CONTESTED SPACES: NEOLIBERALISM AND PSYCHOLOGY IN THE FEMINIST ANTI-VIOLENCE MOVEMENT IN ONTARIO FROM THE 1970S TO TODAY

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the co-evolving projects of Psychology and neoliberalism have influenced the feminist anti-violence movement since the early 1970s, and attends specifically to the extent to which this movement has been depoliticized over time through the use of trauma as a concept applied to the area of domestic violence research and intervention. A critical feminist and historical lens is used to analyze Toronto Interval House and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Homes as institutionalized sites of the feminist movement from 1973 to today. I conclude the institutionalized movement, represented through shelters and state policies, has contorted itself to meet the demands of neoliberalism in Ontario, resulting in functional rather than truly emancipatory forms of feminism enduring across the province and within the women's shelter system. This project contributes a historical, theoretical, and critical perspective on moving forward feminist theorizing and organizing by reconceptualizing violence and trauma.

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Chapter One — Introduction

On any given day in any given shelter across what is now[1] called the province of Ontario, every bed is occupied, with every shelter operating at capacity "almost always" (Women's Shelters Canada, 2019). The phones ring often with calls from women who are looking for space and have been calling diligently every day for weeks; from women and their children who are escaping abusive relationships and partners with whom they have built lives; and from women who have been turned out and away from other services due to substance use or mental health concerns. Shelters at their capacity must turn women in-need away daily, feeding an immense backlog of women seeking access to fundamental living essentials and resources, including safety from the threat of violence. While over 5000 women accessed shelters across the country on a single day in 2021, over 700 were turned away due to shelters being at maximum capacity (Women's Shelters Canada, 2022). This is cast against the backdrop of an epidemic of violence against women in Ontario. As an example, in their Annual Femicide List for 2021 to 2022, The Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH) provided the names and details of death for 52 women who lost their lives that year, 19 of whom were killed by an intimate partner.

The "psy" disciplines—"psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy and related disciplines" (Marecek & Lafrance, 2021, p. 4; see also Rose, 1999)—have played an important role in shaping these spaces and the networks in which they exist. Psychological theory and research on domestic violence has proliferated since the 1970s, producing a plethora of concepts and interventions that have been taken up into shelters and adjacent services. As Pache (2021) suggests, Psychology and related disciplines are one of the "main drivers in the production of

[1] "what is now called" and "so-called" are used throughout this project to evade uncritical use of names and frames established through the historical and ongoing projects of colonialism

knowledge and professional practice surrounding behaviors in general, both in institutions and in popular culture" (p. 74). In the context of Ontario, women's shelters now commonly employ a trauma-informed lens through which to understand and attend to the problem of domestic violence. Increasingly imbued with a neurobiological emphasis, trauma-informed approaches are recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2023) for service providers working with women who have experienced domestic violence. In shelters and transition homes, the trauma-informed approach is meant to be used as a way to recognize that violence is experienced in different ways by different people; that trauma is multidimensional; that difference in social location has varied and diverse effects across populations of women accessing services and resources (Women's Shelters Canada, 2019). And while neither trauma nor trauma-informed practice are mentioned at all in the earliest domestic violence policies in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2005, 2012), such terms are used with increasing frequency in later publications (e.g., 13 times in *Ontario's Gender-based Violence Strategy* (2018)), while trauma-informed practices have become a "guiding principle" of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence* (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022).

Domestic violence research and theory related to trauma and trauma-informed approaches continue to garner significant interest within Psychology and closely related fields, such as social work and health-care (Baird et al., 2022). Of particular importance to/in a history of Psychology, as well as to/in a history of feminist organizing, is the application of trauma theory to conceptualizing and attending to the psychological consequences of domestic violence. Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) form a common thread through these histories. An emphasis on context, social location, political analysis, and social transformation

are elements of feminist theory and methods that helped to shape the relationship between trauma and domestic violence as it unfolded in Psychology (Brown, 2004; Burstow, 2003; Marecek, 1999), while feminists within the psy professions including Judith Herman (1992) and Lenore Walker (1979) were instrumental in formalizing the connections between psychological trauma and the experience of domestic violence within the discipline (Pache, 2021), offering new ways of understanding and talking about violence and its consequences (Marecek, 1999), a grammar now considered to be the most accurate way to describe women's experiences (Goodman et al., 1992). Yet, despite its origins in feminist praxis, and the close relationship and affinity feminist scholars generally maintain with it, domestic violence-related trauma theory/ approach have been rendered mainly through the biomedical lens that is dominant within Psychology, a lens which Jeanne Marecek (1999) aptly acknowledges as existing in tension to a feminist perspective. While the original feminist conceptions of trauma and its usefulness in explaining and attending to the outcomes of the experience of domestic violence resisted pathologizing and individualizing narratives, biomedical constructions of trauma are now constrained within a hegemonic power structure which feminists so often challenge. As Lovrod and Ross (2011) discuss, the inclusion of PTSD into the DSM was celebrated by feminists who hoped the diagnosis would validate women's experiences, yet it can be seen more and more as a "mechanism that disguises the roots of suffering" (p. 41).

The framing of trauma through a biomedical lens is itself part of an epistemological shift which started in 1980 with the reconfiguration of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III (DSM-III) (Marecek & Lafrance, 2021). Conceptualized increasingly since the 1990s through a neurobiological lens (Baird et al., 2022; Solomon & Heide, 2005; van der Kolk, 2000; Zaleski et

al., 2016), trauma tends to now be framed in terms of its long-term negative health consequences, ranging from poor health and quality of life to central nervous system dysregulation, associated with symptoms of depression, substance use, and risk-taking (Campbell, 2002; Goodman et al., 1993a, 1993b; Lutwak, 2018). Yet, as Marecek and Lafrance (2021) suggest, biomedical or medicalized concepts transfigure psychological suffering into purely individual and internal experiences devoid of political or social meaning; social, economic, political, and interpersonal elements are positioned as external and therefore irrelevant in explaining and addressing psychological suffering. The medicalization of social and political issues, such as domestic violence, have been associated with individualization, pathologization, and depoliticization of individual and collective consciousness (Pache, 2021; Peters, 2019), processes that fit disturbingly well within neoliberal ideology, which itself began to sweep across the west in the early 1980s (McDowell, 2021). The union of biomedical and neoliberal approaches entrenches the notion of an omniscient expert who assumes the role of identifying deviant or pathological ways of being, while it becomes the responsibility of the individual to address such deviance (Peters, 2019). An intra-individualized imperative for recovery, for growing beyond ones circumstance from a victim to a survivor, is now central to understandings of trauma and PTSD that percolate from Psychology into the feminist anti-violence movement (Sweet, 2021).

It is worth noting that in Judith Herman's (1992) original conception of the relationship between trauma and domestic violence, individual healing and recovery was intrinsically connected with a social movement to end all oppression, a political commitment to social justice.

Herman's original work is affectionately cited by scholars drawing attention to this original framing. For example, Pache (2020) says:

> Herman (1992, p. 9) claimed that only social movements offered the conditions to study trauma systematically […] In their fight to make violence against women a public issue, Herman and many other feminist mental health professionals supported indeed the study of what was seen as ineffable. They were sharing the perspective of the left, the antiracist and the feminist movements, which had embraced the idea of oppression as an experience of suffering. In this perspective, telling these stories was part of an empowering process to acknowledge the experience and the viewpoint of the oppressed. (p. 17)

Although the feminist anti-violence movement has made great strides to address and resist violence against women in what is now called Canada, I argue that the rise of neoliberal ideology over the past 40 years has constituted a major challenge to and source of transformation of such efforts. Focusing on the context in Ontario, Canada, this research aims to identify and analyze the specific effects of neoliberalization on the feminist anti-violence movement. I argue that Psychological discourses on domestic violence have come to reflect a neoliberal ideology, the uptake of which into both state and the feminist anti-violence movement has led to a depoliticized approach to addressing violence against women in the province. Despite shelters retaining a commitment to feminist values and ideals, and although vibrant examples of feminist anti-violence organizing persist, I focus on how these spaces draw into them Psychological knowledge that reinforces the very norms and dominant discourses feminist organizing aims to resist. This chapter provides an introduction to my research by examining the background and context of the feminist anti-violence movement in Canada and Ontario, specifically, the rise of

neoliberalism and its effects on anti-violence organizing, and the neoliberal construction of domestic violence. I conclude with a summary of my research project and an overview of the chapter structure of this thesis.

The Feminist Anti-Violence Movement

Tracing its beginnings to the late 1960s and 1970s, feminist scholars Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskon, and Margret McPhail (1988) divide the women's movement (what they align with second wave feminism) in so-called Canada into two distinct origin stories, namely institutionalized and grassroots feminisms. Institutionalized feminist organizations, such as the National Action Committee (NAC) and Status of Women, were established by the federal government and had an existing foundation amidst state politics across the country. Harkened as a completely new kind of movement, grassroots feminisms alternatively emphasized collective action and an orientation toward community, using methods such as advocacy and consciousness raising, with radical feminists specifically focusing on violence against women as a central issue. Borne out of this larger women's movement, the feminist anti-violence movement that emerged in the 1970s is credited with bringing to public attention the high and previously hidden rates of women's victimization from their male partners (Berns, 2001; Davis, 1988; Ferraro, 1983; Johnson, 2011; Kurz, 1987; Liang et al., 2005; Marecek, 1999; McCloskey & Fraser, 1997; Rodriguez, 1988; Schillinger, 1988; Tierney, 1982). Adamson et al (1988) suggests that the efforts of feminist anti-violence organizers to challenge the divide between private and public life, to render visible the personal as political, is fundamental to the underlying ideology of the movement. This movement is thus credited with playing an instrumental role in shifting attitudes and definitions regarding domestic violence within both United States and Canadian law and

policy (Million, 2013), conceptualizing "wife beating as a political phenomenon that reflects the hierarchical and dominating relationships that characterize patriarchal society" (Rodriguez, 1988, p. 214). Black scholar Beth Ritchie (2000), writing at the beginning of the 21st century, suggests:

> The mainstream social movement, organized over twenty years ago in response to an emerging consciousness that regarded gender violence as the most extreme point along the continuum of women's oppression, can claim numerous victories, such as legal reforms that protect the rights of battered women and sexual assault survivors, the criminalization of sexual harassment, and legislative moves to call attention to the needs of children who witness domestic violence. (p. 1133)

Emergency shelters for those women experiencing domestic violence were one of the most fought for and commonly celebrated (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Davis, 1988; Kurz, 1987; Rebick, 2005; Rodriguez, 1988) victories of this movement. As Davis (1988) noted, "the single most successful effort to mobilize resources for battered women proved to be the battered women's shelter that emerged in the 1970s" (p. 357). Anduhyaun Emergency Shelter, the first emergency shelter for Indigenous women in Ontario opened its doors in 1973 (Janovicek, 2003), the same year as Toronto Interval House, and by 1975, two thirds of the shelters in Canada were located in this one province (MacLeod, 1980). As of 2022, there were 96 emergency women's shelters in Ontario funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) (Women's Shelters Canada, 2022).

Although shelters remain a much-needed resource for women escaping violence, the capacity for these spaces to provide adequate, inclusive, and informed service to *all* people has been contested in the literature. On the website ShelterSafe (2022), a search in the 300 km radius

surrounding my home in a rural area one hour north of the provincial capital in Toronto, only 22 of the 97 crisis shelters in the province listed formal inclusivity policies regarding gender identity, while 6 explicitly address sexual orientations. This is concerning if, as most VAW shelters suggest, such spaces are operating from a feminist standpoint. In their literature review, Ellis Furman et al. (2017) found that while LGBTQ2S persons are at a greater risk for intimate partner violence (IPV), the gender-specific model of violence in Ontario's VAW sector has often led to their unintentional exclusion within the shelter system. They suggest while shelters can offer *something* to marginalized people, most of them do not realize they fail to create a culture of inclusivity where diverse groups actually *want* to engage in their services. This "gap in awareness" reflects a problem that remains marginal in the literature on gender-based violence, namely that "despite the common exercise of power and control in violent relationships, multiply marginalized groups have been excluded in discussions surrounding IPV as it is viewed as a White, heterosexual, cisgender issue" (p. 363). Lena Palacios (2016) echoes this sentiment, bringing focus to the marginalization of particular groups of women in both Canada and the United States *by* the mainstream feminist movement itself:

> When I refer to "Indigenous and race-radical feminists," I do so to reference both girls and women of color and Indigenous girls and women who experience gender-based state violence and who identify as women, queer, Two-Spirit, lesbian, bisexual, gender queer, or gender non-conforming, whose interventions are generally marginalized by both "whitestream feminist" anti-violence movements as well as more radical (male-dominant, nationalist) movements resisting both interpersonal and state violence interpersonal violence. (p. 139)

While immigrant, Indigenous, Black, women of colour, and lesbian women have all organized according to diverse interests and goals related to their subjugation and oppression in Canada and Ontario, it is the issues of white, middle class feminists that are most often reflected in the actions, ambitions, and histories, of what is often labelled or perceived as the *mainstream women's movement* (Adamson et al., 1988; Rebick, 2005; Wharton-Zaretsky, 2000). Chela Sandoval (2000) suggests the histories of feminist consciousness produced by hegemonic feminist scholars have led to an image and general understanding of the women's movement as the "official story" that reflects the goals, challenges, interests, of the white middle class movement, while excluding and marginalizing those groups and movements othered through its discourses. I suggest there are multiple streams of feminist consciousness that ebb and flow throughout the history and analysis I provide in this work, which give way to differences in feminist organizing between mainstream and institutionalized efforts of the feminist anti-violence movement, and the organizing of feminisms outside the mainstream.

In her critical history of Indigenous organizing within and alongside the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario, Nancy Janovicek (2003) highlights how the spaces that had been established by the mainstream movement often failed to meet the unique cultural and spiritual needs of Indigenous women. As shifts in settlement patterns of Indigenous peoples began in the 1960s, individuals and communities moved from reserves located in rural and remote areas to urban settings, with migration rates highest for women due to fleeing violence, or having lost status or housing due to oppressive policies encoded in the "Indian Act". The absence of appropriate services for Indigenous women was complicated further by the reliance on a criminal

justice system response and mandatory prosecution adopted by the Canadian government in response to domestic violence. As Margaret Abraham and Evangelia Tastsoglou (2016) suggest:

> The Canadian criminal justice response does not take into account the special vulnerabilities to domestic violence of immigrant, racialized, and First Nations women, which are due to the systemic intersections of their gender with race, ethnicity, class, faith practice, immigration, and social status in Canada. (p. 573)

Lina Sunseri (2000) acknowledges that "most Aboriginal women point out that, for them, the Canadian law is at the centre of our problems and the patriarchal nature of the Canadian state has different meanings and consequences for Aboriginal women" (p. 146). Drawing attention to the structural dimensions of violence against Indigenous women, Dian Million (2013) places emphasis on the fraught relationship between gender-based violence and the historic and ongoing systemic violence against Indigenous women brought about through colonization, as well as the the relationship between policing and gendered violence in so-called Canada. Indeed, as Pamela Palmater (2016) suggests, while domestic violence is one of the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, chronic poverty and homelessness, incarceration rates, the legacy of residential schools, and the impacts of ongoing colonization and oppression are all factors. Indeed, "the common-sense appeals to settler legitimacy, benevolence, and permanence that prevail in some dominant anti-violence initiatives" (Hargreaves, 2017, p. 4) must be balanced through an awareness of and action oriented to the intrinsic connection to state violence and colonial origins of violence against Indigenous women. The voices of Indigenous women, these scholars suggest, need to be heard and accounted for in the commentary and initiatives attending to violence against Indigenous women in/by the mainstream anti-violence movement. In Chapter

Four, I consider how the dominant discourses of the contemporary mainstream feminist movement—neoliberalized and psychologized forms of trauma and intersectionality—constructs victims of domestic violence through a western, biomedical lens—one which is at odds with the original feminist motives of trauma and its relationship with domestic violence, as well as at odds with the aim of accounting for the voices and knowledge systems of those who exist outside the mainstream movement.

Coinciding with such criticisms of the radical feminist politics and the mainstream feminist movement, increased professionalization and the institutional legitimization of shelters has also been a locus of critical interest almost since their inception (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Palacios, 2016; Peters, 2019; Sweet, 2019; Tierney, 1982). As an example, Zoë Hilton (1989) argued that "government sponsorship signalled the beginning of a shift towards professionalization and policy-oriented definitions of the problem" (p. 326) and linked this change with the depoliticization of wife assault. Mimi E. Kim (2020) suggests "success against the state paradoxically transforms social movement victors into unwitting agents of the state. With these forms of contentious politics, "once you win, you are the state" (p. 310), and Marina Morrow et al. (2004) identify this lean into state-sponsored programming as a source of depoliticization for the feminist anti-violence movement:

> As the issue of violence against women came increasingly on to the Canadian political agenda it was shaped by the aims and demands of the state in ways which de-politicized the original intent of the feminist anti-violence movement (to expose patriarchal systems of power and to establish women-specific supports) which meant governments were more likely to fund gender neutral systems of supports and professionalized responses. (p. 369)

In this work, I argue that a key mechanism of this depoliticization has been the rise of neoliberalism in Ontario and Canada, and its specific effects on state policy, social services, and social movement organizing with respect to domestic violence. While this is central to my argument, I believe statements such as "the original intent of the feminist anti-violence movement" invoke ambiguous imagery regarding what the feminist movement entails, and who is and is not included in these "original" intentions. Claims regarding the types of systems and supports the state is willing to fund must be taken seriously, however single-axis definitions or analyses of this historical and enduring movement are not capable of managing the complexity of the history of anti-violence organizing in Ontario and beyond. Nevertheless, a deeper discussion of neoliberalism, specifically as it has unfolded in the Ontario context, is warranted.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a theory and philosophy of political economic practices that suggests citizens are best off when the government steps back from intervening in the lives of such citizens, and instead takes on the role of upholding the institutional framework for free market competition to occur, under the assumption that with unfettered capitalism comes unlimited well being (Carlquist & Phelps, 2014; Cosgrove & Karter, 2018; Madsen, 2014). Neoliberalism has become a dominant ideological form within our society, a form which subsumes all and constitutes the perceptual lens through which reality is organized (Teo, 2018). Sugarman (2015) suggests "Neoliberalism is reformulating personhood, psychological life, moral and ethical responsibility, and what it means to have self-hood and identity" (p. 2). Under neoliberalism, each individual becomes the centre of their own reality, the sun of their own universe, with a seemingly unlimited vista of opportunity spread out before them. An emphasis on personal

responsibility, independence, and self-reliance is juxtaposed with the promise of unfettered possibility and equal opportunity; neoliberal ideology is hegemonic because it has appealed to values and desires held in the hearts of subjectivities of the citizenry (Gill, 2021), which themselves are products and factors in the ongoing development across social, cultural, historical, and structural domains.

Yet, neoliberalism is neither just an economic agenda nor only ideology; it "must be understood as a multi-faceted project with real institutional and economic restructuring, coupled with reinforcing cultural and ideological processes" (Coulter, 2009, p. 26). While it may be characterized by individualism, consumerism, and economic growth as normative goals, it is associated with the disproportionate accrual of power, wealth and privilege, as well as increased social inequalities (Carlquist & Phelps, 2014). As Sarah Blacker (2014) remarks in her discussion of the universalizing and totalizing drive of neoliberal capitalism, the moral imperative of self-improvement means that if you are *not* working on yourself you are not being an active or productive citizen, that there is something *wrong* with the individual, rather than the structure or system. Neoliberalism diminishes difference, flattens hierarchy while claiming an equal playing ground for all, in effect erasing the structural conditions that lead to uneven distribution of power and privilege in and between social groups. Kendra Coulter (2009) argues that neoliberalism promotes individualism and self-responsibility while skirting "discussion about existing inequities in power and economic status or between genders, and how these influence the ability of people to make choices in their lives" (p. 28).

Instead, and importantly for this project, neoliberal policies regarding social welfare programs and services encode characteristics such as self-responsibility, choice, and willpower,

justifying cuts and funding requirements by constructing "bad choices" like substance use, staying in abusive relationships, or homelessness as accounts of failed responsibility-taking. To this effect, neoliberalism is the antithesis of welfare oriented structure policy ideology; because neoliberalism construes the market as an equal opportunity realm where hierarchy and difference don't matter or exist, any reliance on support given by the state is seen as a failure to maximize self-efficiency. Seen as infringing on personal liberty, any dependency on the state is deemed irresponsible, and neoliberalism seeks to empower individuals through the notions of freedom and choice while distancing itself from interfering in the lives of citizens, including with provisions and social support (Gill, 2021; McDowell, 2021). Madsen (2014) characterizes "empowerment as a rhetoric that conceals systematic forms of power and protection in Western capitalistic states, institutionalized through welfare and the public sector, and embodied by social citizenship" (p. 111). Feminist historian and critical Psychologist Alexandra Rutherford suggests:

> Empowerment is a central goal of (gendered) neoliberal subjectivity. Individuals who feel empowered carry the belief that they can control the circumstances of their lives, will work hard to overcome adversity, and will accept personal responsibility if they are unable to become generative, productive, well-adjusted, entrepreneurial neoliberal subjects (p. 623).

The unfurling of neoliberalism in Ontario occurred in a series of "starts and stops" in the years following the second world war as popular belief in the dominant approach to state governance — Keynesian welfare, with its emphasis on state intervention — in particular, its capacity to manage the needs of the Canadian citizenry, began to wane (McDowell, 2021). The Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney elected in 1984 is credited with the introduction of neoliberalism to Canada, stressing social and fiscal responsibility, and ushering in

an era of both neoliberal and neoconservative reforms (Rodgers & Knight, 2011). Yet, it is the government of Mike Harris—Progressive Conservative party elected 1995—that is associated with the "boom" of "aggressive neoliberalism" in Ontario specifically that led to massive cuts to social programs such as women's shelters (Gill, 2021). Harris blamed the welfare state for recession and high unemployment rates across the province, targeting individuals who accessed social supports by eliminating employment equity, cutting social assistance, reducing the numbers of affordable housing units being built, freezing minimum wage and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and diminishing funding to women's shelters (Coulter, 2009). The survival of feminist organizations doing anti-violence work, such as VAW shelters, became increasingly predicated on what state funding they were able to achieve, as well as on external funding, charity, and volunteerism—characteristic of neoliberal times (Cossman & Fudge, 2002). This approach has been criticized as "pathologizing the poor and invoking images of welfare recipients as undeserving of assistance, whose personal failings, or lack of motivation, led them to poverty" (Gill, p. 9). Gill suggests "the Progressive Conservatives perpetuated, through gendered, classist, and ableist discourses, the idea that poverty is an individual problem that each person is responsible for on their own accord" (p. 10), which led to:

> Some of the largest political demonstrations in Ontario's history occurred, including a major public sector strike, the largest teachers' strike in the history of Ontario, and the 1995–1996 ''Days of Action'' which took place in Toronto, London, Hamilton, and other cities to oppose the cutbacks to public services. (Coulter, 2009, p. 31)

Yet, even after the election of Liberal party leader Dalton McGuinty in 2003, neoliberal policies continued to intensify in the province, albeit using a "softer approach to neoliberal

integration, one that was not as radical or aggressive as the Harris-Eves period" (Gill, 2021, p. 11). Indeed, scholars have identified a particular form of neoliberalism taking shape across Ontario's history, namely that of Third Way neoliberalism—an approach associated specifically with Bill Clinton in the United States, Tony Blair in the United Kingdom, and Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien in Canada (Coulter, 2009)—which constitutes the union of neoliberal economic approaches with social democratic strategies "characterized by a rhetorical promotion of balancing social and economic interests, while the government actively avoids debate or action on economic regulation, inequality, and corporate power" (Coulter, 2009, p. 29). This approach, in contrast with the "aggressive neoliberalism" of the Harris government, is characteristic of the Liberal governments of McGuinty, as well as Kathleen Wynne a decade later in 2013 (McDowell, 2021). Kendra Coulter (2009) suggests:

> When we examine how the Liberals' approaches to poverty and domestic violence affected women, and how government actors responded to women's attempts to shape policy, critiques of Third Way agendas as strategic, linguistic, and policy melanges masking damaging neoliberal projects are strengthened and bolstered. (p. 32)

The Liberal government continued to conceptualize poverty and domestic violence both as individual and separate issues, sparking increased divestment of the state from social problems and a view of such social inequities as being derived from personal shortcomings rather than "structural unemployment and government and economic policies" (Coulter, p. 35). The failure of the McGuinty government to acknowledge poverty and violence against women as interconnected was juxtaposed alongside the Liberal policy of partial privatization for women's shelters, which cut back stable funding and implemented the institutionalization of private fund-

raising as a “central means for generating operating revenue” (p. 36; see also Mosher, 2004). This controversial shift was ushered in by the first domestic violence-related policy in the province—the *Domestic Violence Action Plan* (Government of Ontario, 2005), to which “front-line workers responded with anger and shock” (p. 37). The erosion of the Keynesian welfare system in Canada and subsequent neoliberalization of the social order in Canada, in tandem with what Coulter deemed ““strategic silence” about the gendered implications of neoliberal policies” (p. 40), has led to what Janine Brodie (2008) suggests is the progressive delegitimization of the feminist movement.

Yet, the roll out of neoliberalism in Ontario is neither solely a Conservative nor Liberal matter, rather, all three major parties (i.e., Progressive Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic) have all been in power during the decades of economic, political, and social restructuring in the province (McDowell, 2021). Further, the various minority and majority configurations afford an even greater complexity, as neoliberal approaches can be compared under distinct mixtures of the three parties. Melanie Knight and Kathleen Rodgers (2012), for example, pinpoint the election of the Stephen Harper government as instrumental to the delegitimization of the larger Canadian women's movement as evidenced by budget cuts, the elimination of programs — especially those targeted at Indigenous knowledge and women's programs — and the reconfiguration of Status of Women Canada. These authors charge Harper’s conservative party with “transforming this gender-based infrastructure” and catalyzing a “decades-long erosion and delegitimization of the women’s movement” (Rodgers & Knight, 2011, p. 570). As support to shelters increasingly diminished, cuts to equality-seeking, “special interest groups” were balanced with more funding being devoted to police reporting, and to psycho-educational programs under the premise of

providing women with the right tools and healthy options to help them develop skills, appropriate responses and reactions to violence. By labelling “equality seeking groups” as already equal in Canadian society (Bev Oda, politician in the house of commons, defended the restructuring of Status of Women, and removal of the word “equality” from her program, by suggesting "equality has been achieved”), the state was able to justify cuts and reductions in funding to various programs, effectively silencing such groups and their interests (Brodie, 2008). In a letter to Stephen Harper, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Homes (OAITH) (2010a) rails against changes made to the Status of Women program, suggesting the:

> continued defence of your elimination of the Court Challenges Program and the mandate and funding changes to the Women’s Program are signals that your government does not understand the critical link between advocacy and equality, does not care, or deliberately intends to limit access to democratic processes for women and other equity seeking groups. We are deeply troubled by all of these possibilities. (p. 1)

Following the trend of previous years in the neoliberal age, feminist activists and advocates had to pivot to take on a more service-oriented and professionalized approach, adopting mainstream or institutionalized rhetoric and practices to ensure the continuation of their work to end violence against women (Rodgers & Knight, 2011). I discuss this in Chapter Two in the context of the histories of OAITH and Interval House, which illuminates these trends toward individualized service delivery and funding requirements, as well as in Chapter Three where I provide an analysis of the influence of neoliberal ideology on the politics of the feminist anti-violence movement, specifically attending to the ways in which feminist notions of anti-oppression and social justice are shaped by such ideology. These shifts toward

professionalization and institutionalization catalyzed through the rise of neoliberalism are, as I will argue in the next four chapters, sources of complexity and contradiction for the feminist anti-violence movement, which has retained its feminist commitments while at the same time rendering itself and its projects through a neoliberal lens and lexicon. For, despite such proclamations of feminist intent, institutionalized forms of anti-violence advocacy and organizing have especially been criticized as having been coopted by the state. In her brilliant history of feminist anti-violence organizing and its struggle/relationship with the state in the U.S., Bumiller (2008) suggests the successes of this movement(s) are complicated due to mainstream feminisms cohabitation with the state, "entangled in the circuitries of violence," that women who accessed service in shelters were actually *disempowered* by virtue of engaging by the very services and policies there to serve them, which had with time become increasingly neoliberal in their aims, rhetoric, and actions. The neoliberalization of service delivery within shelters has been criticized for helping to engrain the assumption that women will work to become independent of social and governmental supports, a view which some critics suggest buttresses a moral belief in self-contained individualism (Ferraro, 1983). Abraham and Tastsoglou (2016) suggest:

> The framing of domestic violence in terms of legislation, policies, and state intervention tends to fit disturbingly well within the neoliberal framework [...] the rights and autonomy of women facing domestic or intimate partner violence appear to be translated by neoliberal patriarchal states into intervention through criminalization, and forms of state regulation that result in an uneasy co-habitation of women and the state. (p. 569)

Coupled with an emphasis on a criminal justice system response to domestic violence, changes in social policy have inculcated degendered and individualized discourses, along with a responsibilitizing ethos and moral indictment to work on oneself (Mack & McCann, 2018). Such individualized discourses and responsibilitizing calls to work on oneself are, as Knight and Rodgers (2012) argue, less about justice and more about personal responsibility. Violence is reconfigured and reinterpreted through a neoliberal lens as being a result of women's inaction or poor decisions — that if given the right tools to improve themselves and their behaviour, their choices, that they can free themselves from their misfortune.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality offers a poignant perspective on neoliberalism and offers a tool for those of us who are interested in critically engaging with Psychology as it draws attention away from the internal, the personal and individual level as the problem or the point of intervention, and toward addressing the collective, the social and structural dimensions that constitute and give shape how power exists in the topics we research, the methods we use to study them, and the kinds of interpretations we make (Rutherford, 2018; Settles et al., 2019). In using this approach to analyze how trauma moves through political policy, anti-violence organizing, and Psychological research on domestic violence, I aim not to disregard the experience of trauma, rather provide a critical inquiry into the power dimensions and relations that form the contexts in which this concept emerges, exerts its influence, and is enacted. I consider the structural, institutional, and political influences and implications of trauma talk as it converges with biomedical and neoliberal discourses. I aim to show how the uptake of trauma discourse does not reflect an interest in conveying women’s trauma as legitimate, rather it reflects an interest in

emphasizing its individualizing and internalizing effects through its entanglement with neoliberal and biomedical discourses.

