

Mount Saint Vincent University
Department of Family Studies and Gerontology

**Mapping the Social Relations of Violence and Homelessness in the
Everyday Lives of Women: An Institutional Ethnography**

by

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence against women is still a common occurrence and it leads to women being vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. This study mapped the social relations organizing women's everyday experiences with homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship.

Institutional ethnography directed this research. Data collection consisted of three components. The first component was five face-to-face unstructured, interactive interviews with women who left an abusive relationship and experienced homelessness. The second component was 13 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with service providers from organizations the women indicated they utilized. This component explicated how the service providers organized the women's everyday experiences with securing housing. The third and final component was a textual analysis of the policies and programs from the organizations identified by the women.

Results identified the ruling relations that coordinated the women's homelessness. The interviews indicated that money was the main organizing factor in coordinating their homelessness. The other coordinating factor was limited amounts of affordable, adequate housing. Findings suggest many organizations are coordinating the homelessness experienced by women leaving abusive relationships. Lines of fault were discovered between the women's everyday experiences and the organizations and service providers in place to address homelessness. These lines of faults are maintained through ruling relations which prevent women from participating in the development of policies and programs they will be utilizing.

The consequences of homelessness have serious implications for both women and society. Changes that are implemented must focus on long-term change and be inclusive of the individuals experiencing homelessness. Recommendations from this study are directed at government, service providers, and society in general. The results will inform policy and program changes within government and non-government organizations that support women leaving abusive relationships.

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Acronyms and Glossary

CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
CTC	Child Tax Credit
EI	Employment Insurance
ESIA	Employment Support and Income Assistance Act
GSS	General Social Survey
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
IA	Income Assistance
IE	Institutional Ethnography
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LICO	Low Income Cut-off
NS	Nova Scotia
NSDCS	Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
NSDEL	Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour
RTA	Residential Tenancy Act
STIR	Shelter-to-income Ratio
THS	Transition Home Survey
UN	United Nations

Bifurcation – a separation between the ideological and authentic self (Smith, 1987)

Discourse – the textual embodiments of ideologies (Smith, 1987)

Homelessness – being without a home of one’s own, including housing instability

Housing Instability – being insecure in one’s housing arrangements. This insecurity can come from feeling unsafe in the home, having a difficult time affording the home and home-related bills, living in a home that is not big enough for one’s family, and so on. It is the feeling of not being stable where one lives and constantly worrying about losing one’s home.

Institutional Ethnography – a research methodology with the aim to explicate the ruling relations organizing people’s everyday lives (Smith, 1987)

Intimate Partner Violence – A pattern of violence in an intimate relationship that includes physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse. The intent of IPV is to dominate and control the woman (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

Line of Fault – the disconnect between policies and programs, how they work and their purposes, and the everyday experiences of those individuals that the policies aim to affect (Smith, 1987)

Ruling Relations – organized practices and discourses that create a hierarchical society (Smith, 1987)

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Safe and affordable housing should be the right of all individuals. Unfortunately, there are many people who cannot access safe and affordable housing. The ability to secure affordable, adequate housing is especially crucial for women leaving abusive relationships because they are often forced to flee their homes. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pattern of violence in an intimate relationship that includes physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse with the intent of dominating and controlling the woman (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Women who have experienced IPV are almost four times more likely to report homelessness than women who have not experienced IPV (Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling, 2007). For these women, there are no alternatives. They either remain in a dangerous situation or leave their current situation for another insecure situation – homelessness. For some women who cannot find affordable, adequate housing, returning to the abusive relationship is the only alternative (Sev'er, 2002a). Yet, when these women return to their partners, the IPV continues and often becomes more severe (Charles, 1994; Sleutel, 1998; Sev'er, 2002a). Therefore, it is imperative to increase our understanding of the connection between IPV against women and homelessness among women in an attempt to reduce the risk of homelessness when women do escape abusive relationships.

A growing body of evidence recognizes that homelessness is becoming a substantial problem in North America. For decades Canada has been experiencing a crisis with regards to homelessness and it appears to be unchanging. In 1998, the Big City Mayors Caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities acknowledged

homelessness in Canada to be a national disaster and requested interventions and policy changes to counteract the crisis yet, 15 years later the numbers continue to be unchanged (Tota, 2004).

Intimate partner violence against women still permeates the lives of a high percentage of women, both in Canada and internationally. It causes more injuries to women than rape, mugging, and motor vehicle accidents together (IWK, 2001). Statistics Canada (2006b) indicated in 2004 7% of married or common-law married women experienced at least one episode of physical or sexual IPV in the previous five years. Although research has increased, along with public knowledge and preventative and reductive measures, these figures remain unchanged from the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS) (Mihorean, 2005). These figures are low because IPV is often under-reported, under-diagnosed, and under-stated. As well, the figures only discuss physical and sexual violence and do not include emotional/psychological or financial abuse (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a).

Affordable, adequate housing is vital in the attempt to break the cycle of violence against women and support is required for as long as it takes women to become stable. If women are not stable in affordable, adequate housing there will continue to be a high risk of them returning to their abusive partners. Society needs to recognize not only that affordable, adequate housing is especially crucial early on the path to independence but also that the path to independence can take months or years (Sev'er, 2002b). Limited research has been conducted on the frequency of women becoming homeless after

leaving a violent relationship or how common it is for women to remain in the violent relationship to avoid homelessness (Novac, Brown, & Bourbannais, 1996). The connection between IPV and homelessness in the lives of women needs to be made to develop and direct policies that create more affordable, adequate housing and alter shelter regulations.

It is difficult to accurately determine the levels of homelessness because there is a lack of consensus when defining homelessness, which makes research difficult. The inability to accurately determine levels of homelessness reduces the ability to study the social, political, gender, and cultural structures that contribute to homelessness (Reid, Berman, & Forchuk, 2005). This can be particularly perilous for women leaving abusive relationships, the group focused on in this study.

My own personal background includes leaving my home due to IPV. For 13 years, my children and I have struggled to remain housed. Our other option was to remain in the violent relationship. It was better for us to experience housing instability than violence. My volunteer experience at an emergency shelter for women indicated to me that my situation was not unique. Intimate partner violence has pervaded the lives of many homeless women. This is not due to choices we have made. The issue of homelessness among women as a result of IPV affects individuals from all backgrounds. We personally did not create our situation. Intimate partner violence and homelessness are social issues.

This research project illustrates the connection between IPV and homelessness and analyzes the systemic forces and societal structures that contribute to the issue

through a critical theory paradigm. The research questions drew from the participants their everyday experiences and led me to the social institutions that were contributing to the creation of their situations. The research questions were:

- What are the housing experiences of women leaving abusive relationships?
- What is the relationship between the service providers' policies, available resources, and the experiences of the women?

More research studying the effect leaving an abusive relationship has on homelessness among women is required because the policies in place may not be adequate. In order to alter policies we need to understand the effect they have on the individuals for which they are written. We also need to understand what the women utilizing the policies require so the policies created reflect the needs of those using them instead of reflecting what policy makers anticipate to be the individuals' needs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As a background to the issues, I conducted a literature review that integrated IPV against women and homelessness among women. It was essential that an in-depth knowledge of these two issues be developed before an understanding could be acquired regarding the connection between the two issues. Therefore, I will discuss the issues, IPV and homelessness, individually and then move into a discussion focusing on the connection between the two issues. My discussion on IPV will explore the ideologies affecting it, types of IPV, consequences of IPV, options available for women who have experienced IPV, and the societal outcomes of IPV. I will then discuss homelessness among women, including a definition, homelessness statistics, characteristics of homeless individuals, effects of homelessness, causes and risk factors, lack of affordable housing, and shelters. The final section will discuss the connection between IPV and homelessness among women and will then focus on the effects on women and the strategies in place for women who are experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship.

Intimate Partner Violence against Women

Researchers contend that four of the most underreported crimes are committed within families (Sev'er, 2002a). Intimate partner violence is one of these crimes. Intimate partner violence is a pattern of violence in an intimate relationship that includes physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse with the intent of dominating and controlling the woman (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Intimate partner violence can occur in all types of relationships and can be carried out by either women against men or men against women. For the purpose of this study the focus was only on IPV against women

by men.

During the 2004 GSS, 22% of the women who indicated they had experienced IPV had not told anyone about the IPV until they told the telephone surveyor (Mihorean, 2005). Women do not report IPV for numerous reasons including: (a) they do not recognize the behaviour being directed toward them as abusive; (b) they believe the abuse is personal and do not want to involve outsiders; (c) they believe the abusive episode was too minor to report; (d) there is still a stigma attached to disclosing abuse; and (e) they are fearful of the repercussions against them enacted by their partners, family or friends if they report the IPV (Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Statistics reported in the literature are low because most studies focus only on physical and sexual violence. However, when other forms of abuse are taken into consideration the figures are much higher. The level of IPV that is not reported needs to be contemplated. Only surveying physical or sexual abuse indicates a misunderstanding by researchers regarding what constitutes IPV and the level of damage that can be caused by the non-physical, yet very insidious, forms of abuse. In order to increase the level of IPV that is reported, a societal understanding of what constitutes IPV is required.

Within the Nova Scotian Domestic Violence Intervention Act, IPV is described as:

- i. an assault that consists of the intentional application of force that causes the victim to fear for his or her safety, but does not include any act committed in self-defence;

- ii. an act or omission or threatened act or omission that causes a reasonable fear of bodily harm or damage to property;
- iii. forced physical confinement;
- iv. sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual molestation, or the threat of sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual molestation or;
- v. a series of acts that collectively causes the victim to fear for his or her safety, including following, contacting, communicating with, observing or recording any person (p. 97).

Intimate partner violence, especially physical IPV, typically follows a pattern of stages consisting of a tension building stage followed by a violent episode and then a honeymoon stage (IWK, 2001); and. as the abusive relationship progresses, the period of time between these stages shortens. The length of time IPV occurs in a relationship can vary from several months to years and the process of leaving can take place in one-step or be a long-time process that consists of leaving and returning several times (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mihorean, 2005; Panchanadeswaran & McCloskey, 2007; Sleutel, 1998; Wilcox, 2000). Moreover, IPV against women is often not an isolated incident.

According to one study, 54% of participants who reported physical IPV in a current or previous relationship indicated that the IPV occurred more than once in that relationship (Mihorean, 2005). Intimate partner violence occurs against women of all racial, cultural, religious, socio-economical, educational and geographical groups, and ages (IWK, 2001; Jewkes, 2002; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a).

Research has indicated that even though all women are at risk of IPV, some

groups experience higher risk. These groups include women in shorter or common-law relationships, aboriginal women, women in step-families, women whose partners drink heavily, pregnant women, separated women, women in relationships experiencing financial difficulties, women who experienced childhood abuse, and younger women (Bassuk, Dawson, & Huntington, 2006; Davis & Srinivasan, 1995; IWK, 2001; Jewkes, 2002; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone, Johnson, Cohan, & Lloyd, 2004; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Pavao et al., 2007; Sleutel, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2006b; Tota, 2005). Age is a key risk factor with those 25 to 34 years of age being more at risk (Statistics Canada, 2012) and those over 45 being at the lowest risk (Mihorean, 2005). The age of the woman's partner is also a risk factor with IPV, with younger men being associated with higher risk levels (Mihorean, 2005). Pregnancy is another risk factor that often appears in research reports (IWK, 2001; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sleutel, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2006b) and Jewkes (2002) discovered studies that indicated the number of children in the relationship to be a risk factor. Poverty is a risk factor due to its "effects on conflict, women's power, and male identity" (Jewkes, 2002, p. 1423). Rates of IPV were three times higher for women in a family household with income under \$30,000 than for women in households with income levels over \$60,000 (Tota, 2005).

