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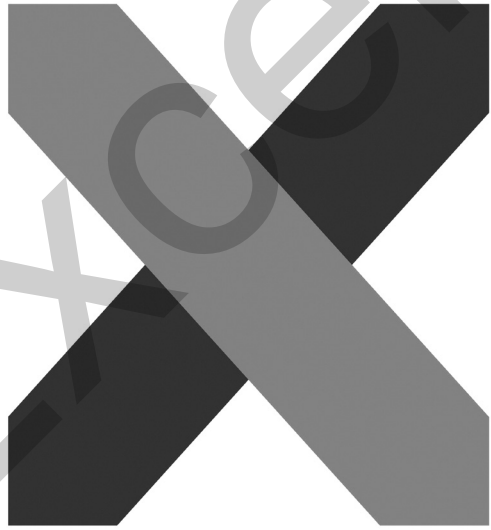

Ineligible

SINGLE MOTHERS UNDER WELFARE SURVEILLANCE ***Krys Maki***

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Acronyms

ASI	Addiction Services Initiative
BTP	Business Transformation Project
CAP	Canada Assistance Plan
CAS	Children's Aid Society
CCP	Common Cause Procurement
CERB	Canada Emergency Response Benefit
CHPI	Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative
CHRT	Canadian Human Rights Tribunal
CHST	Canada Health and Social Transfer
CSL	Canada Student Loans
CSUMB	Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit
CVP	Consolidated Verification Process
ERO	eligibility review officer
EVP	Eligibility Verification Process
FCMS	FRO Case Management System
FNCFS	First Nations Child and Family Services
FPE	feminist political economy
FRO	Family Responsibility Office
HSF	Housing Stabilization Fund
KCAP	Kingston Coalition Against Poverty
ICT	information communication technologies
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs
KCAP	Kingston Coalition Against Poverty
LICO	low-income cut-off
MBM	market basket measure
MCCSS	Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
MECA	Maintenance Enforcement Computer Assistance
MMIWG	missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls
NPM	new public management
OACAS	Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
OCAP	Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
OCB	Ontario Child Benefit
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program
OPS	Ontario Public Service
OSAP	Ontario Student Assistance Program
OW	Ontario Works
OWA	*Ontario Works Act*
PA	participation agreement
SAMS	Social Assistance Management System
SDA	Special Diet Allowance
SDMT	Service Delivery Model Technology
SPP	Special Priority Policy
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
VAW	violence against women

Introduction

Welfare Surveillance, Regulation, and Mothering on the Margins

Poverty carries a lot of stigma and shame. Those of us who grew up poor know all too well the creative strategies and diversions we come up with to hide our struggles to fit in. Poverty and being fatherless was something that I felt shame around and spent a lot of energy concealing and avoiding when asked about my homelife. Because I worked so hard at hiding these realities, I did not think that anyone cared about the poor, the struggle, the stigma, the trauma. I was luckier than most. My mother was loving, fun, and full of life despite the multiple jobs she held down as a young single mother raising two kids on her own. When we had to move across the country and leave our life behind and start over, she had few options but to go on welfare until she could get back on her feet. The harshness with which she was judged and treated — including the sting of town gossip and moral judgment specifically because she was single, young, and receiving social assistance — was unyielding. The absence of a husband made her suspected of all kinds of immoral doings, from sleeping around to drug addiction. I knew this because my classmates would taunt and tease me; as a young child, it was humiliating and I internalized this stigma. I carried this pain with me for a long time, hidden deep down, until it was pulled out of me unexpectedly in a lecture hall.

I never imagined writing a book about welfare, surveillance, or the regulation of poor single mothers, especially because it was so close to home, an uncomfortable home from which I had spent a great deal of my life distancing myself. During my undergraduate degree, I had not come across research or writings on poverty and the experiences of single mothers until my final year for a course on gender and the welfare state. When I first read Pat Capponi's *Dispatches from the Poverty Line* and Margaret Little's *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit* I was moved so deeply that I could hardly articulate my thoughts about these readings in

my seminars. I found myself having to leave class during documentaries about poverty, especially when it zeroed in on the intersections of family and state violence. In some ways I felt exposed and raw, yet I also felt seen and my experiences validated for the first time as I had not seen struggles of poverty, as well as defiant resistance, from the perspectives of women and single mothers reflected in the course content until then.

I was inspired by anti-poverty and feminist writers and thinkers who were committed to exposing the injustice and unearthing the everyday experiences and resistance of what it was like to be poor in a system designed to break us — including those who actually lived it or were embedded in anti-poverty activism. I was called to anti-poverty activism and research because I felt affinity with these women's stories and a part of me thought I could heal my own pain by confronting the injustice. A rich body of anti-poverty, feminist, social-legal, and anti-racist research had documented and challenged Ontario's neoliberal welfare reforms of the 1990s and the impacts on single mothers, yet few had examined the multi-layered welfare surveillance apparatus and the accompanying privatization of social services. Welfare surveillance became my entry point and added a new lens and exploration on the criminalization and stigmatization of poverty in Ontario.