My larger focus on violence against women as a historically, socio-culturally, and structurally produced reality is well suited to an intersectional lens. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) call attention to the transformative potential of intersectionality theory within research on domestic violence specifically, suggesting entire communities of women had been excluded and ignored in scholarly literature. They argue new literatures captured the lived experience of "diverse battered women and the social structural underpinnings of domestic violence" (p. 38), suggesting that a broader lens enables research that is more accessible and relevant to more people. Strid and Verloo (2020) echo this sentiment nearly two decades later, suggesting "Violence is a crucial domain for better understanding intersectionality: the field of gender-based violence is at the heart of reflections on intersectionality and its exclusionary effects" (p. 83).

Critical legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose seminal work (1989) on the violence against women of colour is particularly relevant to my considerations given its focus on domestic violence, is often credited with first applying the term intersectionality to an analysis of how race, class, and gender intersect . Her piece provides scholars with a basis for understanding how intersectional analysis can be applied to domestic violence, as well as how to conceptualize domestic violence as being rooted in multiple and intersecting dimensions of power. Many scholars acknowledge a broad intellectual history that goes beyond single founders or even definitions or conceptions (see McCall, 2005). Indeed, intersectional-like thought has existed for over a century (Settles et al., 2019; Truth, 1851), was present in the theorizing of Black feminist scholars in particular throughout the 70s and 80s (hooks, 1981, 1984; Combahee River

Collective, 1977; Collins, 1990; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981), and was first referred to more formally as “intersectionality” over 30 years ago (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), since which time the theory and approach has gained increasing popularity across a range of disciplines. Only recently has intersectionality appeared in mainstream Psychology journals (Settles et al., 2019), though its presence within the discipline has been acknowledged as a tremendous boon to Psychology researchers and practitioners (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2021; Cole, 2009; Grzanka et al., 2020; Rutherford, 2018).

Mainstream psychology, traditionally linked with the values of liberalism, tends to emphasize the individual as the primary unit of analysis, while intersectionality asks researchers to go beyond uni-dimensional categories and concepts (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016). Intersectionality thus serves to challenge the disciplinary norms inculcated into the discipline of psychology, holding tremendous potential to disrupt and interrogate structural power (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Cho et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2019; Warner et al., 2016). Yet, as Settles et al. (2019) call attention to, intersectionality remains relatively limited in its integration within psychology, often subject to misuse and misrepresentation, relegated to speciality journals. The epistemic exclusion of intersectionality theory in psychology, these authors suggest, maintains power in the hegemonic discipline, which itself establishes the guidelines for what is considered to be “good” scholarship and who is considered to be credible. When it comes up in mainstream psychological research and discourse on domestic violence, it is often limited to use as a theory of identity to situate knowledge and reflect multidimensional and complex standpoints (Baird et al., 2021; Bryant-Davis, 2019; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017), as opposed to being a rich theoretical *and* analytical tool. Moradi and Grzanka (2017) assert a person is not just a collection of multiple

identities, rather, the various axes of experience (social categories) called attention to through intersectional approaches are dynamic, changing across time and space, subject to and interacting with power structures. Moving beyond analyses of conceptions of "intersectional identities"—what Cole (2009) refers to as "categorical intersectionality" (see also Rutherford, 2018)—to make use of intersectional in research allows for a more nuanced consideration of how categories are mutually constitutive at both the individual and institutional levels to examine institutional causality (Hancock, 2007).

Given its prevalence in domestic violence policy at both the federal and provincial levels (Canada, 2019; Ontario, 2018)—primarily as a tool to examine "intersecting identities" (Toronto Interval House, 2016; OAITH, 2018, 2019, 2022b; Standing Committee on the Status of Women, 2022)—the use of intersectionality is a relevant point of inquiry for my project. Thus, intersectionality is used in my project in two ways: 1) as a site of analysis, in terms of how intersectionality has appeared within federal and provincial policy, Psychological research, and within the anti-violence movement, and 2) as a theoretical frame and approach to interpreting the data used in my project. I draw on Cole's (2009) "three questions for each stage of the research process" in Psychological research using intersectionality empirically: 1) who is included within this category?, 2) what role does inequality play?, and 3) where are the similarities?

Constructing Violence

Sociologist Paige Sweet (2021) contends that the space between structural and gender-based violence widens through the articulation of narratives related to individualized and internalized psychological transformation, obscuring their relationship while simultaneously increasing women's reliance upon such institutions. This transformation, argues Sweet, reflects

the reconstruction of women as neoliberal subjects, as productive citizens who must take responsibility for their lives and refuse to play the victim, engaging in a positive process of becoming a survivor. According to neoliberal victim theory as described by Stringer (2014), the role of neoliberal values in anti-victim discourses (re)produces rhetoric and motifs regarding personal responsibility, individual transformation, and a formulation of victim = bad and survivor = good. The effect of framing victimhood in the context of poor risk management, bad choices, or a lack of positivity reconfigures social vulnerability as the consequence of personal inaction "erasing the social foundations of suffering in order to mask rising inequality, and making it seem logical to regard victims of poverty, inequality, discrimination and violence as the authors of their own suffering" (p. 9). This approach helps to explain how the mainstream feminist anti-violence movement can maintain a radical anti-establishment appearance while at the same time be subject to cooptation. This frame organizes new ways of the victim conceptualizing their own victimhood, a paradoxical transformation and discursive transformation regarding who is and is not seen as a *real* victim. It also obscures the connection between victimhood and inequality, and violence brought about as a result of social hierarchy and difference. Joanne Baker (2010) elucidates the "cruel accountability" imparted through the transformation of victimhood, which decontextualizes, individualizes and privatizes the experience of violence "that is structurally produced and profoundly gendered" (p. 201). Women come to take responsibility for their victim status, and for growing beyond it—transforming themselves "not just *in spite* of difficulties but *through* them" (p. 201)—instead of understanding the experience of domestic violence in the context of social, historical and structural inequality. The neoliberal subjectivity imparted

through this transformation, according to Baker, is associated not only with choice, agency, independence, self-surveillance, and positive affect, but with the urgency to avoid victimhood.

Aligning with Stringer, Sweet (2019; 2021) suggests that the neoliberalization of the state, and of the citizen-subject themselves, is at the heart of this transformation of victimhood. She links the moral imperative to survive with the "biomedical and therapeutic logics" so valued by the state. Psychological rehabilitation, self-evaluation, and recovery are part of the institutional (re)configuration of domestic violence, wherein women must demonstrate themselves to be survivors, even when their stories of recovery obscure the structural conditions that made the violence they experience possible (what Sweet calls the *paradox of legibility*). Women who interface with a number of systems from shelters to policing and the court system to the medical system are expected to engage in modes of personal transformation, to demonstrate their worth and need for resources. Increasingly, such narratives are rendered through a psychologized and medicalized lens, itself shaped by neoliberal ideology.

In their research into Ontario's health care policy and its effects on women, Shannon Braedley (2012) importantly links neoliberal and biomedical paradigms, articulating them both as gendered, inherently masculine forms of governance that shape health care policy, as well as social inequalities of gender, race, and class. In particular, Braedley highlights the positivist roots in the underlying epistemologies of both neoliberalism and the biomedical paradigm as being associated with instrumentality, rationality, and objectivity; a focus on measurement as the basis for analysis and assessment being associated with calculation; a subject and object relation wherein those in control (i.e., in business, physicians) have power over dependent and feminized individuals and groups. Fiske and Brown (2006) likewise examine health policy in Canada and

the implications of defining medical subjects in moral terms, attending specifically to violence against Indigenous women and the ideological construction of policies.

Sweet (2019; 2021) suggests this process, the medicalization of domestic violence, has important implications not only for how women are constructed, but how they relate to their own identity and subjective experience. She suggests, “What was once largely understood as a social and criminal problem is increasingly addressed in the language of public health, mental health, and medical intervention” (p. 412). Framing domestic violence through a biomedical lens, Sweet (2015) contends, follows the neoliberal path from social to individual; domestic violence is framed, articulated, approached, understood, and supported through a scientific lens, often disconnected from wider sociopolitical implications and connections. The process of medicalization renders psychological suffering through a biomedical model perspective that represents suffering as an individual and internal experience, while social, economic, political, and interpersonal elements are positioned as external and therefore irrelevant in explaining and addressing psychological suffering (Marecek & Lafrance, 2021).

The characterization of violence as a medicalized construct has also been widely criticized and theorized both within the domain of psychology (Pache, 2020; Marecek & Lafrance, 2021) and beyond (Riska, 2010; Riemann, 2019; Rojas-Durazo, 2016; Sweet, 2014; 2015; 2019; 2021). Marecek and Lafrance (2021), for example, suggest medicalizing discourse negates the influence of factors such as social inequality and gendered violence by individualizing psychological suffering. They examine how “the trope of trauma” (p. 11) has been reconfigured through medicalized discourse into an individual and internal problem, one that has been effectively depoliticized and disconnected from the larger social context. Sweet

(2021) argues the language of trauma is a new style of health governance that aligns with techno-scientific transformations taking place across society, within academia, policy, social services, since the 1970s. Framing domestic violence services through the language of trauma has provided a veil of legitimacy and credibility, the attainment of which is an ever-looming concern for services that are vying for state funding (Sweet 2019; 2021). Sweet argues that the uptake of trauma discourse by the anti-violence movement in the 1980s and early 1990s represents this awareness and was instrumental in conceptualizing domestic violence as a medicalized phenomenon through the lens of trauma, specifically PTSD. The shift to conceptualizing trauma as *the* way to view what victims of violence were experiencing forms the basis for what sociologist Paige Sweet (2021) identifies as an epistemological shift. As she suggests, "the idea that trauma is stored in the body—and therefore that the body should be a site of therapeutic work—is widely accepted" (p. 32). This was seen in both the anti-violence movement and within the discipline of psychology as programs and services, interventions and treatment became increasingly professionalized and medicalized (Pache, 2020; Sweet 2015; 2021).

However, there is little critique that focuses on neoliberal constructions or invocations of trauma, especially with regard to the expectations for psychological transformation in women who have experienced the trauma of domestic violence, despite, as Million (2013) notes:

> The shift in domestic violence law that accompanies the rise of victimology and psychological trauma also signals the movement from one order to another. It is a shift wherein the "private" domestic space of colonization also becomes the public space of trauma, where it painfully subscribes subjects for healing. (p. 102)

In this work, I do not deny the traumatic nature of domestic violence, rather, I consider how hegemonic Psychological science imparts a neoliberal subjectivity through its theory and research on trauma. The emphasis on individual self-development, the self as an endless work in progress, draws attention inward and away from external conditions; instead of connecting women's suffering with political causes, medical and psychological explanations are used to transform suffering into a personal issue. Therefore, I call this form of trauma *neoliberal trauma*, a concept I explore more in Chapter Four. As social psychologist Shannon Peters (2019) suggests, "In a neoliberal society, distress is conceptualized as an illness or a disorder and the burden of removing such distress is placed on the individual" (p. 240). I look to the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario to consider how the uptake of Psychological knowledge on domestic violence has occurred and with what effects. In particular, I am interested in how the feminist anti-violence movement has been altered through psychological discourses on domestic violence, and what the effects of these changes have been for both the movement itself and the women it advocates for. In my research, I explore the concept of depoliticization with regards to the feminist anti-violence movement, focusing specifically on the context of Ontario, Canada. I use the conceptions of trauma and trauma-informed practices used in the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario as an entry point to consider the effects of neoliberalism on how domestic violence has been constructed, theorized, researched, and acted on in Psychology. I aim to show how neoliberalism and hegemonic Psychology act as interlocking projects that have reconfigured the relationship of state to the individual—be it a woman who has experienced violence or an anti-violence advocate—even in a so-called "social welfare state" such as Canada. In my final Chapter, I offer an argument that more deeply considers the emancipatory possibilities for

Psychology to stand outside the bounds neoliberalism in relation to domestic violence research, intervention, policy, and activism.

This research examines the impacts of neoliberal discourse – including those produced by/in Psychology - on feminist anti-violence organizing in Ontario from the 1970s to today. I examine a wide range of literature, drawing primarily on Psychological research, but at times extending my view toward sociological, political, and anthropological inquiries in order to construct a robust and rich foundation. In addition, I do so in order to capture and mirror the complexity in which research and theorizing about gender-based violence has developed since the 1970s. While in my analysis I maintain a distinct commitment to feminist inquiry and praxis, I include literature that is feminist, non-feminist, as well as anti-feminist. Although a variety of viewpoints exist within the domain of psychology (i.e., feminisms, biosocial), extending my analysis beyond its disciplinary boundaries lends a multifaceted perspective and nuanced understanding of how research, theory, policy, and activism has differed across time and space.

Two main sites of analysis are used in this project: the Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH) and Toronto Interval House, both of which been influential in the Ontario anti-violence movement since the early 1970s and into the following decades. My critical analysis and history of these two organization aims to reveal how the feminist politics of the women's anti-violence movement, state and bureaucratic intervention, and psychological knowledge converge, diverge, and overlap. These critical histories are presented in Chapter Two, and charting the organizational development I also use these histories of OAITH and Interval House to consider how the increasing neoliberalization of the state and Psychology have affected the federal and provincial policies and discourses engaged with by the shelter system itself since

their inception in the 1970s. As such, a central question in this research asks whether the feminist anti-violence movement has been depoliticized as psychologized and neoliberalized discourses on domestic violence have become entrenched in the province throughout the last three decades, especially. I used archival materials from the Canadian Women Movement Archives (CWMA) at the University of Ottawa, as well as reports and publications available through each organizational website, to chart changes over time in policies and procedures, language, and service delivery. In particular, I critically examine how the concept of trauma travels across the histories of Interval House and OAITH, in part to illuminate the parts of social and cultural stories that have been overlooked, obscured, or forgotten in favour of hegemonic discourses that tell of how time and space has passed. Few histories have explored the psychologization of domestic violence, constituting an important contribution of this current work. In particular, little attention has been given to how women who have lived through domestic violence have been constructed and attended to through psychological research, theories, and interventions. Thus, another important question in my research relates to how women's subjective experiences of violence have been shaped by Psychological discourses—trauma, in particular—theorizing such narratives and frames impose an individual level focus, which evades approaches focused more intently on collective experience and structural change, while at the same time renders systemic injustice and oppression through a neoliberal frame.

Project Summary and Overview of Chapters

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them. Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer. Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need. Take

only that which is given. Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share. Give thanks for what you have been given. Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken. Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever.

— Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 221)

Doing history is a political act. It combines the art of activism with the power of storytelling. The way we choose our subjects, and how we organize the evidence to support our interpretations can make a significant contribution to public knowledge. And, sometimes that public knowledge affects how we might collectively honor or reject certain actions or people from the past. Our work has the potential to inform our ideas about social justice, and to contextualize or offer critical perspectives on controversial contemporary issues. In this way, history is a form of activism.

— Erika Dyck (2020, p. 2)

Today we find ourselves in a political period of urgency and despair. The academy remains one of the few remaining spaces within which dissent is possible. Here social critique and outrage are recognized as forms of knowledge; inquiry is valued as oxygen for democratic sustenance; collaborations are possible and necessary for sustaining global movements of resistance.

— Michelle Fine (2006, p. 103)

In the next Chapter, I construct the histories of the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario using OAITH and Interval House as my sites of analysis. I focus this history between the

emergence of the first shelter—Toronto Interval House—in 1973, to the early to mid 2000s. I bring a greater emphasis to contemporary realities within the movement in the remaining chapters. In Chapter Three, I focus on the politics of the feminist anti-violence movement, providing an overview of existing histories of the movement in Canada, and to a lesser extent, the U.S. I also explore how the paths between neoliberalism and the anti-violence movement have crossed, calling attention to policy in Ontario, as well as changes in language related to domestic violence shaped by the rise of neoliberalism. Bringing focus to how Psychology has taken up domestic violence, in Chapter Four I explore various theories and methods of researching and understanding domestic violence, the introduction of PTSD as a lens through which to render the study and understanding of domestic violence, and the resulting relationship between trauma and healing. I examine how this has played out in the Ontario context and elaborate on how trauma has shifted with neoliberalism since 1980. In the final chapter, I examine two major themes emerging in my research—a shift from collective to hierarchical organization within the movement, and from feminist to evidence-based approaches, drawing on how intersectionality and trauma, respectively, have been represented in these shifts. I turn then to considering how resistance might play a role in imagining new futures and possibilities for the feminist anti-violence movement, and for scholarly work within Psychology.

To suggest that all activism and organizing related to domestic violence has been depoliticized or lost its potency completely would be naive and it would overlook a historical and ongoing legacy of feminist organizing and resistance against violence against women. Instead, I argue the feminist anti-violence in Ontario has been forced to comply with the larger state apparatus in order to achieve its goals, and that this mainstreaming and institutionalization

has been a source of its diminished potential for radical resistance and social transformation. At the same time, this relationship has enabled the movement to persist in an institutionalized way, so that shelters remain an important site for feminist organizing for violence against women. In particular, I suggest the rise of neoliberalism and its unique trajectory in Ontario parliament and society has been instrumental in the way domestic violence is conceptualized and attended to in the province. I draw parallels with the neoliberalization of domestic violence in Psychology, attending to how domestic violence advocacy has been influenced through psychological theory and research since the 1970s, and extend this argument by considering the ways in which the neoliberalization and psychologization of domestic violence are interlocking and simultaneous processes.

In this work, I braid into my analysis and historical (re)telling the insights I've gleaned as a front-line worker in an Ontario violence against women (VAW) shelter. I too straddle the dividing line between lands that converge and diverge. My existence within multiple realms—as a feminist; a critical Psychologist; an advocate; an employee within social services; an activist; a woman—disrupts stable ways of conceptualizing myself amidst my research. I draw on my understanding and experience of the women's shelter space as an intensely complex and diverse tapestry woven together by a community of women. The stories, experiences, knowledge and teachings, recipes and laughter unfolding in the shelter space is often inspiring to witness, and at times a very challenging place to be. The shelter is also an in-between space shaped by manifold histories, socialites, politics, identities that play out across time. This space for me is also an endless source of ambivalence. There is a deep well of knowledge, humility, and commitment to challenging oppression and social injustices that streams through the shelter, with the women I

work alongside advocating with a fierce determination and transformative vision to serve women in their community the best way they can. Yet, while we are guided in our work by an underlying feminist ethos, we also exist at the same time amidst bureaucracy and hierarchy within the organization itself, and in the larger social services field and state apparatus. Contradiction and complexity come to mark these spaces.

The feminist spirit that guides my advocacy in the shelter and larger movement bleeds into my academic work as a critical feminist researcher within Psychology. I recognize that my presence and the roles I play in both spaces are made possible through the enduring and ongoing impacts of colonialism in so-called Canada, as well as the dominance and oppression wrought through power systems like racism, sexism, and capitalism. Through my reading of VAW policy in Ontario and psychological research on domestic violence, I acknowledge how dominant discourses have become inculcated at the social, historical, institutional, and cultural levels, and how through my unequal access to power and privilege afforded by my position as a white, cis-woman, I too have been complicit in the reproduction of the very forms and mechanisms of oppression I critique.

As much as my academic interests as a critical researcher centre on, as Michelle Fine (2006) describes it, "seeking knowledge where the light is dim" (85) and the effort "to reveal how power works to produce, sustain, and naturalize social inequities across multiple levels of analysis" (p. 93), I also interrogate the dim spaces within my own embodied experience. I agree with Fine who suggests we need to get uncomfortable, need to sit with the discomfort and find within it a source of inspiration and motivation in order to channel that sense of discomfort into personal and social transformation. Interdisciplinary researcher Caroline Lenette (2022) provides

a similar sentiment: “we cannot support or contribute meaningfully to the decolonization agenda unless we are prepared to experience feelings ranging from discomfort, pain, commitment to methodological awkwardness, hesitancy, to a lack of control, transparency and fluency” (p. 25). The idea that “social researchers should always be the most vulnerable” (Fine, 2006, p. 88) is a reminder that it is researchers who are the ones seeking knowledge in the dim light; there is a “need to interrogate why they are studying what they study; what in their own biography, curiosity or sense of responsibility spurs the questions asked; whose perspectives will be privileged, negotiated, and/or silenced in their work” (p. 90). We must engage a sense of humility along with those feelings of vulnerability in order to open oneself up to being wrong; to resistance; to change; to chaos; to the unknown and unimaginable. As a feminist scholar with an interest in doing history with communities I feel a part of, I commit to the tools and ideas that will help me actively interrogate and draw on my own experience and roles, as well as the different ways I exist amidst and am implicated in structures of oppression.

Chapter Two — Histories of the Feminist Anti-Violence Movement

Canada's first emergency women's shelter—Interval House in Toronto—opened its doors in the spring of 1973, "born—as an idea—at *The Women's Place*, a feminist information centre run by and for women, in 1972" (Toronto Interval House, 1973), "willed into being […] by pioneers with a fire in their belies and determination in their hearts" (Toronto Interval House, 2003a), "as the response to the numerous phone calls that were received at 'The Women's Place'" (OAITH, 1985):

> At The Women's Place in Toronto, a group of feminists noticed a new issue bubbling to the surface: women were trying to escape abuse at home, but had no job, no income and no place to go. The group formed a collective, secured start-up funding to help with rent and wages and on April 1st, 1973, they opened the doors to Interval House – Canada's first shelter for abused women and their children. (p. 2)

Documentation from the 1970s suggests this decade was a time of organizing, of defining how the shelter should operate and what it could offer to women seeking refuge. Letters of support from the year if its inception suggest the shelter was seeking immersion into the local community and existing systems interfacing with women. "Project Interval," as it was termed in a letter from Metro Toronto Community Services (Logan, 1973), demonstrated an interest in collaborating with other service providers and "creativity utilizing the experience and human resources which already exist in the community," while at the same time filling a service gap and providing a much-needed service not available elsewhere. Similar sentiments from the Children's Aid Society (Kerrigan, 1973) and an organization called The Distress Centre (Winch, 1973)

celebrating Interval Houses's capacity for service provision in this important and under-serviced area. Toronto General Hospital (Oldham, 1973; Stiles, 1973) likewise provided a letter of support, which acknowledged the relationship formed with Interval House over the previous year, including the education and counselling support (i.e., psychotherapeutic skills) imparted to the staff at Interval House. A letter of support also came from a previous resident of Toronto Interval House (Jansson, 1973), who described her experience as one that helped her to gain a sense of confidence and contentment through the non-judgemental and respectful support she received. She suggests the small size of Interval House was one of its greatest strengths, as well as the ability for staff to engage with and form deep connections with women who accessed service at the shelter.

The development of Interval House occurred amidst a rising awareness of violence against women in the home, shaping the services offered so as to provide "desperate women" escaping "physical brutality from husbands" a refuge where their basic needs could be met (Pennington, 1976). Interpersonal violence, specifically in the form of wife battering or intimate partner violence/domestic violence, emerged as the main frame through which violence against women was conceptualized in the mainstream during the 1970s. Battered women and, specifically, wives were the quintessential characters of the early movement to end violence against women (otherwise known as the battered women's movement). A newspaper article appearing in *The Toronto Star (*Pennington, 1976) describes the women accessing support through Toronto Interval House as:

> Age 19 to age 50 years. She usually has two or three pre-school age children; sometimes one in school. She is tired looking but trying desperately to keep up physical appearances.

> Their socio-economic situation is one of desperation […] Both the threat and depravity of being a battered woman becomes intensified if there are no alternatives to her present physical and emotional environment. The psychological environment of her social transition is filled with fear and confusion. (p. F1)

Interval House in Ottawa, a second site, which opened its doors in 1976, provided legal, financial, and housing support when women who had faced physical abuse in their marriages came to their doors (Ottawa Interval House, 1976). Service delivery between 1976 and 1979 included these areas of support, and involved the general tasks associated with maintaining a shelter, from cooking and general house maintenance, to public education, fundraising, and working with local police (Toronto Interval House, 1979). Near the end of the decade, Interval House Toronto and Ottawa compiled their experiences to produce a document called *How To Set Up An Interval House* (Interval House, 1979), which emphasized the importance of collaborating with like-minded individuals, understanding the nature of the problem in local communities, understanding the law, connecting with local social service agencies and community groups, obtaining a house, and developing services, programs, rationale, and a budget for their intended work.

The emergence of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in 1977 as a provincial coalition consisting primarily of emergency shelters (i.e., first stage) for abused women and their children is further evidence of this early stage of defining the work shelters would and could do. OAITH established itself as an organization that would unify the growing network of interval homes in Ontario:

> [The goal of OAITH is] to improve conditions for Battered women and their children in Ontario, to improve the services of the interval and transition houses, to lobby for changes in attitudes towards women, and to lobby for changes in legislation were these affect the battered women and the services provided for them. (OAITH, 1985, p. 3).

> [The purpose of OAITH is] to strengthen the relationship between the established and proposed Interval and Transition Houses in Ontario primarily serving Battered women and their children, and whilst respecting and recognizing the autonomy of each individual organization. (OAITH, 1987, p. 1)

OAITH conceived of its role early on as serving as acting as a bridge for communication and knowledge sharing between member organizations, which consisted of a growing body of shelters and transition homes across the province, as well as between those shelters and government bodies. Out of the support provided by OAITH, the organization intended for shelters to develop and operate independently to serve the unique needs and conditions of women in their local communities. OAITH (1983a, 1983b) was at the fore of arguing "wife battering is a crime and a societal problem, not a private matter" (p. 1), which "along with other forms of violence against women, reflect patriarchal attitudes and the economic structure in society" (p. 1).

Committed to an explicitly feminist ethos, Interval House characterized its own organizational structure as a *democratic collective* (Ottawa Interval House, 1985; Toronto Interval House, 1978, 1983a, 1983b), a horizontal organization with no executive director or supervisors, where staff shared responsibility equally with few rules, regulation, and authority to

support women from falling into “institutional pit falls” (Toronto Interval House, 1978). All volunteers and staff were to contribute equally to the organization and operation of the shelter, guided by their feminist values in approaching both life and politics, and as a way of asking questions and searching for answers rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women, as well as their own role in addressing it:

> Our ideal is not to limit each other's power but to allow all of us to be as powerful as possible. Because each of us receives more strength and support in our work if everyone is exercising her power and responsibility to the fullest, this also leaves room to express weakness and to ask for help and support. (Toronto Interval House, 1983b, p. 2)

> Why? We believe oppression is a situation in which people don't have control over their lives. Within the nuclear family, where the individual man has control over the individual woman and in the case of wife-beating, this imbalance of power erupts into violence. Shared decision making is a materialization or an ideal that says people should have control over their lives. (Ottawa Interval House, 1985, p. 2)

The quotes above suggest Interval House conceived of its own organizational structure as a reflection of the very social and political conditions in which violence against women both occurred and could be addressed. They defined violence against women as a political and social issue rooted in the unequal distribution of power and privilege between men and women (Ottawa Interval House, 1985). “Wife beating is a matter of historical record,” and the patriarchal ordering of Canadian society was articulated as the main reason for battering as a persistent issue in the country. Speaking of Interval House, OAITH acknowledged early on this first shelter

“came from an understanding of the woman's experience, rather than from an academic approach, and operated from a feminist basis” (OAITH, 1985, p. 2). This feminist consciousness inspired not only the way the problem was articulated (i.e., as rooted in structural inequality) and how it was addressed, but it formed the basis for how staff and volunteers aimed to work with one another as women.