Intimate partner violence against women occurs in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. However, for the purpose of this research project I focused only on IPV against women in heterosexual relationships. Intimate partner violence against women in heterosexual relationships is the result of power, control, and gender

inequality (Bennett, Riger, Schewe, Howard, & Wasco, 2004; Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone et al., 2004; Meyers, 1994; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a). Men identify themselves based on power in their relationships and challenges to that power are perceived as threats to their identity (Jewkes, 2002; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). This is why IPV will often escalate when a woman attempts to leave the abusive relationship (IWK, 2001; Meyers, 1994; Mihorean, 2005; Sev'er, 2002a; Wilcox, 2000). Her act of leaving removes the power and control from the man and he therefore reacts violently toward her in an attempt to regain the power and control he is losing (Meyers, 1994; Mihorean, 2005; Sev'er, 2002a).

Types of Violence Experienced

Intimate partner violence consists of physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse, and these types of abuse can be experienced individually or in combination with each other (Duffy & Momirov, 1997; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a). Physical abuse consists of being punched, choked, pushed, hit, bit, grabbed, kicked, shoved, slapped, or having an object or weapon used to injure them (IWK, 2001; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a). Physical IPV often begins following a period of emotional/psychological and financial abuse (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Sexually abusive behaviours consist of any sexual activity or touching that is forced or non-consensual, pain or injury inflicted during sex, and unprotected sex when the man is knowingly infected with a sexually-transmitted disease (IWK, 2001; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a; Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Emotionally/psychologically abusive behaviours include threats, insults, unjust blame, false accusations, torture, stalking, control, harassment, yelling, destruction of personal property, brainwashing, intimidation, degradation, humiliation, deprivation, criticism, extreme jealousy, erosion of self-worth, and isolation (IWK, 2001; Jewkes, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Rice, 2001; Sev'er, 2002a; Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Although these behaviours are not criminal according to the Canadian Criminal Code, the intention of abuse is to dominate the behaviour of the woman so they are often used to intimidate and control the woman (IWK, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2006b). Isolation, which takes apart a woman's support system, is considered to be one of the more sinister emotional/psychological abusive tactics (Sev'er, 2002a). Women often indicate in research that they find emotional and psychological abuse more damaging than the physical IPV they have experienced (Mihorean, 2005; Sleutel, 1998).

Financial/economic abuse consists of denial of access to family income even if she is contributing to that income, restricting access to an inheritance, having no control over what portion of the family income is saved or spent, confiscating pay cheques, and having no input on what will be bought (IWK, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone et al., 2004; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Sev'er, 2002a; Statistics Canada, 2006b). Financial abuse also consists of destroying the woman's employment status by causing her to miss work due to physical injuries, unreliability in providing transportation or child care, destroying items or clothing required for work, forbidding her to work, causing her to be late, or harassing her at work

until she loses her job (Leone et al., 2004).

The main purpose of IPV, regardless of the type of violence used, is to control one's partner's behaviour (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). In 1993, Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar wrote *Education Groups for Men who Batter: The Duloth Model* and used wheels to provide an understanding of the types of IPV used against women. As shown in Figure 1, the Power and Control Wheel clearly indicates the various types of violence used against women in abusive relationships and how they all connect to physical and sexual violence. It also provides a clear image of how the various forms of IPV are all based on power and control. According to Pence and Paymar (1993) these tactics are typical power and control tactics used by individuals in positions of power. They are the tactics that have been used historically to maintain racism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and other types of dominance (Pence & Paymar, 1993). According to Pence and Paymar (1993) "men in particular are taught these tactics in both their families of origin and through their experiences in a culture that teaches men to dominate" (p 2). No IPV tactic is without intent. They are all connected and used, predominantly by men, to maintain control over their partner (Pence & Paymar, 1993).



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

Figure 1 Power and Control Wheel

Ideologies Affecting IPV

Ideologies, such as patriarchy, familialism, and the media reinforce beliefs on the subject of IPV by contributing to a hierarchical society (Bassuk et al., 2006; Jewkes,

2002; Meyers, 1994; Sev'er, 2002a; Wilcox, 2000). A hierarchical distribution in society creates positions of power and conflict and it is within this power and conflict that IPV occurs. Patriarchy, an ideology that grants men power over women, is an outcome of a hierarchical society that supports and sustains it. Patriarchy leads to relations of ruling and oppression due to the disparity of power levels between men and women (Bassuk et al., 2006; Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Wilcox, 2000).

Michael Johnson, a key researcher in family violence, has conducted extensive research on the patriarchal nature of IPV (see Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone et al., 2004). His research has shown that IPV occurs in most intimate relationships due to the different levels of power and control in the relationship, more specifically, that men use IPV to maintain power and control over their female partners. Johnson's research indicates repeatedly that patriarchy affects IPV.

Another ideology that affects IPV is familialism, which became normative for the Western family after industrialization when a split between the private and public spheres was created. Familialism consists of the belief that what occurs in the family stays private. This enables IPV to occur within the family home and no effort is made to publicize the issue. Familialism also includes beliefs on the role of a wife. Expectations are that a wife will put the needs of her family above her needs and will keep the family together even during circumstances that are not the norm, such as abusive behaviour. The attempts made by abused women to keep the family together have to be recognized as attempts to maintain a mythological belief of what a family is suppose to be. This

mythological belief is maintained and promoted by the media through the normalization of the nuclear family. Familialism also consists of the belief that an individual's home is a safe haven but this is not true for women who experience IPV. For these women, their home is unsafe and the outside world is where she is safer but the ideology of familialism leads them to remain in dangerous situations.

The ideologies of patriarchy and familialism reinforce beliefs about IPV by justifying men disciplining women, often for transgressions of their family roles (Jewkes, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2007; Meyers, 1994; Sev'er, 2002a; Wilcox, 2000). Jewkes (2002) states IPV is a product of society. The socialization of male violence against women is confirmed by Nicolson and Wilson (2004) when they discuss IPV as a method men use to maintain power and control over their partners. This method is acquired through gender-role socialization (Nicolson & Wilson, 2004).

The media is considered to be an ideology by some (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). It contributes to gender-role socialization. It also contributes to the continuation of IPV and is especially entrenched in the assumptions, myths, and stereotypes that portray IPV as an individual or family issue (Meyers, 1994). Studies indicate IPV is a social problem connected to gender issues, domination, and control, not a private issue, yet this is not reflected in media reports (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Meyers, 1994). The media contributes to IPV by supporting the dominant power structure in society (Meyers, 1994).

The media promotes many myths about IPV including: "(1) those involved are pathological – the woman is masochistic, the batterer is 'sick'; (2) the woman provoked him; (3) the woman must have had a reason for staying; (4) battered women never press

charges; and (5) battering is restricted to the ‘lower classes’” (Meyers, 1994, p. 49). By presenting IPV as an individual problem, the media assists in ignoring the societal components of IPV while reinforcing stereotypes that blame the woman which, in turn, produces and reinforces male power and dominance (Meyers, 1994). Unfortunately, IPV will continue to permeate society until the ideologies that promote it are alleviated.

Consequences of IPV

The consequences of IPV include emotional, social, economic, and physical consequences. These consequences are experienced at both micro- and macro-levels. Emotional consequences include confusion, loss of self-identity, anger, fear, shame, anxiety, feelings of failure, depression, passivity, lowered self-esteem, hostility, mistrust, feelings of guilt, loss of dignity, sleep problems, feelings of inferiority, frustration, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (Bennett et al., 2004; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone et al., 2004; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Rice, 2001; Riger, 2002; Sev'er, 2002a; Sleutel, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Social consequences include a higher risk of poverty for women and children, difficulty in developing future intimate relationships, loss of custody of children (both temporary and permanent), unemployment, higher divorce levels, impaired ability to function in society, drug and alcohol abuse, the inability to finish education, homelessness, and heavier burdens on the health care and legal system along with counseling and shelter resources (Rice, 2001; Riger et al., 2002; Statistics Canada, 2006b). Another key social consequence is the increase in single parent families. According to Statistics Canada (2006b), IPV plays a key role in creating single parent

families with 68% of single mothers indicating there was IPV in their previous relationships. This leads to the economic consequences of more low income families that are a factor affecting society in general (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Statistics Canada, 2006b). Economic consequences are related to the costs incurred by the woman and her family along with the health and criminal justice systems, lost productivity in the workplace by all individuals involved, and social services (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Leone et al., 2004; Riger et al., 2002; Statistics Canada, 2006b). The economic consequence factor should be taken into consideration in future studies on IPV because they can have a devastating effect on society.

Physical consequences include all physical injuries along with a deterioration of physical health and well-being in general (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Riger et al., 2002; Sev'er, 2002a). When discussing episodes of IPV, women are more likely than men to report severe IPV, injuries suffered, medical assistance required, and a fear that their life is in danger because of the IPV (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Mihorean, 2005). The physical injuries can be short- or long-term and can sometimes result in the death of the woman. A common physical consequence of violence against women is miscarriage because violence often escalates with pregnancy, although for some women pregnancy is the first time they experience physical IPV (Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004). Whether short- or long-term, the emotional and physical consequences of IPV affect a vast percentage of women. In fact, IPV damages more lives, not just the woman's life, than all genetic disorders combined (Nicolson & Wilson, 2004).

Consequences at a micro-level include the emotional and physical effects the violent experience has on the woman. One study indicated that “violence and abuse have direct, immediate, and traumatic effects on mental and physical health of all women and account for nearly one third of all visits to emergency rooms by women” (Rice, 2001, p. 362). Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death around the world for women between the ages of 14 and 44 and therefore it must be acknowledged as a serious public health concern (Rice, 2001). There are physical differences between men and women so women are more likely to be injured and to fear for their lives because of the IPV they are experiencing compared to men (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Mihorean, 2005; Nicolson & Wilson, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2006b). The 2004 GSS indicates that 44% of women reported an injury from IPV while only 19% of men reported injuries from IPV (Mihorean, 2005). Women are more likely to report serious injuries (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000) and 13% of the women who experienced IPV sought medical attention (Mihorean, 2005).

Macro-level consequences include the inability to work, homelessness, increased drug and alcohol addictions, and impacts on the health care, legal, and criminal justice systems. The impact on these systems can be physical, time, or economic. The physical or time impact considers the resources that are tied up with each individual woman’s case. The economic costs of IPV become immense because of the resources utilized. Studies have placed the economic costs of IPV, which include health, criminal justice, and social services costs along with lost productivity of the women, in the billions of dollars (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

There are numerous societal outcomes of IPV against women. The key outcome explored further in this research project is homelessness among women. According to the 2009-10 Transition Home Survey (THS), from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010 103,000 women and children stayed at a shelter in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011a). On April 15, 2010, over 70% of women residing at a shelter were there because of abuse and 4,645 women resided at one of Canada's shelters specifically for abused women on that particular night (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Over a third of these women had previously resided at the shelter they were in at the time of the survey (Statistics Canada, 2011a). An additional 213 were turned away because the shelter they were attempting to get into was full (Statistics Canada, 2011a). However, these statistics only indicate the number of women who utilized transition house services and do not include those who left without utilizing this form of support. This can translate into a large number of women and children who are trying to secure affordable, adequate housing. This is a grave concern because it has been stated that "the lack of economic independence and lack of availability of housing, coupled with the presence of small children, severely delimit the potential for success in establishing a violence-free life" (OAITH, 1998, 1999 as cited in Sev'er, 2002a, p. 198).

It is very difficult to measure the impacts of IPV against women, whether they are micro- or macro-level impacts or emotional, social, economic, or physical consequences for the individual women, because they are so vast and varied. According to Statistics Canada (2006b) "one of the challenges of measuring the impact of violence against women is the difficulty in adequately reflecting the broad range of impacts on individual

women in psychological and physical terms, as well as the broader societal-level costs of supplying services to victims” (p. 32). Recognizing this fact is the beginning of measuring and analyzing the effects IPV has on women.