When I sat down to interview Marie in my home, I was reminded of the tenacity of single mothers who find creative and necessary means to survive. She shared her past strategies, which would be largely impossible to hide with the sophisticated technologies used by Ontario Works (OW) today. Marie shared that she was "completely opposed" to surveillance: "instead of the whole belief that you're innocent until proven guilty … it's a system where they're out to prove you guilty." Prior to the welfare reforms and anti-fraud surveillance technologies of the mid-1990s, she worked under the table bartending and waitressing. While an underground service economy still exists today, it is much harder to hide this from welfare authorities, especially if it is not paid in cash, as they can access bank account statements as well as mandatory reporting for any additional income. Additionally, employers can use this to their advantage and leverage it to coerce workers to work longer or do tasks outside of their job descriptions. Tara shared that she faced discrimination as a Black single mother in her under-the-table job, which she took to help pay for her medication not covered by the OW drug card. She feared that they would report her to a welfare fraud hotline if she refused unsafe

work or additional hours. She had no recourse or workplace protections, and her employer used this to further exploit her. This was a common feeling among the women I interviewed: many felt criminal and "bad" for needing financial support following a separation, fleeing abusive situations, succumbing to illness, loss of employment, or a combination of these life crises.

My interviewees shared countless stories of how they felt that very little of their lives escaped the gaze of Ontario Works. Most troubling was how this invasive and penetrating gaze invaded their personal lives, including romantic relationships, where they bought their groceries, how they balanced their budgets, and how they parented. For instance, I interviewed two sisters who shared that they felt that even their sex lives were monitored by welfare. They were worried about how often their partners came over and if the neighbours would "rat them out" to the fraud hotlines. This was further complicated in situations where there was shared custody and parents were doing their best to co-parent. Fiona was shocked that she faced an investigation for welfare fraud after her caseworker found out she had been at a community fair with her ex-husband and children. Investigations, surveillance, and accusations of fraud made single mothers feel criminal, and they feared for their future and the custody of their children as investigations could trigger the involvement of child welfare authorities (managed by the Children's Aid Society). They shared painful examples of how welfare surveillance went beyond the walls of welfare offices and included community surveillance. Even charities like food banks increasingly employ file and electronic surveillance to determine eligibility for basic needs.

My study revealed that welfare surveillance has evolved, and home visits and inspections have largely been replaced with a much more sophisticated apparatus of surveillance, regulation, and social control. Today, welfare surveillance goes beyond the face-to-face and bureaucratic demands on women to provide constant "proof" that they are deserving. Powerful computer databases initiated in the late 1990s include algorithmic surveillance to weed out allegedly widespread fraud, and this automated system uses risk criteria to alert caseworkers of potential fraud and issues automatic letters to recipients when a file is "red flagged." Receiving these letters made single mothers' hearts skip beats, and the threat of financial punishment was experienced as a coercive form of economic violence enacted by the state. The letters threatened to cut off benefits, criminal

fraud investigations, and file review for reasons often outside of their control and of which they had been completely unaware. Women felt powerless in the system — as Annie described, "like a puppet on a string."

Policies, and the rules and regulations attached to them, are not neutral; they have real impacts on people's lives. The sophisticated surveillance technologies that have evolved are embedded with biases and assumptions about poverty that date back to the earliest state supports for the poor. Over the past decade and countless hours I spent with single mothers, anti-poverty activists, social policy analysts, and caseworkers, I have learned that the welfare surveillance apparatus is purposeful and has wide-reaching social and political consequences for poor people. The criminalization of poverty, the ever-shrinking welfare state, the privatization of social services, discrimination, and social exclusion are just some of the many ways that welfare surveillance impacts low-income communities. I undertook this study with two key goals: 1) to understand and map the welfare surveillance apparatus; and 2) to understand welfare surveillance from the perspectives and experiences of those who endure this surveillance as well as those expected to enforce it (caseworkers).

The Feminization of Poverty, a "No-Win" Situation

Nationally, over 2.4 million women and girls are living on a low income — a rate of 13.8 percent (Statistics Canada 2016a). Women make up 81 percent of lone parents (Statistics Canada 2015) and single mothers have been identified as being at "high risk" for poverty (Lankin and Sheikh 2012). While women are more likely to experience poverty, single-mother families are at a particular disadvantage as they are often forced to take part-time, poorly paid jobs to meet their childcare responsibilities (van Berkum and Oudshoorn 2015; Vincent 2013). As of 2021, single adults without children make up the majority (61 percent, n=200,231) of cases on social assistance in Ontario. However, when accounting for total beneficiaries (including dependants), lone parents and their children are the largest group of recipients (48 percent, n=372,288), with over 93 percent of lone parents headed by women (Zon and Granofsky 2019; MCCSS 2021).