A report published by the Women Against Violence Subcommittee of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council (1989) acknowledges the feminist foundation of the movement, including its orientation to the issue and organization around the issue:

> Services for battered women were established by feminists; supporting women experiencing the pain of wife assault. The ‘battered' women's movement was not formed to open shelters. it began with women working together collectively to understand the issue and dynamics of violence against women and a desire to effect social change which would impact the conditions and institutions which perpetuated that violence. In unearthing the problems it became evident that the immediate crisis of sheltering women needed to be addressed. interval and transition houses provided that safety net. (p. 1)

In particular, this report emphasizes the role of grassroots groups in establishing shelters and transition homes, in addition to the work done by “large and well-funded” women’s groups to raise awareness of wife assault. The combined actions of these groups were considered to lay the foundation for the work being taken up at the governmental level. Although Interval House identified itself into the mid-1980s as a feminist collective, the increasing involvement of the state in addressing violence against women, particularly in the areas of funding and operating criteria, began to shape shelters in new ways across the province and this influence was no

different for Interval House. The report from the Women Against Violence Subcommittee report included a quote by the Women's Research Centre for Feminist Action which elucidated the growing importance of working with the state to maintain "the credibility and visibility for women's issues and experience" (p. 25), as well as funding and other forms of support, while suggesting "accepting the state's rules and ideology can have and is having essentially the same result: the institutionalization of women's issues and invalidation of women's experiences" (p. 28). The unfurling result of the state's involvement, according to this report, is that feminist services and organizational structures were being compromised through increased professionalization and bureaucratization at the same time women's experiences of violence were being redefined, reintegrated into dominant ideological structures only to be rendered invisible once again. The reliance on the state for funding the important work being done at shelters began to occupy more space in the movement, causing shifts in the organizational structures of shelters that reflected the demands of funders, as well as "the state's rules and ideology."

In 1995—under the Conservative provincial government of Mike Harris and Liberal government of Jean Chretien at the federal level, which, as I discussed in Chapter One, were both instrumental in ushering in neoliberalism in Ontario and across the country during this part of the decade—the organizational structure of Interval House appeared to experience its own breakdown— "a collapse of governance structure in the organization" (Ottawa Interval House, 1995c, p. 1). The need for change was evident—100% of staff and board at Ottawa Interval House supported the need to change from collective structure to hierarchical, claiming "collectivism has never really worked during the time in which they have been involved"

(Ottawa Interval House, 1995a, p. 3) and “collectivism has become a weapon to ensure that the status quo remains intact” (p. 3):

> The organization is so dysfunctional that it no longer, in good conscious can be maintained […] patterns of behaviour in themselves and colleagues which seem to have become "institutionalized." this means that individual behaviours have become synonymous with individual personalities. Some of the "personalized" characteristics which were identified include: "burned out", "over involved", "bitter", “hostile”,"stuck." (Ottawa Interval House, 1995a, p. 4).

Lack of a shared vision, lack of collective decision making, and a "high tolerance for behaviours which do not reflect the “feminist values of: women positive, respect for differences, responsibility, accountability, equality, informed choice and accessibility” were articulated as main factors in this breakdown, according to a brief released on the need for “radical change” (p. 2) within the organization (1995a). With more diversity, the findings suggested, came more internal dysfunction. Although some of the changes experienced by Interval House appeared internal, it is also apparent there were simultaneous and numerous external and structural changes taking place in Ontario causing the breakdown, including changes to “labour laws, funder's requirements, existing by-laws and policies and procedures, accepted organizational practices and a long history of interpersonal relationships make radical change a complex and difficult process” (Ottawa Interval House, 1995a, p. 2). They suggested:

> We believe the problems faced by Interval House are structural in nature and greater than the current board/staff conflict. this is not an isolate situation, but is typical of the organizational difficulties experienced by a number of shelter s across the province. We

> believe that the problems we are facing are a result of the lack of the organization's ability to adapt to the changing environment. (Ottawa Interval House, 1995c, p. 6)

The time of the collective appeared to be coming to a close by the early 1990s, as fiscal cutbacks across the country and province hit social sectors hard, and the "collective and board decided the organization had to evolve if it was going to continue to thrive" (Toronto Interval House, 2003). Referencing Interval House as "the Collective" appears once more in their 2003 Annual Report. In the years that followed, Interval House began to articulate its role in helping women to transform their lives. In doing so, Interval House itself was shifting and expanding. In the next section, I examine more deeply the developmental trajectories of the movement in four areas: the pursuit of funding, service delivery, building economic self-sufficiency, and helping women to heal and recover. These themes emerged out of the body of research used for this project and are conceived of as separate, yet overlapping areas of the movement.

The pursuit of funding

Funding has been a crucial focus for shelters since their inception. In the same year it opened its doors, Interval House received letters of support from various community members who suggested the service was "highly worthy of continued funding" (Toronto Interval House, 1973c, p. 1). Early shelters usually secured funding through "start up" funds, such as Canada Works grants, community development funds, and purchase of service agreements (OAITH, 1985). Per diem payments acquired through local governments also constituted some of the first forms of funding for women's shelters, and the provincial government also provided quarterly funding for crisis intervention, counselling, child witness support and crisis telephone support for women (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011).

Interval House entered into its first per diem funding contract with Metro Toronto Social Services in 1973 and secured membership with the United Way in 1976 (Toronto Interval House, 1978), which provided important financial support to the organization. Per diem was highly variable, and not everyone was eligible, and was only given when beds were full. An example of this problematic structure is the loss of funding from social services to Interval House in 1981 due to a chicken pox outbreak and subsequent quarantine in the shelter (1981). The federal *Report on Violence in the Family* (Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982) suggested per diem payments were often non-sufficient to cover both the needs of women and their children when in shelter.

> Provinces have the power to determine the way in which they fund emergency shelters. The method used by many provinces, paying the shelter a fee based on the number of days a client has stayed, does not seem to ensure the effective operation of the shelter […] The provinces which fund shelters on a per diem basis might consider another financial scheme which is acceptable to them, but which provides for all necessary services, and affords more stability for the shelters themselves. (p. 23)

OAITH (1988) argued member organizations needed to appear credible to earn stable and consistent funding, as well as earn respect from local communities and provincial organizations, and in 1990 developed the document *Basic Tips for Lobbying* (OAITH, 1990b) to support shelters in the ongoing fight for political and social changes for abused women, including the acquisition of funding. Identifying the role of advocates in helping to shape policy, to demonstrate themselves as credible, worthy of funding and support, OAITH reminded shelters:

> You are experts who advocate for the needs of women--they are engaged to find solutions and implement them, with your input and expertise to guide them […] going directly to the people affected by these issues may ultimately be the only way you will amass enough power to be able to put pressure on governments, police and other power systems if they become unwilling to make changes […] Look good. everything you do should be as perfect as possible in its presentation without being overdone. Dress appropriately--not too casual but not fancy. You have to decide which is more important, making an honest fashion statement, or getting your opposition to listen to your concerns about abused women. (p. 3/4)

Here, OAITH engendered a sense of potential—advocates working in shelters still had an important role to play in shaping government response. At the same time, as the Women Against Violence Subcommittee of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council (1989) suggested, feminist organizations were becoming increasingly constrained by funding requirements and criteria related to operations, reporting, financial accountability, as well as organizational and in-shelter policies. Policy direction was largely positive and expansive until the mid-90s when government cut funding to women's emergency shelters—including OAITH, which lost 100% of its core funding from the province—eliminated funding to second stage programs and shifted policy focus largely to the criminal justice system (see Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011; Morrow et al., 2004; OAITH, 1996, 1998). By the mid-1980s, Ontario was home to one-third of the women using shelters across the country, and a budget cut of only 5% resulted in negative impacts to the service delivery of 60% of such agencies within the province (Miller & Du Mont, 2000). In the report *Locked in Locked Out*

(1996), OAITH suggests these cuts “are based on an ideology of “personal” or “individual” responsibility for what has historically been a collective community responsibility in Canada” (p. 68). They target the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris for “implementing the practice of a value system based on individual “survival of the fittest” or the most privileged” (p. 68). These cuts to funding, OAITH argued, were part of larger structural shifts taking place within the province, which were causing ruptures within the movement; a greater emphasis on economic viability coupled with a focus on individual responsibility had great implications for the goal of ending violence against women:

> Evidence of an unhealthy shift to privatization and personal responsibility in our work to end sexist violence. Continuing erosion of public funding, along with corresponding privatization and user fees, will ensure devolution of responsibility for women’s equality rights from the collective, social responsibility women fought for, to a regressive ‘victim based’ personal responsibility. (OAITH, 1996, p. 68)

Examining the junction between the experience of poverty and that of violence, York University scholar Monica Mosher (2004) provided a historical understanding of the cuts faced to social programs at that time. The welfare system—a system primarily used by single mothers at that time—"emerged during a period of transformation in the conception of social citizenship in Canada” where "the idea of the ‘social’ disappears and the ‘good’ citizen is one who is 'self-reliant', making no 'claims' on the state” (p. 2). The erosion of social programs and cuts to social assistance were premised on an emerging view in Canadian politics that poverty was linked the notion of individuals as “lazy, unmotivated and deceptive” (p. 80). Mosher drew on research

from OAITH to demonstrate the detriment of the discrimination faced by women in social services

> Research conducted in 1996 by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, and affirmed repeatedly by frontline shelter workers, demonstrates the significant impact welfare rates have on women's decision to stay in, or return to, an abusive relationships. (p. 2)

These provincial cuts, including the defunding of OAITH, were criticized by Interval House through public service announcements, educational campaigns, television and radio interviews that year (Toronto Interval House, 1996). In the 2003 annual report by Interval House, these cutbacks were the impetus behind a series of changes in organizational structure and service delivery, including the pursuit of alternate funding sources, strengthening the internal organization by forging news partnerships between staff and the board, and offering new and innovative “continuum of services, designed to lead women on a solid path to independence” (Toronto Interval House, 2003, p. 1). The mark of their 30th anniversary that year was a Capital Campaign to raise funds for the acquisition of a new and larger shelter space for more women and more programs. That year, Interval House had over $2.6 million in revenues and just over $2 in expenses (i.e., children’s program, resource development, building economic self-sufficiency program, education and outreach, administration, court support, ex-residential program, counselling program, and residential program); in 2003, Interval House ended their thirtieth year with a surplus of over six hundred thousand dollars they used “to help women and children pick up the pieces of their shattered lives and begin anew” (Toronto Interval House, 2003, p. 16).

Under the Third Way (neo)Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty, Ontario released its first policy related to violence against women—*The Domestic Violence Action Plan*—in 2005 (Government of Ontario), attending to "five "key" community systems: justice, health, education, child welfare and community services, of which women's independent community-based services are one part" (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011, p. 25). The plan invested an increase of $2.5 million to stabilize "community-based counselling services" starting that year, on top of the 3% increase to funding in 2004-2005 (Government of Ontario, 2005), though a report by Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes (2011) reported no new funding for cost of living increases on base budgets. Additional funding for a new pilot training program to help abused women succeed in the workforce and gain economic independence was also made available. This program was to be developed by the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), which "provides a vehicle for government action on issues of concern to women. The two main areas of activity for the OWD: preventing violence against women and promoting women's economic independence" (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011, p. 25).

The following year, Beverly Oda, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, declared women had achieved equality, that "women in Canada are strong and already equal to men" (Brodie, 2008; Knight & Rodgers, 2012; OAITH, 2006). Under the guise that equality had already been achieved—that no more support was needed to help women achieve equal status within Canadian society—OAITH "lost funding from the Status of Women Canada when criteria were changed to exclude advocacy and research funding" (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011, p. 35). OAITH (2006) charged Progressive Conservative

party leader Stephen Harper with implementing anti-democratic processes that limited access to funding and resources for women's shelters:

> The continued defence of your elimination of the Court Challenges Program and the mandate and funding changes to the Women's Program are signals that your government does not understand the critical link between advocacy and equality, does not care, or deliberately intends to limit access to democratic processes for women and other equity seeking groups. We are deeply troubled by all of these possibilities. (p. 1)

In addition to reinstating the goal of "equality" in the Status of Women mandate, OAITH (2006) lobbied for advocacy and research projects to be re-deemed as eligible for funding, for increased funding to the Women's Program and women's groups, and for the restoration of funding to the Court Challenges Program and National child-care program. Funding cuts were restored in 2008 and $80 million in funding was provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services the following year (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2011). The DVAP update (Government of Ontario, 2012) boasts of a 49% increase in funding to violence against women agencies, including shelters, as well as counselling agencies, making note of supports to Francophone services especially.

At the same time, The Canadian Network of Women' Shelters & Transition Houses (2013) suggested that there continued to be "an abundance of government cuts to social justice organizations that provide VAW supports" (p. 13) including 100% cut to funding for the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO); a $730,000 cut to Pauktuutit (Inuit Women's Association of Canada); a 100% cut to the Native Womens's Association of Canada (NWAC); the Women's Health Contribution Program (WHCP); and The National Council of Welfare. The

cuts to NWAC resulted in the cessation of the *Sisters in Spirit* initiative, an important initiative to document the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. These organizations attend specifically to violence against Indigenous women, women's health generally, and poverty, and their defunding constituted challenges to addressing violence and its effects within its communities. Only two years prior, a report published by the Canadian Women's Foundation *Violence Against Aboriginal Women* (Lamontagne, 2011) argued native women's shelters and "mainstream" shelters had different funding needs, and that the root causes of violence against Aboriginal people were both complex and historic, necessitating very different approaches to addressing violence in those communities:

> Short-term prevention project funding is insufficient to address root causes. A number of the shelters had taken advantage of project monies obtained from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation – funding which is not longer available given its recent closure - and funding through the Status of Women Canada, but such approaches have also created additional administrative burdens given that reporting requirements are not consistent. (p. 12)

The importance of vying for funding became especially pertinent during this time. The diversification of OAITH's funding base is reported explicitly as a priority and primary commitment in their 2015 Annual Report, which included receiving funding from the Ontario Nurses Foundation, the Ontario Provisional Police Association, and Ontario Women's Directorate (OAITH, 2015a). In the following year they received additional funding from and established a working relationship with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (OAITH, 2016). This is also reflected in the annual reports of Interval House, which grew from 1-page documents (e.g., 1976, 1978) to detailed descriptions of budgets and commentaries on the

funding and donations they received that year. For example, the theme for their 2011 annual report was celebrating donors and other supporters (Toronto Interval House, 2011), and in 2013, Toronto Interval House (2013) wrote they were "The first shelter in Canada to welcome our donors into our home," despite concerns for security within the space, and the experiences of women and children residents. In that report, they were described by donors Michael and David Young as:

> The perfect combination of enlightened entrepreneurial philanthropy . Smart people with great management skills and financial discipline who have come together to create a scalable, cost effective model that provides a safe harbour and develops long-term solutions for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. (Toronto Interval House, 2013, p. 19)

In their assessment of national shelter services and policies, Women's Shelters Canada (2019) identified a divide, albeit overlapping, between the demand for funding—running parallel with reporting requirements and the administrative burdens mentioned by Lamontagne (2011)—and the need to provide immediate service to women. Women's Shelters Canada (2019) highlighted the concerns of advocates who suggested: "The constant applications for and reporting on grants as well as fundraising is sometimes overwhelming" (p. 68); that "Paperwork has taken over. A great deal of time is spent doing administrative work (policies, procedures, data collection, etc.) to meet funder, agency, and accreditation requirements" (p. 68); and "A database is not provided by [the] funder and the funder changes the statistics they are collecting every year without consultation" (p. 68).

Funding remained an integral component to *It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy* (Government of Ontario, 2018), when it was released under the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne, which like the Liberal McGuinty government responsible for the DVAP (Government of Ontario, 2005, 2012), aligns with a Third Way neoliberal approach (Coulter, 2009; McDowell, 2021). "The Strategy" aims to provide supports in the areas of trauma-informed counselling, emergency shelters, transitional housing, sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres (SADVTC), working with diverse populations, a permanent roundtable on violence against women and the police response. Because "trauma can last a lifetime" (p. 15), psychotherapy (i.e., cognitive behavioural therapy) is funded under this policy to "help people moderate their issues" (p. 17). Released shortly after *It's Never Okay*, the federal strategy, *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence* (Government of Canada, 2019), builds on support for shelters in need of repairs and improvements. Similarly, "an investment of $18.5 million over the next three years into the Transitional Housing Support Program (THSP) to assist survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking find and maintain safe and affordable housing" (OAITH, 2021, p. 3). This is a circumstance unique to Ontario where "VAW shelters reported having 31 housing workers (70% of the total number of housing workers) due to Ontario currently being the only province that provides funding specifically for a housing worker" (Women's Shelters Canada, 2019, p. 3).

The demand to meet funders requirements is always in tandem with the need to support women in the shelter, where crises play out constantly, and the lives of women and children need to be attended to, yet to be able to provide adequate and efficient service, the funding requirements have to be met, pulling workers within organizations in different directions,

separating the shelter into two worlds—the realm of numbers and the world of women in service. Recognition of this divide provokes questions as to what exists in the space between—how do these two worlds exist in relationship to/with one another? In speaking two different languages, how do front-line advocates/workers/staff and members of the board engage in dialogue? These relationships are important to consider, for they inform and constrain what either world can do, and become important in conceptualizing how service delivery within shelters takes place.

Service delivery

Toronto Interval House began in 1972 with a group of women who wanted to give women and children temporary temporary shelter during the housing crisis Toronto was facing in the early 1970s (Toronto Interval House, 1977). Women needed to find housing for a variety of reasons, including being new to the city or for economic reasons, but they quickly saw an immense need to offer services capable of supporting women facing abuse in their marriages. Beginning in Ontario with Interval House in the spring of 1973, shelters across the country began to open their doors their doors to women fleeing violence, and the needs and conditions of these women helped to shape service delivery offered through these spaces.

The list of services offered by Interval House between 1976 and 1979 (1979) ranged from advocacy related to the criminal justice system, housing, employment, child care, and cooking. Most of the women accessing this space during this time were white, English speaking, and born in Canada (Interval House, 1979); Interval House (1976) suggested "although wife battery occurs in the full range of Metro's ethnic mosaic, cases involving immigrant families are in the minority" (p. 3). Women accessing this shelter were also most commonly married to men—Interval House saw a 30% increase in married women from 1975—who most likely (78%) had

used physical violence against them (Interval House, 1978), and was the most common reason for women's admission to the shelter (Interval House, 1979).

> The main reason women come to us for help is that their living conditions have become intolerable, either because of physical abuse from an alcoholic or violent partner, abuse to the children by the partner, or financial and mental stress causing marriage breakdown (Ottawa Interval House, 1976, p. 2)

Understanding and defining the developing role of shelters and advocates was central to work being done in the 1970s and 1980s. OAITH (1986) suggested "traditional" social agencies (e.g., children aid society, family services, marriage counsellors) were not giving enough support, or else that women were faced with messages that reproduced patriarchal norms:

> The women were told that if they changed their behaviour, e.g. "stop nagging your husband" or "try to understand him a little better" or" recognize when he is tired, depressed, under stress, over worked etc" that if they changed their behaviour their husbands would stop beating them: i.e. it was the woman's fault if she was battered. (p. 2)

In a Statement of Principles and the Aims of Membership report by OAITH (1983b), the organization acknowledged "that some groups of women in our society, such as economically disadvantaged, immigrant, native, francophone, or disabled women face a double oppression" (p. 1). They later suggested "we are not working with mentally handicapped, incompetent women" and asked, "if we refuse psychiatric patients, are we discriminating?" (OAITH, 1986, p.3). To meet the diverse needs of women being served in shelters, as one of their main responsibilities, OAITH sought out opportunities for shelter works to develop basic skills and levels of professional accreditation (1986). Using grant money secured through the Ontario

Skills Development fund, OAITH “purchased” a psychologist to upgrade staff counselling skills and provide them with hands on experience. These two reports suggest OAITH was responsive to shifting trends within shelter spaces and society generally, that "wife battering, along with other forms of violence against women, reflect patriarchal attitudes and the economic structure in society” (p. 2) and services needed to reflect those needs. OAITH (1988) identified “the needs of the residents and children we serve as our primary professional obligations,” and suggested their work be guided by the desire to “contribute to society's understanding of the issues of domestic violence* and assist with public efforts to reduce/prevent domestic violence*” (a footnote remarks of the use of *domestic violence*: the committee requests direction re terminology*)[2]. OAITH further identifies their role in promoting excellence within the shelter movement by helping women to gain perspective and make informed decisions about their lives, and “to provide all these services in a non-political, non-judgemental, non-proseltyzing manner” (p. 4).

Interval House responded to the need to adapt service delivery to social, political, and economic changes taking place provincially by engaging in the pursuit of alternate funding sources, establishing new partnerships, and shifting from crisis intervention to a continuum of services "designed to lead women on a solid path to independence” (Toronto Interval House,

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[2] A contentious debate over how to name interpersonal violence (e.g., wife battering, domestic violence, male violence against women, intimate partner violence) is visible in the literature used for this project since the 1980s. Interpersonal violence is commonly understood in this literature to occur between two partners, often a cis-man and cis-woman who are usually married, as evidenced by the variations of “wife battering” that have emerged since the 1970s. Although reports and publications repeatedly suggest domestic violence can happen in a multitude of types of relationships, it is only ever conceptualized within this body of research as an issue between a man and woman; at no time are same-sex relationships ever used as an example at any time in this body of literature. This is even though the word wife falls off the radar after 2005, then disappears from all sources after a single mention in the year 2013. Domestic violence comes to enjoy a sort of epistemic privilege as the predominant form of violence based on framing/naming/definitions, shaping theories, research questions and designs, interpretations of data, and interventions.

2003). A woman who went to Interval House was provided with shelter, as well as space and time to upgrade her skills, “improve her ability to support herself and her children” and receive “tangible support to help her meet her goal of true independence,” evolving over the years toward offering a “continuum of programs and services to effectively address the systemic causes of abuse and its aftermath” (Toronto Interval House, 2005, p. 4). They were an organization at the forefront of providing abused women and children with innovative service to help transform their lives.” These transformations brought about changes in the organization, in the support they offered as a shelter, and in how they characterized their goals; Interval House claimed it was transforming the very idea of a women’s shelter. For instance: “In the midst of helping to transform women's lives, Interval House is transforming itself and expanding the term "shelter" to include the building economic self-sufficiency program” (Toronto Interval House, 2001, p. 1).

Transformation, independence, and self-sufficiency begin to emerge as emergent themes in Interval Houses annual reports, services and programs from the 2000s onward. Interval House positioned itself as being oriented toward the future, enacting potential, and moving women onward to generative and productive lives. Women were encouraged to leave behind any reliance on any system that might have held them back before—at Interval House, women were able to acquire skills to move beyond their oppressed conditions so they could take action in creating a life of independence. The focus is on assisting the individual woman through specialized service delivery, counselling, and an integrated approach, “anchoring her life in more productive and fertile ground” (Interval House, 2005). In an annual report from 2012, in addition to their core

services such as counselling, advocacy, outreach, housing, and legal support, the residential program at Interval House reported offering:

> 208 hours of women's group activities were logged at our home. Some of the groups are structured with topics such as health and wellness, legal rights and life skills. Other groups are more activity-based and included nutrition workshops facilitated by a nutritionist, laughter yoga, expressive art and movie screenings. (p. ii)

The range of services and programming offered through Interval House reflects their self-proclamation of being leaders in the field, innovative in their integrated and responsive approach to attending to the unique and widely different needs of women they serve—"an organization "willing and capable of adapting to better serve the needs of abused women and children" (Toronto Interval House, 2005). This sentiment is echoed in a fact sheet detailing the relationship and joint efforts of Interval House with FRPO: "[Interval House] positions themselves as a leader in the campaign for women's empowerment, providing specialized services that help abused women and their children leave domestic violence and rebuild their lives" (Toronto Interval House, 2015b, p. 1), and elsewhere:

> Because of you, Interval House is transforming what it means to be a " shelter ". In fact, we don't call ourselves a "shelter" anymore. Now, we use the word "centre". Not only does this better reflect our holistic approach to healing the women and children in our home, but it also reminds us that our families are at the centre of everything we do. (Toronto Interval House, 2012, p. 8)

> As the first shelter for abused women and children in Canada, we are leaders in the campaign for women's empowerment , providing innovative, specialized services that help abused women and their children transform their lives and break the cycle of violence. (Toronto Interval House, 2016, p. 2).

> Many survivors may need specialized counselling or psychotherapy to help them cope with, and treat, complex issues and/or mental health issues, stemming from their experience of abuse and trauma. Specialized counselling and psychotherapy services can provide clients with long-or longer term counselling rather than general or brief counselling (Toronto Interval House, 2016, p. 16).

> As Canada's first shelter for women and children experiencing abuse, we remain trailblazers in the campaign for women's empowerment and independence , providing innovative, specialized and transformative services that help to break the cycle of intimate partner violence (Toronto Interval House, 2019, p. 9)

Such narratives of progress, both for women and Interval House itself, represent transformations taking place within the organization that enabled them to remain responsible to women's needs, and at the same time remain eligible for funding. They position their programs as transformative, necessary to women's journeys, and as imperative to healing and moving forward. Toronto Interval House (2016) suggests "without access to specialized counselling, survivors will not learn effective coping strategies, receive assistance with setting and achieving goals, or receive help to overcome barriers and challenges, and generally with re-building their

self-esteem, confidence, and motivation" (p. 16). The activities in this example suggest women must engage actively in transforming their lives; women must do this work on themselves—they must cope, achieve, overcome, rebuild. Here, the psychologization of service delivery can be observed.

OAITH is likewise considered a "provincial expert in all matters related to gender-based violence," working with "member organizations to strengthen the services they offer through training, education, public awareness, and advocacy" (OAITH, 2021, p. 4). They acknowledge how their reach has grown and extended beyond only shelters, and how training and resources they have created are now made use of across numerous sectors, "with workers and leaders, students and volunteers in a number of different settings and organizations. We recognized this strength as we build a community of learners across Ontario" (OAITH, 2016, p. 2). The following year, OAITH (2017) claimed it "is forging ahead with change, unstoppable energy, and resilient strength from a growing membership" (p. 3) These themes of leadership, resilience, forward motion, and transformation constitute progress narratives, which suggest OAITH is a vital and strong organization within Ontario. They stress their role as leaders within the "sector", and stress the role they play in providing training and resources to shelters across the province, especially since the mid-2000s (OAITH, 2015a, 2016, 2019, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023). Resources provided by OAITH have included documenting formally since 1990 the cases of intimate partner femicide (IPF) in Ontario (an updated version including the names of all women who have been murdered by their partners is available on their website annually) (OAITH, 2015b, 2023); a guide to understanding and working with intersectional frameworks (OAITH, 2018); and a resource guide for Ontario VAW-agencies containing activities related to wellness

communities, which suggested including trauma-informed yoga, talk therapy, physical health (i.e., stretching at your desk, healthy eating), building resilience, and "psychological PPE" for "trauma workers" in shelters. In 2019, they released an online interactive training called *Her Brain Chose For Her* (OAITH, 2019a) in collaboration with the provincial advisory committee's *Ageing Without Violence* (AWP) project to examine the impacts of trauma on a woman's life across their lifespan using a feminist intersectional analysis. Their online "Violence Against Women Training Hub" further offers 25 courses (free for "employees working in VAW Shelter or Transitional Housing Organizations), such as Moving Towards Trans Inclusive Shelter and Housing, Sexual Violence, The Law and Legal Options, and Risk Assessment and Safety Planning with Older Women Who've Experienced Abuse (OAITH, 2023b). Ongoing training and webinar series are available to member organizations throughout the year.

Building economic self-sufficiency

In the first Canadian study on battered women, Linda MacLeod (1980), suggested women stay in abusive situations in part due to economic dependence, and economic/financial abuse is commonly mentioned as a form of violence women experience early on in this research (Ottawa Interval House, 1985). To help women who had experienced violence gain access to housing more quickly, the Special Priority Policy (SPP) was fought for by OAITH and established in 1986 (Women's Shelters Canada, 2019). However, near the end of the 1980s and into the following decades, the need for women's financial independence and justice became central to anti-violence work. The Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council (1989) suggested "an end to violence can only be achieved when women have acquired economic security," (p. 12). A little over a decade later, Interval House spoke of this time and argued "[women] didn't want to

be poor, single mothers reliant on government assistance. They needed to find dignity in their work" (Toronto Interval House, 2003b, p.1). This suggests the shift toward women themselves wanting to achieve economic self-sufficiency began to take place at the end of the 1980s, and that their dignity was contingent upon overcoming their circumstance.

In 1998, Interval House initiated their Building Economic Self Sufficiency (BESS) program to respond to this growing awareness, which constituted a major shift for the shelter in terms of service delivery and also in defining their role as service providers. They suggested: "in the midst of helping to transform women's lives, Interval House is transforming itself and expanding the term " shelter " to include the building economic self-sufficiency program" (p. 1). BESS was designed to help women to stand strong and escape violence, and to encourage "women survivors of abuse to make and sustain positive life changes" by becoming economically independent (Toronto Interval House, 2001). One Interval House donor remarked they felt "good about supporting Interval House" because they went further than just providing safe shelter, but offered "programs like BESS to help women get through difficult times and rebuild productive lives in the community" (Toronto Interval House, 2011, p. 1). Helping women to become financially secure, not only from their ex-partners, but from the government, became intrinsic to this initiative:

> Truly breaking the cycle of violence means giving women choices and independence . Creating and developing our BESS program meant we could empower women in whole new ways and complete our circle of holistic care. In BESS, women learn to write a resume and cover letter, the latest computer skills, prepare for an interview and develop life skills like balancing work and parenting . And the impact is stunning: we are always

> overjoyed to get calls from our BESS graduates telling us about their promotion, new job title and other amazing milestones (Toronto Interval House, 2013, p. 15).