Available Options

Currently there are numerous resources available for women experiencing IPV. However, these resources were not always available. In fact, the resources available have increased substantially in the last 30 years due to legislative changes and new government and non-government programs developed to address IPV (Mihorean, 2005). Programs developed at the community level are a fundamental part of the support women receive when leaving an abusive relationship (Bennett et al., 2004). Most of these earlier programs were created by grassroots efforts and volunteer labour although they eventually turned to government and private funding to continue offering the programs they developed and to expand on the services offered (Bennett et al., 2004; Davis & Srinivasan, 1995).

Resources available include both formal and informal options. Formal options include the legal system (police, courts, prisons, attorneys), counselors, doctors, nurses, transition houses, psychologists, crisis centres, social workers, daycare workers, crisis telephone lines, pharmacists, emergency shelters, community, family or women centres, ministers, and victim services (Davis & Srinivasan, 1995; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mihorean, 2005). According to the 2004 GSS, 47% of female victims of violence used a formal resource (Mihorean, 2005). Legislation developed for the protection of women in abusive relationships includes the pro-charging and pro-prosecuting policies currently

enacted in all Canadian provinces and territories (Mihorean, 2005; Sev'er, 2002a; Statistics Canada, 2006b). Pro-charging and pro-prosecuting policies require that charges or prosecution occur when there are reasonable grounds and evidence, even if the victim does not want charges laid (Mihorean, 2005).

Of the formal services available, shelters remain a significant resource for women escaping an abusive relationship (Bennett et al., 2004; Davis & Srinivasan, 1995; Panchanadeswaran & McCloskey, 2007). Statistics Canada (2006b) indicates from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004, 52,127 women and 36,840 children stayed at a shelter in Canada. The number of women using the shelter system in Canada is unnerving because typically the women who use shelters tend to be fleeing very serious violence (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Shelters provide women with a safe place to heal and begin to consider the options available to them (Bennett et al., 2004). Legal and medical assistance is often provided at a shelter (Bennett et al., 2004). If a woman has been considering making changes in her life before entering a shelter the stay, and support provided during the stay, can lessen the frequency and level of IPV at home (Bennett et al., 2004; Panchanadeswaran & McCloskey, 2007). One study indicated that reoccurrence of IPV two years later was 76% for the group that had advocacy counseling compared to 89% reoccurrence for the group that did not receive any intervention, even when this counseling took place during stays as short as one night (Wellbery, 2003). Other services are available across Canada for women leaving violent relationships. According to Statistics Canada (2006b) there are over 600 services for victims of crime across Canada. Although these services are designated for all victims of crime a large percentage of the

service users are women who are in abusive relationships (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Informal support systems include family, friends, neighbours, children, and co-workers (Davis & Srinivasan, 1995). Women are more likely to turn to informal support than formal support systems (Mihorean, 2005; Riger et al., 2002; Wilcox, 2000).

According to the 2004 GSS, almost 75% of victims of IPV revealed the abuse to an informal support system (Mihorean, 2005). Two-thirds of the women who disclosed IPV during the 2004 GSS interview indicated they relied on family, friends, or neighbours (Mihorean, 2005). Informal systems offer women both emotional and tangible support such as childcare, transportation, shelter, money, and food (Bassuk et al., 2006; Davis & Srinivasan, 1995; Jewkes, 2002; Riger et al., 2002). It is vital in helping a woman regain her independence following an abusive relationship because it reaffirms that she is valued, increases her self-esteem, and is also a source of practical support following an abusive episode (Jewkes, 2002; Riger et al., 2002).

Whether women turn to formal or informal systems of support, it is apparent in previous research that the reaction of the system used is crucial in assisting women when leaving the abusive relationship (Bassuk et al., 2006; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Sev'er, 2002a). Following an abusive relationship women require housing, employment, and emotional support (Sleutel, 1998). Unfortunately, housing, employment, and emotional support are not always available to them so they return to the abusive relationship (Novac et al., 1999). Although some formal services offer resources and information to provide direction for the women, other formal services and many informal services do not (Bennett et al., 2004).

Meyers (1994) states “violence against women must be understood within a complexity of oppression that victimizes women not simply because of their sex, but because the symbolic representation of gender is inextricably tied to issues of race and class” (p. 59). Class has a substantial impact on women starting over after leaving an abusive relationship. For example, even if information is provided for the women searching for housing options, it does not help them if there is no affordable, adequate housing available. They often become homeless.

Intimate partner violence against women is still very common and comes in many forms. It is affected by a variety of societal influences which makes it challenging to understand and reduce. Although there are options available for women leaving an abusive relationship they can be underutilized or not provide the type of support the woman requires at the time. There are many societal outcomes of IPV. One of the main outcomes is homelessness.

Homelessness among Women

In order to understand the risk of homelessness for women who have left abusive relationships there needs to be an in-depth understanding of homelessness. In this section I will begin with a discussion of homelessness in general, including definitions, statistics, and effects. I then will continue with some common causes of homelessness and end by providing information on shelters and the effort that has been made to alleviate homelessness through their use.

Homelessness Defined

There are numerous descriptions of homelessness in the literature, including those

that define levels of homelessness. The typical levels used are: (a) households in core housing need; (b) households at risk; (c) relatively homeless; and (d) absolutely homeless (Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1996; Novac, Brown, & Gallant, 1999; Tota, 2004, 2005). Households in core housing need are those failing to meet one of the three criteria (adequacy, suitability, and affordability) defined by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (Reitsma-Sweet, 2001; Tota, 2004). The three criteria will be discussed in detail later. Households at risk of homelessness are considered to be those that spend more than 50% of their gross income on shelter (Tota, 2004, 2005), although shelter expenses do not include medical or transportation costs, food, clothing, or the number of dependents in the household (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Moore & Skaburskis, 2004; Terashima, 2005). The relatively homeless have shelter but it may be temporary and there is no stability (Tota, 2004). The absolutely homeless live on the street without any shelter (Tota, 2004).

Homelessness can also be defined by the length of time a person lacks shelter. These levels include transitional, episodic, and chronic (Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1999). Transitional homelessness occurs when the person experiences a crisis in their life, such as leaving an abusive relationship (Novac et al., 1999). Episodic homelessness transpires when a person lives in a situation that is unstable (Novac et al., 1999). Their situation produces an environment that makes them susceptible to repeated homelessness (Novac et al., 1999). Women who leave an abusive relationship and return repeatedly often experience episodic homelessness (Novac et al., 1999). Chronic homelessness occurs when a person is homeless more frequently than they are housed (Novac et al.,

1999).

The definitions used for homelessness and how they typically exclude individuals who live at risk of homelessness are a limitation in the current research (Baker, Cook, & Norris, 2003). For the purpose of this study, I used the United Nations (UN) Centre for Human Settlements' (Habitat) definition for high-income industrialized countries, which defines homelessness as “points on a continuum that includes all those ‘who live in accommodation that does not reach certain standards as well as those with no accommodation at all’” (UN Habitat, 2000 as cited in Tota, 2004, p. 12). Housing instability is closely linked to homelessness (Pavao et al., 2007), therefore, both women who have been absolutely homeless and those who have been living at risk will be considered homeless for this study. These women typically fall into transitional or episodic time frames of homelessness (Novac et al., 1996).

Homelessness Statistics

Canada does not have any official, national statistics on homelessness and the counts that are available usually focus on the absolutely homeless (predominantly men) while ignoring those living at risk of homelessness (predominantly female) (Chisholm, Morris, Eisler, & Bergman, 1998; Klodawsky, 2006; Layton, 2000; Malos & Hague, 1997; Novac et al., 1996; Reid et al., 2005). Moreover, it is difficult to complete research on homeless individuals because there are high numbers of invisibly homeless individuals in various communities and a lack of consensus on the definition of homelessness (Chisholm et al., 1998; Hatty, 1996; Klodawsky, 2006; Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999). Homeless individuals are invisible for numerous

reasons, but most connect to the stigmatism attached to being homeless (Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1996; Reid et al., 2005). According to the literature available, “the dominant discourse on homelessness is one that depicts the homeless population in a variety of stigmatizing and derogatory ways” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 238).

It is also difficult to find statistics about homelessness because it continues to be poorly documented since there is no standard definition (Klodawsky, 2006; Tota, 2004). Therefore, it is difficult to monitor levels of homelessness, how the homeless population shifts and changes, what type of services are available for homeless individuals, how well these services fill their needs, and what services are missing (Tota, 2004). The biggest issue that arises from the lack of statistics on homelessness is it becomes very easy for governments to ignore the issue. As Layton (2000) states, “no data = no problem” (p. 69).

Characteristics of Homeless Individuals

Homeless individuals are very diverse in their characteristics and experiences. They are not limited by age, gender, culture, or race (Community Action on Homelessness [CAH], 2009; Lenk, 2003; Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000; Novac et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005; Sev'er, 2002b; Tota, 2004; Zamprelli, 2003). For decades the homeless were considered predominantly men but in recent years statistics have indicated homelessness is a growing problem among women (Hatty, 1996; Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005). In a snapshot study completed in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), NS on the night of November 13, 2008 31% of the homeless were women (CAH, 2009). Other studies have also indicated approximately 30% of the homeless are women (Klodawsky, 2006; Tota, 2005). Even

though some statistics are available, there is a general lack of research completed specifically on homeless women (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Klodawsky, 2006). Often they are grouped into research completed on homeless men (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Klodawsky, 2006).

Causes and Risk Factors of Homelessness

The causes of homelessness are often multiple and complex and although most individuals indicate more than one reason for their homelessness, poverty and homelessness are, and always have been, linked (Klodawsky, 2006; Layton, 2000; Lenk, 2002; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Rice, 2001; Robertson, 1998; Terashima, 2005; Tota, 2004, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). Causes are usually a combination of macro- and micro-level factors and are very complex (Klodawsky, 2006; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Tota, 2005). Homelessness is usually not a continuous situation (Tota, 2005). Most individuals experience prolonged periods of housing instability that can be peppered with absolute homelessness (Baker et al., 2003; Novac et al., 1996; Tota, 2005).

Often homelessness occurs when a household in a precarious position experiences a stressor such as eviction, the inability to pay rent or mortgage, IPV, family breakdown, loss of employment, roommate issues, loss of informal support systems, or an unexpected, large expense (CAH, 2009; Cities and Environment, 2006; Layton, 2000; Lenk, 2003; Novac et al., 1999; Zamprelli, 2003). Women in this precarious position often experience a variety of housing difficulties including: sacrificing bills to pay rent or mortgage or vice versa; paying rent, mortgage, or bills late; threat of eviction; frequently moving because of difficulties in securing affordable housing; overcrowded or unsuitable

living conditions; not eating or eating less in order to pay the bills, rent, or mortgage; living with family or friends; being without housing; selling belongings; and difficulty renting or buying due to credit checks (Baker et al., 2003; Pavao et al., 2007).

Although these are the key factors to homelessness and affect all women who have experienced homelessness, there are other factors that influence certain groups of women. These individual factors will be discussed but it needs to be remembered that although individual vulnerabilities are important factors in the women's experience, research should always consider the macro-level factors contributing to poverty and a lack of affordable, adequate housing (Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000). In previous studies, women indicated various causes for homelessness including: family violence, conflict, and breakdown; cuts in social programs; discrimination; lack of supportive housing; addictions; migration; lack of education; adverse childhood experiences; eviction; deinstitutionalization; release from treatment programs or correctional facilities; inability to find affordable, adequate housing; inadequate income; immigration; isolation; and mental illness (CAH, 2009; Chisholm et al., 1998; Cities and Environment Unit, 2006; Harris, 1999; Hatty, 1996; Hicks, 2003; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Layton, 2000; Lenk, 2003; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Pavao et al., 2006; Reitsma-Sweet, 2001; Sev'er, 2002b; Terashima, 2005; Tolomiczenko & Goering, 2000; Tota, 2004, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003).