While we must account for how the feminization of poverty is experienced differently depending on one's social location, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability, we must also acknowledge the systemic factors that perpetuate this process generally. Unfortunately, Ontario Works does not collect this data, which prevents researchers from gaining a

deeper understanding of social assistance recipients. There are many overlapping and compounding systemic factors that keep women poor (Wallis and Kwok 2008). Race- and gender-based labour market exclusions, discrimination, and lack of opportunities to advance all prevent women from leaving poverty and the ranks of the working poor (Block, Galabuzi, and Tranjan 2019; Katshunga et al. 2021; Wallis and Kwok 2008). Persistent gender stereotypes about "women's work" in the home and the simultaneous devaluation of this unpaid care work erases this labour, which contributes to "double" and even "triple" days for women in paid employment (Bezanson and Luxton 2006). Women's labour market participation is also significantly obstructed by a lack of affordable childcare. Adding to all of this, domestic violence, one of the leading causes of women's homelessness, contributes to financial precarity and housing instability, creating even more vulnerabilities to poverty (Maki 2017; Schwan et al. 2020). Finally, after decades of neoliberal reforms, the eroded welfare state fails to support women when they experience financial hardship — social assistance payments remain far below the poverty line and the various systems of support (social housing, etc.) are insufficient and disconnected, resulting in ineffective overall responses.

The feminization of poverty is deeply intertwined with systemic racism, as seen in the Canadian labour market. The 2016 Census demonstrated that 20.8 percent of people of colour are low income compared to 12.2 percent of non-racialized people (Statistics Canada 2016c).[1] Accounting for gender, racialized women face higher levels of poverty: 65 percent of families led by single Black mothers are poor compared to 26 percent of families headed by white single mothers (Katshunga et al. 2021; Statistics Canada 2016a). Racialized women, both immigrant and Canadian-born, are often segregated into non-unionized, precarious, low paying jobs with few or no benefits, frequently in the service sector or care economy (Block, Galabuzi, and Tranjan 2019; Galabuzi 2006; Katshunga et al. 2021). The gender and racialized pay gap is also a factor, with racialized women earning fifty-nine cents in comparison to non-racialized men and eighty-seven cents per dollar compared to non-racialized women (Block, Galabuzi, and Tranjan 2019: 14). Since racialized women are segregated into low-paying and precarious work, "employment offers little protection from poverty" (Katshunga et al. 2021). For Black women specifically in the greater Toronto area, "one of the highest rates of working poverty was among Black women at 10.5 percent," which was more than double

the rates for white female workers (4.7 percent) (Katshunga et al. 2021). Systemic discrimination and racist labour market policies, including in the social assistance process, perpetuate a cycle of poverty that makes it difficult for racialized women, especially single mothers, to get ahead.

The Canadian state delineates Indigenous Peoples into three distinct groups — First Nations, Métis, and Inuit — with each group having many distinct cultural groups within. As a result of a long history of colonialism, systemic racism, and sexist discrimination, Indigenous women face some of the highest levels of poverty in Canada (MMIWG 2019; NWAC 2019; Yerichuk, Johnson, Felix-Mah and Hanson 2016). The social and economic marginalization experienced by Indigenous single mothers puts them at further risk for violence — at the state level (systemic violence), at the institutional level (education, health care, housing, social assistance, etc.), and as individuals (domestic violence, non-partner violence, lateral violence, etc.) (MMIWG 2019). There is a paucity of research and data exploring the poverty of Indigenous mothers, and much of the literature focuses on children's poverty instead. However, the existing research does provide insight into the disparities. A 2019 report co-published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Assembly of First Nations found that more than half (53 percent) of First Nations children on reserve live in poverty; those off reserve (41 percent) as well as non-status First Nations children (32 percent), Inuit children (25 percent), and Métis children (22 percent) likewise faced increased poverty compared to the one in five or 18 percent national average (Beedie, Macdonald, and Wilson 2019: 9). National census data also does not capture accurate data on Indigenous Peoples; the Native Women's Association of Canada has long fought for data on poverty for each Indigenous identity (NWAC 2017).

For decades, researchers, policy analysts, caseworkers, politicians, and anti-poverty activists have noted that social assistance rates are woefully inadequate. Many single-parent families then struggle to meet basic needs like food and shelter, and intimate partner violence survivors have few alternatives between staying with abusers and homelessness (Little 2015; van Berkum and Oudshoorn 2015). A bare-bones budget calculation illustrates the impossible situation facing lone parents, the majority of whom are single mothers. Across Ontario, a single parent with one child under seventeen years receives $360 for basic needs and up to $642 extra for shelter, a total monthly allowance of $1,002 regardless of the size of the community or cost of housing, which varies significantly between rural

and urban areas (MCCSS 2020b). In addition to this amount, if the recipient has filed their annual taxes, they are eligible to receive a federal and provincial child tax benefit. The maximum Canada Child Benefit for children under age six ($553.25) and Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) ($119.50) totals $672.75 for one child. Combined, this amounts to $1,674.75 per month to cover shelter, food, childcare, and all other expenses. However, the OCB is neither universal nor accessible to all families, especially racialized families; recent immigrants may only access the OCB if their partner is a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident, a refugee, or a temporary resident who has lived in Canada for the past eighteen months and who has a valid temporary resident permit (Government of Canada 2012). Indigenous applicants for OCB are also at a disadvantage because applicants must file an income tax return in order to be eligible, and families who live on reserves are not required to file them.