> Economic Self Sufficiency—this term describes the circumstances in which a woman who has survived intimate partner violence works toward, in order to provide for herself and her family with minimal public / private financial and social assistance to meet needs that include housing or childcare assistance (Toronto Interval House, 2016, p. 3).

In their *Barriers Report* (Toronto Interval House, 2016), Interval House identified barriers to employment, and thus economic stability, for abused women and suggested that women come up against these barriers in unique ways, that the barriers are linked, that "multi-dimensional intersecting identities impact the experience of a barrier," and that systemic and structural barriers exist through power systems (i.e., racism, discrimination, sexism, ageism, classism), socio-economic conditions, legislation, and institutional policies. OAITH (2018) applies a similarly intersectional analysis:

> Canada's affordable and low-income housing deficit is felt most acutely by women leaving violent partners or emergency shelters, and especially by women who are poor, indigenous , living with a disability, and/or living in rural and remote areas […] indigenous women, low-income women on social assistance , homeless women, transgender women, and two-spirit persons are particularly impacted by housing discrimination. (p. 7)

Although women's experiences of violence and economic insecurity are articulated through systemic-level analyses, neither OAITH or Interval House mention the need for structural changes in social, political, or economic realms, rather they suggest emancipation is gained through personal development. I will attend to the use of intersectionality more fully in chapter five, however acknowledge here that while structural inequalities are named, the articulations of intersectionality in these examples, particularly related to economic self-sufficiency, render the experience of violence through an individualized lens. The barriers women face may be structural, however it is women themselves who must engage in work in order to move beyond such barriers.

Concluding Thoughts

Although Interval House identified itself into the mid-1980s as a feminist collective, the increasing involvement of the state in addressing violence against women, particularly in the areas of funding and operating criteria, began to shape shelters in new ways across the province, and this influence was no different for Interval House. The mid-1990s were, in particular, a pivotal time in this history. Interval House (Ottawa) suffered a break in their democratic collective organization in 1995, the same year massive cuts to anti-violence organizations, including OAITH, took place all across Ontario. Shelters were forced to transform themselves in the face of the precarious reality of funding requirements and resources.

Several key themes emerged out of these histories, including the vital importance of funding, an emphasis on building women's sense of independence and economic self-sufficiency, and the transformation of the shelter and service delivery. The narratives underlying these themes suggest progress and positive transformation within and of the movement to end violence against

women. Interval House and OAITH both position themselves as leaders within the "sector," helping to usher in a new age of support for women who have experienced violence. This narrative is especially salient in the archival materials for Interval House. Through these histories there also appears a division between the front-line and the executive—those advocates within shelters who work directly with women who have experienced violence, and the board of directors and individuals within leadership roles. Importantly, it should be noted that, according to the Not-for-profit Corporations Act (Ontario, 2010), individuals sitting on the board of directors may only do so on a volunteer basis. The board of directors thus comprises individuals who are able to work for free, and it is worth considering what systems of privilege and opportunity enable these individuals to do so, as well as how those positions differ from the women served in women's shelters. I consider this divide more deeply in the context of women with lived experience of violence in the next chapter.

Chapter Three — Politics of the feminist anti-violence movement

Without doubt, shelters and transition homes constitute a vital component of the feminist anti-violence movement, transformative spaces wherein the emancipatory spirit of the feminist ethos supports and strengthens service delivery (Sweet, 2015). Yet, shelters and transition homes are also spaces characterized by ambiguity, complexity, and contradiction. Once characterized by their commitment to non-hierarchical and democratic collective organization (Ottawa Interval House, 1995a; Toronto Interval House, 1978, 1983a, 1983b, 1985, 2003), shelters and transition homes in Canada have increasingly existed in tension with social, political, and economic realities that constrain and induce an ever-precarious pressure for state funding (Brodie, 2008; Coulter, 2009; Gill, 2021; Hilton, 1989; Knight & Rodgers, 2012; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Peters, 2019). Shelters have become institutionalized forms of the feminist anti-violence movement, though they retain strong inclinations toward social justice in their commitment to end violence against women. They are spaces where the need to fight against oppression and structural inequality stand in contrast with the need for individual women to gain control over their lives. Such aims are also awkwardly juxtaposed with the role of the state in perpetuating the very circumstances which allow violence against women to exist and persist—namely, power systems such as racism, sexism, classism, and beyond. Indeed, this acknowledgement makes it critical to consider how violence is conceptualized—what counts as violence against women? Who is considered to be violent, and who is considered to be a recipient of violence?

Three important themes emerged out of the histories of Interval House and OAITH presented in Chapter Two—the emphasis on the pursuit of funding, changes to service delivery, and the focus on building economic self-sufficiency. I argue these themes are emblematic of the

rising tides of neoliberalism in Ontario through the 1980s and into the following decades, yet there are differences in how these changes manifested in the histories of Interval House and OAITH. While Interval House has increasingly focused on helping women to achieve economic independence, emphasizing the role of the movement in helping women to achieve personal empowerment and transformation, OAITH has developed to bring focus to the application of anti-oppressive and feminist service delivery. Most commonly, this has for OAITH meant engaging the use of intersectional and trauma-informed approaches. The emphasis on feminist approaches especially have intensified for OAITH, while Interval House suggests their orientation has developed along a path of progress from its feminist roots toward its contemporary role as leaders within the movement. For Interval House, this is best exemplified in its transition from democratic collective organization towards a hierarchical structure. Despite these differences, both organizations remained heavily reliant upon the state for funding, and the neoliberal values of individualism, resilience, independence, and personal responsibility are invoked in the service delivery of both OAITH and Interval House as both organizations have shifted and adapted throughout the last five decades in their dance with the state.

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of the feminist anti-violence movement and suggest the movement is characterized by ambiguity—it is at once emancipatory and also depoliticized. Shelters are hybrid spaces—simultaneously grassroots and institutionalized. I suggest both realities can be true under neoliberalism, which is the dominant lens through which not only conceptions of trauma and violence have come to be rendered, but the movement itself. The language through which advocacy and activism, service delivery, and even women's personal experiences is now told reflects dominant discourses which have become imbued with neoliberal

ideology since the 1980s. Yet, failing to adapt to the shifting political, economic, and social realities within Ontario would have spelled disaster for the movement**.** This observation troubles critiques of the feminist anti-violence movement as being co-opted by the state, and instead acknowledges the multiple and interconnected layers of change occurring within Ontario and Canada, which allows for recognition of the ways in which resistance has operated in the movement even as it has undergone processes of neoliberalization—something I will return to in Chapter Five. I begin with an exploration of existing histories and (re)tellings of feminist anti-violence activism in the Canadian context, and to a lesser degree in the context of the U.S. movement. I then turn to my analysis of the neoliberalization of the feminist anti-violence in Ontario, and use sociologist Paige Sweet's (2019; 2021) paradox of legibility to explore how the rhetorics of victimhood and survivorship exemplify the shifts engendered by neoliberal ideology.

Histories and (re)tellings

Histories of Canadian feminism usually paint a picture of the 1960s and 1970s as times of unified action, a confluence of different feminist traditions all coming together with their own trajectories, reflecting the wide and diverse interests and identities of Canadian women (Adamson et al., 1988; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Schillinger, 1988). These few decades tend to be portrayed as a golden age, heralding a new age of feminist activism adjacent to other transformative social movements occurring during the same timeframe. Yet histories of the women's movement in Canada tend to provide broad overviews of the emergence and existence of feminist anti-violence activism and services (see Burt, 1990; Rebick, 2005; Morrow, 2007; Sangster, 2021), and there are few that focus in on the feminist anti-violence movement specifically in Canada and Ontario (Atcheson & Marsden, 2018; Goodhand, 2017), as well as in

the U.S. context (Bumiller, 2008; Davis et al., 2022). The first history of the feminist anti-violence movement in Canada, compiled by Nancy Janoviek (2008), brought a critical focus to local movements in three Canadian provinces. In this work and elsewhere (Janovicek, 2003), she brings to the fore the organizing efforts of Indigenous women against gender-based violence, and charts the emergence of two emergency shelters for Indigenous women in Ontario. Importantly, she draws attention to differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous feminist organizing, not only in how shelters were constructed and operated, and with what goals and interests, but in how domestic violence itself was conceptualized:

> Patricia Monture-Okanee, a Mohawk lawyer and ONWA activist, challenged the women's movement to incorporate an analysis of race in the theorization of violence against women. Strategies to end violence against women, she argued, would not be successful in Aboriginal communities unless white women relinquished their power over the definition of violence against women. (p. 558)

More histories and analyses attending specifically to violence against Indigenous women in Canada have developed as an important and generative area of research and critique in the past few decades (Barker, 2008; Benoit et al., 2019; Brulé, 2018; Palmater, 2016; Razack, 2016; Sunseri, 2000). For example, Jo-Anne Fiske (1996) explored how boundaries and identities become (re)configured and (re)negotiated through the interaction of the person and politics to generate new forms of experience. Of particular concern for Fiske is how the reconfiguration of these boundaries and identities encourage or facilitate self-surveillance, while at the same time compromises the Indigenous worldviews which stand in opposition to the mainstream social order. She points out how the individualistic conceptualization of rights/governance common in

Canadian politics stands in opposition with more collectivist orientations of Indigenous communities. Building on this analysis a decade later, Fiske and Annette Brown (2006) analyzed political discourse in Canada, suggesting the ideological construction of health policy both shapes and perpetuates "normative ideals with respect to class, gender and culture" (p. 92) by linking the responsibility for issues such as violence against Indigenous women to individuals and communities, rather than to government accountability. Hargreaves (2017) attends to the need to link the colonial origins of violence against Indigenous women with historical and ongoing state violence in *Violence Against Indigenous Women*, in which she provides a rich ecological analysis—which is deeply considerate of historical contexts—and decolonial approach to understanding and intervening upon such violence.

As these histories develop, it is important to acknowledge the different ways Indigenous knowledge and histories are created, shared, and held, as well as how Indigenous theory and methods have been marginalized by hegemonic western epistemologies and discourses within academia (Brownlie, 2009; Cutrara, 2018; Gibson & Case, 2019; Hickey, 2020; Kovach, 2009). Oral histories, for example, are a common source of evidence, though they have only gained acceptance as legitimate sources within the last few decades, and the inclusion of Indigenous oral accounts have yet to be fully incorporated into larger bodies of historical evidence (Gibson & Case, 2019). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) established the need to "remedy the gaps in historical knowledge that perpetuate ignorance and racism" (p. 234)—a process scholars have argued should reflect the coupled shifts of decolonization and Indigenization in education and historical (re)tellings that include honouring and accepting both western and Indigenous ways of knowing (Cutrara, 2018; Hickey,

2020). Indeed, Samantha Cutrara (2018) has argued that truth and reconciliation will be impossible to achieve without acknowledging history as a discipline as an inherently "colonial epistemological tradition of individuality" (p. 266), and that "Western epistemologies and Indigenous epistemologies cannot easily fit together without being honest that the colonial grammar of one has delegitimized the other" (p. 268). Acknowledging the epistemic constraints imposed by western academia, while histories of Indigenous anti-violence organizing may be limited, I include several works that historicize and analyze violence against Indigenous women, and honour these texts as acts of resistance in the fight against such violence.

Numerous texts provide historical accounts and contemporary commentaries regarding the impacts of settler colonialism in Canada and its relationship to the unknown number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls across the country (Anderson et al., 2018; Dean, 2015; Hargreaves, 2017; Palmater, 2016; Razack, 2016). Historically situating and contextualizing missing and murdered Indigenous women in the enduring and ongoing impacts of settler colonialism, Bourgeois (2015) importantly argues "Indigenous women have unanimously identified settler colonialism as a root cause of all forms of violence committed against Indigenous women and girls, including the contemporary phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls" (p. 114). Settler colonialism — the established and ongoing system of oppression within Canada — is buttressed by the ideologies of white supremacy and patriarchy, validating the domination and devaluation of Indigenous peoples as subhuman (Bourgeois, 2015). Amnesty International (2004) took up the issue of violence against Indigenous women in the report *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*, documenting the stories and names of

Indigenous women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada since 1996. In the same year, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) launched the *Sisters in Spirit* campaign to raise awareness of violence against Indigenous women, and a year later received funding from the federal government that led to the research, education, and policy initiative by the same name (King, 2010; Kubik et al., 2009; Palmater, 2016). Samira Saramo (2016) suggests the "crisis of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people" (p. 204) has motivated activism across the country, and that "diverse grassroots responses serve to unsettle the silence, inaction, and insecurity that have allowed violence against Indigenous people to become naturalised" (p. 204). They examine political advocacy in online spaces, and celebrate the Valentine's Day Women's Memorial March and the Sisters in Spirit Vigil (October 4), which, despite being defunded by the Harper government in 2006, remains a vibrant example of grassroots anti-violence activism. Métis scholar Elizabeth Brulé (2018), also offers an account of organizing around the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, transgender, and two-spirit persons in Canada, detailing the art installation and event called the *REDress Project* at York University. This body of literature represents scholarship that, as decolonial and feminist scholar Josephine Savarese (2017) suggests, "gives deeper consideration to ongoing Indigenous resistance and the challenges it presents to the settler state's precarious hold on Indigenous lives" (p. 159).

A number of dissertations have also brought focus to and critically analyzed Indigenous women's activism within the anti-violence movement in Canada. Robyn Bourgeois (2014) examines the anti-colonial anti-violence organizing of Indigenous women in the context of neoliberal and neoconservative state policy within Canada from the 1980s to today. Although she

does not focus only on Indigenous anti-violence organizing, Deborah Sinclair (2019) examines the influence of activists from the early 1970s to the early 1990s in Ontario, utilizing (in addition to other critical feminist standpoints) Indigenous feminist theory as part of the epistemological foundation of her research. Importantly, she calls attention to "how Indigenous women and their communities, the most vulnerable women in Ontario, were marginalized and their needs dismissed by the mainstream VAW movement" (p. 201), acknowledging how the interests, perspectives, and approaches of Indigenous anti-violence activists were distinct from the mainstream movement. Monique Harvison (2016) likewise juxtaposes Indigenous anti-violence organizing with Indigenous activism, focusing on women's shelters as neoliberal and biopolitical institutions, while at the same time offering examples of fruitful organizing against oppression within the mainstream movement. Within all three of these dissertations, the Canadian state is implicated in the historical and ongoing violence against Indigenous women, and the shelter is positioned as a contested space shaped by the logics of settler colonialism and neoliberalism.

The historical connection between state violence and gender-based violence, in particular violence against women in marginalized communities, is made across a large body of literature (Brownridge, 2008; Fiske, 1996; Fiske & Browne, 2006; Hargreaves, 2017; Razack, 2016). Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth Ritchie elaborate on this connection in their recent history of the anti-violence movement in the U.S. context in *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (2020). Uniting feminist and abolitionist commitments, these authors provide a rich historical analysis of anti-violence organizing, bringing to the fore the activism of women of colour and other marginalized communities of activists, making a distinction between mainstream feminist organizing and grassroots efforts that have interrogated and resisted against collaboration with

the state. They invite consideration of how "emergent and existing forms of domination" (p. 14) are interconnected and inseparable from one another as "the historical and contemporary entanglements of systems of oppression" (p. 30). Importantly, Davis, Dent, Meiners and Ritchie historicize and critique the role of the state in perpetuating gender and sexual violence through institutional power structures like the medical system, the criminal justice system and policing. They demonstrate the histories and efforts today of feminist anti-violence organizing are entangled with the state apparatus, that gender-based violence must be contextualized within these social, political, and institutional realities.

Maintaining the focus on feminist entanglements with the state, Kristin Bumiller (2008) charts a history of the emergence and subsequent co-optation by the state of the feminist anti-violence movement in the U.S. Bumiller implicates the rise of neoliberalism in the depoliticization and deradicalization of feminist politics, suggesting the relationship between the anti-violence movement and the state has led to the inculcation of neoliberal values in a highly bureaucratized social service system, wherein women become positioned as victims in-need of saviour by the state. Her analysis and critique, she cautions, should not be taken as disregard for the feminist anti-violence movement, rather should inspire deeper consideration of the neoliberal conditions in which women experience violence, as well as seek refuge from it. Paternalistic solutions to the problem of sexual violence, Bumiller argues, have been epitomized through medicalized and criminal justice responses that reinforce differences in gender, race, and class. She situates these responses continuously within the neoliberal context, arguing solutions attempting to address violence against women must go hand in hand with addressing social and economic inequalities within the lives of women.

Writing in the U.S. context, Mimi Kim (2018, 2020, 2021) provides a rich historical analysis of the relationship between feminist anti-violence advocacy/activism and the criminal justice system, drawing poignant links between the enduring legacies of white supremacy and settler colonialism, as well as the criminal justice system, gender-based violence, and, importantly, revolutionary forms of resistance that have formed out of response to the oppression and marginalization of "communities of color, LGBTQ, immigrant, and disability rights communities" (p. 9). Kim centres her analysis around the conditions that made possible the emergence and development of radical resistance(s) to the dominance of carceral feminism and criminal justice responses to domestic violence, bringing to the fore the counter-hegemonic and transformative theory and praxis of such marginalized communities, namely restorative and transformative justice. As an example, in celebration of Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, specifically the attention she drew to the vital importance of multi-axis analysis in discussions of violence against women of colour (see Crenshaw, 1989; 1991), Kim (2018) points out the radical relevance of intersectionality in the history of conceptualizing and attending to domestic violence. Extending the celebratory mood, Kim brings to the fore the work of anti-violence activists such as INCITE! Women and Trans People of Color Against Violence, who not only levelled critique at the logic of criminalizing domestic violence, but also at the acceptance of and reliance on the criminal justice system as a means of dealing with domestic violence by the mainstream feminist movement. Kim (2020) contextualizes the emergence and sustenance of the anti-violence organizing of marginalized communities amidst a "rupture of the hegemony of carceral feminism within a larger context of a faltering carceral state" (p. 311), positing the rise of restorative justice and transformative justice as methods of attending to the

complexity of violence against women at the intersections of multiple and simultaneously occurring realities.

An overview of this body of literature makes it clear there is no one "history of the anti-violence movement," and that a variety of social, political, institutional, cultural, and historical factors have shaped not only the reality of violence against women in Canada, but the activisms that has emerged to resist this violence. An important contribution of my research is that it offers a more nuanced understanding of the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario, troubling the concept of trauma, in particular, and implicating its use within the movement as part of a dominant discourse on gender-based violence that is both psychologized and neoliberalized, and which constitutes a shift from the aims of the movement being oriented toward social transformation, to emphasizing individual-level change. In this sense, I suggest the mainstream movement—that is, the institutionalized forms of feminist anti-violence activism—has indeed been depoliticized and disconnected from the original emancipatory aims of the movement. At the same time, in keeping with the theme of complexity and contradiction, I argue there are spaces wherein the emancipatory effects of feminist organizing are retained in the contemporary movement. Yet, the concepts and tools used in feminist anti-violence organizing are at once considered to be transformative and emancipatory, such as trauma and intersectionality, while at the same time are rendered through a neoliberal lens, which stands in opposition to feminist commitments.

Intersectionality and trauma-informed approaches have both been called upon in Ontario policy, and in the operations of Interval House and OAITH, so as to attend to the complex and multidimensional realities of gender-based violence. These approaches are indeed potentially

transformative, and they allow advocates and women who have experienced violence to conceptualize gender-based violence through a lens that is compassionate, anti-oppressive, and attentive to the contextual factors related to the existence and persistence of such violence. However, it is the normative constraints imposed by the dominant ideological dimensions in which not only violence occurs, but wherein the actions of the feminist anti-violence movement unfolds, that offer a different perspective on the ways in which trauma and intersectionality have become rendered in and through the movement. I argue these concepts have been neoliberalized in the context of anti-violence advocacy and activism, constituting a significant way the revolutionary potential of the movement has been limited—depoliticized—in the last three decades, especially.

Neoliberalism and the Feminist Anti-Violence Movement

A number of scholars (Mosher, 2004; Collier, 2006; Boucher, 2021) have developed generative research on the histories of anti-violence policy in Ontario. Some have drawn attention to how in the Ontario and larger Canadian context, the unique trajectories of the women's movement alongside the consolidation of the post-war welfare state led to a feminist infrastructure established within the federal and provincial governments (Abraham & Tastoglou, 2016; Brodie, 2008; Burt, 1990; Cossman & Fudge, 2002; Coulter, 2009; Hilton, 1989; Johnson, 2015; Rodgers & Knight, 2011). Championing a liberal feminist and equal opportunity framework, various national women's organizations coalesced in 1967 to form the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (Brodie, 2008; Knight & Rodgers, 2012). The report released by the Commission in 1970 — a "benchmark" for the equality of women and "an important victory in that it consolidated the organizations of different traditions and set the stage

for unified action on many issues" (p. 572) — led to the establishment of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in 1972 and the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women a year later, which acted as a liaison for the women's movement and offered policy advice to the federal government. Much of the literature I have reviewed for this project characterizes these early developments as instrumental in shaping the emergent feminist anti-violence movement, and its success in obtaining support at the provincial and federal levels.

At the same time, there is a presence in the literature of a narrative of loss—the depoliticization of the "radical feminist politics" that once guided the movement (Berns, 2001; Davis, 1988; Hilton, 1989; Mack & McCann, 2018; Peters, 2019; Sweet, 2015, 2019). Rodgers and Knight (2011) suggest the institutionalized relationship between the feminist anti-violence movement and the state began to come apart in the mid 1980s and has continued since with funding for women's organizations regularly reduced or cut completely. The dismantling of the institutional mechanisms that had financially supported the movement and provided a platform for movement demands, they argue, was manifest through the reconfiguration of the Status of Women Canada, millions of dollars in budget cuts, the removal of the term "pursuit of equality" from the organizational mandate, and the limiting of funding eligibility for anti-violence advocacy and research organizations (in particular, these authors target the election of Stephen Harper as prime minister in 2006 as the greatest source of damage to the feminist anti-violence movement). Abraham and Tastsoglou (2016) argue this early feminist infrastructure and women's organizing, generally, also became increasingly depoliticized and regulated by the state as neoliberalism took root in the country, accompanied by the rise of criminal justice and medical approaches to addressing violence against women. Such narratives of loss, which reference a

once-hopeful and radical past, and caution against the co-optation and depoliticization of the feminist movement are present in the literature beginning in the early 1980s (Ferraro, 1983; Hilton, 1989; Lose & Cahill, 1984; Rodriguez, 1988; Schillinger, 1988; Tierney, 1982) and have continued to develop over time (Janovicek, 2003; Knight & Rodgers, 2012; Mosher, 2004; Rodgers & Knight, 2011; Koss, 1990; Peters, 2019; Sweet, 2015, 2019). In particular, it is the "enhanced position of the bureaucracy as a key site of gender politics" (Scala & Paterson, 2017, p. 590) that has constituted a major shifts in feminist politics within Ontario and Canada since this time.

There is ample literature that explores the shift from Keynesian welfare in Canada to the neoliberal project (Cossman & Fudge, 2002; Coulter, 2009; Knight & Rodgers, 2012), and specifically in Ontario (Braedley, 2012; Brodie, 2008; Cossman & Fudge, 2002; Coulter, 2009; McDowell, 2021), as being a major factor in the depoliticization and decline of feminist anti-violence movements in the province. While neoliberal values and programs were advanced throughout the 1980s and 1990s, numerous scholars have posited the time of prime minister Stephen Harper's government (2006-2015) as especially pivotal to Canada's engagement with neoliberalism and its impediments to feminist organizing (Brodie, 2008; Knight & Rodgers, 2012; Rodgers & Knight, 2011. Despite targeting the Harper government for the disastrous changes wrought upon the violence against women sector, it is important to acknowledge that all three major parties were complicit in the entrenchment of neoliberal policy in Ontario and Canada (McDowell, 2021). In Ontario, this has unfolded through the Third Way approach, the "left's ideological embrace of the essential principles of neoliberal economic policy" (p. 53), entrenched through the 1990s and 2000s most explicitly through the socially progressive politics

of the governments of Bob Rae (New Democratic Party) (1990-1995), McGuinty (Liberal) (2003-2013), and Kathleen Wynne (Liberal) (2013-2018). With regards to the violence against women sector, the union of neoliberal approaches with social democratic strategies has obscured the traditional ideological commitments of neoliberalism while entrenching its values, leading to the divestment of the state from social problems such as domestic violence (Coulter, 2009). While these governments have introduced some of the only policies and state interventions addressing domestic violence, such policies, I argue, also encapsulate neoliberal logic, using individualistic approaches and placing emphasis on psychotherapeutic solutions over social change.

Policy in Ontario

Prior to 1995, feminist politics in Canada took the form of "the women's state" (Paterson & Scala, 2021; Scala & Paterson, 2017a, 2017b). The institutionalized organizational structure of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women utilized a multi-pronged approach consisting of women's policy agencies, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and support programmes for community groups. This institutional structure began to shift in 1995, as fiscal cutbacks ensued across the country and provinces placing mounting pressure on women's organizations and programs. During this time, the federal government adopted an "integrated" approach to gender politics, implementing the use of a gender mainstreaming strategy they called "Gender-based Analysis (GBA)," an expert-bureaucratic approach touted as being rooted in feminist understandings of how unequal power relations impact women's lives and experiences of violence. This new strategy established a form of machinery within the state for dealing with and attending to violence and issues of gender equality previously managed by "the women's

state." GBA constituted the main approach to gender mainstreaming—"a blueprint for how analysis is to be conducted and on what basis, as well as how decisions are to be made and by whom" (Paterson, 2010, p. 396)—in Canada, the responsibility for which was relegated to Status of Women Canada. This so-called integrated approach is central to all domestic violence related policy at both the federal and provincial levels, and expanded and was rebranded as GBA+ in 2011 to take on a more intersectional lens.

The vision of the first policy to address domestic violence in Ontario, *The Domestic Violence Action Plan* (DVAP) (Government of Ontario, 2005), was to "free all women and their children from the fear or threat of domestic violence" (p. i). This 23-page policy was touted as a balanced approach to help women "break the cycle of violence" (p. 12) through public education, prevention, early intervention, promising increased funding to core services and programs such as transitional housing support and special priority policy (a form of social housing available to women who have lived through violence). Strengthening the criminal justice response is a central element of this policy, as well as in the progress report (Government of Ontario, 2012), which also focused on access and equity, education and training, developing the legal system response, child welfare, personal accountability, threat assessment and risk management. This report highlighted the importance of addressing "aboriginal" needs, but made no mention of why women, Indigenous women, immigrant women, rural and French women, face the rates of violence they do; no mention of how interacting with these systems is different for different women; they made many claims about their successes, with no mention of challenges. It came one year after the federal government updated their GBA approach, reorienting toward an intersectional analysis to consider how gender interacts with identity factors, such as ethnicity,

age, ability, geography and other aspects of identity among individuals and within broader social context (Scala & Paterson, 2017). The updated DVAP (Government of Ontario, 2012) and subsequent policies come to reflect GBA+, with its intersectional lens and approach to managing the complexity of gender-based violence.