Many of these listed causes, such as isolation, addictions, and mental illness, can be the result of living in an abusive relationship (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Pavao et al., 2006). For women, family violence and family breakdown continue to be the main reason

given for their homelessness, with up to 60% of participants in studies citing this cause (Hatty, 1996; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Layton, 2000; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Novac et al., 1999; Tota, 2004, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). The connection between IPV and homelessness is multifaceted. Intimate partner violence can trigger homelessness among women and, alternately, homelessness can lead women to returning to the abusive relationship.

Some of the causes of homelessness among women are macro in nature. These include cuts to women's shelters, housing programs, and rent subsidies (Cities and Environment Unit, 2006; Klodawsky, 2006; Layton, 2000; Sev'er, 2002a; Terashima, 2005; Tota, 2004). Although the recent increase in affordable housing programs have indicated renewed interest at all levels of government there are limitations to new affordable housing programs including sustainability, depth of subsidy, and lack of operating funds (Klodawsky, 2006; Tota, 2005).

Other causes are due to societal beliefs promoted by ideologies of neoliberalism, liberalism, familialism, and patriarchy. The ideology of neoliberalism supports a social system based on individualization and creates a belief system that everyone has the same choice and opportunities available to them (Treanor, 2003). It creates an "us" versus "them" mentality in which individuals think if they can succeed so can everyone else and if someone does not succeed it is because there is something wrong with them as an individual – not because something is wrong systemically. Liberal democracy created a shift in social structure that produced the split between the public and private spheres of individuals' lives. Liberalism justifies neoliberalism because of the emphasis on everyone

having choice and being equal regarding freedom of choice and access to resources (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). It also supports familialism and patriarchy by supporting the dichotomy of public and private spheres and promoting the belief that what occurs in the family stays in the family (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

These ideologies promote the belief that individuals should be able to afford to support themselves and should look after themselves and if they cannot than their family should. They also support the belief that the family is a safe haven and that men rule the family and women are their property. They lead to stigma being attached to individuals who cannot provide for themselves and to families that separate (Novac et al., 1996; Reid et al., 2005).

Often the causes of homelessness are portrayed as individualistic. The blame is placed on the individual for the choices they made and their inability to cope (Layton, 2000; Smith, 1999). In most cases this is untrue and leads to misconceptions about homelessness. According to research, individuals are often caught in a circle of attempting to find housing, secure Income Assistance (IA), or find employment while not having an address (Tota, 2005). An example given by Tota (2005) indicates without an address women did not qualify for IA yet when they found an apartment and had to request a proof of address from the potential landlord for IA it would create a situation where the apartment was suddenly no longer available. When working with the young women in their study, Reid et al. (2005) discovered the underlying message these women had received was their situation was their fault and they could change their homelessness if they wanted to. During the literature review three key causes of homelessness –

violence, poverty, and low levels of affordable, adequate housing – were discovered.

Violence. Many women who have experienced homelessness found themselves in that situation after leaving an abusive relationship only to discover that life on the street is also very violent. Even with the level of violence experienced on the street there are women who have left abusive situations so extreme that street violence is a preferred option (Novac et al., 1999). They had to make a choice and opted for the insecurity of homelessness over the violence they experienced in their home, only to continue experiencing violence on the street (Hatty, 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005).

Studies have indicated that homeless women are at a serious risk of experiencing violence on the street with most indicating they have experienced at least one episode of violence when homeless (Novac et al., 1999). Homeless women indicated they were assaulted by their partners, other homeless individuals, security guards, police, drug dealers, clients, and members of the public (Hatty, 1996). Approximately 65% of the women who reported they were assaulted in one study indicated they received injuries during their assaults (Hatty, 1996). The violence experienced on the street is gendered, with women being more at risk than men (Hatty, 1996; Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1999). The violence against women is typically perpetrated by men (Hatty, 1996; Novac et al., 1999). Women will often become invisibly homeless to avoid violence on the street (Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999). Other strategies used include disguising their gender, securing a relationship with a male even if it is an unhealthy relationship, and either staying filthy (including urinating in their pants) so men will not want to rape them or using public facilities to remain clean and tidy and thereby portraying themselves as

housed women (CAH, 2009; Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1996).

Poverty. Poverty is a main contributing factor in homelessness, but it does not affect everyone equally. It is largely gendered and worldwide women and children bear the burden more than men (Rice, 2001). Poverty is often defined by low income cut-offs (LICO). The LICO is “an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family” (Statistics Canada, 2006a, p. 7). LICOs have been in use since 1959 and are based on community size and the number of individuals in a family (Statistics Canada, 2006a). High levels of households live under the LICO rates (Reitsma-Sweet, 2001; Robertson, 1998). For example, studies have indicated that when using LICO rates, nearly three million Canadian women live in poverty (Reitsma-Sweet, 2001). According to Robertson (1998) it would cost \$16.3 billion to bring every Canadian up to LICO rate cutoffs. The 2008 LICO rates for a city the size of HRM are \$19,094 for an individual and range from \$23,769 for a family of two to \$50,529 for a family of seven or more (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

Poverty is gendered therefore low incomes affect women differently than men (Novac et al., 1996). Women are typically the custodial parents in lone parent families so their poverty also affects their children and because they are relying on a single income they are more at risk of becoming homeless (Tota, 2004). According to one study, 20% of the 16,700 single parent households in HRM are considered at risk of homelessness (Tota, 2004). Women also make less than men or have a difficult time retaining their employment when leaving an abusive relationship and therefore rely on IA (Leone et al.,

2004).

As of July 2008, monthly IA rates in NS for rental or ownership shelter were \$300 for a single person, \$570 for a family of two, and \$620 for a family of three or more (Nova Scotia Department of Community Services [NSDCS], 2012). For board, these monthly rates (as of July 2008) are \$223 for a single person, \$242 for a family of two, and \$282 for a family of three or more (NSDCS, 2012). Monthly personal allowances (as of June 2012) are \$238 per adult, \$133 per dependent child up to eighteen years of age, and \$238 per dependent child between the ages of eighteen and twenty (NSDCS, 2012).

As of October 2011, minimum wage rates in NS for inexperienced workers were \$9.50 per hour and \$10.00 per hour for experienced workers (Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education [NSLAE], 2012). This calculates to a yearly income of almost \$21,000 for an experienced full-time worker, and is slightly above LICO rates. If an individual worked full-time at minimum wage and lived in a bachelor apartment in HRM they would still be spending 35% of their income on rent.

Income assistance and minimum wage rates do not reflect what households require to survive, especially considering housing costs, and they need to be increased (Chisholm et al., 1998; Cities and Environment Unit, 2006; Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1999). In 2009, the living wage required for an individual living in a bachelor apartment in HRM was \$12.48 per hour (CAH, 2009). The cost of living in larger cities across Canada is increasing yet wages are stagnating. Studies have indicated that renters are more likely to be in core housing need (Reitsma-Sweet, 2001). Income for renters increased only 10% during the 1991 to 2001 timeframe while the average shelter costs

increased by 15% leaving most renters paying over 50% of their income for shelter (Tota, 2005). In 2005, 17,465 households were below LICO and paid over 50% of their income for shelter (CAH, 2009). Research in HRM has indicated that 73% of the households at risk of homelessness are renters (Tota, 2004). This creates an increase risk of homelessness for women because women are predominantly renters (Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1996). Renters are at a greater risk than owners with falling vacancy rates and rising rental figures (Layton, 2000; Reitsma-Sweet, 2001). The amount of affordable, adequate housing that is available is impacted by these trends.

Lack of affordable, adequate housing. Three components in housing contribute to its acceptability – adequacy, suitability, and affordability (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Reitsma-Sweet, 2001; Tota, 2004, 2005). A dwelling that is considered adequate does not require any major repairs (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Spurr, Melzer, & Engeland, 2002; Tota, 2004, 2005). A dwelling that is considered suitable has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the occupying family (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Spurr et al., 2002; Tota, 2004, 2005). Affordability means housing costs are less than 30% of household income (Tota, 2005). A household is in core housing need if it does not meet either affordability, suitability, or adequacy standards without paying over 30% of household income (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004). In Canada, affordability is the component that is met least often (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004).

CMHC (2011) indicated the average rent for a bachelor apartment in NS was \$670 per month, with one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments averaging \$753, \$925, and \$1182 per month respectively. Although the average vacancy rate in HRM was 2.4%

in 2011, the cost of renting is still too high for low-income individuals and does not leave enough for basic needs (CMHC, 2011). Housing affordability is directly linked to income and costs and is often defined as a shelter-to-income ratio (STIR) (Tota, 2005). The CMHC uses a STIR of 30% as a standard of affordability (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Tota, 2005). Anything over 30% can increase the risk of a family being in core housing need. This definition should not be used as a predictor of homelessness though but as an economic vulnerability that could lead to a crisis if other stressors, such as job loss, IPV, or family breakdown, occur (Tota, 2005). The risk of homelessness is greater for women-headed households. According to the 1996 census 16% of Canadian females were in core housing needs households compared to 13% of Canadian males (Spurr et al., 2002). Lack of affordable, adequate housing is especially problematic for women who are in abusive relationships because their options are stay or be homeless. Often these women have children that they also have to take into consideration (Novac et al., 1999).

Over one million households in Canada are paying more than 50% of their income on shelter (Tota, 2005). This represents a 51% increase since 1990 (Tota, 2005). In 1991 16,635 households in HRM were in core housing need (Tota, 2005). In 2005, that number had increased to 25,180 with 46% of an average annual income of \$18,495 being paid on shelter (Tota, 2005). According to the 2001 Canadian Census, NS was the only province where the number of households in core housing need rose compared to the 1996 Canadian Census (Engeland, Jakubec, & Lewis, 2004) and according to Tota (2004), HRM has one of the highest percentages in Canada of renters paying more than 30% of their income on shelter alone with figures at almost 50%. Rising housing costs

increases the pressure on households who are at risk of homelessness (Moore & Skaburskis, 2004; Terashima, 2005).

There is a grave need for more affordable, adequate housing options. Increasing levels of social housing is required because there are lengthy waiting lists for currently available social housing stock (Layton, 2000; Malos & Hague, 1997; McTeague, 2002; Novac et al., 1999; Robertson, 1998; Sev'er, 2002b; Smith, 1999; Terashima, 2005; Tota, 2004; Zamprelli, 2003). This increase in housing stock must also be considered safe for the women, especially those leaving abusive relationships, because they may be uncomfortable in certain buildings or neighbourhoods (Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Novac et al., 1999).

Regardless of the background causes of looking for other shelter options, lack of access to affordable, adequate housing is a key factor in homelessness, yet increased levels of affordable, adequate housing stock alone will not alleviate the high levels of homelessness. The effort must combine increasing levels of affordable, adequate housing stock with increased wages and social support. Part of the social support system in place includes shelters. Lower levels of affordable, adequate housing have a negative effect on shelters by leading to a lack of enough facilities to house the individuals that require them to increasing the length of stay individuals have at a shelter which does not free up beds for new individuals who require them (Novac et al., 1999).

Effects of Homelessness on Individuals and Society

The effects of homelessness on women are numerous and detrimental and can be emotional, physical, or societal. Emotional effects include mental illness, low self-

esteem, depression, addictions, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, and higher stress levels (Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Tota, 2005). These effects can be short- or long-term, the level of the effects can increase over time, and the effects often decrease the opportunity for the woman to secure shelter and employment (Pavao et al., 2006).

