinship care, then financial support is available through the child's/youth's in care status. Where kin make a commitment to raise a child/youth through a custody arrangement the system must be flexible in being able to provide financial support based on the needs of the caregivers and the well-being of the child/youth (p. 12)

Some of the answers provided by kinship caregivers reported by OKM-2004 are relevant in this aspect, for instance,

[Q.] What have been some of the problems and difficulties you have experienced?

[A.] Supervision Order was a big financial strain. I am still in debit because of it. We struggled through but we could not have continued under a supervision order.

[Q.] If the intent is long term fostering, what supports would you require to care for the children/youth long term without the children/youth being in the legal care of the Society?

- Legal assistance re: access (unless adoption). [Access is a] very big hurdle to cross.
- Educational support in later years like scholarships, bursaries etc...
- To have us know resources, contacts etc...
- Cultural links

The OSKS-2010 found that CASs consider the lack of financial support to kinship services caregivers as one of the three major issues that Ontario kinship model is facing currently. The other two were, lack of understanding kinship standards, and best practices guidelines and the complexity of the kinship family dynamics. While the lack of financial support is presented by OSKS-2010 as a consequence of the limited financial support provided by Ontario works to kinship services families, and as a cause of the migration of kinship services to kinship care. The increasing of funding and financial support for the kinship services model is also considered essential to its succeed as a stable placement. However, according to the vision of OSKS-2010, the increasing funding will only provide a complement to the limited financial support that Ontario Works is providing to kinship services caregivers. Thus, the funding is expected to be used to improve CAS services delivery. In other words, increases in the funding are thought mainly for CASs not for Ontario PWKC and their children.

These are some excerpts of OSKS-2010 related with this analysis.

In relation to the limited financial support provided to kinship services caregivers,

Almost all the agencies that replied (15 of 16 or 94%) identified this as a key major issue facing kinship services. Four of the 15 CASs stated the Temporary Care Allowance through Ontario Works is too low and there are inconsistencies in how jurisdictions determine eligibility for the Temporary Care Allowance. Not having access to such essential service items as: transportation assistance, daycare, educational supports, legal aid and counseling were included under *lack of financial support*. Another key theme identified under *lack of financial support* is that for financial reasons and the needs of the child, Kinship Services caregivers become Kinship-in-Care providers in order to gain

access to the foster care per diem and the range of supports available under that care option.

AGENCY 41 'We are asking kin to care for Ontario's most vulnerable children but will not contribute to the financial cost'

AGENCY13: 'Many of the kinship services families are struggling themselves and require financial and other supports to care for a child' (pp. 13-14)

Two main forms of funding and support were seen as essential to the Kinship Services model succeeding as a stable placement option for children. Funding and Supports to the Agencies While some agencies said they are being proactive by using some funding to prevent admissions in the first place, other agencies stated they have found themselves in financial constraints that have required them to reduce their complement of kinship service workers. Stable funding and adequate supports to agencies is essential for Kinship Services to be effective, efficient and ensure child safety and permanency agencies articulated that their current resources are not sufficient to meet the exceeding demands needed for the kinship service families.

AGENCY 12 'Resources kin placements are exceeding agency capacity to provide it'

AGENCY27: Monies allotted for admission prevention

AGENCY38: More Agency support for financial assistance for kin services families is needed

AGENCY 2 [Agency] no longer has a Kinship support group for kinship services families. (pp. 19, 20)

In relations to the migration from kinship services to kinship-care

Financial resources and supports available to CASs are not sufficient to meet the needs of the kinship service families. The transition from Kinship Services to Kinship In-Care is frequently associated with the need for the kinship services family's need to access financial assistance. The most common services identified as not available to kinship service families were a per diem for food (96%) and travel/gas costs (92%) (p. 5).

In relation to future funding use,

a more ideal CAS model included two things: (a) Greater support and funding provided to the kinship services model. (b) Specialized kinship service teams/workers and structure.

The current model assessed as most effective at this time: a specialized kinship services unit. This model fosters quicker assessments, provides greater supports to kinship service families, has enhanced ability and skills in searching for kin, and the emphasis of the model is on kinship permanency and prevention of subsequent maltreatment.