While the notions of intersectionality and attending to "aboriginal needs" are important acknowledgements, both the original DVAP and its update (Government of Ontario, 2005, 2012) evade analysis, critique and intervention upon "the factors and issues that result in higher rates of violence against Aboriginal women" (Ontario Native Women's Association, 2007, p.10). A letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper by OAITH (2006) calls attention to this amidst the rollout of the DVAP:

> Women from Aboriginal communities all over this country are being targeted, brutalized, disappeared and murdered because they are Aboriginal and because they are women. Women of colour, women living with a disability, immigrant and refugee women, young and older women, women in rural and Northern communities, all face continuing sexist violence at work, at home, at school and in their neighbourhoods and in addition they must face discrimination and inequity as a result of their race, culture, language, age, ability or geographic location. (p. 1)

In their *Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women*, the Ontario Federation of Native Friendship Centres and the Indigenous feminist organization Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) (2007) further suggests "violence against aboriginal women is rooted in systemic discrimination, and consequently, issues of gender, race and cultural exclusion must be considered in addressing these contributing factors" (p. 5), reminiscent of the

intersectional approach being reinforced through state policies and GBA+ at that time. The ONWA suggested mainstream anti-violence services—establishing a divide between the "mainstream" and Indigenous anti-violence organizations—and responses—specifically, the emphasis on a criminal justice response and lack of culturally relevant service delivery—fail to support to attend to the unique lived experiences of Indigenous women. Indeed, in a report for Women's Shelters Canada by Manon Lamontagne (2011) suggests shelters for Indigenous women across the country are "at the heart of the struggle" (p. 3) to end violence against Indigenous communities/women. Yet, this report acknowledges a difference between the resources needed by shelters for Indigenous women as compared with mainstream VAW shelters. They suggest "While all shelters have faced similar problems, they have adapted to these problems in different ways to fit their own individual needs" (p. 19) and some directors of shelters for Indigenous women have suggested "mainstream shelters do not fully appreciate the scale and scope of the problem of family violence within Aboriginal communities" (p. 14). Such statements suggest, as I have already noted, a divide between mainstream shelters and shelters for Indigenous women. Indeed, in *Survivor Voices*, OAITH (2008)—itself characterized as a mainstream feminist organization (O'Neill, 2017)—points out

> Aboriginal women, immigrant women, women with disabilities and francophone women identified the need for more service supports developed in response to their specific issues. They identified that they struggle to find appropriate services that respond to the challenges they face. (p. 7)

At the same time, although this umbrella organization for shelters across the province calls attention to the importance of "appropriate services" for marginalized communities,

including Indigenous women, I did not find this reflected in the service delivery of Interval House, which at no time over the 50-year timeframe I examined for this project mentions services aimed at Indigenous women. An analysis of the extent to which this finding can be generalized to the entire Ontario context is beyond the scope of this project, but this recognition seriously calls into question the supports and resources available to Indigenous women through mainstream shelter services. What is the cost of this gap in service for both Indigenous women seeking support, as well as advocates within shelters for Indigenous women? Lamontagne (2011) found the need to develop such services was often privileged by shelters for Indigenous women at a significant cost to the individuals staffing those shelters:

> directors mentioned that they are often faced with the choice of paying their staff an adequate salary or between developing services and programs that are so desperately needed by the community. As a result of such choices, shelter workers in the communities earn much less than their Canadian counterparts. (p. 11)

This conceptual and material divide adds another layer of complexity to the history and analysis I provide in this work, for in order to provide resources to women experiencing violence, mainstream women's shelters and anti-violence services rely upon the state, and on the dominant power systems and state structures which have been implicated in the historical and ongoing marginalization and oppression of Indigenous women. Dian Million (2009) provides an apt critique of the states role in perpetuating damage to Indigenous communities, and the outcomes for women who attempt to escape the very violence the state has itself condoned:

> Decades of government policy have impoverished and broken apart Indigenous families and communities, leaving many Indigenous women and girls at heightened risk of

> exploitation and attack. Deep inequalities in living conditions and discrimination in the provision of government services have pushed many Indigenous women and girls into precarious situations— ranging from inadequate housing to sex work—where there is a heightened risk of violence. These same inequalities have also denied many Indigenous women access to services needed to escape violence, such as culturally appropriate emergency shelters and transition houses. (p. 3)

Under the government of Kathleen Wynne, *Walking Together: Ontario's Long Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women* (Government of Ontario, 2016) is a collaborative endeavour between Indigenous communities and the state. In an opening statement, Wynne acknowledged Ontario's "shameful past" and its influence on the shaping of inequality in the province, while at the same time thanking communities for their resilience. Acknowledging "The extreme level of violence against Indigenous women in Ontario has complex roots stemming from deep-seated colonial attitudes that perpetuate racism and discrimination" (p. 10), this policy comes one year after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Canada, 2015) released its 94 calls to action—only13 of which had been completed as of 2022, according to the Yellowhead Institute (Jewell & Mosby, 2022). Six key areas of funding and support are mentioned in the strategy: family support, community safety and healing, policing and justice, prevention and awareness, leadership and collaboration, and date and research (Government of Ontario, 2016). Although "improved data and research" is a central component of this strategy, no mention is made of the epistemological and methodological foundations of the proposed research. This is a pertinent consideration given the suggestion this research be directed at supporting "improvements for Indigenous shelters and counselling agencies to better support the

needs of women on- and off-reserve" (p. 23). This policy does not address how data collection will be improved, and how it will align with the specific needs and approaches of shelters and services for Indigenous women. As Dian Million (2009) suggests, Western epistemologies comprise and crave objective and scientific narratives, not the affective and personal experiences which constitute the knowledge systems of Indigenous feminisms and communities. The history of detrimental policies for Indigenous people throw this epistemic privilege into stark relief and call into question which approaches are valued in this Ontario strategy, for if knowledge systems continue to reflect and reify the dominant worldviews within our society, how can they also be informed, as they claim to be, by the Indigenous communities they aim to support?

Also released by the Wynne government, *It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-based Violence Strategy* (Government of Ontario, 2018) is aimed at early intervention and prevention of gender-based violence against "people in Ontario," as well as changing attitudes and norms, and improving system response, namely that of the police and criminal justice system. It focuses on the empowerment of women through individualized services and support, such as housing, legal, and counselling supports, while emphasizing trauma-informed approaches as central to the strategy. Noting how trauma can last a lifetime, an important aspect of this policy is increased funding to evidence-based approaches such as psychotherapy (e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy) to help people moderate their "issues." Trauma-informed counselling and sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres (specialized programs in emergency rooms making use of invasive forensic evidence collection, clinical care, DNA analysis, and toxicology screening (Muldoon et al., 2018)) were also recipients of increased funding and attention through this policy. Intersectionality is mentioned for the first time in Ontario policy, though it does not

provide an explanation of what this means, makes no mention of feminism anywhere throughout the document, and makes no appeals to social justice or transformation. Articulations of intersectionality are vague throughout this policy document; intersectionality is mentioned in the appendix —"Research indicates that when survivors are provided with trauma-informed services that are inclusive and intersectional they are more likely to have their common and specific needs met" (p. 28)— with no actual elaboration on what this mode of inquiry or action entails. A definition of gender-based violence is provided that includes "Structural or systemic forms of violence that create or uphold gender inequality (e.g.colonization, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, etc.)" (p. 6), though the majority of interventions offered in this policy are aimed at helping individuals to prevent violence and recover from its effects. Achieving economic stability, for example, through employment is suggested not only as a way for women to escape violence, but to prevent violence from occurring again. Even while invoking an intersectional approach and understanding of gender-based violence as structural, the emphasis on individual-level intervention suggests this policy evades turning a critical eye on the systems and structures—including the state itself—which allow violence against women to persist. Returning to this idea in the next chapter, I use mainstream conceptions of trauma as an entry point to analyze how the structures of Psychology and neoliberalism impose psychologized and individualized constructions of violence. I argue the air of benevolence imparted through these social democratic articulations—intersectionality, gender-based analysis, and trauma-informed—exemplify the Third Way neoliberal ethos bolstered by the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne, the time of which came to an end the same year this strategy was released, ushering in the Progressive Conservative party of Doug Ford from 2018 to today.

At the federal level, Canada released *It's time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence* (Government of Canada, 2019), a three pillar approach to addressing gender-based violence through prevention, supporting survivors and their families, and promoting responsive legal and justice systems. It calls on "experts, advocates, survivors and researchers to help build comprehensive data collection systems on sexual and gender-based violence and evidence-based resources for policy makers and services providers" (Muldoon et al., 2018, p. 751). "Informed by grassroots activism and feminist action" (Ontario, 2019, p. 4), both trauma-informed and intersectional approaches are guiding principles to this policy, while there is no mention of feminism, power or structural inequalities mentioned at all in the document. The word *criminal*, on the other hand, appears 17 times in the document, while *justice* appears 36 times. In the most recent policy document developed by the federal government (Government of Canada, 2022), intersectionality is minimized to an identity theory, a way of making sense of the ways people are different, with no attention paid to the emancipatory potential of the tool as both an analytical framework and a guiding force behind inquiry and praxis aimed at social justice.

Few studies have examined these policies and the impacts they have had on domestic violence in Ontario. Tara Mantler (2020) used critical discourse analysis to examine how the DVAP, a violence against women emergency shelter, and regional hospital policy interact. She found no clear indication how the DVAP and shelter policies work together, indicating training goals between the two sites did not align, and suggesting that differing aims between shelter and provincial state policy serves as a hindrance to societal change. Critical discourse analysis was also used by Burnett et al. (2015) in their study on the intersection between VAW shelters and

policies related to various adjacent social services. These authors compared their findings against the DVAP and noted gaps in access, coordination between services, and accountability of services. In a report by Mosher (2004), the relationship between domestic violence and poverty was found to be a large oversight in Ontario policy addressing either social concern; policies and services addressed either domestic violence or poverty (through social assistance programs such as Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program), but rarely considered how these two realities intersect and disproportionality impact women, specifically. The neoliberal view of poverty as an individual failure, or a product of laziness or lack of motivation, already entrenched in Ontario state policy in the early 2000s, was identified as a main area of change recommended by the report. Women working within the welfare (as it was known then) system faced discrimination, were treated with suspicion, and received amounts of assistance that allowed them to only barely meet basic needs for themselves and their children. At the same time, the Ontario government celebrated their "zero tolerance" approach to domestic violence, purporting to protect the rights of women while keeping them safe, obscuring the importance of material resources (i.e., financial stability) in safely being able to leave abusive relationships. The failure to account for this intersection within policy is a powerful example of the third way approach.

Changes to the institutional infrastructure of feminism in Canada and Ontario taking place during the 1980s and into the following decades were garnered by larger social, economic, and political shifts taking place across the West. I align with other scholars who suggest these shifts and its effects on the feminist movement have been spurred on by the rising tides of neoliberalism (Collier, 2012; O'Neill, 2017; Rodgers & Knight, 2011). Although violence

against women has consistently remained an issue of vital importance to generations of feminists, “the individualization of feminist activism” (O’Neill, 2017, p. 448) has come to characterize the movement. O’Neill further suggests the very notion of what it means to be a feminist has transformed to reflect this individualist imperative, targeting “neoliberalisms ‘undoing of feminism’—making it seem simultaneously second nature and unnecessary” (p. 447) as a key source of the depoliticization of the feminist movement, including the diminished explicit use of feminist approaches and theories. Research by Scala and Paterson (2017) suggests identifying ones work with a feminist perspective can actually hinder progress in policy development and strategizing, because “it immediately gets associated with the political movement in that sense and less with a way of doing [policy] that might be more equitable” (p. 586). According to this work, bureaucratic or “democratic” discourses and practices are made more valuable when they are disassociated from more a explicit feminist ethos, taking on a more professionalized and scientized (i.e., rational, objective) lexicon to influence systemic change. This approach determines which organizations and parts of the movement are acknowledged—and, ultimately, funded—as legitimate and central to the states own approach to domestic violence. This is an especially important consideration for my research. Collier (2012) has suggested OAITH has been considered by the Ontario government to be a main anti-violence social movement organization, which, although the organization has targeted gendered and structural systemic inequality as a main cause of violence, calls into question the ways in which OAITH exists in tension with such demands from the state.

Contested feminist spaces — The paradox of legibility

To further ground this analysis, and to further trouble the reliance on institutionalized forms of advocacy, I use sociologist Paige Sweet's (2019) notion of the paradox of legibility. The paradox of legibility considers the journey toward survivor hood women who have experienced domestic violence undertake when navigating myriad social institutions after abuse. Such institutions have afforded women important avenues for political and legal recognition, yet in order to access support through these systems, women "must tell stories about their experiences that fit existing "social problems" narratives" (p. 411). Sweet suggests women's survival practices have changed in response to institutional changes, like those taking place in Ontario and across Canada from the 1980s onward. In order to gain access to resources women must demonstrate they are deserving of support by acting in line with the institutional expectations:

> Scholars have also shown how involvement in the legal system shifts women's identities as they transform their practices of self in order to become "worthy" victims [..] Resources are then conferred on the basis of this worthy victim status, including housing, police protection, and pathways to citizenship (p. 412).

According to Sweet, legal system approaches to domestic violence, as well as medical approaches (i.e., mandatory screening for domestic violence within hospitals, trauma-informed approaches), have come to characterize the system response to violence against women. Women must prove they are "legitimate victims," while at the same time demonstrate they are capable of *surviving*, of moving beyond their circumstance to psychologically recover from abuse. This paradox engenders a state of confusion, especially for folks and communities who exist beyond the normative boundaries of the status quo. It forces women to engage with the state apparatus,

including its bureaucratic mechanisms and institutions, which causes a rupture in women's experiences, for "to be credible survivors, they must tell stories of psychological recovery, even as those stories obfuscate the causes and infrastructures of violence" (p. 415):

> The institutional level is critical because it is a site of profound contradiction in women's lives: institutions provide recognition and belonging, while they also reproduce inequalities, making legibility difficult or impossible to achieve for women on the margins. Institutions therefore link objective structures of inequality with the intimate level of meaning-making and personal practice. (p. 413)

Critically, Sweet suggests this process of becoming—of moving from victim to survivor—is an act of productive citizenship wherein women "make themselves into neoliberal citizen-subjects" by engaging in the demands set out by the state. Here, the experience of violence is both psychologized and individualized. Mosher (2004) provides a poignant example of how women who have experienced violence, and whom live in poverty, must navigate the demands and pressures of social services like ODSP and OW in Ontario in order to gain access to financial support. I suggest this imperative runs parallel with the demands placed on women's organizations, such as Interval House and OAITH, for funding and resources. As Sweet (2019) suggests, "even as the paradox of legibility catches women between harmful structural conditions and psychological means of explanation, they construct new lives and new meanings out of the (flimsy) tools provided by institutional modes of recognition" (p. 425). Likewise, OAITH and Interval House have adapted service delivery in order to do the work they deem important, maintaining a focus on helping women following abuse, even when institutional forces render their efforts through hegemonic frames. To more clearly demonstrate this, I turn to

the divide between victim and survivor as it has appeared in the histories and contemporary narratives of OAITH and Interval House, and consider how psychologized and neoliberalized narratives of domestic violence have been engrained not only individually, but institutionally.

Victim or survivor?

The cycle theory of battering is used by Interval House (1985) to describe how women become victimized and internalize feelings of learned helplessness that prevent their leaving. Stuck in the cycle of violence, women are said to suffer in isolation from psychological battering and low-esteem (Macleod, 1980). Shelters are positioned as sites where women can "break the cycle" and move beyond the experience of victimhood. This is an important acknowledgement, given the myriad systems women who have experienced violence have had to navigate in order to access support and resources. OAITH (1996) suggests:

> Women must identify themselves as a "victim" and prove they've been assaulted. Often the woman is questioned and doubted, and women are expected to produce increasing amounts of documentation to qualify for service. This kind of treatment shames women and drives them back to abusers because response amounts to "blaming the victim." (p. 32)

Victim status is articulated here as a force that holds women back from breaking the cycle; because they are made to demonstrate the legitimacy of their claim in order to gain access to institutional support, the blame for their position is placed on women themselves, further entrapping them in violence. This excerpt from OAITH seems to suggest the treatment women receive as victims impedes their progress, and suggests institutions are also responsible for altering the ways in which they interact with and treat women who have experienced abuse. Shelters and the services they offer to women constitute sites wherein the chains of victimhood

can be broken. In Interval House's 2005 annual report, an ex-resident describes her experience at the shelter:

> When I come here I felt like a victim, but I don't feel like a victim anymore," she thought to herself. The counselling services and supportive staff had helped Mira rediscover herself and come into her own […] she just didn't have the strength to break the abusive cycle alone. (Toronto Interval House, 2005, p. 4)

Women who were able to successfully break the cycle were seen to be crossing a threshold from someone suffering from the effects of violence to an individual who had been empowered and transformed from victim status (e.g., —they had become a survivor). Breaking the cycle is commonly associated with women's empowerment, independence, and transformation (Ottawa Interval House, 1985, 2016, 2018, 2019). Interval House (2013) suggested "truly breaking the cycle of violence means giving women choices and independence" (p. 19), which entailed offering "creative new solutions to the urgent and ever-changing challenges facing survivors on their quest to break the cycle of violence and rebuild their lives after abuse. (p. 19)

Survivor appeared once before the year 2000 in a report by theWomen Against Violence Subcommittee of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council (1989). Written in such a way as to allude to a divide between survivor and victim (i.e., funding "victims/survivors"), its use suggests multiple ways of conceiving of women who had experienced violence were possible. This term has been more commonly used when women are characterized as agents of change in their communities and in their own lives. Toronto Interval House (2001), for instance,

suggests “the BESS program is about encouraging women survivors of abuse to make and sustain positive life changes.” Numerous examples derive from OAITH:

> Survivors are at the heart of change to end violence against women . In the late 1960s and early 1970s, energized by the civil rights and women’s liberation movements, Ontario women who experienced intimate violence began to talk. They talked to each other and to feminist activists. Then, talking about violence against women was radical. One of the first slogans of the time was “Break the Silence,” a message that spoke volumes about the disbelief, victim -blaming and lack of support in women’s lives. But women didn’t just talk, they acted to help create their own services: Women’s shelters, rape crisis centres , women’s centres and neighbourhood groups. (OAITH, 2008, p. 1)

> Tell survivors by getting involved and being a voice heard can empower them. What a difference it has made in my life and how I have really made a difference and in turn have turned something horrific into a positive part of my life by being able to flush the bad emotional component and turn that into positive energy—to be able to be strong enough to stand up in front of a audience and tell my story and what they can do to see the signs etc. So really let them know how getting involved helps them."
> — Greater Toronto Area (OAITH, 2008, p. 1)

A recent initiative of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) is its Survivor Advisory Committee, what OAITH dubs “a success story” emerging from its Survivor Voices Inclusion Project. This committee moves beyond support for survivors to

> engagement and empowerment , giving them representation in lobbying and advocacy, service improvement, awareness-raising, and public education. (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Homes, 2013, p. 20)

The above quote captures a relationship between political and personal empowerment, the goal of the latter being the former. OAITHs publication *Survivor Voices* (OAITH, 2008) drew together "insights and advice of woman abuse survivors about participating in policy development and systemic change." Women with lived experience are given a platform to draw attention to the value of their own stories and voices, while at the same time acknowledging a separation between themselves and positions wherein they could use their experiences to support others:

> I think that I as an abuse survivor would like to counsel women on how to overcome the abuse and help them get out of it. Sometimes experience in the situation speaks volumes to the other women, when they know that you know exactly how they feel. But I am not sure how to start.
>
> — Unknown location (OAITH, 2008, p. 17)

> I just found out today that it was even possible for survivors to help. I've thought a lot about trying to help other women, but thought you had to have the education .
>
> — Unknown location (OAITH, 2008, p. 18)

These excerpts suggest women with lived experience of violence and abuse recognize themselves as outside of or different from the institutions with which they engage. Overcoming victimhood is a pathway to stepping onto equal ground with the organizational systems attending

to abuse. This further complicates the divisions I have called attention to in the previous chapter between the front-line and the executive. Surely, there are cases wherein the people occupying these roles have also experienced violence, however it is important to acknowledge the distinct separation between the women who access shelters as residents and the individuals who are responsible for governing the shelter spaces themselves. Generally, the structure of the board is obscure for even shelter workers, making the space between women residents and the executive worlds apart. OAITH acknowledges the strength in survivors stories, suggesting they constitute an important base from which to draw knowledge about how to support the movement to end violence against women, yet lament the absence of their voices from mainstream service delivery.

> The decrease in ongoing survivor involvement and leadership in the response to intimate woman abuse. As systems have become more engaged and services more 'professionalized–'even within women's grassroots agencies−fewer self-identified current and recent survivors have found their way into leadership positions on policy and program delivery. To be sure, many survivors of woman abuse still work within shelters and other women organizations and, of course, wherever there are women working within systems, there will be survivors as well (OAITH, 2008, p. 1)

Given the states reliance on GBA+ and its emphasis on expert-knowledge in shaping policy, it is hard to imagine how the voices of women with lived experience could be influential on policy and bureaucratic structures. Though the Government of Canada (2018) expresses the importance of consulting survivors on their gender-based violence strategy, and suggests their efforts to end gender-based violence involve attempting "to truly understand the lived

experiences of survivors," the paradox of legibility demands women's identities as survivors takes precedence over all other areas of their life, even at the cost of addressing the need for structural and institutional changes. The *Survivors Voices* (OAITH, 2008) publication by OAITH further demonstrates this tension, suggesting "The sheer complexity and level of activity women have to maintain to survive and get access to the services they need also prevents some of them from taking on anything else that they might want to do" (p. v), and that "Survivors identify anxiety about engaging with services and systems they feel are often disrespectful, disbelieving and discriminatory" (p. v). Even as women identify the systems with which they engage with as "disrespectful, disbelieving and discriminatory," they must articulate their stories using the language inscribed in state policy in order to render themselves legible.

Concluding thoughts

In Chapter One I provided an overview of the shifts—namely, the rise of neoliberalism and its implementation via the work of all three major political parties—taking place in the Ontario political and economic landscape that provided the basis for my history of the feminist anti-violence movement in Chapter Two and deeper analysis of its politics in Chapter Three. Consistently, the restrictions placed on feminist anti-violence organizations have been at the detriment of women and communities marginalized most by such neoliberal policies. Indeed, the histories of feminist anti-violence organizing I unearthed through my archival research, particularly written into provincial and federal policy, but also including the publications and documents of OAITH and Interval House, fail to account for the structural dimensions of violence against Indigenous Women that catalyzed the movement(s) to end violence against Indigenous women. They also commonly offer narrow, individualized, and universalized

approaches to addressing violence, flattening the diverse and varied conditions leading to both violence against Indigenous women (i.e., racism, colonialism, imperialism AND patriarchy) and feminist organizing to end such violence. These narratives have painted feminist anti-violence organizing, as well as the emergence of women's shelters, with the same brush, creating the illusion of a singular movement emerging out of a singular issue—violence against women—which I argue negates the complex and unique differences between the politics of mainstream shelters and shelters for Indigenous women. As I have discussed in this chapter, there is a distinct divide between mainstream and Indigenous anti-violence organizing, as argued by Janovicek (2003) in one of the first histories of the feminist anti-violence movement:

> Strategies for change developed by the battered women's shelter movement influenced Native women to conceptualize family violence as a political issue, but there were significant differences between the goals of Native-run and feminist transition houses. Aboriginal women did not agree that wife abuse was fundamentally an issue of gender inequality. They also differed with the feminist criticism of the family because the family had historically offered protection from racism. (p. 558)

An important consideration emerging out of my reading and analysis, as Harvison (2016) suggests, is "The women's shelter is part of a larger social machinery that is involved in the control and restriction of the mobility of indigenous peoples. This is a common quality of the state institutions that intervene most violently in the lives of indigenous peoples." (p. 27). I suggest this narrow lens calls into question the ability of state responses, as well as mainstream shelter services, to respond adequately to such differences and needs, for as Fiske and Browne

(2006) poignantly suggest :“policy can never be read in isolation. Policies are inextricably twined to dominant thinking and a taken-for-grantedness of the democratic process” (p. 107).

Doubtlessly, the lines between feminist identity and bureaucratic position are neither solid nor static, and some scholars suggest feminist bureaucrats, despite being constrained by “bureaucratic norms and principles such as secrecy, neutrality, hierarchy and rule following” (Scala & Paterson, 2017, p. 581), are well-positioned within the state to effect change in potent ways. The role “femocrats” play in identifying new issues and forming internal networks of allies in promoting transformative policy, according to these scholars, constitute strategies of resistance wherein feminist values can be injected into the state apparatus. Yet, the space between feminism and bureaucracy remains complex and ambiguous, and femocrats have reported downplaying “the feminist intent of GBA+ in their work due to the negative connotations associated with the word” (Scala & Paterson, 2017, p. 434), instead framing interventions through professionalized terminology. Covertly feminist, this approach uses language and approaches that appear more credible and less political, such as the use of evidence-based approaches like trauma, in order to subvert the system. Despite this, however, analysts working with GBA+ have acknowledged the approach is not commonly used in the development of policies, rather, is used primarily when it comes to planning how policy will become enacted. For these subversive femocrats, it is small administrative changes that constitute resistance. While this form of gender mainstreaming is purported to rely not only on policy and bureaucratic machineries, but also feminist research, women’s movements and social justice organizations, the latter two dimensions have been increasingly marginal to the implementation of GBA+. Instead, the emphasis on neutrality and hierarchy so characteristic of bureaucratic principles has come to exemplify feminist activism in

Canada. In the context of Ontario, OAITH (1996) suggested early on in the first wave of dramatic cuts to women's organizations and equality seeking groups that feminist values were being eroded in favour of bureaucratic mechanisms that only individualized violence against women. Writing on the U.S. context, Bumiller (2008; see also Mack & McCann, 2018) suggests the successes of the feminist anti-violence movement are complicated due to "circuitries of violence" that entangle feminism with the state, leading to approaches that emphasize the individualistic frames of the therapeutic state, feminized victim services, paternalistic logics, and the notion that women needed to be saved. As other scholars have noted (Scala & Paterson, 2017), the differences between feminist and bureaucratic approaches are not easily reconciled as evidenced by the turn toward approaches to attending to violence that are bureaucratic and individualized, and which also maintain an appearance of social democracy. The use of intersectionality and trauma-informed approaches have come to exemplify this veil of social democracy, appeasing feminist values while at the same time obscuring them, rendering them through a distinctly neoliberal lens.

Yet, while it is apparent that there is a separation between the "femocratic" approaches taken up in Ontario and Canada policies, and the feminist consciousness which sets itself apart from such alliance with the state, I have also brought attention in this chapter to the divide between mainstream feminist and Indigenous feminist organizing against violence. Indeed while the mainstream movement politicized domestic violence, creating a new language and perspective through which to understand gendered oppression, little to no space was created early on to consider the relationship between violence against Indigenous women and the

historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism (Million, 2009), affording even greater complexity and contradiction to my analysis. For as Dian Million points out:

> Canadian views on what constituted a "social" problem had been drastically challenged by the mid 1980s. A primarily Euro-Canadian and American feminist movement successfully reordered the political significance of familial "privacy." Acts that had been nominally "private," such as wife beating, child sexual abuse, and conjugal rape, were named, politicized, and criminalized, becoming charged public issues. Still, these seemingly successful feminist campaigns in the United States and Canada did not immediately empower First Nations women, nor did they reorder their lives. (p. 55)

Million describes the testimonials offered by Indigenous feminists in Canada since the 1980s and 1990s as catalyzing a discursive shift in "narrative agency" (p. 65) toward a new affective language and perceptual reorganization of how violence against Indigenous women and communities was understood. These testimonies resisted against the reduction of *felt* experience to psychological problems, instead arguing the voices and stories of Indigenous women be understood as sites of political action which make visible the historical and enduring realities faced by Indigenous peoples. This conception disrupts the notion of singular historical narratives of the mainstream anti-violence movement, and instead suggests parallel ways of understanding and acting upon violence have unfurled across the last five decades. As I have suggested, this awareness also calls into question the efficacy or potential of state policy in attending to violence when Indigenous voices are either silenced or obscured in or by them. As Million suggests:

> All of this becomes important to our emerging conversation on Indigenous feminisms, on our ability to speak to ourselves, to inform ourselves and our generations, to counter and

> intervene in a constantly morphing colonial system. To "decolonize" means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times. (p. 55)

The second part of this chapter analyzed how scripts of victimhood and survivorship are juxtaposed and enacted through state policy, as well as through the feminist anti-violence movement. The terms *survivor* and *victim* are used almost with equal frequency in my archival research, with victim used only 5 more times than survivor, even though *survivor* has been used most frequently since the new millennium. In contrast, use of the word victim has traversed all five decades covered in this research. While the term *victim* has been commonly associated in archival and contemporary materials with crime, another form of victim emerged out of my research, namely that of the psychologized victim. This form of victimhood is associated with the psychological impacts of abuse, and with the need to overcome such a state. The imperative for psychological recovery imparted upon victims, and celebrated within survivors, is integral to what Sweet (2019) terms the paradox of legibility. Victimhood is not productive; victims are seen as in possession of a troubled sense of self, the antidote to which is the journey toward survivorship (Ross, 2022). Women must articulate their experiences as victims and as survivors through a journey metaphor, where dominant frameworks undermine the importance of political and social analysis while women must transcend their “troubled identity” (p. 62) in a neoliberal context. Sweet (2021) uses the concept of the paradox of legibility to describe the idea that women must tell stories of survivorship and recovery in order to make themselves be seen as credible to institutions they interact with and become dependent upon (e.g., the criminal justice system, children’s aid societies, social services), while at the same time appealing to those very structures and systems that enable violence against them in the first place. She suggests trauma

encapsulates neoliberal subjectivity and demands individuals engage in self-recovery and healing, personal growth and development in order to demonstrate their capacity, their inherently human ability to grow beyond their misfortune and self-actualize as empowered individuals. This is especially salient in the rhetoric of survivor-hood, wherein the pursuit of happiness and health through healing is engaged in as an ongoing process of self-development and the performance of the traumatized victim becoming a survivor. This pursuit is highly individualized rather than a collective process of solidarity and interdependence; rather, women engaging in "working on themselves" learn their symptoms are encoded in their brain, their physiological and psychological responses, which can be altered and acted upon through self-management and self-work, under the guidance of expert authority. The entanglements between structural and interpersonal violence speak not just to intersubjective dimensions of violence, but to the socio-subjective nature of violence and its consequences—individually, interpersonally, as well as on the social, historical, political, and institutional levels.