Physical effects include bodily injuries, malnourishment, and increased illness (Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1999; Tota, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). These effects can also be long- or short-term and can eventually lead to death for some women. According to the literature, homeless individuals have 2 to 8 times higher mortality rates than the general population and young homeless women, those between 18 and 44, have 10 times the mortality rate compared to the general population (Tota, 2005). Homeless individuals experience illnesses more frequently than housed individuals because shelter is an important contributing factor to health and well-being (Novac et al., 1999; Tota, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). The increase in illness could be the result of exposure to the elements, sleep deprivation, nutritional deficiencies, the challenges and barriers they face accessing health care, or by the confined living conditions within the shelter system (Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005; Tota, 2005).

Physical injuries often occur due to the unsafe nature of life on the street. Both homeless men and women are concerned about safety when living on the street but for women the concern is more profound because the risk is gendered (Klodawsky, 2006; Tota, 2005). It is imperative that the distinctions between violence and fear for homeless men and women be recognized. Many homeless women regularly experience physical and sexual abuse (Reid et al., 2005). Homeless women consider the violence they

experience to be the biggest issue they face and rank it over addictions and mental health issues (Reid et al., 2005). Often homeless women will participate in unhealthy relationships or behaviours in order to protect themselves from the dangers of living alone on the streets (Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999).

Societal effects include the inability to secure employment, an increase in illegal activities for survival (including theft, panhandling, squeegeeing, illegal employment, break and enter for shelter purposes, and prostitution), and the societal discomfort individuals feel when confronted with visible homelessness (Hatty, 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Tota, 2005). Another key societal effect that cannot be ignored is the potential increase in the number of children in foster homes. Being homeless negatively impinges on women's abilities to care for their children and consequently their children are taken into custody by social service agencies if the father is not able to take the children, cannot be found, or is unknown (Novac et al., 1996; Sev'er, 2002b). Additionally, when women cannot secure adequate housing they have difficulty regaining custody of their children (Novac et al., 1996).

Shelters

The first shelter for abused women in Canada opened in 1973 in Vancouver (Sev'er, 2002b). Canadian shelters consist of emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and non-residential homeless services (Tota, 2005). Emergency shelters provide temporary shelter for people who have no other options except living on the street (Tota, 2005). Transitional housing facilities offer supportive housing options for people requiring additional assistance in overcoming trauma and re-establishing personal and

housing stability (Lenk, 2004). They are utilized between emergency shelters and permanent housing with a time limit on stays ranging from three months to three years (Lenk, 2004). The need for transitional housing is very clear because women leaving abusive relationships often find that the limited length of time they can stay at an emergency shelter - typically 30 days - is not long enough to heal and prepare themselves for living on their own (Baker et al., 2003). Non-residential homeless services are facilities that homeless individuals can use on an as-needed basis and consist of drop-in centres, soup kitchens, and food banks (Tota, 2005).

Shelters, and the services they provide both to women who reside in them and those who do not, continue to be under-funded and under-resourced (Baker et al., 2003; Layton, 2000; Novac et al., 1999; Sev'er, 2002b; Tota, 2005). This leads to women being turned away at the door, shelters focusing on day-to-day survival requirements and nothing else, shelters operating in violation of health, safety, fire, and building code regulations, and a waitlist for services offered including programming (Layton, 2000; McTeague, 2002; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Robertson, 1998; Sev'er, 2002b; Smith, 1999; Terashima, 2005; Tota, 2004, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). Yet, when shelters are properly funded the results can be very beneficial for the individual women as well as for society. For example, studies have indicated that 66% to 90% of residents utilizing transition houses moved to permanent housing of their own or experienced various other accomplishments (Lenk, 2004).

The number of shelters has risen over the last few decades with the greatest rise occurring between 1979 and 1992 (Statistics Canada, 2006b). (Sev'er, 2002a; Statistics

Canada, 2006b). They are well-used with almost 600 shelters serving 103,000 women and children during the timeframe from April 1, 2009 until March 31, 2010 (Statistics Canada, 2011a). The THS indicated that on April 15, 2010 4,645 women and 3,611 children were housed in shelters across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Statistics from a shelter for women and their children in HRM indicate that in 2006 there were 524 admissions, 59 of them children, which is an 11% increase from 2005 (Buote, 2007). According to Statistics Canada (2011a), 71% of women staying at a shelter in 2009-10 were there because of abuse. Women are more likely than men to stay in a shelter more than once although most shelter stays are short (Sev'er, 2002a). According to Buote (2007) in 2006 the average stay at a HRM shelter for women and children was 9.04 days, which is higher than the 8.77 days average stay in 2005.

Services offered by shelters include access to food, advocacy, counseling, legal services, crisis telephone lines, medical services, housing referrals, clothing banks, and support services focusing on IA, employment, addictions, mental health, education, and domestic violence (Neufeld-Redekop & Zamprelli, 2001; Sev'er, 2002b; Tota, 2005). These programs are important because support is often required before an individual can become independently stable, especially for individuals with histories of IPV (Lenk, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2006b).

However, even with the services and support offered at shelters there are numerous reasons women will not stay at a shelter. These reasons include: they have male children over 12 years of age who are not allowed to stay at the shelter; the location of the shelter (often in dangerous areas of the urban core); inflexibility; lack of privacy;

they have to be more domesticated than they want to be, cultural and personal diversities; overcrowding; noisy conditions; and too many rules and curfews (Neufeld-Redekop & Zamprelli, 2001; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Robertson, 1998; Sev'er, 2002b; Tota, 2004, 2005). What has to be remembered is shelters are not a solution to homelessness and therefore should not be perceived and utilized as such.

Although recent research has focused on societal causes, homelessness is still perceived as an individual problem thus society feels relieved of any duty to do anything to alter the statistics on homelessness. According to Layton (2000), homelessness “was – and still is – a social construction, a result of our collective actions as a society, an artifact” (p. xxi). Until there is recognition that homelessness is not the fault of the individual and usually occurs due to relations of ruling outside the individual’s ability to alter there will continue to be high homelessness statistics.

A lack of clear definition of homelessness, and the subsequent partial statistics, has an impact on what is being done to alleviate homelessness. It also impacts what is known about causes and effects of homelessness. This also impacts what is being done to alleviate homelessness. Three main causes of homelessness for women were discussed. The key one is violence. It has been recommended that IPV in the lives of homeless women be recognized when dealing with their homelessness (Novac et al., 1999). Therefore, one area that needs to be further studied is the connection between IPV against women and homelessness among women.

Intimate Partner Violence and Homelessness

This section of my literature review explores the connection between IPV against

women and homelessness among women in detail. I discuss the effect on women of the social policies that govern their everyday realities along with some possible strategies to alleviate these effects.

Although it has been since the 1990s that research has discovered a link between IPV and homelessness among women, it is still under-explored (Novac et al., 1999; Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006; Wesely & Wright, 2005). Even though IPV may not be considered a cause of homelessness due to other contextual issues in a woman's life, it can assist in creating circumstances that lead to homelessness (Williams, 1998). As previously discussed, family violence, conflict, and family breakdown are often cited by women as the predominant factors leading to their homelessness (e.g., Baker et al., 2003; Reid et al., 2005; Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006; Tota, 2004, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). These dominant factors affect women more than they affect men. Tota (2004) states women are three times more likely than men to indicate IPV or relationship breakdown as the main cause of their homelessness.

Men are more likely to be in a position of being able to obtain housing due to their economic positions compared to women's (Malos & Hague, 1997). Often in abusive relationships a component of the IPV inflicted on the woman is financial, which creates an economic dependence on her male partner. This economic dependence limits her options when attempting to leave (Baker et al., 2003; Bassuk et al., 1997; Browne & Bussuk, 1997; Charles, 1994; Moore, 2003; Williams, 1998). For a woman to escape an abusive relationship she requires a safe place where she can go and bring her children if she has any (Sev'er, 2002b). If she cannot find housing or cannot become economically

independent she often returns to her partner and the IPV continues (Baker et al., 2003; Charles, 1994; Malos & Hague, 1997; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moore, 2003; Sev'er, 2002b; Sev'er, 2002a; Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006; Williams, 1998).

Another potential outcome of IPV that makes it difficult for women to secure housing on their own is the increased risk of drug and alcohol dependency following an abusive relationship (Bassuk et al., 1997; Browne, 1993; Moore, 2003; Wenzel, Leake, & Gelberg, 2001; Wesely & Wright, 2005; Williams, 1998). Drugs and alcohol are often used as a coping strategy (Moore, 2003; Wenzel et al., 2001). There is also a potential for an increase in mental health concerns following an abusive relationship due to the nature of the treatment the woman has experienced during the relationship (Bassuk et al., 1997; Browne, 1993; Moore, 2003). Both drug and alcohol dependency and mental health issues can create situations in which it is difficult to maintain employment and secure housing (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Klodawsky, 2006; Leone et al., 2004; Moore, 2003).

Women are often forced to make a decision between being housed and being homeless based on what their lives were like with their abusive partners. In these situations, their lives have become so unbearable at home that homelessness, with its own dangers and uncertainties, is considered a better alternative – an escape (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Reid et al., 2005). However, even for homeless women that do not cite family violence, conflict, or family breakdown as a direct cause of their homelessness, there is still usually a connection of family violence in their history (Malos & Hague, 1997; Novac et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005).

Some women will not leave their partners because they do not see a safe

alternative (Charles, 1994; Sev'er, 2002b; Styron, Janoff-Bulman, & Davidson, 2000). Over half of the women in one study indicated the fear of not having affordable, adequate housing to go to as a factor influencing them to remain in the violent relationship for as long as they did (Sev'er, 2002b). Therefore, there needs to be more affordable, adequate housing available so women recognize they have alternatives. There also needs to be adequate formal support services that can assist women during their crisis (Sev'er, 2002b). The importance of a safe alternative cannot be stressed enough since women and children's lives are at risk (Sev'er, 2002b).

There is often a direct link between IPV and homelessness among women but this is not always the case. Frequently there is not a continuous path to homelessness but one that is interrupted and begun again (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Novac et al., 1996; Wesely & Wright, 2005). Regardless of what path is taken, direct or indirect, the impact of IPV on a woman consists of a "downward spiral toward social exclusion, destitution, and dislocation" (Wesely & Wright, 2005, p. 1092). This impact intensifies the risk of homelessness following family breakdown. This path to isolation is compounded by the IPV the male inflicts on his partner as discussed earlier.

Effects on Women

The shortage of affordable, adequate housing for women has long been recognized by advocates as an issue in Canada, especially for women leaving abusive relationships (Novac et al., 1996). It affects their ability to re-establish themselves and often leads to them returning to their abusive partners (Novac et al., 1996). As discussed previously, rental rates are increasing and there are long waits for subsidized housing

(Novac et al., 1999). For some women, subsidized housing is the only opportunity available for them to secure their own housing. For these women, wait times and lack of availability are especially crucial. Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration regarding the lack of affordable, adequate housing is that it continues the control abusive partners have over the women. When women do not have affordable, adequate housing options, the power their male partners have over them increases and the woman's control over her own life is reduced (CMHC, 1994).

For many women experiencing homelessness following IPV, there may be affordable housing available but it may not be adequate regarding their safety concerns. Safety can be connected to being in neighbourhoods with high crime rates and drug use, and it can also be associated with the ex-partner being able to access the woman. Research has indicated that homeless women move often to avoid abusive situations and because of decisions made by social service departments (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999).

Sometimes women get evicted, or threatened with eviction, after securing housing independently because it is too expensive for them to maintain on their own. Many women who have left abusive relationships and can secure housing report experiencing other housing issues such as eviction or threat of eviction, having to rely on food or clothing banks, paying mortgage, rent, or bills late, and skipping meals or eating less (Baker et al., 2003; Sev'er, 2002b). In one study, 25% to 50% of the women separated for one year described housing issues such as paying mortgage, rent, or bills late, reducing grocery money to cover mortgage, rent, or bills, or being at risk of eviction (Baker et al.,

2003).