As Table 1 shows, the average costs of living for a family of two in Toronto in 2020 are well above ($2,761 versus $1,675) the amounts allotted to a single parent and child on Ontario Works (LowestRates.ca 2020). The low-income cut-off (LICO), historically Canada's only measurement for poverty, was $26,143 in 2018 for a family of two in a large urban centre (Statistics Canada 2020a). The total annual income a single parent with one child receives on social assistance (including the OCB and Canada Child Benefit) is $20,100 — $6,043 below the LICO. As part of *Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*, in 2018 the Canadian government introduced a new low-income measure, the market basket measure (MBM), to establish Canada's official poverty line. The MBM is calculated "based on the cost

Table 1: Average Monthly Living Costs* in Toronto Ontario, 2020

Expenses	Amount
Rent (two bedroom)	$2,966
Transportation	$259
Food (family)	$1,055
Phone and internet	$156
Total expenses	$4,436
Total income (social assistance and Ontario and Canada Child Benefits)	$1,675
Discrepancy in benefits vs. cost of living	-$2,761
Discrepancy in benefits vs. MBM	-$2,336

*Totals have been rounded up.

of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living" (Heisz n.d.: 3). The MBM marks progress; however, its critics argue that it only addresses physical sustenance and therefore ignores social and cultural needs as well as the impacts of social exclusion that accompany poverty (Campaign 2000: 2020). In 2018, the MBM in Toronto was estimated at $48,142 (Statistics Canada 2020b), more than *double* the amount afforded to OW recipients with one child ($20,100).

The feminization and racialization of poverty is troubling, and our broken social safety net is failing low-income mothers. Considering these harsh realities — where welfare rates do not come close to providing the necessary financial supports to meet basic needs — it was shocking to see how closely surveilled single mothers' spending was. As I interviewed caseworkers, it was clear that there were differing opinions on how much surveillance is required to administer welfare benefits. Some workers were more understanding of the struggle facing low-income women and cited the stats and numerous system failures that keep women poor. Others had no qualms about digging into people's personal lives and did not see any issues with welfare surveillance. One caseworker I interviewed actually felt obligated to keep tabs on recipients and felt that the work he did was no different than a bank employee's financial assessment. Yet the moral undertones and placing blame on recipients for their life circumstances was clear: "In life there's nothing really free and at the end of the day people are turning to Ontario Works to get help … there has to be some accountability" (Peter, caseworker).

Surveillance has become increasingly normalized in many aspects of our lives and "systematic surveillance has become routine and inescapable part of everyday life in modern times" (Lyon 2009: 1). Surveillance is ubiquitous in the workplace, finance, law enforcement, education, health care, and social media, and it has been "rapidly embraced as the central mode of administrative management" (Gilliom 2001: 124). With ever-evolving technological advancements and anti-welfare sentiments, surveillance practices since the late 1980s have become particularly prevalent in government services in countries that have most enthusiastically embraced neoliberal doctrines, specifically Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Webster 2012). Because surveillance mechanisms have become so pervasive, during my research I was frequently told by skeptics and liberals alike: "well, if you have nothing to hide…," "if you

haven't done anything wrong…," "if you follow the rules…," "that is just the way it is now…," and "we need technology to solve our problems." At the other extreme, I heard myths and misconceptions about "widespread fraud," "welfare cheats," the "lazy," and "undeserving" — stereotypes of those who at times rely on social assistance for their subsistence. They were not to be trusted and therefore surveillance and regulating their behaviour were necessary to ensure that they were not abusing the system.

In the following pages, I hope to disrupt such assumptions about surveillance and technology by centring the narratives of those who must live under these conditions. It is my hope that the insights of single mothers on social assistance will challenge these normalized ideas of surveillance as neutral, apolitical, and harmless, disputing poor-bashing stereotypes suggesting that the poor deserve such intensive monitoring of their private lives. Welfare surveillance is neither apolitical nor neutral; indeed, as I demonstrate in this book, social sorting, discrimination, moral regulation, and "othering" processes are intertwined with various surveillance practices and not everyone is surveilled for the same reasons.

Key Concepts and Terms

While studying welfare surveillance, the research I reviewed lacked a conceptual model that could capture the full experience of what it is like to live under this form of surveillance and regulation. Employing feminist methods and theory situates lived experience as an important form of knowledge construction and uncovers how hidden forms of state regulation manifest in the daily lives of single mothers on social assistance (Naples 2003). Theoretically, I weave together feminist political economy, moral regulation, and theories of surveillance to analyze the impacts of welfare surveillance and regulation on single mothers and caseworkers. Feminist scholars of poverty have largely ignored technological surveillance as an area of inquiry and only a handful of surveillance scholars have grappled with surveillance in the lives of low-income people, particularly low-income racialized and Indigenous women. Too often these theoretical perspectives are not in conversation with one another, missing the potential for new insights and interdisciplinary connections across and beyond theoretical frameworks. By merging these perspectives, I aim to build a conceptual model of the welfare surveillance apparatus. In this section, I review some of the book's main concepts to guide readers in their understanding of the application of welfare surveillance.