Sweet (2021) suggests therapy in particular "has become a central component in the institutional configuration surrounding domestic violence, and women interact with it in many forms when they access services" (p. 101). Sweet (2019) contends the therapeutic state is a neoliberal apparatus through which subjects are reconstructed into self-evaluators, psychologized and individualized, and reoriented toward personal journeys of psychological rehabilitation and recovery. This calls into question forms of hegemonic Psychology that dominate the literature on domestic violence and trauma, and invites deeper consideration of how these concepts are shaped by Psychological discourses that reflect and buttress the status quo. In the next chapter, I extend this analysis of the rise of neoliberalism within the feminist anti-violence movement by

considering how the concept of trauma has travelled within Psychology to more deeply consider how conceptions of domestic violence have been shaped by the interconnected processes of psychologization and neoliberalization.

Chapter Four — Looking at Psychology Looking at Domestic Violence

A large body of research on domestic violence spans feminist and critical studies, Psychology, Sociology, biomedicine, and beyond, constituting a cosmos of converging and diverging theory and practice. Though there is tremendous overlap across disciplines, given the rise of framing domestic violence through the lens of trauma, there is a great emphasis across literatures that address its psychological dimensions specifically. Trauma and trauma-informed approaches have been particularly influential in garnering support and validation for the psychological realities of women who have experienced domestic violence, allowing for more nuanced understandings and analyses of women's suffering in the face of violence (Sweet, 2019; Tseris, 2013, 2019). Trauma theory has its roots in early psychoanalytic theory, though its modern conception can be traced to 1980 when the *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*-III was not only reconfigured (Marecek & Lafrance, 2021), but trauma itself took on a new life in the form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Marecek, 1999; Pache, 2020; Young, 1997). Histories of trauma and PTSD have acknowledged the intellectual trajectory of trauma as a culturally constituted process (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Young, 1996). With regard to feminist organizing, PTSD and trauma constituted the basis for understanding and articulating domestic violence and psychological suffering related to it in ways that had not been possible previously (Pache, 2021). Importantly, Fassin and Rechtman (2009) note that the discourse of trauma, a label which invokes passivity and helplessness, invites testimony to suffering specifically, rather than to resistance, resilience or recovery through activism (see also Nagy, 2015).

In the decades since, trauma and trauma-informed approaches have been subject to an explosion of interest, heavily enshrined in Psychological theory, research, and intervention related to domestic violence, at the state level, and within the feminist anti-violence movement (Tseris, 2019). The “turn towards trauma” (p. 35) constitutes a move from trauma as a peripheral concept toward its positioning as central to conceptualizing and attending to the psychological impacts of domestic violence in women’s lives. Conceptualizing domestic violence as a form of trauma initially helped feminist psychologists put the psychological outcomes of violence into non-pathologizing terms (Lovrod & Ross, 2011; Pache, 2021; Samuels-Dennis et al., 2011; Tseris, 2013). Rather than being framed within the context of individual defect, symptoms could tell of pathology but be associated with an external event. Yet, while the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM was celebrated by feminists who hoped the diagnosis would validate women's experiences, critiques have centred on how the diagnosis is seen more and more as a "mechanism that disguises the roots of suffering” (Lovrod & Ross, 2011, p. 41). Some feminist scholars question whether trauma theory, as applied to domestic violence, has retained its underlying motivations toward social justice (Lannamann & McNamee, 2020; Tseris, 2013).

Tseris (2015) draws attention to a great sense of ambivalence that comes from working with trauma in a critical way, acknowledging how it has supported women and the movement, while at the same time acknowledging the ways it has alternatively drained women and the movement, at times implicated in the reinforcement of hegemonic norms around domestic violence. Though it has become a dominant and ubiquitous framework in literature and practice related to domestic violence, the development and success of trauma as a concept has been critiqued as imparting neoliberal ideology through its discourses (see Cosgrove & Karter, 2018;

Dhar & Dixit, 2022; Nagy, 2015; Million, 2013; Peters, 2019; Scrine, 2021; Sweet, 2019; Tseris, 2013, 2016, 2019). However, while critiques of trauma do exist, there is limited critical analysis on the topic of trauma and domestic violence, in particular as a gendered, neoliberal construct, and even fewer analyses that empirically document how the neoliberalization of trauma discourse has played out in shelters and transition homes specifically.

In the next chapter, I explore how women's shelters serve as sites of analysis to assess the influence the co-evolving projects of neoliberalism and hegemonic Psychology have had on (re)shaping how domestic violence is conceptualized and acted upon—by the state, by Psychology, feminism, and by the women who have experienced violence themselves. To set the stage for this analysis, in this chapter I first consider the rise of trauma in domestic violence related research, providing an overview of feminist theory and practice related to this area of study, then turn to how trauma discourses have penetrated the feminist anti-violence movement in Ontario. I conclude with a critical commentary on trauma as a manifestation of the twin engines of neoliberalism and hegemonic Psychology.

Domestic violence research in psychology

The study of domestic violence in Psychology has its roots in feminist theory and analysis; feminist analysis has focused how violence against women is always connected to larger contexts and structural dimensions, including the influence of patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, and racism (Johnson, 2011). Indeed, the first feminist critiques of Psychology targeted androcentric bias laden in the epistemologies, methodologies, and content (Eagly & Rider, 2014), while challenging the patriarchal norms that dominated Psychological research and intervention. The work done by feminist psychologists in the 1960s and 1970s served as the

foundation on which extensive critiques of women's oppression were built, and numerous histories of feminist psychology now exist (Austin et al., 2006; Bergeron et al., 2006; Boatswain et al., 2001; Buhle, 1998; Chrisler & Smith, 2004; Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Eagly et al., 2012; Eagly & Rider, 2014; Kim & Rutherford, 2015; Kimball, 1986; Marecek et al., 2003; Parlee, 1992; Pyke, 2001; Ruck, 2015; Russo & Dumont, 1997; Rutherford, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2021; Rutherford & Pettit, 2015; Stewart & Dottolo, 2006). Psychology's Feminist Voices, a digital archival project—itself a piece of feminist Psychology history—led by feminist Psychologist Alexandra Rutherford, is likewise a boon to scholars who invoke the history of feminist psychology in their work and efforts to understand the historical and ongoing subjugation of women and other marginalized people.

Feminist psychology emerging in the 1970s was aimed at disrupting the discourses engrained through mainstream Psychology (Rutherford et al., 2010)—"a radical critique through feminist reconstruction of traditional psychology" (Fine, 1985, p. 168). Concerned with the reproduction of dominant discourses and ideologies regarding sex and gender, feminist approaches have made connections between Psychology and the social context to draw attention to the ways in which the discipline is implicated in establishing and perpetuating such social hierarchies. Domestic violence was but one social problem once long-neglected by science and Psychology that was rendered psychological through the efforts of feminist Psychologists. Midway through the 1980s, Meredith Kimball (1986) suggested feminist Psychology possessed several specific characteristics, namely that is is non-sexist; it is interdisciplinary and considers multiple dimensions of experience as constituting the basis for psychological happenings; it concerns itself with "errors of commission and errors of omission" (p. 249), or the ways in which

men and women have been both misrepresented or ignored in research; and it is imbued with awareness of how research is used for social and political means—an ethical responsibility to use research for social justice and transformation, rather than as a tool of subjugation and oppression. Diane Burns (2000) suggests feminist Psychology can thus be used in two ways: it can be used to challenge the discipline of mainstream Psychology, and should also be used in the spirit of social transformation to enjoin academic feminism with grassroots social activism. Yet, some scholars have questioned the efficacy of Psychology in addressing domestic violence, noting that the discipline's scientific focus on the experience of individuals rarely leads to suggestions that address the social order (Salazar & Cook, 2002). And although the origins of research and theory on domestic violence may be rooted in feminist ideals, not all research on domestic violence is feminist.

Theories and methods

Battered woman syndrome (BWS), first introduced by U.S.-based psychologist and feminist Lenore Walker (1977, 1979), was one of the earliest attempts at conceptualizing the psychological impacts of domestic violence (O'Leary, 2012). Walker defined the battered woman as subject to psychological *and* physical violence and coercion, a change from mainstream understandings of domestic violence, as well as women's suffering, which catalyzed a difference in seeing domestic violence as an experience with lasting and sometimes "invisible" impacts. A torrent of research on BWS burst forward beginning in the early 1980s to establish diagnostic criteria (Appleton, 1980; Walker, 1991), develop theoretical frameworks (Appleton, 1980; Walker, 1989; Walker, 1991; Bograd, 1999; Liang et al., 2005; Dutton & Corvo, 2006; Sullivan, 2018), and identify factors for therapeutic intervention (Appleton, 1980; Bani-Fatemi et al.,

2020; Bornstein, 2006; Johnson et al., 2011; Huston, 1984; Kubany et al., 2004; Millen et al., 2019; Paradis, 2017). Walker's theory of the battered woman has had tremendous transport across time in Psychology, as well as into different disciplines and beyond. For example, the three phase *cycle of violence* described by Walker is seen in a number of Canadian research and policies related to domestic violence (MacLeod, 1980; Government of Ontario, 2005; Ontario, 2018).

Feminist theories of domestic violence have placed emphasis on the social, emotional, and political contexts in and through which domestic violence occurs, bringing to the fore the role of power relations in such violence (Brown, 2004; Burstow, 2003; Pache, 2021). Johnson (2011) put forth a feminist perspective on domestic violence inspired by the narratives of women accessing women's emergency shelters. Johnson's theory focuses on different types of intimate partner violence, distinguishing between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence, where the former is the "prototype" for domestic violence while the latter constitutes the most common form. Grounded in a radical feminist theoretical foundation that assumed and acknowledged the difference in power between men and women, as well as the social and political contexts in which violence against women occurs, psychologist Mary Koss (1990) developed an instrument to measure the sexual victimization of women and mens aggression (Johnson, 2015; Webster & Dunn, 2005). Another feminist theory—the notion of *power and control*—repeatedly emerges throughout the literature, calling attention to the tactics through which violence against women occurs, such as violence, intimidation, and psychological abuse (Arroyo et al., 2017; Davis, 1988; Furman et al., 2017; Hearn, 2013; Herman, 1992; O'Leary, 2012; Russo & Pilot, 2006; Sweet, 2015). Loree Cook-Daniels (2015) applied "power and

control" as a conceptual schema to analyze intimate partner violence within transgender relationships. They focus on power and control tactics specific to trans folks, calling attention to the responsibility of service providers and advocates to educate themselves on the differences. Another study by Scarduzio et al. (2017) considered power and control as a gendered stereotype men are more likely to use physical force and aggression to exert dominance over a woman, while women are more likely to commit violence out of fear or self-defence. Referencing *power and control* 82 times in a 13 page paper, Maldonado and Murphy (2021) probe the relationship between trauma and power and control, conceptualizing the concept as a "trauma-related cognition" as a way of making sense of domestic violence perpetration.

The collection of theories related to domestic violence may lead one to overlook the ways these explanatory frameworks for conceptualizing domestic violence have also been limited. In contrast to feminist approaches, Dutton and Corvo (2006) put forth a notably anti-feminist perspective on domestic violence, suggesting both genders commit violence equally with equal consequences; patriarchy is neither an accurate nor appropriate explanation, rather arguments which invoke this explanation are considered unfounded and purely ideological. Bell and Naugle (2008) do not directly critique feminist approaches, rather, in an assessment of various explanatory frameworks for conceptualizing domestic violence, they suggest that various theoretical approaches (i.e., feminist, power, social learning, situational, personality) have fallen short of capturing the complexity of domestic violence—the act, as well as its outcomes. Indeed, in a review of domestic violence literature from the 1990s, Johnson and Ferraro (2000) suggested domestic violence could not be explained with a single theory or conceptualization given how widely varied and context-dependent this violence is.

PTSD and Domestic Violence

In the first chapter of *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman offers "a forgotten history" of the study of psychological trauma—a commentary on the "intermittent amnesia" experienced by the field—and argued for a revival of the study of psychological trauma, claiming the field had been sent underground "like traumatized people, cut off from the knowledge of our past" (p. 9). Historical and modern conceptions of trauma, she argues, evolved alongside political movements, upon which the Western concept of trauma was built on as a synthesis of these understandings. She articulates the trajectory of trauma in the context of social transformation, drawing connections often between Psychological theories of trauma and violence against women. For instance, with regard to Freud's influential contributions to modern conceptions of trauma, Herman suggests "the dominant psychological theory of the [20th] century was founded in the denial of women's reality" (p. 24) (Freud eventually abandoned his theory, lest he acknowledge the intense social implications of the pervasive reality of gender-based violence). Important in the context of this work especially, Herman attends to the ways the concept unfolded through the feminist movement of the 1970s, through which a language emerged to describe the sexual and domestic violence women had experienced. She outlines not only an argument for the consideration of trauma as an outcome of domestic violence, as well as a new diagnostic category she called complex post-traumatic stress syndrome (c-PTSD) to capture the psychological outcomes of ongoing and repeated exposure to traumatic experiences, but also details the subjective experiences that result from such experiences, including how trauma impacts women's psychological states, and how women's psychological states become reflected in their individual journeys toward recovery. She articulated c-PTSD as a spectrum of conditions

that could best capture the experience of trauma that came as a result of domestic violence, and put strong emphasis on the clinical dimensions of diagnosis and recovery.

Cited over 25,000 on Google Scholar, the presence and influence of Herman's work is undeniable. Yet, in their analysis of Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, Humphreys and Joseph (2004) call attention to the marginalization of crucial elements of her original ideas, namely the role of social supports and social movements in trauma intervention, by hegemonic discourses on therapeutic approaches to trauma. Within the realm of clinical psychology especially, the relationship between PTSD and domestic violence was eagerly accepted and the development of research and interventions abounded, all underscored by an emphasis on professionalized, medicalized and specialized approaches, and taking a distinct departure away from the systems established by radical feminist advocates that were rooted in self-knowledge and mutual support (critiques I will return to later in this chapter). At the same time, Herman's emphasis on the importance of political movements in understanding, challenging, and healing trauma is commonly called upon by critical and feminist scholars (Marecek, 1999; Pache, 2020; Tseris, 2013; Webster & Dunn, 2005).

Feminist approaches to therapy are especially credited as having helped to shift understandings of trauma, to broaden the scope of what is considered to be traumatic so as to acknowledgement that women "are traumatized by everyday violence against women" (Burstow, 2003, p. 1293; see also Herman, 1992). Brown (1991; 2004) outlined distinctly feminist contributions to understandings of trauma, focusing on feminist therapy, models and theories of trauma, and diagnosis and treatment. Feminist therapy emphasizes the social environment and social transformation, engages a critical approach, is counter-hegemonic, and fosters an

egalitarian relationship between client and therapist. Samuels-Dennis et al. (2011) also call attention to the goals of the feminist movement to ensure clinicians and researchers could adequately assess, identify, and treat the impacts of psychological trauma caused by domestic violence. These authors also extend the underlying feminist ideals of trauma to conceptualize an intersectionality model of trauma, which aims at moving away from stress-response frameworks of trauma, which they argue "decontextualize and depoliticize the experiences of women" (p. 55), toward a framework that retains its radical feminist commitments to addressing the political and structural dimensions of domestic violence.

Although feminist values have underpinned the relationship between trauma and domestic violence, it is not always the case that theories of trauma are necessarily feminist. Bessel van der Kolk (1988, 2000, 2007)—a "trauma pioneer" (Anyikwa, 2016, p. 485)—for example, is commonly referenced in literature on trauma (Baird et al., 2022; Peters, 2019; Goodman et al., 1993a; Grabbe & Miller-Karas, 2018; Scrine, 2021; Suleiman, 2008; Tseris, 2019; Zaleski et al., 2016), yet his theory is grounded in biomedical understandings, and tends to marginalize an emphasis on how social, political, and economic factors influence psychological outcomes while focusing on the biological impacts and correlates of trauma in the brain and body (Scrine, 2021). Brain-based conceptions, treatment through the use of psychopharmaceuticals, and the use of talk therapy (liberating repressed memories stuck in the body through speaking about trauma), are core assumptions that underpin the dominant biomedical model (Tseris, 2019). Trauma is commonly conceptualized through changes to the endocrine system, to metabolism and neurophysiology, the sympathetic nervous system, the HPA system (i.e., cortisol, coping, stress), and to adrenal hormones and the immune system. This is

reflected in the literature particularly in recommendations for treatment of PTSD related to domestic violence include primarily cognitive behavioural therapy (Arroyo et al., 2017; Birkley et al., 2016; Iverson et al., 2011; Kubany et al., 2004; Lutwak, 2018; Ontario, 2018; Stewart et al., 2016; Trabold et al., 2020; van der Kolk, 1988, 2000, 2007; Walker, 2015), mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kelly & Garland, 2016), and eye movement desensitization therapy (EDMR) (Brown, 2004; Stewart et al., 2016). Various pharmaceutical interventions are also used for IPV-related PTSD/trauma diagnoses, including benzodiazepines and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) (Lutwak, 2018; Stewart et al., 2016).

This mainstream conception of trauma has now become the conceptual framework through which the psychological experience and outcomes of domestic violence are most commonly understood and attended to (Sweet, 2021; Tseris, 2019). Using the OMNI library through York University, I searched *domestic violence* and *trauma* together and found only 4 peer-reviewed journal articles published before 1980, half of which focused specifically on children. This number has swelled to 6003 in the decades since, with more than 4000 published in the last ten years alone, and literature now abounds on the relationship between trauma and domestic violence (Ansara & Hindin, 2011; Arroyo et al., 2017; Astin et al., 1993; Bell & Naugle, 2008; Baird et al., 2021; Birkley et al., 2016; Campbell, 2002; Goodman et al., 1993a; Goodman et al., 1993b; Houskamp & Foy, 1991; Iverson et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2007; Kaysen et al., 2007; Lang et al., 2002; Lovrod & Ross, 2011; Lundy & Grossman, 2001; Lutwak, 2018; Robertiello, 2006; Sweet, 2019; Tseris 2015, 2019). Since the 1980s, PTSD has been positioned as the most obvious or "accurate diagnosis […] for victims of violence" (Goodman et al., 1993b,

p. 123), while Perez et al. (2012) indicates “the mental health consequence most frequently associated with IPV is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)” (p. 103).

Healing from trauma

Research has brought focus to a wide range of outcomes related to the trauma of domestic violence, from chronic disease, such as heart disease, asthma, and insomnia (Bonomi et al., 2006; Campbell, 2002); to the risk of hospitalization (Bonomi et al., 2006; Campbell, 2002). The mental health consequences of domestic violence have also increasingly become a central focus in research, with certain symptoms becoming nearly synonymous with domestic violence in this body of literature. For example, depression is widely focused on as an outcome of experiencing domestic violence (Ansara & Hindin, 2011; Arroyo et al., 2017; Baird et al., 2021; Bonomi et al., 2006; Campbell, 2002; Goodman et al., 1993a; Iverson et al., 2011; Lundy & Grossman, 2001; Lutwak, 2018; Mantler, 2020; Robertiello, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2018, Trabold et al., 2020)—so much so that some scholars have argued battered women are commonly mistaken for being depressed, and instead suggest the use of trauma theory so as to more appropriately identify and treat victims of domestic violence (Jones et al., 2001). Reduced self-esteem is another psychological outcome of domestic violence appearing in this body of literature, which is often coupled with depression as markers of poor adaption and recovery (Sweet, 2019).

Recovery, growth, and healing have been central to mainstream conceptions of domestic violence related trauma since the early 1990s especially (see Herman, 1992). Without progress, the existence of the trauma is representative of an “unsuccessful attempt at healing” (p. 63), which itself contributes to the creation a new mental schema (or subjectivity)—that of the

traumatized victim (Herman, 1992). Likewise, Sullivan et al. (2018) suggest, “unless these underlying traumas are dealt with, survivors may not be able to achieve increased well-being” (p. 564), while Solomon and Heide (2005) argue that “only after the traumatic memory is fully processed and integrated can homeostasis be restored” (p. 54). In contrast, the traumatized person is out of control, not confident about making decisions about the future, lost between amnesia or reliving, overwhelmed by feeling or else feels nothing at all, experiences an “inner deadness,” and is alienated from the world around them. According to Herman, “the person with unrecognized post-traumatic stress disorder is condemned to a diminished life, tormented by memory and bounded by helplessness and fear” (p. 74), placing emphasis on the importance of identification, of naming and framing experience as trauma in order to engage it in a meaningful and productive way. “Acknowledging the reality of one’s condition and taking steps to change it become signs of strength, not weakness; initiative, not passivity. Taking action to foster recovery, far from granting victory to the abuser, empowers the survivor” (p. 225). Yet, for Herman, “recovery is never complete,” (p. 303) and requires an ongoing and endless commitment to ones own empowerment and identity as a survivor.

Resilience is another important theme emerging out of the literature since the 1990s (Astin et al., 1993; Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Catallo, et al., 2012; Crann & Barata, 2016; Grabbe & Miller-Karas, 2018; Samuels-Dennis et al., 2011; Tseris, 2015; Tsirigotis & Luczak, 2018; Ulloa et al., 2015; Walker, 2015). Lenore Walker (1991) suggested the loss of resilience to stress was a consequence — a permanent scar — of living with domestic violence over time. The positive outcomes of domestic violence are associated with an “absence of psychopathology.. the presence of resilience proxy measures..” (Crann & Barata, 2016, p. 854), positive adjustment and

an “individuals' superior functioning and performance” (Ulloa et al., 2015, p. 89), and strong social supports (Astin et al., 1993). Herman (1992) identified several qualities she assigned to resilient people: they make use of any and every opportunity for purposeful action; they are able to maintain social connection and good coping skills; and they possess the ability to stay calm before and after traumatic event. Scrine (2021) suggests the goals of recovery and healing are inextricably linked to the cultivation of resilience and agency, as well as the imperative to address threats to the nervous system. More and more, resilience and recovery have thus come to be rendered through a neurobiological language (Baird et al., 2022; Lutwak, 2018; Solomon & Heide, 2005; Zaleski et al., 2016), one that has already come to serve as an explanatory framework for trauma, generally (Tseris, 2019).

Women’s shelters in particular have served as important sites of analysis in the literature, as gathering locations from where participants can be drawn and where interventions and theories can be assessed (Astin et al., 1993; Berns, 2001; Ferraro, 1983; Kaysen et al., 2007; Kilpatrick, 2004; Johnson, 2011; MacLeod, 1980; Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Perez et al., 2012; Robertiello, 2006; Symes et al., 2021). Interventions have focused on a number of outcomes, such as leaving the relationship for good (Arroyo et al., 2017; Bybee & Sullivan, 2002); preventing re-abuse (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Campbell, 2002; Huston, 1984); facilitating personal growth, resilience, self development (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Lutwak, 2018; Ulloa et al., 2015); and addressing women’s PTSD and trauma responses (see next section).

The Ontario context

Notions of healing and recovering from the impacts of violence are mentioned for the first time in the archives used in this current work in the early 2000s. Women are characterized as

in a state of disrepair once they have experienced violence, a state which is made more manageable through appropriate services and programs; women who have experienced violence have unique needs which shelters had begun to acknowledge and address through adapted service delivery:

> While in this physical shell of transition their emotional confusion begins to gain some direction. The Director of one House told me "you see some women come here and they're really ugly, but by the time they leave they're beautiful. The physical and psychological rest from constant fear of abuse or the actual battery itself rejuvenates her soul and will to continue. (Ottawa Interval House, 1985, p. 3)

> 80% of the women who come to interval house go on to live a live free from violence [...] women and their children heal their brutal physical wounds and also heal the invisible wounds of a shattered self-esteem […] Our home tells stories: stories of abuse and violence, stories of rebirth and recovery […] what women wanted to help them recover from abusive relationships. (Toronto Interval House, 2003, p. 6)

> Recovering from an abusive relationship […] Ceclia found the BESS program to be so unique because the staff understood her recovery process and her need for emotional support and basic life skills, in addition to job readiness preparation […] anchoring her life in more productive and fertile ground. (Toronto Interval House, 2005, p. 8)

These quotes suggest recovery is implicated in women moving forward in their lives in more productive ways; recovery is a natural part of the process of experiencing violence, which

involves material, physical, and psychological growth and progress. A woman's journey "to healing and independence" requires more than just safe shelter—she must also attend to the psycho-emotional issues stemming from their experiences of trauma (Toronto Interval House, 2016). These needs are to be met in the shelter space. According to the 2017 annual report, residents at Interval House spend "hours of recovery and learning in Women's Group." Women's Shelters Canada (2019) suggest "VAW shelters help women rebuild their lives, heal from abuse, develop resilience , and move towards living violence-free lives" (WSC, 2019). They suggest trauma-informed approaches in particular support women in this healing process, suggesting the work women put into this process leads them toward futures free of violence.

Trauma is mentioned for the first time in this body of research in a letter from an ex-resident of Interval House (1973), referencing the shock women experience when coming into shelter: "the trauma of the geographic separation from familiar surroundings." Other than two mentions of children's lives being traumatized by violence (OAITH 1983a, 1983b), the concept of trauma and trauma-informed approaches do not gain momentum until the mid 2000s, and from 2015 and onward, the concept of trauma seems common-place in the sources.

In a report on barriers faced by women who have experienced violence, Interval House (2016) examines "psycho-emotional issues related to abuse and trauma" (p. 6) and identify the role of service providers in helping women to recover from trauma. Women may experience low self-confidence, low self-esteem, low-motivation, and stress; depression, mental health disturbances, PTSD, and "neurosis" (no elaboration is provided); the normalization of chaos and crisis, and the perpetuation of turmoil in her life; feelings of powerlessness, lack of control, and helplessness. They may not be aware of how resilient they are; the experiences of violence and

trauma obscure a woman's inner strength and capacity for transformation. Specialized counselling (they include no definition of what this entails other than "long-or longer term counselling rather than general or brief counselling" (p. 16)) or psychotherapy are recommended "to help them cope with, and treat, complex issues and/or mental health issues, stemming from their experience of abuse and trauma" and "learn effective coping strategies, receive assistance with setting and achieving goals, or receive help to overcome barriers and challenges, and generally with re-building their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation" (p.16). Recovery from trauma is deemed essential.

A part of the provincial advisory committee project called *Aging without Violence,* the online training *Her Brain Chose For Her* (2019a) by OAITH uses a feminist intersectional analysis to articulate how violence and trauma unfurl across a woman's lifespan, and advocates for the use of trauma-informed approaches in service delivery within VAW sectors. This training introduces anti-violence workers to trauma in the context of gender-based violence, and its relationship to "broader systems of oppression" (p. 7); the "architecture of the brain" (p. 5), and its hierarchical functioning; the trauma response in neurobiological terms; the legacy of trauma —intergenerational and historical trauma—handed down through generations of people who have been oppressed (the intellectual history or depth of these terms is not expanded on, and van Der Kolk is used in the next sentence to explain how the repetition of trauma leads to "the cycle of violence"); the effects of trauma on women's functioning, offering the criteria from the DSM-V; the use of intersectionality—specifically, an awareness of intersecting identities; the influence of trauma on memories and narratives of violence; the threat of vicarious trauma for anti-

violence workers; and the practices of hope, resilience, resistance, and healing to surpass the grasp of trauma.

> The greater the trauma , the greater the risk for alcohol abuse… drug use, depression , suicide attempts, and other negative outcomes. Clearly, we cannot begin to address the totality of an individual's healthcare, or focus on promoting health and preventing disease, unless we address trauma. (OAITH, 2019, p. 28)

The statements "we" must address the individual's healthcare and "we" must address trauma" suggest there is an imperative for those working within the VAW sector to address the insidious impacts of trauma after violence. Trauma is positioned as an individual-level target, as something to be addressed within each individual person; the work of supporting individual women who have experience violence is the role and responsibility of individual workers. OAITH does draw attention to this, suggesting "as well as individuals, entire communities as a collective whole can be traumatized. Individual trauma must be understood within the context of the broader systems of oppression and social disadvantage which impact marginalized women of all ages" (p. 7). They include an entire chapter on using an intersectional approach to working with women who have experienced violence in the context of colonization, oppression, and racism, and draw on decolonial scholar Natalie Clark (2016) to elucidate how intersectionality can move understandings of recovery, resilience, and resistance beyond traditional Western conceptions. At the same time, they fail to acknowledge Clark's argument that the "current construction of trauma continues to create a colonial subject who requires intervention, support and saving," or the explicit connection Clark draws between colonialism and current (dominant) constructions of trauma. They further fail to account for the rich intersectional analysis Clark

provides of how violence is shaped by Western defined framing and discourses of trauma so as to include some individuals and groups while excluding others; how some forms and experiences of violence are seen as valid, while others are not:

> The dominant discourses of "trauma" continue to define violence within normative neo-colonial constructions, thereby functioning to obstruct and erase the naming of certain kinds of violence such as experiences of racism, structural violence enacted through state policy [11], and violence to Indigenous lands through mining and other development. (Clark, 2016, p. 4)

In the same publication, OAITH (2019) also cites the anti-psychiatry sentiments of psychologist Bonnie Burstow (2003) to call attention to the hegemonic frameworks through which trauma has been rendered, inviting shelter workers to think more critically about how dominant systems of knowledge production have influenced how trauma is understood. Their use of Burstow is admirable, though they fail to heed her warning that the "institution is inherently traumatizing" (p. 1300) and that normative hegemonic frameworks, however oriented toward feminism or social justice, can easily be reproduced. For despite their recognition of how oppression, power, and structural disadvantage operate within the context of trauma, they continue to use Western, biomedical and neurobiological understandings of trauma and mental illness, and the use of medical language, such as "recovery" and "symptoms," in framing psychological experience. For example, OAITH uses definitions and symptomology derived from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V) to describe the potential effects of trauma's ongoing interference with a woman's functioning, and suggest treating *all* women as though they have acquired traumatic brain injuries through violence.