The policies of shelters and transition houses often affect a woman's ability to remain housed. For example, some transition houses have limitations on the length of time a woman can stay (Williams, 1998). Time limitations can range from two weeks to three months (CMHC, 1994; Charles, 1994; Williams, 1998), yet this may not be enough time for the woman to secure housing and stabilize her life following leaving her partner. Subsequently, she finds herself homeless. Other effects of shelters' policies, including curfews and rules, were previously discussed.

Strategies

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the strategies in place for women leaving abusive relationships are not always affective. Care needs to be taken in altering strategies to ensure they assist rather than hinder a woman's ability to leave an abusive partner and that they do not lead to women experiencing homelessness. The complexity of the issue also needs to be recognized when developing strategies (Browne, 1993; Clarke, Pendry, & Kim, 1997; Tota, 2005; Wesely & Wright, 2005). There is not one path to homelessness and all women's experiences will be different (Wardhaugh, 1999; Wesely & Wright, 2005; Williams, 1998).

Due to the continuous prevalence of violence in the lives of women who have experienced homelessness due to IPV, special care must be taken by service providers not to revictimize the women. To ensure revictimization does not occur, service providers must be educated on the issue especially the systemic forces that contribute to the instability of the lives of these women. They also need to recognize the connection

between IPV and homelessness among women as well as the effect limited resources have on the lives of these women (Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006).

Recent decisions made by governments to reduce the amount of social assistance available need to be reversed because it has been indicated in previous studies that IA helps women leaving abusive relationships secure housing (Baker et al., 2003; CMHC, 1994; Leone et al., 2004; Moore, 2003). One transformation that has been occurring with IA is the changing work requirements in order to be eligible for continued support. This transformation is especially critical for women leaving abusive relationships because the often long-lasting effects of IPV can make it difficult to meet the work requirements of IA (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Klodawsky, 2006; Leone et al., 2004; Lown, Schmidt, & Wiley, 2006).

Conclusion

Intimate partner violence is still affecting many women and can lead to homelessness. As indicated by the literature review, there are several limitations of previous research including limited research directly exploring the connection between IPV against women and homelessness among women (Bufkin & Bray, 1998; Novac et al., 1999; Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006; Williams, 1998). The limitations include ambiguous definitions of homelessness, under-exploration, and a lack of research focused specifically on homeless women.

Contextual factors that contribute to homelessness, such as the urgent safety needs of women leaving abusive relationships, have to be taken into consideration when researching IPV against women and homelessness among women (Baker et al., 2003;

Styron et al., 2000). There also needs to be more research that focuses on the systemic forces and societal structures that contribute to homelessness instead of the individual factors that may increase the risk. This focus is increasing but there continues to be numerous studies that concentrate on the individual attributes of the homeless. This research project maps the social relations that affect homelessness among women leaving abusive relationships and discusses the systemic forces and societal structures that contribute to the issue through a critical theory paradigm.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical theory explores structural inequalities and how they hinder the potential of individuals (Comstock, 1982; Morgaine, 1994). It focuses on understanding the historical patterns that have been built up and reinforced over time so individuals are oppressed as a result of these historical patterns. There is an underlying belief that society privileges some groups at the expense of other groups and the role of a critical theorist is to emancipate groups that are oppressed (Comstock, 1982; Fay, 1987; Humble & Morgaine, 2002; Morgaine, 1994). According to Comstock (1982) critical theory is “a science of *praxis* in which action serves as both the source and the validation of its theories” (p. 378).

Critical theory also focuses on how systemic societal structures and ideologies influence, and are embedded within, personal experiences and perspectives (Comstock, 1982; Fay, 1987; Humble & Morgaine, 2002). It is dedicated to discovering and understanding the often hidden patterns within social interaction that affect those social interactions even though the actors often do not realize there are patterns within their interactions (Fay, 1987). The individuals participating in critical research also have a role to play in recognizing the patterns by examining the values, beliefs, and assumptions that have been instilled in them.

History

Although the history of critical theory is relatively recent, it is very rich. The roots of critical theory are based in Marxist thinking and it was developed by the Frankfurt School of thinking during the early 1920s (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Kincheloe &

McLaren, 1994; Marrow & Brown, 1994; Osmond, 1994). This school was based at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Osmond, 1994). The work conducted was to provide an alternative to positivism.

Early key names within the movement include Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal, and Herbert Marcuse (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Marrow & Brown, 1994; Osmond, 1994). They were influenced by the work of Karl Marx, Georg Lukács, Georg Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, and Antonio Gramsci but took those works further to focus on societal inequalities (Marrow & Brown, 1994; Osmond, 1994). It was the work of these early individuals that shifted the focus of Marxist studies from neoliberalism to ideologies and culture (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). Some theorists believe this shift was particularly significant because it was in response to the expansion of mass media and how that affected social change (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982).

In the 1960s Jürgen Habermas began revisiting the earlier work of the Frankfurt School and worked at including a more Anglo-American perspective in the tradition and relating to other theoretical traditions (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Marrow & Brown, 1994; Osmond, 1994). His work in the 1970s created additional attention for critical theory (Osmond, 1994). This additional attention was very important in developing critical theory into the perspective now used, which is different from interpretive and positivistic theories but contains some of their concerns and insights (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982).

All theoretical paradigms contain ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs. Ontology relates to the form and nature of reality and, therefore,

what is there that can be known about reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The ontological belief of critical theory is *historical realism* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Historical realism occurs when reality is shaped by a variety of factors (social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender) and then becomes reified into structures that the individual perceives to be real (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Historical realism contributes to oppression but not always in ways that are visible.

Within critical theory, it is understood that reality is varied and subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This makes it impossible to formulate generalizations regarding humans and declare these generalizations as truth. There is also an understanding that there are “truths” that are passed through generations historically and are viewed as being true (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These historical truths include assumptions and preconceived ideas about groups of individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research project explored the historical realism about IPV against women and homelessness among women and challenged taken-for-granted assumptions associated with these historical truths.

Epistemological questions ask what is the nature of the relationship between the knower, or would-be knower, and what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemological beliefs of critical theory are transactional and subjectivist in nature which, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), means that the findings of a study are value mediated. This means I am connected to my research and my values influenced my research. According to Bredo and Feinberg (1982), a critical researcher does not passively observe a phenomenon and then write about it; they are an active participant in

the phenomenon. This epistemological belief can be understood as it being impossible for a researcher, since they are human, to eliminate their own perspectives from their research.

My values influenced my interviews and analysis. In a critical theory based research project this is difficult to avoid especially when there is a close connection between my life experiences and the topic I researched. As a developing critical theorist, I believe my values should be present in my research project. This study was transactional and subjectivist in nature since I have my own emic perspectives about IPV against women and homelessness among women due to my personal and academic background. My perspectives were a rich resource to my research project and were focused on through reflexivity.

Reflexivity includes the understanding that I, as a researcher, affected the participants and, in turn, the participants affected me (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Berg, 2007; Boyle, 1994). I affected the research by entering into the process with established thoughts, beliefs, and feelings on the topic. The participants affected me by the very nature of the difficult stories they told. These effects are difficult to avoid during qualitative research therefore they were embraced and dealt with through activities such as journaling, which is discussed in more detail in the Methods chapter. Reflexivity also required me to critically examine the interaction between myself and the research participants (Charmaz, 2006; Jackson, 2003). How my understanding and assumptions on the topic affected all areas of my research project should be clear to individuals reading my research (Charmaz, 2006; Cowles, 1988; Jackson, 2003). This adds to the

significance of my research results (Jackson, 2003). The theoretical assumptions of critical theory will now be discussed.

Theoretical Assumptions

Theoretical assumptions assist the critical researcher in achieving the goal of emancipation. The theoretical assumptions of critical theory discuss ways in which personal experiences and perspectives affect an individual's life and how a critical researcher should focus on uncovering systemic structures creating oppression. Critical theory's belief is that reality is shaped by gender, social, economic, ethnic, political, and cultural factors and, over time, these factors become crystallized into structures that are believed to be real (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The key premise of the critical theory framework is individuals need to develop an awareness of the systemic oppression they are experiencing in their everyday lives before they can experience emancipation from the oppression (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). Critical theory, like feminist theory, creates an understanding of how societal forces affect individuals and their experiences and how the individuals can then emancipate themselves from the oppressive situations through social action and change (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Humble & Morgaine, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). This research project assisted the individuals participating in beginning to understanding the oppression in their lives and to begin to emancipate themselves from their situations. The emancipation of individuals was only possible by using research methods that were not quantitative in nature (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Humble & Morgaine, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). The courses of action were clear and true to the

participants because this research project began with the everyday experiences of the women and then took that information and discovered which institutions were contributing to their systemic oppression.

The knowledge of the women participating in the study was dependent on the social realities in their lived experiences. For some of the women participating in this research project, the treatment they experienced at the hands of their partners and the subsequent difficulties they experienced in securing housing was justified by the social structures in their lives and through social realities. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) this knowledge is never stable or fixed. Instead, it is developed and mediated through historically created societal power (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Smith, 1987). The power relations in the lives of the women participants were key factors in their values and perception of self and contributed to their individual situations. My research project began to uncover the social conditions in the women's lives influencing their values and perceptions.

Women who experience IPV and homelessness experience oppression or self-defeating circumstances created by social conditions and their limited knowledge in how their situation is historically created through societal power. Oppression has many faces (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, culture, and ethnicity). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) discuss the many faces of oppression and the risk of focusing on one at the expense of others. This was an important factor to consider for my research project since there were many faces of oppression within the lives of the participating women. As well, many people experiencing oppressive or self-defeating circumstances are too embedded

in survival to recognize that the causes of their situations are not individual. This appeared true of the women participating in this study.

Critical theory presumes the privileging of particular groups over other groups and that oppression will result from this privileging (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Humble & Morgaine, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). These beliefs, according to Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), are reinforced by language therefore it was important to focus part of this research project on analyzing the language component of the oppression the participants experienced. In order for this research project to affect the women participating they would have had to critically analyze the oppressive and limiting aspects of their lives and become emancipated from these situations. Recognition is the first step to taking a stand against oppression. Once they examine their own values and beliefs they will have begun emancipating themselves from their situation. Once emancipation begins the participants will be in a position to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions about their lives and vice versa.

Critical theory exploration is focused on changes to alleviate social inequalities through social action, policy analysis, and reform (Comstock, 1982; Fay, 1987; Humble & Morgaine, 2002). A critical theorist has to recognize historical realism and the effect it has on individual's everyday realities. A critical theorist does not just question what is wrong with a historical realism and challenges assumptions, but also desires to change the historical realism (Comstock, 1982). A critical theorist also challenges taken-for-granted assumptions (Comstock, 1982; Morgaine, 1994). When Comstock (1982) discussed critical theory he stated "it tries to show its subjects how they can emancipate

themselves by conceiving and acting upon the social order in new ways . . . because it begins from the meanings its subjects attribute to social processes and attempts to rectify ideologically distorted meanings and values, its method of investigation and validation is based on *dialogue* with its subjects” (p. 378).

Key factors found in critical theory research are institutions, discourses, ruling relations, the local and extra local, line of fault, bifurcation, ideologies, and enlightenment. Institutions, discourses, ruling relations, bifurcation, and line of fault were written about and defined by Smith in her 1987 book *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. The institutions that Smith (1987) discusses are not the overt structures that house various organizations but are the covert meaning systems that are attached to, and reinforce, the social relationships individuals experience in their everyday lives. They include family, school, media, community agencies, government, and churches (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Morgaine, 1994). Institutions affect an individual’s experiences and everyday lives (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Morgaine, 1994; Smith, 1987).