Welfare and social assistance are used interchangeably throughout the book. While the term "welfare" has been and continues to be used in a derogatory manner by some, it was the more common term used by the single mothers and advocates I interviewed. The term "welfare state" refers to a host of government-funded and -managed public services such as health care, education, and social services (including social assistance, unemployment insurance, and disability supports). I use the term "recipients" rather than clients to challenge neoliberal framing that increasingly individualizes poverty by treating welfare delivery as a business and exchange of consumer goods that can be outsourced and earmarked for profit.

Surveillance

Surveillance involves close monitoring, observation, record keeping, and categorization of information about individuals (Lyon 2007). Lyon outlines three different types of surveillance used to classify individuals: human surveillance, file-based surveillance, and interface (electronic) surveillance. While surveillance obviously existed long before computer databases and technology, in modern society — manifested, for instance, in the census — it is unique because of its capacity to speed up the collection, analysis, categorization, and analysis of vast amounts of data as well as the permanence of the digital record (Lyon 2007). State surveillance is not neutral but rather a form of social control that people experience differently, as not everyone is surveilled in the same way or for the same reasons (Lyon 2007; Monahan 2010, 2017). As John Gilliom argues, "Surveillance of human behaviour is in place to control human behaviour, whether by limiting access to programs or institutions, monitoring and affecting behaviour within those arenas, or otherwise enforcing rules and norms by observing and recording acts of compliance and deviance" (2001: 3).

In the context of publicly funded social programs, "welfare surveillance" refers to the technologies, practices, regulation, and implications of tracking applicants and beneficiaries of social assistance and services (Dee 2013; Maki 2015; Gilliom 2001; Henman and Marston 2008; Monahan 2010), and it is used by the state to monitor and regulate low-income communities often across multiple government jurisdictions. Depending on which services the poor are trying to access, they will encounter different types of surveillance (Henman and Marston 2008; Gilliom 2001). Yet it is not only the state that draws on welfare surveillance; communities, individuals, and, increasingly, non-governmental organizations, private

companies, and employers participate in monitoring the poor as well. Borrowing from Foucault (1980: 194), I use the term "apparatus" to map out the various interconnected systems of state and non-state welfare surveillance levelled against the poor, including policy and regulations, bureaucracy, welfare offices, community surveillance, and, increasingly, surveillance technologies. Framing it in this way helps identify how the "apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements."

We also need to think about how computers and emerging technologies factor into welfare surveillance and subsequent social sorting: "There are dangers inherent in surveillance systems whose crucial coding mechanisms involve categories derived from stereotypical or prejudicial sources" (Lyon 2003: 2). For instance, in a US study about automating public services, Eubanks found, "in new data-based surveillance, the *target often emerges from the data*.… Surveillance is not only a means of watching or tracking, it is also a mechanism for social sorting. Coordinated entry collects data tied to an individual behaviour, assesses vulnerability, and assigns different interventions based on that valuation" (2017: 122). "Algorithmic surveillance" (Yeung 2018) refers to contemporary surveillance that uses computer database algorithms to predict (and manage) risky behaviour or populations, and it is a useful concept for understanding how welfare automates decision making. Specifically, predefined software codes work with "criteria to trigger special programmed events (alarms, etc.) or outcomes (profiles of risky people)" (Ceyhan 2012: 43). The process of risk management and predicting behaviours before they even occur separates previous surveillance from modern methods that were not possible without current technology (Lyon 2007: 56). It is important to look beyond the mathematical and technical aspects of algorithms to account for the humans who design them, the institutions that use them, and those who are impacted by them (the users) (Yeung 2018). Indeed, there is the potential for data to obscure discrimination against people on the basis of their gender, sexuality, race, disability, and class (Monahan 2009, 2010, 2017; Lyon 2007; Barocas and Selbst 2016; Noble 2018).

Understanding how these different surveillance practices come together and spread out among other governing bodies helps illuminate the ways in which single mothers are caught in a web of surveillance threads. Borrowing from Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) theory of surveillance

assemblages, Nicolas Pleace (2007: 6) uses the term "surveillance mash-ups" to describe data sharing by multiple social service sources to surveil and acquire necessary information about low-income individuals. It means that welfare recipients may be monitored by several surveillance mechanisms and social service government agencies at any given time. Mashups allocate power to social service agencies to amalgamate, share, and categorize confidential information about welfare recipients and poor people in general. These powerful, increasingly automated database-sharing technologies have drastically widened the capacity of the state to monitor individuals (Eubanks 2017; Maki 2015). Social control therefore operates at multiple levels in the welfare state apparatus — through various governing bodies, caseworkers, civil society, and the recipients themselves in the form of self-surveillance, whereby individuals internalize social control and subsequently self-regulate (Foucault 1980; Sa'di 2012). In this way, power is multifaceted and taken up by the subjects of surveillance to the extent that they govern their own behaviour.