Like Interval House, OAITH suggests service providers play a critical role in assisting women to recover from both trauma and violence. In *Her Brain Chose For Her* (2019a), OAITH suggests the role of workers is to explain to women how they are traumatized, using the language of the brain to explain to them what is going on within them as they experience various physiological and psychological effects:

> It may be beneficial for you to explain parts of what you know about the neurobiology of trauma to a client. It might help her to feel less alone, less a stranger in her own body. If you do decide to share some of what you know, try to communicate simply and clearly. Check in often with the woman to see if she's understanding what you're telling her, and to make sure she wants the information you're offering. Look at the interaction not as a lesson, but as an opportunity to connect. (p. 47)

In this narrative, narratives of trauma are interconnected with processes of social transformation; service delivery is oriented around helping women to understand themselves and their experience through the lens of trauma. This orients advocates and the women themselves inward as their experience is conceptualized through the language of the brain, and they learn to articulate their stories through this new lexicon. Connection is integral, according to OAITH, and advocates should "make sure she wants the information you're offering" (p. 47), suggesting a democratic approach to knowledge sharing. This declaration stands in near contrast with the emphasis on Western and biomedical constructions of trauma OAITH (2019a) returns repeatedly through in *Her Brain Chose For Her*, as well as with their focus on individual women entering on healing journeys toward resilience and recovery from violence. The impacts of trauma on women's functioning and the sustained experience of various symptoms—"re-experiencing the

traumatic event over and over; having disturbing memories of the event; avoiding reminders of the trauma; inability to feel pleasure; difficulty focusing; problems with memory and sleep; hypervigilance" (p. 26)—all point toward women being positioned as damaged and in-need of recovery. Although OAITH repeatedly identifies structural factors in perpetuating conditions which allow violence to occur, and thus trauma to develop, they emphasize the importance of women understanding and addressing their trauma in preventing violence in their lives rather than suggesting structural conditions change. Further, intersectionality is offered as an approach to engage a multi-axis analysis of power and oppression, yet its focus is reduced to identity and on individual women's experiences of trauma .

To be certain, OAITH (2019a) purports to maintain a feminist perspective throughout my readings of their organizational documents and publications—albeit, a feminist perspective which is deeply aligned with a mainstream and institutionalized feminism—and calls attention to the importance of extending individual-level understandings of trauma to include broader and more expansive conceptions that understand trauma as existing "within the context of the broader systems of oppression and social disadvantage which impact marginalized women of all ages" (p. 7). Further to their point, OAITH calls attention to the multi-generational impacts of colonialism and racism in Canada, and offer approaches such as "Red Intersectionality," which Clark (2016) elsewhere suggests exemplifies the "rich tradition of Indigenous critical scholars" (p. 7) who call for "methodologies that are rooted in Indigenous sovereignty and are grounded in specific Indigenous Nations' ontologies and epistemologies" (p. 7), as examples of resistance to Western theory and methods. Yet, their focus on "addressing" colonization, oppression, intergenerational trauma and racism" emphasizes trauma-informed practices that are steeped in

Western science and conceptions of trauma. The need for structures to change and transform is never mentioned, but the repetition of dominant constructions of trauma is repeated along with an emphasis on individualization and interiorization. This suggests OAITH's proclamation of feminism is one which stands outside of and at times in contrast to the Indigenous feminisms I have discussed in Chapter Three, particularly in the context of forms of knowledge, as well as violence, which are seen as more or less valid and valuable.

Trauma-informed approaches are promoted in both the provincial (Government of Ontario, 2018) and federal (Government of Canada, 2019) gender-based violence strategies. In the provincial strategy, trauma-informed approaches ensure service providers can "respond safely and effectively to the physical and mental health needs of those affected by [gender-based violence]" (p. 26). These approaches achieve this by allowing workers to understand trauma and how it impacts the lives and behaviours of people, while creating environments that are physically and emotionally safe, as well as "opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection." Through trauma-informed approaches, service providers can support coping and resilience in the folks they serve. Trauma-informed counselling is also mentioned as a key support recommended by the Ontario government in their strategy (2018). I suggest trauma and intersectionality as they have been conceptually applied to VAW exemplify the processes of third way neoliberalism—that is, it seeks balance between political demand and social welfare. Applications of trauma continue to psychologize the experience of violence, placing emphasis on the internal and individual, rather than social and structural.

A poignant example of this process comes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), which emerged

out of the recognition of the deleterious impacts of colonialism on indigenous people in what is now called Canada, and led to the possibility for financial reparations for individuals who had lived through the violence of what was called the Indian residential school system (Cook, 2019). The state-centred approach of the TRC to healing and reconciliation was steeped in and informed by psychological discourses of trauma, emphasizing the sharing of individual trauma and prioritization of a "talking cure," and the proof of damage by virtue of demonstrable psychological harm (Burrage et al., 2022)— "Reconciliation that is grounded in a public confession that performs a form of voyeurism for a mostly settler audience" (Cook, 2016, p. 71). This process exemplifies what Paige Sweet (2019) calls the paradox of legibility, which I discussed in Chapter Three, by suggesting individuals must tell stories of psychological crisis, which also include narratives of healing and recovery. It imposes the need for reconciliation upon Indigenous peoples—the need to speak about one's experiences and histories in an attempt to move on from the past into a newfound "good" or reconciled relationship with the Canadian state. Dian Million (2009) expresses concern over the use of colonial, medicalized conceptions of mainstream trauma to articulate the stories of Indigenous women, which cast these women *only* as individualized victims of trauma on a path to recovery and personal transformation. Yet, as I have discussed specifically in the context of Indigenous and mainstream knowledges about violence, trauma discourse has come to reflect "these epistemological commitments about what counts as legitimate historical knowledge" (p. 74). The emphasis on biomedical and individualized constructions of trauma suggest dominant epistemologies resist the affective forms of emotional and embodied knowledge characterized by Indigenous feminisms,

specifically, constituting a significant way in which such constructions are subject to the projects of Psychology and neoliberalism.

Constructions of trauma under neoliberalism

Marecek (1999) suggested new ways of talking about violence led to the creation of new narrative framework and a feminist lexicon that could describe the experience of women survivors of domestic violence. This lexicon, termed "trauma talk" by Maracek, is damage-centred, using words like trauma, wound, damage, and broken; it is a language that has become an essential part of healing and recovery. Assessment, diagnosis, therapy, and feminism in therapy are all transformed through trauma talk, which reconfigures how women perceive themselves and their experiences, their roles in moving through and forward, in processing the past, and in the expectations they place on the world around them. Yet, Maracek calls attention to how PTSD often evades feminist criticism, despite the fact that it is rendered through an increasingly biomedical frame. Tseris (2019) suggests the promises of being non-pathologizing and contextual endow the concept of trauma with an air of benevolence, which allows it to be positioned as a liberatory tool; because trauma accounts for life histories and social contexts, it appears to be in service to aims of social justice. She suggests "the trauma paradigm seems to offer a counter-narrative, by highlighting the socio-political contexts of women's lives, critiquing the de-contextualised and dehumanising effects of psychiatric labels, and inviting women to disclose their previously silenced stories of abuse and violence" (p. 47). Yet, it is mainly biological discourses of trauma that are used as evidence, framed increasingly through a neuroscientific lens to legitimate the concept further, which ultimately lend a "restricted scope for examining the social relations of power that are important in making sense of patterns of

violence and structural inequalities" (p. 47). Trauma, according to Tseris, with its emphasis on recovery and the need to give voice to repressed memories, reduces the original feminist aims of analyzing and challenging systemic oppressions to a "personal confessions practice," so that social justice and social transformation become background noise while emphasis is placed on the stories and voices of individuals. Narratives of survivorship, resilience, and recovery are brought to the fore as the appropriate language to render the experience of trauma through, while social, political, and economic domains elude true disruptions to their hegemony.

Sweet (2021) argues the language of trauma is a new style of health governance that aligns with techno-scientific transformations taking place across society, within academia, policy, social services, since the 1970s. Framing domestic violence services through the language of trauma has provided a veil of legitimacy and credibility, the attainment of which is an ever-looming concern for services that are vying for state funding (Sweet 2019; 2021). Sweet argues the uptake of trauma discourse by the anti-violence movement in the 1980s and early 1990s represents this awareness and was instrumental in conceptualizing domestic violence as a medicalized phenomenon through the lens of trauma, specifically PTSD. Yet, she also suggests (2015), "critiques of the anti-violence movement often overlook its increasing reliance on the institution of biomedicine for the identification of victims" (p. 333).

Within mainstream Psychology, domestic violence theorizing was undertaken with vigour and rendered through a distinctively biomedical lens (cite). As Pache (2021) suggests, "the framing of violence against women [...] as a health issue tends to be strongly supported by many feminist advocates around the globe" (p. 61). Yet, many scholars have explored how biomedical language has imbued psychological discourse with conceptions of experience that are narrow and

separated from the social context in which they unfold (Marecek, 1999; Maracek & Lafrance, 2021; Pache, 2021). Marecek and Lafrance (2021) point to the reorganization of the DSMIII in 1980 as a reflection of the inculcation of the biomedical perspective into the psychological disciplines. The characterization of violence as a medicalized construct has been widely criticized and theorized both within the domain of psychology (Pache, 2020; Marecek & Lafrance, 2021) and beyond (Riska, 2010; Riemann, 2019; Rojas-Durazo, 2016; Sweet, 2014; 2015; 2019; 2021). Medicalization—" the processes through which aspects of life previously outside the jurisdiction of medicine come to be construed as medical problems" (Clarke et al., 2003, p. 161)—has historically been concerned with the extended authority of the medical system into the lives of the people (Zola, 1972, 1991); the relationship between medicalization and capitalism (Ehrenreich & English, 1979); and the epistemological shift constituting the construction of medical knowledge and its monopoly over health, as well as illness (Conrad, 1992).

Those who critique and resist the medicalization of domestic violence call attention to the way it has been psychologized, individualized, internalized, and decontextualized via its association with a biomedical model and separation from sociopolitical theory and praxis (Lovrod & Ross, 2011; Maracek & Lafrance, 2021; Salazar & Cook, 2002; Stein et al., 2006; Sweet, 2015). One of the earliest critiques on the medicalization of domestic violence comes from Kurz (1987) who examined the response by advocates and service users to the increased role of health care personnel in identifying, intervening upon, researching, and preventing domestic violence. Specifically, this author focused on *resistance* to medicalization, which Conrad (1992) noted in the early 1990s was one of only two examples of resistance in existing

literature. They point out medicalization occurs at the conceptual, institutional, and interactional levels, providing an analysis of the sexist attitudes guiding the responses of medical professionals to battered women.

Thompson (2021) suggests mainstream conceptions of trauma are institutionally produced, grounded in medicalized and individualized frameworks, framing not only how trauma is understood and acted upon, but how individuals must render their experiences of violence through biomedical language that reflects dominant discourses about psychological distress and healing. Lovrod and Ross (2011) echo this:

> In a medicalized context, a PTSD diagnosis launches a range of prescribed approaches to treatment that function together like a social "machine," with implicit and explicit investments in the status quo. Incentives emerge for clients and professionals to adopt increasingly commercialized and pharmaceutal approaches to healing […] Trauma and PTSD diagnoses inevitably reproduce the politics from which they emerge. (p. 45)

Tseris (2019) suggests women commonly use neurobiological language to lend credibility to their narratives, while also constructing their stories and experiences of violence using vocabularies that reflect neoliberal values. Indeed, although trauma and "trauma-informed" practices may claim to take a contextual approach to theorizing, making sense of, and attending to the psychological consequences of violence, social dimensions are commonly looked over in favour of biomedical and neurobiological explanations. Marecek & Lafrance (2021) suggest medicalizing discourse negates the influence of factors such as social inequality and gendered violence by individualizing psychological suffering. They examine how "the trope of trauma" (p. 11) has been reconfigured through medicalized discourse into an individual and internal problem,

one that has been effectively depoliticized and disconnected from the larger social context. The framing of violence through an ultra individualist lens has led sociologist Shannon Peters (2019) to posit PTSD to be "the epitome of the medicalization of trauma" (p. 241), and suggests medicalization under neoliberalism takes on a specific character wherein social inequalities and power systems, such as racism and sexism, are ignored, while creating the conditions for violence to persist.

Criticisms of trauma as a Western concept tend to call attention to the various social, structural, institutional and historical dimensions of the emergence of trauma as a theory in the West (Clark, 2016). Under this paradigm, as Clark argues, trauma becomes a problem for the individual, instead of being seen as a social problem brought about through the enduring and ongoing impacts of colonialism, including its influence on how violence is conceived of and attended to. In their review of the current treatment for PTSD guidelines by the APA (2018), Bryant-Davis (2019) examine the statement on culture/cultural oppression in the guidelines, suggesting it overlooks cultural influences on both how PTSD is conceptualized and intervened upon. Making no mention of oppression, discrimination, cultural modifications to empirically supported treatments, cultural trauma, or culturally emergent treatments, Bryant-Davis argues the document fails to prepare mental health practitioners with adequate knowledge and tools to work with diverse cultures. They suggest the guideline shows the:

> Fundamental assumption of a universal trauma response called PTSD without consideration of the possibility that PTSD is culture-bound and may not fully represent the ways in which trauma effects culturally marginalized survivors [...] a psychology based on research with White middle-class, heterosexual, male, college-educated

> research participants that is then applied liberally to all groups of people. (p. 401)

Statements found in the Psychological literature used for this project, such as: “PTSD is a western invention that falsely presumes that trauma is experienced and expressed in the same way across cultures” (Nagy, 2015, p. 531), “domination of Western constructs of trauma” (Clark, 2016, p. 5), PTSD as a construct is “peculiarly Western” (Stein et al., 2006, p. 2), and “trauma as Psychology conceives it” (Dhar & Dixit, 2022, p. 112) allude to an acknowledgement of trauma —within decolonial scholarship, especially— as a hegemonic discourse, constructed by and through dominant forms of knowledge. As another example, Lovrod and Ross (2011) suggest “trauma, as currently understood in the West, is a product of modernity’s positivist notions of progress, traceable to the rise of industrialization, mechanized combat, risk management, and psychoanalysis, each with distinguishable gendered effects” (p. 44). This cultural imperialism, Tseris (2019) suggests, assumes Western notions of mental health are universal and applicable across cultures, while Western science, including Psychology, sets up and maintains an epistemic boundary around itself (Clark, 2016). Clark suggests:

> The dominant discourses of “trauma” continue to define violence within normative neo-colonial constructions, thereby functioning to obstruct and erase the naming of certain kinds of violence such as experiences of racism, structural violence enacted through state policy [11], and violence to Indigenous lands through mining and other development. (p. 4)

Dhar and Dixit (2022) are amongst a handful of scholars who suggest “the current popular iteration of trauma theory is an example of neoliberal discourse” (p. 109)—a hegemonic discourse that is dependent upon certain assumptions of the human experience, namely the

importance and primacy of interiority, the healing power of psychological processing, the normalcy of “the autobiographical” self, and the necessity to verbalize the past.

The Ontario context is complex, for as I have demonstrated, the uptake of trauma, as well as intersectionality, has been rendered in one sense through an anti-oppressive lens, which at the same time obscures the ways in which neoliberal discourses pervade the concept. At the same time, the notion of trauma has been of tremendous support to many women who have experienced violence, serving as sources of validation and a sense of legitimacy (Tseris, 2013, 2015). Yet, as the examples above suggest, trauma is not neutral, rather it is hegemonic, and it imposes a standard for a neoliberal subjectivity, which must be met in order to be considered legitimate (Sweet, 2019), resilient (Dhar & Dixit, 2022), and productive (Million, 2013).

Traumatized Subjectivities

Trauma discourses appear on the surface to be positive and seem “to offer a counter-narrative, by highlighting the socio-political contexts of women’s lives, critiquing the de-contextualised and dehumanising effects of psychiatric labels” (Tseris, 2019, p. 47). Having emerged out of feminist organizing, trauma is credited with moving Psychology toward a conception of mental health that considers history and context over individual pathology (Burstow, 2003). Yet, as Tseris (2019) suggests, trauma has a "restricted scope for examining the social relations of power that are important in making sense of patterns of violence and structural inequalities” (p. 42), and the “development of a narrow view on the effects of violence, and a disappearing social analysis” (p. 44) imparts a limited capacity to obtain social justice as it personalizes responsibility and negates the need for larger structural changes within social,

political, and economic dimensions. Similar to how Bilge (2013) described the superficial nature of neoliberal intersectionality, Tseris (2019) argues:

> While personal narrative-making about trauma takes on the appearance of political critique, it reduces an analysis of systemic oppressions to a personal confessional practice. This means that when women speak about their experiences of gendered abuse either within therapy or in a more public context, it is not necessarily the case that feminist goals relating to empowerment and a structural analysis of power will automatically follow. Instead, an emphasis is placed on individual survivors, at the expense of perpetrators and – even more importantly – at the expense of a recognition of the political and cultural forces that support rape and gendered violence to continue. (p. 48)

Yet, because "trauma constitutes the middle stage between the political denunciation of violence as oppression and a sometimes reductionist health perspective on violence as harm" (Pache, 2020, p. 17), the neoliberal spirit which occupies the mainstream conception of trauma can be obscured, serving as another source of ambiguity and contradiction. As evidenced by policy and shelter service delivery in Ontario, trauma has become a common lexicon for understanding women's experiences of violence and abuse, thus shaping the kinds of actions women must undergo to make productive use of their trauma. For example, in their call for a national action plan on violence against women and girls, the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transit Houses (2015) suggested trauma-informed counselling should be made available to women both in the short and long term. This aim is reflected in Ontario policy (2018) likewise emphasize trauma-informed approaches to counselling and make increased funding available for psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy in particular. The federal

government (2019) suggested trauma informed approaches support service providers to respond to the psychological outcomes of and to understand trauma, to create environments that are "emotionally and physically safe," and aim to support women's "coping and resilience" through strength-based and capacity-building frameworks.

Tseris (2019) argues psychocentric narratives of trauma emphasize biomedical, deterministic, and reductionistic approaches and understandings. Such hegemonic framings, Tseris posits, reflect the hyper-individualist ethos of neoliberal ideology, which imparts through trauma discourse a neoliberal subjectivity—the traumatized subjectivity. The "aesthetic of resilience" deriving from mainstream discourses on trauma "normalizes the damage inflicted within white supremacist patriarchy, responsibilizes inflicted individuals to manage their own recovery, and celebrates those who are able to overcome the damage" (Thompson, 2021, p. 108). Through this lens, individuals—traumatized subjectivities—are rendered separate from social, political, historical, and institutional contexts, as well as the conditions of power and structural inequality that shape them. Rather than social institutions and power systems—patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism—being seen as problematic and traumatizing, the individual subjectivity is positioned as problematic.

Concluding thoughts

The use of trauma and intersectionality capture the threads of ambiguity and complexity running through this story. I suggest trauma and intersectionality share several similarities, such as their relationship to feminism, and in the ways they have been appropriated—neoliberalized and psychologized—in the context of VAW to cast GBV as an individual problem.

Trauma has become the conceptual framework through which the psychological experience and outcomes of domestic violence are most commonly understood and attended to (Sweet, 2021; Tseris, 2019). Women who have experienced violence are encouraged to see within their trauma—a nebulous concept that is challenging to define—the potential for personal transformation. The identification or even expectation of trauma is accompanied by a call to action to work on oneself, to heal and recover, and to move beyond the experience that has so damaged ones mind and life. This call to action implies a moral imperative to manage personal issues individually by managing emotional suffering *appropriately* through enacting ones agency and autonomy in the spirit of personal growth, recovery, and empowerment.

Doubtlessly, the use of trauma as a concept in the context of domestic violence has been an important source of validation for women who have experienced violence, and is a celebrated concept within feminist scholarship and beyond (Tseris, 2019). Yet, even though trauma is championed as language and concept capable of describing a universal, socially contextual phenomenon—one that can be reasonably understood and compassionately addressed—it is common for trauma to be framed, theorized, and acted upon in ways that reflect a neoliberal ethos. As a theory of political and economic practices, neoliberalism asserts citizens are best off when the government steps back and does the job of upholding the institutional framework for individualism, consumerism, and economic growth to occur in, premised on the assumption that with unfettered capitalism comes unlimited well being (Carlquist & Phelps, 2014). Yet, while it at once promotes values such as individualism and self-responsibility through a rhetoric of choice, the logic of neoliberalism also flattens difference through the assertion that all people have equal access and ability to accrue power and economic status. Failure to succeed within the

market economy, and in society generally, is regarded as an individual fault demonstrative of pathology or deviance (Cosgrove & Karter, 2018). Through neoliberal ideology, individuals are endowed with a sense of personal responsibility to manage and tame any distress they may encounter; there is an expectation citizen-subjects will both govern and discipline themselves, constantly returning to a neoliberal baseline characterized by individualism, productivity and positive affect.

When resilience is framed as a personal quality, a space is created for an us/them mentality to emerge wherein *some* people are characterized as having the "right stuff," while others are still encumbered by their victimhood (Dhar & Dixit, 2022). Critically, structural domains of power must be taken into account when considering the neoliberal character of resilience, as well as trauma. Resilience, for example, is not applied equally to all women. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) argue Black women have been portrayed through cultural stereotypes as "aggressive, resilient, and immune to the effects of violence," (p. 53) equating this sense of resilience with a lesser need for protection or justice. Indeed, as Tseris (2019) suggests, "ideas about what counts as resilient behaviour, growth or strengths are not neutral, but are deeply embedded in dominant power relations and the norms and values of neoliberal societies" (p. 52)

Though it is an underdeveloped area of critical inquiry, some scholars have provided generative critiques of how trauma discourse has been applied to domestic violence, calling attention to a disregard for social, historical, and political influences on violence, as well as to a hyper-individualist focus on the need for personal accountability and self-development implicated through its discourses (Sweet, 2019, 2021; Tseris, 2015, 2016, 2019). Specifically,

these scholars call attention to the neoliberal subjectivity imparted through mainstream trauma discourses, suggesting women who have experienced domestic violence must make sense of their psychological experience through a narrow, hegemonic lens shaped by dominant norms and values. A significant challenge emerging through domestic violence literature used in my research is how to best conceptualize, address and treat the psychological outcomes of domestic violence in women's lives, a project made more complicated under a neoliberal worldview. This invites deeper consideration of how hegemonic Psychology and neoliberalism have existed and continue to exist as interlocking projects to completely reconfigure the relationship of state to the individual. In this project I have aimed to unearth and assess the history and contemporary status of this relationship, so as to imagine spaces for Psychology to exist outside of, rather than enmeshed with, the neoliberal project, an idea I return to in chapter five.

Chapter Five — Discussion and Conclusion

This year marks the fifty-year anniversary of the opening of the first shelter in Canada—Toronto Interval House. A woman who is seeking support might call their toll-free number to speak with a crisis counsellor, or else visit their website, which is enabled with a feature common to all VAW-related websites in the province—a button that says "cover your tracks," which allows users to immediately and discretely hide any browser activity associated with the website (Toronto Interval House, 2023). Currently, women may also view an anniversary timeline on the Interval House website, which charts the trajectory of the movement across the last five decades.

Contradiction and complexity have come to characterize shelter spaces. I must acknowledge the tremendous work done by both organizations since their inception, including their commitments to attending to violence against women and seemingly tireless support of women who have experienced abuse. As a front-line worker within a women's shelter, I recognize intimately the legacy of feminist organizing that exists within the walls of shelter spaces, exemplified in the daily advocacy and support given to women seeking refuge from violence in my community. I have felt the strange ambiguity that comes from working in a space so vehemently opposed to structural inequality and oppression, while at the same time rubbing elbows with the very systems implicated in the violence women I serve experience. As trauma-informed approaches are taken in uncritically, pervading service delivery and shaping programs being offered to the community, I see that women gain a new lexicon with which they can discuss and frame their experiences. Beyond becoming increasingly embedded in service delivery, the language of trauma has been written into policies and procedures, organizational mandates, and trainings, framed almost intuitively through a neoliberal lens.

As I have discussed over the last four chapters, in order to stay alive, organizations have *had to* adapt to the rising tides of neoliberalism as they have swept across Canada since the 1980s. Indeed, after half a century of being in existence, the precarious nature of funding remains a consistent issue for shelters, and both Interval House and OAITH have rendered service delivery so as to appease funders and to align with state policy. In a report from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2022) it was identified that:

> A major barrier to service provision, and survivor s' access to these services, is the long-standing chronic "under-fund[ing]" of the GBV sector in Canada. Burnout among workers in the GBV service sector is among the consequences of this sector's under funding . As a result, this burnout can create a strain on service provision, ultimately affecting survivors' access to these services. Witnesses described conditions for workers in the GBV sector and explained that these conditions are the result of a lack of funding and "systemic devaluing of this form of labour." (p. 38)

In the histories presented in this project, even though service delivery is still grounded in feminist values—this is more overtly expressed in my archival research by OAITH than Interval House— it has a limited contemporary focus on collective action and social transformation, and instead promotes qualities of individual transformation and action. My archival research suggests there has been a rupture in feminist approaches to attending to violence, which I argue has led to this great state of ambiguity. It is not adequate to suggest the movement has been co-opted or depoliticized, rather, such a rupture occurred due to the weight of both internal and broader political/structural changes occurring through the 1980s and 1990s especially. I have suggested these changes have been ushered in by neoliberalism as "an ideology of personal or individual

responsibility" (OAITH, 1996, p. 68), which has led to increased professionalization and psychologization within the feminist anti-violence movement. The emphasis has shifted from social transformation to what women can do to support "living lives free from violence" (p. 72), which includes the parallel projects of criminalization of and healing/recovery from violence. The movement has become a *sector*, and its focus is no longer on emancipation, rather on individual-level advancement or progress, both for women who have experienced violence and for advocates themselves.

Transformation, independence, and self-sufficiency all appeared as themes in my research, trending especially since the 1990s. These shifts have been exemplified in the transition from the collective to the hierarchical, from feminist to evidence-based approaches, and have been contextualized amidst the rise of neoliberalism. I have used the rise of trauma and its use in Ontario policy, shelter spaces, and Psychological literature as examples of the interconnected processes of neoliberalization and psychologization of domestic violence. Somewhat surprisingly, there has been a substantial rise in the use of intersectionality since the 1990s especially within policy, organizing, research and intervention related to violence against women, and the concept has appeared prominently in my research. In the next section, I expand on these trends.

From the collective to the hierarchical

The division between the front-line—that is, the advocates in shelters who work directly with women who have experienced violence, of which OAITH is considered to be part in the context of the current project—and the executive—the leadership team which sits atop the organizational structure of shelter spaces—has been articulated through my archival research.

This divide is further reflected in the demand for funding and in the need to provide immediate service to women; between the preparation of reports and collection of data, and the lived experience of women themselves and front-line workers. As such, the uneasy alliance with and reliance on the state has resulted in a number of contrasting perspectives and positions, which while they may appear as being in opposition or as binary manifestations of the movement, I suggest the boundaries between feminism and the state are neither neat nor distinct, rather the state and feminism have become entwined, creating new modes of activism and advocacy, as well as meaning making and social change, under neoliberalism. I conceptualize these divides as a spectrum, wherein resistance and cooptation, the radical and the institutional, the feminist and bureaucratic, do not stand in opposition to one another, but mix and exist at times in harmony or in tension. This is true not only for the state, and for feminist anti-violence organizing and advocacy, but for Psychological theory and practice.

The value of an intersectional lens is expressed clearly in the archival research for this project, as it has become central to approaches not only within the feminist anti-violence movement, but within federal and provincial policies. As mentioned previously, OAITH (2019a) emphasizes an intersectional approach to understanding trauma in *Her Brain Chose For Her*, even though they limit their use of this framework primarily to focus on "intersecting identities." An expansive perspective is later offered in 2022, OAITH (2022a) when released the training called *Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence* to address the use of intersectional and a social justice-based analysis for examining oppression and racism in gender-based violence. With regards to service delivery, OAITH calls attention to the interconnection amongst adjacent services in *Taking Action* (2022a), acknowledges how individuals exist within communities, and

suggests addressing oppression requires a collaborative and collective approach and understanding and desire for social transformation. According to OAITH, intersectionality is imperative for anti-violence workers to draw on in service delivery:

> Power and privilege compared with marginality, are not opposites. We each contain, in our own social locations, different elements of both, causing a blending of how they interact and intersect in our daily lives, how we work with the women we serve, and how aware we are (or not aware we are) about our privileges. (OAITH, 2018, p. 2)

> [The choice to use intersectional approach is] decidedly political in that we see intersectionality as a necessary approach to dismantling systems of racism and oppression to build a more just and equitable society. This approach is distinct from depoliticized invocations of intersectionality, which strive to be broadly inclusive of all social identity categories but do not address inequitable structures. (OAITH, 2022b, p. 2)

OAITH identifies explicitly the need for service providers to critically analyze how systems of oppression influence and are present in their work, including their individual positionality, in interpersonal relationships with other advocates and women in service, institutional policies and practices, as well as data collection methods, and in their community in the forms of racism, ableism, antisemitism, criminalization, homophobia and heteronormativity, Islamophobia, poverty, structural discrimination and exploitation of migrants, and transmisogyny and transphobia. They argue: “these systems of structural oppression are always already deeply tied to the work of dismantling gender-based violence as these systems are inextricable from women, girls, and gender diverse communities who experience gender-based violence" (OAITH,

2022b, p. 21). The role of anti-violence workers, OAITH suggests, is to destabilize assumptions about gender-based violence, questioning how abuse is defined, and who is included and excluded by those definitions. This reflection captures the orientation toward social justice and praxis so essential to intersectionality (Collins, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Warner et al., 2016), and justifies its use in the context of anti-violence organizing and policy.