Another key factor in critical theories is discourse because of the role language plays in the development of social structures (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Humble & Morgaine, 2002). Discourses are the textual embodiments of ideologies (Smith, 1987) and in this study I uncovered numerous discourses reinforcing familialism, liberalism, neoliberalism, and patriarchy. These discourses create more difficulties for women when leaving an abusive relationship because the women believe they are doing something wrong by leaving and breaking up the family. Discourses promote nuclear families that

contribute to the guilt women feel when breaking up the family. Discourses also promote and support the ruling relations (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987).

Social forces, such as ideologies, knowingly or not, often work to benefit the socially and economically powerful in our society (Smith, 1987). These individuals are referred to as the ruling apparatus (Smith, 1987). The ruling apparatus creates a hegemonic society and happens through the hierarchy process (Campbell & Gregory, 2002; Smith, 1987). This process is often covert and taken-for-granted (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). The ruling apparatus keeps women below men within numerous societal structures and this benefits those at the top. According to Smith (1987), ruling equals “a complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial management, professional organization and education institutions as well as the discourses in texts that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power” (p. 3). The ruling apparatus is closely connected to neoliberalism and creates ruling relations. The power structure of the ruling apparatus worked to control the lives of the women in my study.

The ruling apparatus also supports a false or bifurcated consciousness. A false or bifurcated consciousness begins when social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors are crystallized over time into facts that are then considered to be real (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Smith, 1987). A false consciousness has been developed when these facts are taken as real truths, whether they affect a person’s everyday lives or not (Smith, 1987). Bifurcation occurs when there is a separation between the ideological and authentic self (Smith, 1987). For the women in this research project, the bifurcation was

centered on securing affordable, adequate housing that had been impossible for them because of systemic forces, including societal beliefs. For most of the women, the ability to reside in affordable, adequate housing did not occur until after bifurcation and recognition that what they are experiencing was not due to choices they had made and should not have occurred.

The line of fault is a term created by Smith (1987) and occurs when there is a collision between one's authentic self and one's ideological self. It is the breaking point between what an individual, such as the women leaving abusive relationships and experiencing homelessness, experiences, feels, and deals with in her everyday life and what society indicates she should know or feel (Smith, 1987). As a result of this breaking point, women who have experienced homelessness likely have two competing forces working in their lives, those that come from their own local experiences and those that are told to them by extra local forces. Unfortunately for the women in my study, the local experiences were often suppressed and hidden so that the social forces from the extra local, which are mediated by ruling relations, often take precedence and dominated her authentic self. Her experiences did not get expressed, heard, or dealt with because of the line of fault. The loss of these experiences ensures that policies and programs do not consider the everyday lives and experiences of the less powerful (Smith, 1987). This then works to create an everyday world that is problematic.

In mapping the social relations between IPV against women and homelessness among women, the systemic forces and societal structures that contribute to the issue are discussed. In any discussion focusing on systemic forces and societal structures

contributing to social issues it is imperative that the historical contexts of these forces and structures be explored since historical realism shapes individuals' everyday experiences. It was also important for me to analyze policies that may have been contributing to the research issue and present possibilities for change. Therefore, critical theory was the preeminent paradigm under which to conduct this study since it focuses on exploring social and structural inequalities along with bringing about societal change. The concepts, prepositions, and assumptions of the critical paradigm are valuable in ensuring the voices of the women were heard and interpreted so as to not oppress or subjugate them. The methodological assumptions of the critical paradigm will now be discussed.

The methodological question is how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The methodological beliefs of critical theory are dialogic and dialectical in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To be dialogical and dialectical in nature means there is interaction and a connection between the researcher and the participants. It also means that the researcher and the participants will use dialogue to generate enlightenment because the result of the dialogue is to enhance the participants' consciousness of their role in changing social structures (Comstock, 1982; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My research was dialogical and dialectical in nature.

Summary

In summary, critical theory is not used to predict social change but to develop an understanding of how institutions affect an individual's experience and their everyday lives so the individual can then overcome barriers and create social change with their

genuine will (Comstock, 1982; Fay, 1987; Smith, 1987). These goals focus on the change that is imperative through a genuine critical process. This goal must be recognized in all research projects under the critical theoretical framework. I achieved this goal by conducting an institutional ethnography (IE) on the issue of IPV against women and homelessness among women, which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research project was to explicate the local ruling relations organizing the housing difficulties of women leaving abusive relationships. Institutional ethnography was the research method used in this study because as a society we are governed by social organizations directed by ruling relations and discourses (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). Social organizations result from and influence the social relations into which people enter. These social relations are guided by an individual's knowledge; while their knowledge is a construct of their social relations and the reality they live (Smith, 1987). Institutional ethnography assumes it is the individual's working knowledge of their everyday world that provides the beginning of an inquiry (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). This then guides the inquiry to an analysis of how experiences enter a participant into social relations with others outside of their immediate environment (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987).

Institutional ethnography, like the critical theory paradigm, is based on dialogical interplay between the researcher and the participants (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Institutional ethnography also serves to highlight the connections among the contexts and happenings of an individual's everyday life. Ruling relations play key roles in directing the everyday lives of women who experience homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. Therefore, it was imperative this study be conducted from an IE perspective because mapping the daily lives of the women participating is what led to an understanding of the role of the ruling relations in their everyday lives.

This study began with the everyday experiences of the women participating in the

study. Because explication of local ruling relations is the essential core of the research process for IE (Campbell & Gregor, 2002) I started in the local for the women participating. Being exposed to the women's local was an important step in mapping social relations (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). My volunteer roles at a variety of service providers for women who have experienced abuse and/or homelessness in HRM, along with my personal experiences, assisted in exposing me to the everyday experiences of women struggling with homelessness following an abusive relationship. The stories of the five women who participated guided the next stage in mapping their everyday worlds by providing an understanding of how they participated, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in social relations with others (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

I then used the information obtained from the women's experiences to determine which service providers to interview. Following the interviewing of the service providers I conducted an analysis on the service providers' policies. I learned more about what occurs in the women's everyday world, how ruling relations affects these occurrences, and how texts ensure the ruling apparatus has a role (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). The three components of IE guided the mapping of the social organizations as they related to the housing experiences of the five women who participated.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen for the research in this study because it was the most beneficial method for producing an in-depth understanding of the everyday experiences of the women who participated in the research. The depth of information required in a study on the experiences of women who have been subjected to

homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship, and the meanings attached to that information, could not be reproduced in quantitative research. For the purpose of this study, qualitative research with a focus on telling individual stories was required to provide a voice to women who have left abusive relationships and subsequently experiences homelessness.

As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002), explication is the analytic focus of the research process of IE. For this to occur successfully I started in the local setting and collected information about the everyday world of those experiencing homelessness (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). I then had to go beyond what can be known in any local setting and discover how the extra local and ruling relations worked to organize the everyday world of women experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987).

Levels of Analysis

In order to be situated in the local setting I needed to be in the everyday world of those who are experiencing the problematic (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987). In this case this was women who had experienced housing difficulty after leaving an abusive relationship. The primary tool used to accomplish this was unstructured, interactive, face-to-face interviews. Data analysis began with interviewing women who had left abusive relationships and experienced homelessness.

Purposive techniques were used to recruit these participants because the research required informative, unique cases (Neuman, 2003). When conducting an IE it was imperative that I chose participants who could provide rich data regarding their everyday

experiences. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher wants to choose a few cases for intensive study and when the researcher requires participants that meet an explicit criterion. It provides the researcher with the opportunity to select specific participants with specific criterion in mind. Initially, I planned to use my volunteer experiences as a means to begin to situate this research in the local setting and to facilitate the recruitment of participants. However, those experiences and the connections that arose from them were not as beneficial in providing participants as I had anticipated. I did connect with one of the participating women through my volunteer connections. The remaining four were secured through advertising (see Appendix A) and personal connections.

One of the criteria that had to be met by the participants in this study was they had to have been in a heterosexual relationship with an abusive partner. The abuse did not have to be limited to physical violence only, and could include sexual, emotional/psychological, verbal, social, financial, or any combination as long as the participants identified themselves as survivors of abuse. The relationships were not limited to marriage but there must have been cohabitation. The participants had to indicate that the relationship ended at least one year prior to the study. This was to provide a level of protection to the women participating so I was not revictimizing them by interviewing them at a point in their life when they were very vulnerable.

The participants also had to have experienced homelessness, as defined by the UN Centre for Human Settlements, at least one year prior to participating. In order to prevent re-victimizing the women involved, distance was required between the immediacy of their housing crisis and their participation in the study. The definition used did not only

include those women who had experienced absolute homelessness but also encompassed those who experienced housing instability. The participants must have used programs and services within HRM, NS. The participants also had to be over eighteen years old and have the ability to communicate in English. These criteria resulted in five women being interviewed.

Once the initial information on the individuals' personal experiences was gathered I then began to map it by exploring the community resources utilized by the individual women. The information derived from the participants led to the 46 different community resources utilized during their experiences with homelessness. As a component of the study, service providers from the community resources identified were also interviewed. It was important to interview the service providers because they were able to provide me with an understanding of how they are unknowingly affected by the ruling relations of their organization and whether they recognize the affect these ruling relations have on the women who utilized their services.

Finally, a textual analysis was conducted on the policies of the community resources the women identified. Documents analysed included government policies along with individual organizations policies and procedures. A textual analysis was important because it provided me with an in-depth understanding of the policies affecting the participants in their everyday lives. This understanding assisted me in critically assessing the policies. In turn, this enabled me to provide information to policy developers that will lead to improvements in the policies. These three components – participant interviews, service provider interviews, and textual analysis – completed the IE.

Interviews with the women. Five women were interviewed using unstructured, interactive, face-to-face interviews. This interview method was the optimum form of data collection for this study because of the detailed information and understanding that was provided regarding the experiences of the women participating in the study and what those experiences meant to them. This understanding was directed only by the participants as they relived their stories. During the interview process there was interaction between myself and the participant that affected both of us and required reflexivity (Corbin & Morse, 2003) as I will discuss later.

After the initial contact, I met with the women to confirm they met the criteria, understood the study and the concept of informed consent, realized the interviews would be audio recorded, had a clear understanding that they could stop the recording or the interview at any time, and recognized the process could elicit distressing feelings (Brzuzny, Ault, & Segal, 1997; Corbin & Morse, 2003; Larossa, Bennett, & Gelles, 1981). Screening questions to ensure participants meet the inclusion criteria for this research project were asked prior to the commencement of each interview (see Appendix B).

Once it was determined the woman fit the research criteria and agreed to participate in my study we either began the interview or, in one case, booked an interview to be held at another date. The meetings and interviews were held at a time and place of the women's preference, so they were as comfortable as possible to enable them to tell their story. It was also important that only myself and the participant be present and there were no background diversions that would distract either myself or the participant or could interfere with the confidentiality or the quality of the recording (Richards & Morse,

2007). All but one of the interviews took place in the participants' residences. The remaining interview took place in my place of resident because the participant's home did not provide a private location and she did not want to go to my office.

At the beginning of each interview I went through the project information sheet (see Appendix C) and the letter of informed consent (see Appendix D) with each participant to ensure they fully understood what participating in my research project involved and the concept of informed consent (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Larossa et al., 1981). To aid in this process, each woman was given her own written copy of the informed consent form. As well, I read the informed consent document to each woman to ensure it was thoroughly understood and to address any literacy issues that could have been present, as suggested by Corbin and Morse (2003). After reviewing the informed consent document the woman was asked if she had any questions or if further clarification or explanation regarding the project was required. If she had no questions, did not require further explanation, and agreed to participate I reviewed the informed consent statements and asked her to sign the informed consent forms. I brought two copies to each interview so the woman was able to be provided with her own copy of the information letter and an informed consent form that was signed by both of us.