Surveillance of the poor is not new; however, the techniques and capacities to monitor them have transformed (Monahan 2010; Maki 2015; Eubanks 2017; Gilliom 2001). To understand the shifts in surveillance approaches, capacities, and impacts on low-income communities, we need to need to contextualize the ways in which surveillance takes a particular form under neoliberalism. Broadly, the political and ideological aim of neoliberalism is to reduce the role of the state via privatization and deregulation as well as through austerity measures and tax breaks for corporations (Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism promotes the increased role of the private sector and economic rationality in not only the economy but society as a whole. Schram argues that this shift has negatively impacted social welfare polices by "putting in place a heightened disciplinary regime for managing subordinate populations who are deemed to be deficient" as neoliberal market citizens (2018: 309).

Neoliberalism functions in three specific ways in relation to welfare surveillance: outsourcing to private companies to build surveillance technologies; the expansion of regulating bodies through workfare; and disciplining recipients and caseworkers. Neoliberal approaches to policy have individualized poverty and blamed the poor for their "personal failings," which has resulted largely in a harsher and more disciplinary welfare state (Schram 2018; Snider 2006). It is steeped in competition, individualism and "consumer choice" rather than the collective good

and betterment of all citizens (Coulter 2009). Neoliberal ideology and subsequent policies and surveillance during the Conservatives' reforms of the 1990s were used to dismantle the welfare state and lessen public responsibilities and support for those rendered vulnerable in capitalist labour markets (poor, working poor, disabled, women, single mothers, racialized people, etc.) while ratcheting up surveillance and disciplinary measures to reduce "dependency," "abuse" and "fraud." Indeed, emerging surveillance technologies were perceived as a way to catch and even deter allegedly widespread welfare fraud.

Neoliberal surveillance plays out in the workplace and has significantly altered caseworkers' labour. To "modernize" welfare, the Ontario government needed to enact practices that could monitor and quantify "results." This involved new measures to surveil workers to ensure that quotas and targets on caseload reductions, a primary goal of neoliberal welfare policies, were met. New public management (NPM) processes plot the transformation of public services, such as welfare, toward more market-oriented practices, reforms, and risk management strategies previously only used in the private sector (Hood 1995). In relation to welfare specifically, this coupled with neoliberal ideologies translates into "market-oriented" approaches to public services that treat social assistance recipients as though they are consumers. Throughout the book, I will incorporate Kenneth Kernaghan and Mohamed Charih's (1997) three principles of new public management: 1) changing the machinery of governments (technology and bureaucracy); 2) instituting new approaches to internal management (quotas and statistics of workers' productivity); 3) and reducing the role of the state (market rationalities).

Feminist Theory

My understanding of neoliberal policy and the welfare surveillance apparatus emerges from moral regulation, feminist political economy (FPE), and intersectionality. Single mothers' experiences of welfare surveillance were unique and often complicated by intersecting social locations of class, gender, disability, age, and race. Feminist theories help illuminate the various ways in which the neoliberal state and governing bodies respond to their status as single mothers, how they are rendered "deserving" of social assistance, and how this process is racialized and classed.

A feminist analysis of surveillance encourages us to recognize its profoundly moral and gendered dimensions. Informed by Foucault's notions of power, discourse, and knowledge, "moral regulation" refers to the ways

in which individuals are constituted by the state and illuminates the "regulatory practices and discourses" that shape an individual's experiences, including social control as well as potential forms of resistance (Valverde and Weir 2006: 76). The moral judgment of single mothers has always been a factor determining their deservedness for social assistance. Moral regulation helps illuminate the host of actors involved in surveilling the poor and their role in transforming the individual. Although the scope and meaning of "moral regulation" are contested (Glasbeek 2006; Chunn and Gavigan 2006b), I adopt the definition offered by Little (1998) and Chunn and Gavigan (2006b), who move away from deterministic understandings of social control and situate moral regulation in relation to state and non-state actors as a site of contestation and struggle. Specifically, as Little and Morrison argue, "By highlighting the moral investigative process of a policy one is better able to understand the complex and interdependent relationship between the regulator and the regulated" (1999: 113). Policy, including welfare legislation, is complex, contradictory at times, and coercive. Yet it also offers potential for resistance, self-determination, and social change. Moral regulation illuminates how the welfare surveillance apparatus connects the different layers and systems of regulation and the relationships between them, as welfare is a site of struggle.

As Margaret Little's *No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit* (1998) showed, poor single mothers receiving social assistance have always been surveilled; moral regulation and deservedness for assistance have long been explicitly racialized, as poor white single mothers were the primary beneficiaries of the Ontario Mothers' Allowance (OMA). The OMA created a specific politic of entitlement that rested on women's capacity for rearing children. In exchange for proper raising of children, they were provided state benefits and "paid" for this labour. This shaped the types of surveillance they experienced, in the form of invasive and patronizing home visits where their mothering and social reproduction were heavily scrutinized by social workers. Moreover, there was a constant search for the "man in the house," as a sexual relationship with a man (i.e., a male breadwinner) would render her ineligible for assistance, thus reaffirming notions of women's dependency and the patriarchal nuclear family ideal.