The ideal model includes sufficient and stable funding to support the kinship services model in its entirety, Services model in its entirety. Funding allows for the hire of specialized kinship workers to fulfill the duties and responsibilities to meet the Kinship Services Standards; it ensures training opportunities and/or workshops for kinship and it provides support (i.e., financial, per diem, advocacy, emotional) to the kin family prior to the placement, immediately after placement and during placement. Agencies noted that the current climate of financial constraint in child welfare adversely affects the likelihood of advancement on the current model

AGENCY41: One in which the family is appropriated funded to provide care for the vulnerable children of this province. Also, one in which there is adequate access to internal and community resources

AGENCY38: A specialized team with enough staff to meet immediately with kin applicants and assess and support them as needed, hopefully leading to earlier closure with the kin provider feeling comfortable with the situation. A LICO type tool supported by the ministry that will provide guidelines for financial support and other supports needed to ensure good placements for kin family and children. Good working relationships with community partners, i.e., OW, OEYC, FLIC, local counselling agencies who understand and respond to kin needs. Access to internal programs that are now currently available to Kin Care families, e.g. training. Support groups for all kin. Provincial supports for timelines for kids in kin service placements such as the one year and two year timeframe for CICs. Ministry funding for custody cases (57.1) before the court to ensure permanency for children and rights and responsibilities clearly articulated for kin providers. (p. 21)

This last excerpt identifies some of the major dilemmas that child welfare social workers are experiencing in relation to OKCP. In fact, social workers are facing the dilemma of promoting kinship placements, as a clinical best practice for the safety and better outcomes of the children. But at the same time social workers witness the deterioration of poverty conditions of kinship women and children that this approach is causing. Second, social workers are facing also the dilemma of using their increasingly reduced funding to support kinship women and their children or to use it to survive as agency the

neoliberal downsize and dismantling of child welfare. In any case, the more affected are OWKC and their children.

The analysis of the documentary sources shows that through OKCP the responsibility and the costs of the protection and wellbeing of the children have been transferred from the state to PWW. This has been done in Ontario principally with the familialization of child welfare and it has been ensured through increasing controls and state surveillance over PWW and their families. The process started with the conservative neoliberal reform of the province in the 90's and was consolidated with the introduction of the neoliberal transformation of Ontario child welfare of 2006 in which the role of OKCP has been crucial to advancing the neoliberal goals of transferring the costs of social reproduction of the power labour to PWW. As it was analyzed OKCP includes Ontario kinship model, standards and practices that have shaped the kin natural ties in such a way that the majority of PWKCs have assumed the responsibility and costs of the protection and wellbeing of abused children through kinship services modality. While PWKC prefer this modality as a way to avoid state surveillance and control over their lives, this is also the modality preferred by the system, since the spending in kinship services is minimal, and in many cases there is absolutely no state spending. Unequivocally, the reduction of cost by using kinship placements has had different outcomes for PWKCs than for the system. Thus, while in one side Ontario child welfare system has adapted to neoliberal structures of accumulation ensuring class exploitation and gender domination during capitalist globalization. On the other side, Ontario PWKCs are experiencing the exacerbation of the capitalist oppression over their lives.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

This chapter comprises the main conclusions of my research. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents conclusions related with the research purpose and a summary of the case study findings. This part also includes some of the questions that have arisen in this exploratory study for future research. The second part points out some of the limitations of the study. The last part is my self-reflection about this research process.

Research Purpose, Case Study Findings, and Future Research

Research purpose: the validity of a feminist critical approach to research social policy

The main purpose of this research was to contribute to the development of feminist critical analysis of social policy. Particularly, my aim was to critically review the case of OKCP through a feminist lens to uncover relations of class domination, social inequality, and injustice based on gender and other oppressions that permeate both policy practices and policy discourse. In relation to the purpose of the study, the conclusion is that a feminist critical approach is essential to analyze social policy because it allows the researcher not only to situate the policy in its context but also to analyze social policy as a structural relation of class domination and gender oppression.

Feminist research on social policy focuses on analyzing the historical, political, economical and social relations of inequality and injustice that give origin to social policy and in the ways policy impacts women's lives. Thus, the purpose of feminist inquiry is to discover and uncover the oppressions and inequalities that social policy reinforces in societies in which class exploitation, and political and

ideological domination are the source of power and privilege. In other words, social policy is not a rational and value-free government action as positivism postulates. Therefore, the evidence from based-policy research, that pretends to be value-free and abounds in the field plays a significant role in supporting the neoliberal restructuring of social policy, which deepens social inequalities and injustice.