Yet, despite this generative use of intersectionality—commonly used alongside the reduced form of "intersecting identities" in my archival research—I contend with Shi (2018) who warns of intersectionality being minimized to "an analysis of oppression that, even as it claims to be systemic, is totally dematerialised and relentlessly individualised" (p. 272). This is a notable concern for OAITH (2022b) in particular, who sets their approach apart as "distinct from depoliticized invocations of intersectionality." Bilge (2013) provides an apt analysis of a depoliticized form of intersectionality specifically under neoliberalism:

> Intersectionality, originally focused on transformative and counter-hegemonic knowledge production and radical politics of social justice, has been commodified and colonized for neoliberal regimes. A depoliticized intersectionality is particularly useful to a neoliberalism that reframes all values as market values: identity-based radical politics are often turned into corporatized diversity tools leveraged by dominant groups to attain various ideological and institutional goals […] knowledge of "diversity" can be presented as marketable expertise in understanding and deploying multiple forms of difference simultaneously—a sought-after signifier of sound judgment and professionalism. (p. 407-408)

This superficially enacted neoliberal intersectionality, according to Bilge, is not only a source of imposed neutrality upon the "radical politics of social justice," but it also serves to

disempower and deter from "intersectionality's credibility and potentials for addressing interlocking power structures and developing an ethics of non-oppressive coalition-building and claims-making" (p. 408). Bilge suggests the institutionalization of intersectionality and feminism leads not just to muted radical critiques, but a contorted interpretation of intersectionality that can be used for the benefit of dominant group to satisfy and perpetuate hegemonic norms and discourses. As Rutherford (2018) suggests, categorical intersectionality—that is, intersectionality reduced to "intersectional identities"—is a psychologized version […] that focuses on identity and subjectivity" (p. 632).

For example, Interval House (2016) discusses systemic and structural barriers (i.e, discrimination, sexism, racism, ageism, socio-economic disparities, legislation, institutional policies) to women's economic self-sufficiency and employability, suggesting "multi-dimensional intersecting identities [of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability] impact the experience of a barrier" (p. 5). Interval House then goes on to elaborate on the "psycho-emotional issues related to abuse and trauma," listing low self-confidence and low self-esteem, low motivation, high stress, depression, mental health, post-traumatic stress, PTSD, neurosis, avoidance, excessive sleeping, insomnia, headaches, and nausea as outcomes experienced by women. They suggest some women experience powerlessness, lack of control, and learned helplessness, while for others "chaos and crisis are normalized, and become a familiar place from which they feel comfortable operating. Therefore they may subconsciously seek out situations that bring about turmoil" (p. 6). A lack of conflict management skills is also noted, which alongside the previous quote suggests women's enduring psychological suffering derives from their own lack and damage. Indeed, each of these "symptoms" and outcomes are

articulated through a lens which individualizes the experience and imperative for healing (to be met through "specialized counselling or psychotherapy" (p. 16)), as well as internalizes and biologizes violence and trauma.

A similar sentiment is echoed in the Government of Ontario's (2018) strategy to end gender-based violence, wherein "intersecting identities" are listed and connected with risk factors related to the structural inequalities they face. At the same time, this policy suggests survivors *carry* the experience of violence within themselves, and require help from social services, the criminal system, the medical system, and from the state to help them "moderate their issues" and move forward from violence and trauma. Although intersectionality is mentioned in this policy, it is reduced to a commentary in acknowledging the various social identities individuals occupy within society, and nowhere in the document is feminism or any form of justice mentioned. Feminism is mentioned in the Government of Canada's (2018) gender-based violence strategy, which recognizes that "individual and groups of people are defined not only by their sex or gender, but also by multiple identity factors that intersect to make them who they are" (p. 21). This policy claims intersectionality has always been central to the approach of gender-based analysis, though no mention of its intellectual history, use as an analytical tool, or orientation toward social justice is acknowledged. In addition, though this policy makes claims to intersectionality, it focuses primarily on the single axis of gender (mentioned 145 times; in contrast, race is mentioned three times; colonialism once; and class, patriarchy and capitalism are not mentioned at all) and on the individualized risks for and psychological outcomes of gender-based violence.

Her Brain Chose For Her (2019a) by OAITH is another poignant example of the psychologized notion of intersectionality. In a chapter called "intersecting identities," they reference the framework of "Red Intersectionality," an Indigenous-framed approach to intersectionality, and draws attention to the importance of acknowledging how larger social structures influence the psychological experience of violence, suggesting advocates ask questions like: "*How are your client's experiences of trauma and coping framed or pathologized in the current health, mental health, justice, and social service systems?"* (p. 43). Although this recommendation invites deeper consideration of the structural conditions which shape and constrain how psychological experiences and outcomes are perceived for Indigenous women, the approach remains psychologized and individualized, immediately inviting advocates to consider how these experiences shape their interactions with women. Other than this three-page chapter, nowhere else in this publication does OAITH mention intersectionality, while the words "brain" and "trauma" are referenced 173 and 240 times, respectively, in the whole document. The article by Clark (2016) is also the only citation provided on intersectionality outside of OAITH citing their own work on intersectionality (2018) and a single newsletter from the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children located at Western University in Ontario. Although in their publication *How Does Intersectionality Work?* (OAITH, 2018), OAITH provides a wider range of citations, they focus their definition on "intersectional identities" once again, and also fail—as they do in *Her Brain Chose For Her* (2019a)—to link "intersectionality's contemporary applications to its origins in women of color theorizing and activism" (Grzanka et al., 2020, p. 307).

As Moradi and Grzanka (2017) argue “citations are an important mechanism through which this scholarship is credited and honored or erased” (p. 502), and that research, teaching, practice, and activism invoking intersectionality should be informed by historical and contemporary literature in order to ensure the “responsible stewardship of intersectionality.” The absence of relevant citations along with a main frame of “intersecting identities” by OAITH aligns with what Bilge (2013) terms neoliberal intersectionality—a depoliticized and disempowered form of intersectionality which evades the critical project and central concern within intersectionality of coalition building across “dimensions of difference [which have] been a hallmark of progressive, radical activism and exemplifies how intersectional problems necessitate intersectional solutions” (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017, p. 508; see also Cole, 2008; Collins, 2017).

What these examples - spread out across policy and the anti-violence movement - suggest is that intersectionality has been increasingly called upon in strategies and policies, as well as in service delivery, in ways that are ambiguous in that they call attention to important and relevant ideas deriving from the study and praxis of intersectionality, while at the same time they flatten the transformative potential of the tool and framework, limiting what can be known through its application, as well as how violence, and concepts such as trauma, can be conceptualized. This might also be framed as depoliticized or disempowered (Bilge, 2013) or irresponsible stewardship (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017), resulting in an impotent and even harmful rendering of intersectionality. Indeed, while intersectionality is invoked in policies and service delivery to acknowledge the complex realities of women who experience violence, such policies and service delivery fail to acknowledge how they are themselves deeply embedded in a structure that must

be socio-culturally, historically, and structurally situated and contextualized, especially in neoliberalism. Under the neoliberal order, where no counter-hegemonic, nor even competing ideologies are allowed to be taken seriously, social and political institutions have been remade in the image of the market, a project which the state protects and enables (McDowell, 2021). As I have shown throughout my research, neoliberalism has become the common foundation for service delivery and policies aimed at addressing domestic violence, shaping how violence is understood and acted upon, as well as determining how social services, such as shelters, can act in conjunction adjacent services like the criminal justice and medical systems, may function and exist. Even while advocacy and front-line work to support women who have experienced violence is much-needed, and is of tremendous value to women all over the province, the extent to which the emancipatory potential of this work is in stark contrast with the ways in which such services buttress—and are part of—dominant discourses and systems.

Building on my analysis in chapter Four, I have explored in this section the contradiction and potential harm expressed in the use of an intersectional approach at the level of feminist anti-violence organizing and state policy, and in the next section attend to how the use of the concept is furthered trouble when it is paired with dominant biomedical, psychologized, and individualized conceptions of trauma. I contextualize this trouble in the shift from feminist to evidence-based approaches, where local forms of healing are dismissed and discredited in favour of modalities and approaches that have are objectively tested and validated, and packaged neatly into diagnostic criteria that evade context in favour of individualistic explanations and treatments., while at the same time the methods implicated in such approaches are celebrated as socially responsible and transformation.

From feminist to evidence-based

Although trauma-informed approaches to domestic violence were initially conceived of as emancipatory methods capable of teasing out and appreciating difference and nuance in women's lives, these radical roots have been transformed by Psychologized neoliberal ideology. The task of workers has become to support women in living in balance with the neoliberal order, and the use of trauma-informed, as well as intersectional, approaches have been important instruments to achieving this goal. I argue this shift in the political motivations of the anti-violence movement is best exemplified in the rise and uptake of trauma, constituting a shift from the radical feminist politics that once served as the foundation both for trauma and the anti-violence movement, toward the primacy of evidence-based and scientized understandings and approaches to attending to violence.

OAITH (2023a) recommends the use of trauma-informed approaches in all areas and systems a woman experiencing violence interfaces with. In *Between Risk and Safety*, OAITH offers a chart outlining a trauma-informed language that can be used in service delivery to support survivors accessing shelters. The digitization of services during the pandemic, and the creation of their online platform "mulberry" in response to this need, reflects this recommendation, the website for which "has prioritized the inclusion of trauma-informed principles within the overall design and functionality, including transparency, collaboration, choice, empowerment and safety" (p. 25). They suggest commonly used risk assessment tools used in Ontario usually fail to make use of or encourage trauma-informed language. They connect the need to use a trauma-informed approach to service delivery with histories and ongoing realities related to the oppression of marginalized groups within Canada and Ontario.

Specifically, they suggest the dominant discourses and power systems informing risk assessment tools—"a Western colonial and carceral framework"—may have tremendous blind spots and consequences for service delivery:

> There may be specific cultural considerations and variations that are not considered within many tools. This may have impacts on the overall efficacy and validity of risk assessment tools among Indigenous, Black, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of violence. Clinicians are typically trained in a Western colonial system, and the majority of risk assessment tools have been developed within that context. In applying a colonial framework to indigenous Peoples, professionals are ignorant to potential cultural differences in various facets of daily life that contribute to both resilience and risk , perpetuating Canada's colonial legacy. Use of these tools both reflects and perpetuates a system that is based on colonial values and excludes Indigenous voices from the narrative. It assumes that constructs of risk are the same cross-culturally, despite evidence to the contrary, contributing further to systemic discrimination. (p. 24)

OAITH draws attention to important structural dimensions of how dominant notions of risk can further subjugate and oppress already marginalized groups, however they do not acknowledge the historical and contemporary role of trauma in shaping and perpetuating dominant discourses, as I have discussed in Chapter Four. The "turn to trauma" (Tseris, 2019) has encoded trauma-informed approaches as a best practice in policy documents, as well as in service delivery, even though trauma is largely a "paradigm that has arisen within particular socio-political and professional contexts, which has been informed by a number of assumptions

that should be viewed with a critical analysis" (p. 6). Yet, OAITH does not extend their critical analysis or even an intersectional lens to trauma, even though, as decolonial scholar Natalie Clark (2016) (whom OAITH cites, omitting Clark's analysis of trauma) suggests:

> Trauma treatment and social service agencies exist within a web of evidence-based treatment approaches that are evaluated, and "proven" through empirical testing and evidence-based research. These "best practices" however are often deeply rooted in Eurocentric perspectives, and biased testing that fails to recognize the realities of Indigenous peoples. (p. 8)

Again, this quote by Clark suggests OAITH has overlooked the hegemonic norms laden in trauma discourses, even as they tout an anti-oppressive, intersectional approach to trauma-informed care. I argue, both the so-called holistic and intersectional approaches taken by Interval House and OAITH, respectively, which I have discussed in previous chapters, are aligned with broader government trends toward the use of potentially emancipatory methods, even as those methods have become increasingly neoliberalized. These approaches are rendered through an individualist frame wherein the imperative to live a life free from violence is the responsibility of each individual woman. For example, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (2022) argued for a National Action Plan that is "intersectional, responsive to the needs of individuals made most vulnerable by systems and takes a holistic approach to include resources and supports for violence prevention, intervention and healing strategies" (p. 79). This publication suggests "trauma- and violence-informed lens that shelters and IPV services apply is very important to effectively address the mental health problems that can result from IPV." Here, intersectionality is invoked to consider how vulnerability and violence are entwined with systemic-level factors,

while at the same time "prevention, intervention and healing," as well as addressing psychological "problems" are positioned as an individual-level pursuit. This framing represents the increased psychologization of shelter spaces since their inception, where women accessing services in shelters are expected to enter into a constant state of working on themselves to gain freedom from the trauma that shapes their reality, embodying the neoliberal logic that underlies conceptions of this neoliberal trauma.

Women find trauma-informed approaches and conceptions of their experience at every turn: in shelters, the criminal justice system, the medical system, government policy, in counselling, and self-help literature. The insidious emphasis on trauma indicates that even while structural inequality may be a significant cause of women's vulnerability to violence, the path forward involves individual-level action, rather than structural change. I turn to another example outside of OAITH and Interval House to demonstrate further the notion of an "insidious emphasis on trauma," which pervades policy, service delivery, and subjectivity. What is important about this example is that it comes from a critical feminist perspective, yet uncritically invokes trauma as integral to understand and attending to women's experiences of violence.

In a position paper published by Nellie's (2019), another long-lived women's shelter in Toronto, Ontario, a critical feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppressive lens is used to analyze the intersection of interpersonal violence against women and criminalization in Canada. They make an important distinction between what the criminal justice system purports to do (i.e., serve and protect) and what the legacy of Canada's legal system has amounted to. They acknowledge "criminalization not just as people experiencing arrest, contact with the law, criminal convictions or incarceration, but as a systemic targeting of oppressed and marginalized people." Nellie's

suggests women who use substances, experience poverty, are Indigenous, are Black, do sex work, experience mental health issues, are trans, and/or are genderqueer or non-binary are all more vulnerable to criminalization. Inadequacies of responding officers in dealing with or understanding certain situations (e.g., mental health, trauma), as well as existing bias and discrimination within this system and in Canadian society generally. In this document, Nellie's suggests there are numerous psychological consequences of criminalizing women who have/are experiencing violence—"not only does she have to heal from the trauma she experienced from her abuser; she also has to heal from the trauma of criminalization, financial loss, child custody issues, and loss of employment" (p. 9). Trauma-informed approaches are mentioned as essential to supporting the psychological well-being and healing of women who have both experienced violence and been criminalized as a result of it.

The imperative for psychological healing and well-being—to "heal from the trauma"—is a manifestation of the rhetorics of recovery and resilience I discussed in Chapter Four. The work women must do involves being able to move on from their experiences of violence, an imperative that has been repeated through the literature and archival research I have used in this project. It renders women's experience through a specific lens and requires specific responses following violence; women's experiences are framed through the language of trauma and, according to Sweet (2019), become the language through which women in turn must frame their experiences as they navigate myriad social structures in the wake of violence. Sweet suggests women "must make themselves into neoliberal citizen-subjects," (re)constructing themselves as victims on the path to becoming survivors, the process of which is facilitated by dominant discourses on trauma. This process—which I have argued is reflected in the Ontario context—

imparts a traumatized subjectivity as the ideal neoliberal subject. As argued by Tseris (2019), this ideal subject is entangled in the neoliberal logics of the therapeutic state and the imperative for psychological rehabilitation following the experience of violence. In the next section, I draw on the work of Emma Tseris (2013, 2015, 2016, 2019) to explore how the use of trauma and trauma-informed approaches within anti-violence policy, research, intervention, and organizing have been influential in shaping and imparting traumatized subjectivities. Specifically, I argue this insidious growth of traumatized subjectivities has occurred since the mid-1990s in Ontario when neoliberalism began to embed itself in the political and economic structure of Canada.

My goal in this work has been to trouble the role Psychology has played in imparting mainstream conceptions of trauma, as the parallel projects of the neoliberalization of Psychology and the psychologization of neoliberalism. In the next section, I consider the potential for an emancipatory intervention within Psychology, to (re)imagine how domestic violence could be conceptualized and intervened upon in ways that exist outside the bounds of the web created between Psychology and neoliberalism.

Resistance — Standing outside the hegemony

Within the academic domain of Psychology, trauma exists with a kind of epistemic primacy imbued with the qualities of western science (Tseris, 2019). Rendered through a scientist, objectivist, positivist lens, trauma discourses reflect the way subjectivity and objectivity seemingly exist in opposition to one another within the academy, wherein, as suggested in Teo (2019), to go inward implies moving away from the outside, a value laden move imbued with underlying ideological commitments to positivist science. Feminist psychological critique has honed in on the failures of such epistemologies, orienting toward the importance of social-

political analysis and the centering of embodied experience in theory and praxis (Rutherford, 2018; Thompson, 2021). Thompson argues feminist analyses have much to offer to trauma, expanding its explanatory potential by accounting for the role of institutions in knowledge production about trauma, suggesting "contemporary psychological conceptions of "trauma" reflect a broader disciplinary problem in mainstream psychology, which avoids complex concepts such as power, ideology, discourse, social relations, and institutional practices" (p. 110). Indeed, traumatized subjectivities, according to Thompson, are regulated and controlled, as well as constantly (re)produced, through dominant narratives about trauma stemming from institutional power. Feminist theories of trauma originally included socio-/intra-/inter-subjective dimensions (see Herman, 1992), though mainstreamed conceptions of trauma have largely eradicated the need to consider the socio-subjective nature of trauma, including how to go about addressing the larger structural/institutional conditions that perpetuate it. This shift reflects the epistemic norms and values of hegemonic psychology, for instance, the neurobiological essentialism that has risen to prominence within trauma literature and research within the last 20 years (Marecek & Lafrance, 2021).

In the case of trauma, the intense focus on the internal experience of the individual, measured and validated from the outside, needs to be addressed and (re)reconfigured through a lens that considers more deeply the implications of viewing persons in this reductionist and simplified way, rather than in the context of historical and sociocultural unfolding. Thompson (2021) suggests critical psychologists should draw distinct and clear connections between the violence perpetuated at the institutional level, and the institutional nature of trauma itself. The formation of traumatized subjectivities is then implicated in this larger structure, as well as

regulated by it, if we take seriously the idea that discourses, knowledges of, and experiences of trauma are controlled and constrained by institutional hegemonic discourses. To do so, Thompson argues we must "decouple understandings of trauma from the individualizing logics of diagnostic imperialism, biological (mal)adaptation, and "resilience", which function to regulate traumatized subjectivities, responsibilize individuals for recovery, and privatize psychological suffering" (p. 115).

As Tseris (2019) suggests, there is a need for critical approaches to challenge and resist hegemonic and neoliberalized forms of trauma that produce traumatized subjectivities. Likewise, Rutherford (2018) suggests critical feminist psychologists are particularly well-poised to challenge the ways in which Psychology has colluded with the neoliberal subjectivity. I invoke the notion of epistemic modesty to elaborate on this assertion, which Teo (2019) suggests stands in contrast with epistemic grandiosity. Epistemic modesty is a value that emerges when understanding subjectivity in its full complexity, involving the recognition of the historical, cultural, and personal limitations of knowledge, and going beyond culture-centric knowledge. Humility, creativity, collaboration—qualities of such modesty—align well with Rutherford's (2018) invocation of reflexivity for critical feminist researchers, so as to ensure the ongoing and consistent interrogation of our value systems and methods.

Tseris (2019) offers a helpful starting point when critically analyzing constructions of trauma. Researchers must consider whose voices are being heard in theoretical frameworks and interventions, whether professional power is being extended or subverted, and how professionals benefit from certain versions of trauma. Is the biomedical paradigm being extended or questioned, and are normative or transformative views of "illness" and "dysfunction" being

utilized? Finally, is a bigger-picture analysis of social and political structures possible? Such considerations fit neatly with Thompson's (2021) suggestion for a critical feminist analytic of trauma, which more seriously and deeply considers the nuance and complexity that takes place through trauma. Traumatized subjectivities may then be (re)conceptualized, considered beyond individualistic constructions of suffering as a personal and private issue. Such a framework (oriented toward both theory *and* a socially justice-informed praxis) might allow psychologists not only to consider how trauma might be thought of in new ways, while at the same time resisting the structural conditions in which it unfurls and is produced.

Throughout this project, I have drawn on concepts from intersectionality to inform how I have analyzed and conceptualized my research, and have examined how the concept has been taken up by the feminist anti-violence movement itself. As part of an emancipatory intervention, I believe shifting understandings and applications of intersectionality within service delivery, research, and policy could reinvigorate the institutionalized and depoliticized forms of the feminist anti-violence movement. Indeed, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) aptly suggested the work done in shelters is not singular or one-dimensional, rather the experience and outcomes of violence are always interconnected with other dimensions of experience:

> Shelters serving these women cannot afford to address only the violence inflicted by the batterer; they must also confront the other multilayered and routinized forms of domination that often converge in these women's lives, hindering their ability to create alternatives to the abusive relationships that brought them to shelters in the first place. (p. 1245)

Drawing on critical race scholar Patricia H. Collins (1998), Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) suggested "Successful anti-violence coalition building requires a view of violence grounded in

intersectionality, critical self-reflection by participants regarding their own responsibility for perpetuating oppression, and empathy (not sympathy) for the suffering of others" (p. 57). Feminist anti-violence organizations, as well as feminist scholars, would benefit from expanding their invocations of intersectionality by enjoining their concepts with critical insights about the hegemonic framings of trauma that derive from mainstream Psychology, while also taking more seriously the unique forms and sources of knowledge about violence and trauma that exist inside and outside the academy. Warner et al. (2016) suggested intersectionality "disrupts traditional paradigms in psychology" (p. 174) by focusing on social justice, dismantling "dominant knowledge production by employing subversive methods and asking subversive questions" (p. 173). Truly honouring the radical potential of intersectionality—as well as feminism—entails disrupting the status quo, of which Psychology is not only a part, but also helps to shape and perpetuate (Cole, 2009; Grzanka et al., 2020; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Syed, 2010; Warner et al., 2016). Montoya (2021) suggests:

> Residing at the intersection of multiple marginalities is not the same as developing an intersectional consciousness or politic. While positionality may provide some degree of epistemological privilege in the recognition of unequal societal structures, intersectional mobilization requires a more agentic orientation to dismantle them, and one that might be adopted more broadly. (p. 5)

This invites feminist organizers, advocates, and researchers alike who engage with intersectionality in the context of domestic violence to reflexively consider how they "understand and frame their mobilization, mission, and values" (Montoya, 2021, p. 7).

Conclusion

A question I return to repeatedly is whether the transformations trauma and intersectionality have undergone in order to fit into the neoliberal order comfortably have altered the movement in ways that are irreparable. What concerns me most is whether these concepts have become fetters themselves, further entrenching neoliberal subjectivities in advocates and women who have experienced violence alike. How does the emphasis on trauma change how women experience and interpret themselves? How does it change how advocates work with and understand the women they serve? In essence, do these concepts act as a prison more than they serve as revolutionary tools of fighting hegemony? This is a poignant concern given that the framing that now appears necessary to gain women support is the very framing that may also be used to deny or perpetuate their need for it - that is, women who have experienced violence must be seen as independent and accountable to their own healing, negating the need for social, economic, and political institutions to change. Further, conceiving of intimate partner violence as something perpetrated by one person against another ignores the ways in which interpersonal violence is interconnected with other structural forms of violence. It forces women and advocates to act on experiences of violence in very specific ways, namely through the criminal justice and medical systems, which for many women constitute significant barriers to accessing support. In some cases, women may also be criminalized in the process of seeking justice through these avenues. These questions and concerns may be more fully assessed and attended to in future research.

As a feminist activist and psychologist, and as an advocate working within a women's shelter, I have an intimate understanding and lived experience of existing amidst such

complexity and contradiction. The shelter is in many ways a liminal zone, a space of transition wherein women themselves are confronted with numerous systems urging them to transform, to carry on, and to free themselves from violence. As someone who exists on multiple planes—within academia—Psychology, in the context of this project—within social services, and within grassroots spaces—I have unique insight into the trappings and failings of the feminist anti-violence movement.

While shelters and transition homes have in some ways maintained a vibrant tradition of grassroots advocacy and feminist philosophy, they must also work within a bureaucratic state structure, which at times means working alongside systems of power that are otherwise challenged and even resisted in other manifestations of feminist theory and praxis. Yet, while I argue that the potency and spirit of feminist action is necessarily constrained by its close involvement with and reliance on the state, it is important to draw attention to the lineage of organizing for violence against women in Ontario, offering a more nuanced and complex understanding. For example, the Ontario Women's Justice Network (2023) and METRAC (2023) are dedicated to helping women to understand what abuse is and provides general legal information about women's rights. In their fight against gender-based violence, these organizations advocate for policy change, raise awareness, and support women in navigating the legal system. Indigenous feminist scholar Elizabeth Brulé writes about the REDress Project, an art installation and initiative at York University to reflect the absence of prevention and education programs that address sexual violence on campuses from an Indigenous feminist antiracist perspective. Palacios (2016) highlights how "numerous Indigenous feminist organizations led by Indigenous girls and women have been challenging calls for a Canadian-

based national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women" (p. 142). Informed by Indigenous philosophical context, they focus their anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist organizing work on self-governance, education, health care, and economy, engaging a "politics of resurgence" by using their own methods to lead efforts in response to the violence against missing and murdered Indigenous women. Such efforts make explicit connections between the inadequacy of state-sanctioned responses to violence against women, and the oppressive role of the Canadian government in perpetuating structural violence and inequality through the enduring and historical processes of colonialism, patriarchy, and imperialism (see also Sunseri, 2000). In the U.S. context, grassroots feminist anti-violence groups such as INCITE! (2016) have yoked together the interests and motives of radical feminism with abolitionist theory and praxis. In *Abolition. Feminism. Now*., Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth E. Ritchie (2022) draw attention to the history of feminist anti-violence organizing by Black women, Indigenous women, and immigrant women, also bringing to the fore the intrinsic connection between state and carceral violence, and gender-based violence. These longstanding activists and groups within the anti-violence movement demonstrate the radical roots of feminist organizing continue to feed and nurture the movement today.

This current project offers a critical history and analysis that examines a movement which emerged out of grassroots efforts and almost immediately entered into a delicate dance with the state. This dance has been explored from several perspectives—as the depoliticization and co-optation of feminist organizing by the state (Brodie, 2008; Bumiller, 2008); as a progressive movement wherein the original intentions of the movement have been successfully implanted into the infrastructure of the state, as is the case with an established criminal justice and medical

system response (Kipatrick, 2004), as well as with Ontario and Canadian policy, especially (Government of Canada, 2019; O'Neill, 2017; Government of Ontario, 2018; Paterson & Scala, 2021a, 2021b; Status of Women, 2002). Yet, as I have already suggested, the notion of a stable or unified "original intention" of the feminist anti-violence movement is itself ambiguous, and forecloses on the possibility of multiple and co-occurring movements, along with their diverse, at times overlapping and at other times diverging, goals, intentions, and strategies. Certainly, the varying forms violence takes—as a crime (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Ferraro, 1996; OAITH, 1983a, 1983b, 1990, 2018); Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989; Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982; Strid & Verloo, 2020), a medical concern (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Appleton, 1980; Sweet, 2015), a political matter or social concern—demonstrate the multi-dimensional nature of organizing and the multiple paths such work has carved out of the social, cultural, political, and institutional landscapes since the 1970s.

In the previous chapters, the themes of complexity, contradiction, and ambiguity are the unifying threads which suture together the worlds of the state, Psychology, and feminist organizing for violence against women. As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, Psychology has been an influential force in how shelter spaces and the networks in which they exist have developed over the last five decades. I argue the feeling of ambiguity imparted by these conflicting narratives are far more nuanced and complex than afforded by a lens which considers the movement to be deemed either impotent or strategically bureaucratic. The bidirectional relationship between the state and academic disciplines—Psychology, in particular —which have helped shape understandings of outcomes of and responses to domestic violence, further complicate this story. For the concepts—trauma, in particular— that have come to

characterize the experience of violence, have not only been shaped by discourses—neoliberalism, specifically—taken up by the state since the 1970s, but have in turn influenced and extended, as well as internalized, such discourses.

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