In the neoliberal era, surveillance has changed and become more sophisticated, automated, and computer based. What remains, however, are the scrutiny, surveillance, and moral regulation that create specific dynamics between caseworkers and recipients. To understand this shift, I

use FPE to explain how single mothers navigate neoliberal welfare policies and how they are conceptualized by the state as "mothers" and "workers." FPE is essential to understanding the social reproduction involved "in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the labouring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis" (Bezanson and Luxton 2006: 3). This labour, critical to the maintenance of life itself, is often gendered as "women's work" and as such is either unpaid (as with traditional "housewives"), devalued, or poorly paid (as in the service and care economy) (Armstrong and Connelly 1999; Bakker 1994; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Brodie 1996; Fudge and Cossman 2002; Coulter 2009; Mayson 1999; McKeen 2004; McMullin, Davies, and Cassidy 2002; Mosher and Hermer 2005; Mutari, Boushey, and Fraher 1997). Under neoliberal welfare policies such as workfare, social reproduction is largely ignored as a form of "work," and single mothers are reimagined as workers first, mothers second (Bannerji 2000; Breitkreuz 2005; Caragata and Liegghio 2013; Little 1998, 2011, 2012).

Moving beyond "single-issue analyses" (Crenshaw 1989: 162, 139) intersectionality is a powerful analytical tool in the study of single mothers' poverty, as it highlights the ways that poverty is differently experienced and responded to (by various institutions, including government) depending on the overlap of social locations such as gender, race, class, Indigeneity, disability, and so on. Intersectionality was conceptualized by lawyer and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw to illustrate how race and gender intersect to create specific experiences of discrimination that reflect the "multidimensionality" of Black women's experiences. An intersectional FPE interrogates the systemic factors that reproduce oppression within governing bodies, particularly heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism. As well, Yasmeen Abu-Laban (2015: 54) asserts that applying an intersectional feminist lens and methodology to studies of surveillance can "enliven and sharpen" the analysis of social systems such as welfare and situate them in a specific social and historical context that reveals the multiplicity of everyday experiences of surveillance across race, gender, class, disability, age, and sexuality. Indeed, under neoliberal welfare surveillance, there is a specific interplay between class, race, and gender in the criminalization of "welfare fraud." Due to what Kiran Mirchandani and Wendy Chan (2007) term "welfare racism," racialized communities in Ontario were specifically targeted for surveillance and fraud investigations following Ontario's punitive welfare reforms in the

1990s. Welfare racism is not unique to Ontario, though — US research has also exposed how welfare became linked to fraud as right-wing media stereotyped racialized single-mother welfare recipients as "welfare queens" and inherently criminal (Kohler-Hausmann 2007). The damage and lateral violence inflicted on communities by 1-800 fraud hotlines created a climate of suspicion among neighbours, friends, and families (Mirchandani and Chan 2007; Kohler-Hausmann 2007; Mosher and Hermer 2005; Chunn and Gavigan 2006b).

Methods

Methodologically, my work was shaped by my lived experience of poverty and anti-poverty activism. It feels critical to share this work with a wide audience, not keep it solely in the hands of the ivory tower and among those privileged enough to occupy such space. I wrote this book for the community organizers and anti-poverty activists who work tirelessly and with their whole hearts and bodies on the line to make the world a better place. It's also for the folxs living in poverty, who fight every day for their survival and may not have the privilege, time, ability, energy, and resources to attend the disruptions and rallies to confront the abusive neoliberal state. It is my hope that policy makers and caseworkers also take some time to reflect on the findings and think about how we can work together to dismantle these oppressive systems.

This book is based on interviews I conducted in 2011–12 for my PhD research. Using feminist qualitative methods, the research included a critical analysis of social assistance policy and legislation, thirty-three in-depth open-ended interviews with single mothers on assistance, caseworkers, and anti-poverty activists, as well as reflections on over a decade of anti-poverty activism. I approached the research from an activist scholar lens, integrating my lived experience of poverty and activism into the research design, analysis, and dissemination of results. This led me to approach the research from a position of solidarity and align my work with and alongside anti-poverty and social justice movements in the struggle for transformative social change. This book was influenced by the many meetings, food shares, workshops, protests, and actions in which I participated with anti-poverty groups. I was inspired by the methods of Sanford Schram (2002: 2), who advocates that "practitioners of politically engaged scholarship" should work "to connect theory and practice and facilitate an informed challenge to the structures of power,

the inequalities of the political economy, and the deficiencies of social policy."

Anti-poverty activists and advocates were recruited through purposeful sampling methods as well as referrals from my own network. I recruited single mothers through community contacts (often anti-poverty advocates) whom individuals knew personally. Because recruitment occurred through a community contact who was involved in anti-poverty advocacy or activism, it may have influenced the make-up of the sample of women I interviewed. It was more difficult to find caseworkers to interview and I used multiple recruitment strategies. Aside from one OW office, management went to great lengths to discourage me and even "prohibited" workers from speaking to me. This says a lot about the power and gatekeeping involved as well as the protections that government authorities and their workers can put up to prevent outsiders from asking critical questions. In all cities, managers vetted me either by an in-person meeting or over email and in all but one case hand selected the interviewees. In the end I interviewed eight caseworkers and one case manager.