In this respect, this research has presented evidence through both the literature review and the case study about the impact of neoliberal policies in women's lives. Specifically, the oppression and poverty experienced by single mothers and their children in Ontario, who are denied social support and have become objects of the increased control and surveillance from the state as a result of the neoliberal counterattack of the welfare policy in the province, has intensified. Through the feminist lens, this research also uncovered the inequalities and oppression that WKC's are experiencing and that is amply reinforced by OKCP. In conclusion, the interest of capitalist accumulation is the base of the formulation and implementation of OKCP, and it is against the interests of PW'W, their children, and families. Therefore, the positivist myth of social policy being value-free and neutral has not been supported by the findings of this case study.

A second aspect of this conclusion is that the lack of feminist critical approaches on the research on KCP in general and OKCP in particular is a manifestation of the power and knowledge relation in the field of social policy research.

Marston (2004) pointed out this relation:

In many policy communities, there remain a powerful belief in "hard facts" shaping measures of social reform rather than a questioning of how this facts were arrived at in the first place and what forms of knowledge were privileged over others in constructing the objects of research (p. 13).

This seems to be the case with child welfare policy research in which quantitative inquiry and evidence-based policy research constitute a great deal of the investigation in this field. However, quantitative research on the “hard facts” of Ontario kinship caregivers is very scant or non-existent at this time.

Case study findings.

The dilemma of familialization.

One of the findings that stands out in this research is the neoliberal familialization of child welfare, in which it was also found that OKCP is pillar of familialization. This fact has caused a crucial dilemma to practitioners and policy advocates, as discussed in the previous chapter. Because the neoliberal familialization is a central critique in this study, a conclusion in this regard is required.

The findings of this research show that OKCP reinforces power structures of domination and women’s oppression through familialization. As a result of the child welfare familialization, WKC’s are assuming the state responsibility and the costs of child protection. This shift has reduced the cost of foster placements, court procedures, and caseloads, facilitating the achievement of neoliberal goals of reducing child welfare activity and cutting expenditures in a dramatic record of 65% in 4 years. Therefore, it is arguable that this is the way in which the capitalist state supports the immediate accumulation process of the global transnational capital while abandoning part of its previous responsibility in the social reproduction of the power labour force. Thus, in the long run it will contribute to widening the gap between rich and poor: making the poor poorer, and increasing more and more the capital accumulation of consortiums and transnational elites. Furthermore, the consequences of transferring the responsibilities and costs of child protection from the state to PWW are devastating for them, their children, and their

families. For PWW to be in charge of child protection responsibilities and costs has contributed to lowering even more their life standards, diminishing their family budgets, and increasing their unpaid caregiving job, as well as having to face the challenging behaviours and trauma of the children in their care, but without adequate resources. This kinship responsibility also has affected many of their family relationships and in the worst cases; their kin ties have been broken. In all, as we have seen in the literature review, kinship arrangements have provoked not only financial hardships for WKC's, but also many health issues and emotional stress.

Indeed, the neoliberal familialization has two main related characteristics. First, neoliberal familialization is a process of supporting capitalist accumulation during globalization; second, it is an ideological discourse that legitimizes and reinforces the accumulation process, concealing the decisive and essential role of women in it and therefore denying women's oppression. Nevertheless, this research is not claiming that WKC's, (mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, etc.) are not most of the times the best placement for abused children. This is particularly true in the case of racialized children from native, black, and ethnic communities, as it was described in the literature review. Consequently, the conclusion of this research in regards to familialization is that women's caregiver role must be recognized, must be highlighted, must be paid; moreover, the services and support for WKC's and their children need to be expanded. The division between KC and KS must disappear and WKC's must be provided with better resources than foster parents because of the family ties they have with the children and the stability and better outcomes they can provide to them. In other words, the dramatic 65% that the Ontario government has saved through WKC's needs to be returned to them. Those resources belong to poor workingwomen and their children, and need to return to them through direct income and services. Of course, there is a need for an expansion of the child welfare system to provide support and services to WKC's.

There is no dilemma. It is impossible for policy advocates, women's organizations and practitioners to accept the neoliberal familialization of child welfare and to support OKCP. On the contrary, the historical duty is to advocate for a child welfare policy in which the priority is the well being of poor women, their children, and families.

Future research.

Our exploratory research found that specific information and data about the concrete characteristics of Ontario kinship caregivers is very scant. This finding affects the conclusions about the role of OKCP in the exacerbation of women's oppression in the province, because it cannot be illustrated with women's concrete situations. However, the research has suggested many questions for future research. Specifically, there are four areas of research that have arisen from this study. One area of research is the social and demographic profile of kinship caregivers in Canada and specifically in Ontario: both quantitative and qualitative research is needed in this area. A second area involves, the research on the forms of resistance and organization that women have developed against OKCP: there is not research in this area, and there are organizations of kinship caregivers with national and provincial representation. A third area of research would be the analysis and critique of neoliberal familialization discourse. Finally, the fourth area to be considered would be research on social policy advocacy and social work practitioners' experiences and possibilities to participate in contesting OKCP. Some questions for these areas of research are presented next.

Ontario kinship caregivers' social and demographic profile.

What is the social profile of Ontario kinship caregivers including sex, income, age, race, ethnic group, and specific kin relation with the children they are caring for? What is the social location of

Ontario kinships caregivers? What is the predominant disadvantage for them? How multiple oppressions articulated in them?

How has OKCP affected the financial situation of Ontario kinship caregivers? How has OKCP affected their life standards? How OWKC are managing their family budgets? How much has b unpaid caregiving been increased for OWCK? How is the increase of the unpaid caring job affecting OWKC's physical health and emotional stress? How are the challenging behaviours and traumas of the children in their care, affecting OWKC's emotional health? How has kinship responsibility affected OWKC's family relationships and stability?

Forms of resistance and organization against OKCP.

How are WKC's resisting the neoliberal policies? What are the type and the characteristics of the organizations that kinship caregivers are creating to resist OKCP? What are the objectives of those organizations? How are they supporting OKCP? How are they creating class and social consciousness against neoliberal policies? How much support are these organizations receiving from Ontario women's organizations? How much support do they need? How much support would they accept from feminist organizations? How do discursive strategies of women's organizations consent to or resist the neoliberal child welfare policy? How do they create an oppositional and transformative discourse to contest dominant discourses and to promote women's organizing to change OKCP?

Social policy discourse.

What are the strategies of the OKCP discourse? How has the OKCP discourse changed? How are power relations supported by the OKCP discourse? How do discursive strategies of child welfare policy contribute to the construction of women's identities as caregivers so that they consent to individually assume the collective responsibility of children's protection and wellbeing?

Social policy advocacy, social work practitioners and OKCP.

How does social policy advocacy understand the scope of OKCP? What are the main changes that policy advocacy will pursue to reform OKCP?

What knowledge do social workers have of the neoliberal goals of familialization? What are the reforms that social workers consider are necessary to reform OKCP? What are the possibilities of developing anti-oppressive practices with WKC's? What kind of AOP are practitioners developing with WKC's?

Research Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study are related to the exploratory design and the sources on which the research is based. Other limitations are proper to a Master dissertation. The fact that this research was designed to explore a specific neoliberal social policy creates limitations in the scope of the findings. Therefore, the goals, modalities, and changes of other neoliberal social policies require specific research. Another limitation is the fact that this study was based only on an extensive literature review and official documentary data. Although documentary data has been used in social policy analysis and has been justified as a significant source of data in this field, such sources are a significant limitation when doing feminist research. Indeed, women's voices are considered of vital importance by feminist researchers. However, the time and resources of this master's dissertation were an avoidable limit when decisions were made about the type of sources to use, their characteristics, and the amount of data that was adequate to gather and analyze to accomplish this academic requirement.

Self-reflection

Advancing this research has been a great source of training for me. Looking back at the first moment I started thinking on the topic of my MSW thesis and the final product in which I am reflecting today I can see the challenges I have had to overcome. One of the biggest challenges has been for me to understand the limitations of a MSW thesis. Although this limitation is present in each one of the research decision made, it was definitely a crucial element in focusing and concretion. Thus, my first ambitious plan was to develop a feminist participatory action research project that would involve many kinship caregivers and organizations. Then, my second plan was to develop a comparative feminist critical discourse of OKCP and women's resistance. My final project was concreted when I started reviewing OKCP through a feminist lens. I still having some nostalgic feelings for the previous projects; however, I am very satisfied with the research I am presenting. I also think that my beliefs and commitments are reflected in this study.

This is what I think a research process should provide to the researcher: critical knowledge to challenge social injustice and inequality, clear and valid evidence, new concrete commitments, and many questions for future research endeavours. I feel I have achieved all these outcomes through this research experience.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for Data Collection From Documentary Source – Reference

Document _____

Date of publication _____

Kind of document _____

First reading: Relation to research question (e.g. relevance, importance, type)

Context: why was the document written? _____

Method: how was the document developed (e.g. purpose and scope, objectivity, entitlement)

Content (e.g. accessibility and readability, ownership, argument)

Evaluation and review? _____

Notes and thoughts _____