In one community I had a contact that put me in touch with a person in management who was helpful in recruiting workers to speak with me. In another, I randomly met caseworkers at a public consultation for Ontario's Social Assistance Review who then passed my information to their manager to get approval to participate in interviews. Organizing a meeting with management in the third location of my field work was particularly difficult. I ended up reaching out to a social policy analyst to ask for help and cold-calling caseworkers until I got the attention of management. Only then was I able to get a meeting with management to explain the study, and they still insisted on handpicking all participants. Because I only interviewed caseworkers that OW management deemed "safe," the results may show only certain insights into the inner workings of OW and surveillance.

Interestingly enough, the bureaucrats and policy analysts I approached for information about these systems were quick to provide numerous excuses, often citing policy, on why they could not divulge the information. The secrecy with which Ontario Works hid how and why they use surveillance, how algorithms are decided, and what they do with the vast amounts of data they collect was disconcerting but not surprising. This secrecy is common in large bureaucracies that work to "prevent and prohibit everyday work practices from being directly inspected and

made transparent.… Even when a social researcher secures entry, project viability demands that rapport with participants is swiftly established and maintained" (Smith 2012: 109). Even as a privileged graduate student with Queen's University credentials, I had to be persistent to gain access and even then was expected to jump through hoops and "make my case" to senior management on why they should allow me to interview caseworkers. This access is obviously out of reach for low-income people, who, as many of the women I interviewed pointed out, are often ignored and silenced and can rarely communicate with management.

Summary of Book

Welfare surveillance allows us to examine the intersection of the state and capital in what has become the state-subsidized "surveillance industrial complex," which "was designed to facilitate conquest and control over those categorized as 'the other', groups seen as problematic by the elites developing and sponsoring technological growth" (Ball and Snider 2013: 5). As a conceptual model, the welfare surveillance apparatus helps to theorize links across the political economy of the state, welfare administration, and the experiences of the poor in ways that consider the intersectionality of race, Indigeneity, gender, disability, age, and class. Thinking about welfare surveillance broadly and as a network or "web" also helps us understand how surveillance goes beyond the welfare office and enters into other areas of low-income people's lives — trapping them in a web of state and non-state networks that subsequently regulate and discipline them.

The constantly evolving welfare surveillance apparatus is multilayered and involves many systems. Neoliberalism has intensified the reliance on technologies to automate decision making and act as regulatory tools to transform the poor into "good citizen workers." However, face-to-face surveillance and moral regulation continue to be an integral part of the overall system. The poor, racialized, lone parents, and disabled continuously encounter "rituals of degradation" whereby they are denied access or, if access is granted, are forced to submit to intensive and ongoing monitoring. They must also undergo surveillance via home visits, meetings and investigations. *Ineligible: Single Mothers Under Welfare Surveillance* centres the experiences of single mothers in understanding welfare surveillance.

The book begins by exploring the history of the regulation and surveillance of the poor in Ontario, from the 1800s poor laws to the current

neoliberal era, focusing specifically on how single mothers have been situated in emerging welfare policies. I then provide an overview of the welfare surveillance apparatus, describing the various state and non-state surveillance methods that currently monitor social assistance recipients, and I outline the different types of surveillance used and how they function as a form of social control, whether it be human, file-based, or technological. These surveillance methods frequently work in conjunction to search out non-compliance and to spur investigations for fraud or case reviews. The voices of single mothers reveal the multiple and intersecting layers of surveillance they encounter — from the state and civil society and from technology and humans — and what it is like to live under the watchful eye of Ontario Works. Several single mothers revealed how they were ensnared in the ever-broadening web of surveillance networks and how the Family Responsibility Office and Children's Aid Society shared information to monitor them. Indigenous women were particularly impacted by this surveillance as child welfare functions as an ongoing policy of settler-colonialism. I also wanted to know how those who are tasked with the job of surveilling welfare recipients understand their role in this process and how they have responded to the changing workplace demands under neoliberal welfare surveillance. Caseworkers brought forth new perspectives on how they were situated as both surveillers and the surveilled, since the government's new public management practices have placed caseworkers under pressure to meet quotas and to keep caseloads down.

While my interviews with single mothers and caseworkers revealed regulation and social control at the centre of their experience, they also shared many ways that they resist and challenge a broken system. The women who shared their stories with me also demonstrated their individual and collective efforts to resist a system bent on punishing and discouraging them from seeking the support to which they are entitled. Caseworkers also demonstrated their everyday subversion and more organized collective challenges within their unions to neoliberal reforms and privatization. I conclude the book with their everyday and collective acts of resistance. I also weave in interviews with anti-poverty activists and reflections on my own work with anti-poverty actions to highlight the different strategies used to resist the neoliberal welfare state. While social inequality is indeed increasingly automated, legislated, and designed into welfare policies, interviews with caseworkers, recipients, and anti-poverty

activists have shown that there are cracks in the system — where caseworkers can resist the requirement to surveil every aspect of recipients' lives and instead decide to look the other way. Where policy can be enacted, it can be resisted and perhaps even dismantled. Resistance, in its various forms, its potential for social transformation, and its strategies are explored in the conclusion.

Note

1. For a great resource on the racialization of poverty, see Colour of Poverty–Colour of Change 2019.