In order for the participant to be comfortable telling me their experiences she had to trust me. Trust began to be built through casual conversation before the beginning of the interview. At that time I also shared some of my background with the participant so they understood my interest in the research topic. This sharing enabled the women to feel comfortable telling me their story because of our shared experiences. These shared

experiences also enabled the women to be comfortable with the concept of a non-judgmental individual listening to their story (Cowles, 1988). The trust developed between me and the participants meant they were willing to share their story (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Cowles, 1988). The majority of the data was derived from open-ended questions, which provided each woman with the opportunity to discuss her individual experiences. The data from the interviews provided an understanding of the everyday experiences of the individual woman therefore care was taken to ensure the interview guide allowed for dialogue and for similar open-ended questions to be asked at each interview. However, the interview was led by the answers the woman gave to the initial questions and participants were not aware of the information they would be disclosing until they were in the interview setting so the questions changed slightly during each interview (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). There were variances in the questions asked of each individual woman based on their individual story.

My goal was to explicate the everyday experiences of women who experienced homelessness since leaving an abusive relationship and the interview guide was developed with that in mind. The questions focused on the women's experiences with securing affordable, adequate housing. The interview guide evolved slightly throughout the process of data collection because the questions were based on the responses given during previous interviews in an attempt to determine how things work (Devault & McCoy, 2002). The interview guide was reviewed by my thesis committee to ensure it met the goals of my research project and that the questions were clear. No pilot interviews were held. Sample interview questions for the women participants can be

found in Appendix E.

My role as a researcher was to actively listen and guide the interview with affirmative, receptive responses such as “uh huh” (Richards & Morse, 2007). Probing questions, such as “can you tell me more about that situation,” were asked as required. There were limited interruptions to the story-telling to enable the women every opportunity to have their full story documented (Richards & Morse, 2007). The full story provided me with a detailed comprehension of the women’s understanding of their everyday lives including whether they realized the effect systemic oppression and societal forces had on their lives. My role was accomplished by being attentive, genuinely interested, authentic, and understanding (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007).

At the completion of each woman’s story, questions were asked to provide demographic information that was not provided during the telling of her story. The data collected from the closed questions contained age, relationship status, income, number of children, length of relationship the woman left, education level, and employment status. This information, along with field notes on the setting and context of the interview, contributed to the descriptive data on each participant (Richards & Morse, 2007).

I conducted the interview with the women between August 2011 and March 2012. The interviews were intense and ranged in time from one hour to three hours. Each interview was completed in one sitting. During the interviews I was aware of the body language and reactions of the participants. These observations were recorded in my field notes as soon as possible following the end of the interview. Observing the participants

closely also provided the opportunity for me to check with them to see if they wanted to continue or to take a break when they were showing body signs of being distressed. The women were each provided with information on local counselling opportunities along with information on other resources that may be of assistance to them (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). The list of resources can be found in Appendix F. This process is discussed in more detail under the Ethical Issues section.

Each interview was audio recorded after written consent from the women. I then transcribed the recordings myself. After each transcription was completed initial analysis was conducted on the interview. Therefore, data analysis began while data collection was still occurring. This helped ensure the questions for the women were built on the responses of the women interviewed before them.

Interviews with the service providers. The service providers interviewed were determined as a result of the information provided by the women. The women identified a total of 46 service providers. Eleven of the 46 identified were outside of HRM and therefore not eligible to participate. The process in securing service providers to participate began with the mailing of 35 information letters to the eligible service providers (see Appendix G). Responses were immediate from two of the services providers; one refusing to participate and one willing to participate. Approximately two weeks after the letters were mailed follow-up phone calls were placed to 33 service providers. Some of the service providers were willing to have a conversation and booked an interview immediately on the phone. Others requested I send along more information, such as the informed consent document, via email. I followed up again with them a few

days after the email was sent.

Two of the service providers that were not provided with a follow-up phone call would have required an additional ethics application process for their organization. Therefore they were removed from the list. Any of the service providers that were government based were challenging to get through to the correct person to speak with. A decision was made to forego these interviews and analyse their policies, which were all publicly available online.

From these follow-up phone calls 12 more interviews were booked for a total of 13 interviews held. The process was quicker for some service providers than others with some follow-up contacts resulting in an immediate booking of an interview and others resulting in days or weeks of trying to connect with each other. The connections I had previously established through my volunteer involvement with organizations within HRM, NS and through various employment positions facilitated gaining access to employees for this set of interviews.

Purposive sampling methods were used with the individuals within the organizations that would be in the best position to answer the interview questions being determined through conversation with executive directors or the main contact person at each organization. The interview questions for the service providers focused on the policies and programs of their organization. The questions provided an understanding of how the service providers interpreted the policies and programs of their organizations and whether they understood the effect these policies and programs had on the individuals utilizing their services. A tentative interview guide was created but changed with each

interview based on the answers the participants were providing (see Appendix H). The questions focused on examining specific components of the organization's policies and programs and how they related to the everyday experiences of the women participants.

The interviews with the service providers enabled me to further map how policies and programs affect the lives of the women who were included in this project. Semi-structured, interactive, face-to-face interviews with identified employees were conducted between June and August 2012. The interview guide ensured that similar open-ended questions were asked at each interview. Once more, however, the questions evolved to some degree throughout the interviewing process. The questions of subsequent interviews were based on the responses of previous interviews. The interview guide was reviewed by my thesis committee. Interviews took between twenty minutes to one and a half hours to complete. All of the interviews except for one were with an individual employee. One of the interviews was conducted with two employees.

At the beginning of each interview the information document (see Appendix G) and the informed consent document (see Appendix I) was reviewed with each of the employees. Each employee participating was given their own written copy of the information letter and informed consent document and I read it aloud to ensure it was thoroughly understood and to address any literacy issues. I followed the same procedure used with the women to make sure they understood consent and the study. Once the interviews began the same process for audio recording and transcribing was followed. As with the women's interviews, data analysis commenced while data collection was still occurring. This helped to ensure the questions for the employees were built upon the

responses of the previous service providers.

Policies and programs. Interviews with the women and service providers provided guidance as to which policies and programs would be analyzed. Key government policies included the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services Employment Support and Income Assistance Act (ESIA), Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations Residential Tenancy Act (RTA), and Service Canada's Employment Insurance Act (EI). These policies and programs were accessible online, and other policies and programs were provided by the individual service providers. All of the service providers were willing to share with me what they could although some of their policy binders were too large to share. They were also very willing to share eligibility policies along with any rules implemented when using their services. Most of the policies I did not receive from them were operational policies.

Reflexivity. My perspective was a rich resource to this research project, and it was focused on through reflexivity, mainly by journaling. Journaling provided me with the opportunity to explore my role in the research, how I affected the participants and how they affected me, and the interactions between me and the research participants (Berg, 2007; Brzuzy et al., 1997; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). It also offered me the chance to explore any feelings that arose from the research collection and thoughts I had toward the topic prior to beginning the research process (Berg, 2007; Brzuzy et al., 1997; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). According to Berg (2007), I had to internally question what I knew and how I knew it. My journal enabled me to complete this process and became part of my audit trail (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

I also kept field notes throughout the research process. Field notes provided an account of what occurred during the data collection and any changes made to the research design or analytic methods as I progressed through the research project. They included information regarding securing participants, a paper trail of contacts and attempted contacts with participants, cancelled interview appointments, observations of the participants, the interview setting and context, and all follow up contacts made with the participants (Berg, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Cowles, 1988; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998; Richards & Morse, 2007; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). As well, any interventions required, such as stopping the interview because the participant was too upset to continue or providing information on counselling opportunities, were documented in the field notes (Cowles, 1988). The field notes were written immediately following any interaction with a participant so I did not forget to include any significant information (Berg, 2007; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). It was also important that my field notes included information on how I was feeling the day of the interview since that could have affected interactions (Berg, 2007).

Because qualitative research is often an emergent process, my field notes also included the reasoning for any changes involving research design or analytic methods at any point in time during the research project (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). The understanding that arose from my journaling and field notes was incorporated into my study. The field notes and journal entries were dated so I knew where they should be inserted into my data results and they were analyzed along with the interview data (Berg, 2007; Neuman, 2003; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis for this research project took place in different stages, with each stage building upon the other and leading to a map of the social organization of women's homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Although theory guided this project, the relationships discovered were grounded in experience and identified through support from the data (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002) the data have to support the relationships and the analysis must thoroughly explain where the relationships existed and how they worked to organize homelessness in the experiences of the women who were interviewed. Specific data had to be found and presented to support the relationships, as well as to explain how the relationships existed and how they worked to organize the lives of the women.

As discussed earlier, the process of analysis began with the first interview. After the interviews were completed and the identified policies and programs were reviewed, the next step was to put it all together. To "put it all together," Campbell and Gregor (2002) suggest that a researcher tell the story, piece it together, and ask questions as they move through the process. Therefore, I started with writing the accounts of the women and how homelessness existed in their daily lives after leaving an abusive relationship. Following that task I asked myself questions such as why the homelessness occurred and what or who was affecting it.

These questions directed me to the service providers' data. The questions asked to the service providers assisted me in understanding how their policies and programs

worked and the factors influencing their policies and programs. It also provided an understanding of their interpretation of the policy or program. Reviewing the service providers' policy documents eradicated some of the voids that existed in the map. The final process was putting it all together, attempting to make sense of it, and explicating the relationships.

Data analysis began while data collection was still occurring. This ensured the interview questions built upon the responses of the previous interviews as the research progressed. Analysis took place during the interview process and during transcribing. The next step in analysis of the data began with coding, which consisted of arranging the information in different categories that arose during the coding procedure (Richards & Morse, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Proper coding enabled me to move from data to theme and from theme to data easily for clarity in analyzing (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Analysis of the Women's Interviews

A qualitative data analysis program was used to assist in the data management. MAXQDA10, an index-based qualitative data analysis program, was used. MAXQDA10 assisted me in efficiently coding and organizing the themes and key ideas of the transcription of the interviews (Bassett, 2004). Some IE researchers (see Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Devault & McCoy, 2002) have warned against using computers in IE research as it most often makes the process more difficult and breaking the participant's story into chunks is not a goal of IE. However, I used MAXQDA10 as a means to enable me to begin to make sense of the data. The program's use was limited to the management

of data and the organization of codes.

The initial reading of the transcripts and field notes led to a discovery of topics generated by the data (Berg, 2007; Neuman, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). This initial reading is called *topic coding*. I used my research questions to guide this process (Neuman, 2003). This initial coding questioned what data I received and what that data represents (Neuman, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). It also organized the data in categories for ease of reference (Neuman, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). The coding was conducted within MAXQDA10. During this process I reflected on the data and created memos based on this reflection (Richards & Morse, 2007). This process assisted me in identifying the ruling relations impacting the experiences of the participating women. The themes were organized according to their significance for the women in their decision to leave the abusive relationship and in accordance to the objective of the study, which was to determine the connection between IPV against women and homelessness among women, especially in relation to the role institutions play. Once I completed topic coding, I moved to analytic coding, also conducted in MAXQDA10.

Analytic coding consists of a more detailed reading of the data paying attention to the topics and categories, exploring the categories, and pursuing comparisons while watching for new topics that may emerge (Neuman, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). It occurred naturally as I progressed through topic coding (Richards & Morse, 2007). Patterns in the data were discovered (Berg, 2007). It was during this stage of analysis that I began to question the data and what it was telling me and to explore the consequences of the women's experiences, the causes of these consequences, and the processes that led

to them (Neuman, 2003). Along with creating a connection in the research categories, this stage also led to me questioning the categories developed that led to the creation and deletion of categories (Neuman, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007).

Analysis of the Service Providers' Interviews

Data analysis of the service providers' interviews was completed through topic and analytic coding using the same methods used for the women's interviews. As with the women's interviews, the process of data analysis started at the first interview and continued until data analysis was completed. MAXQDA10 software was also used for this analysis.

Analysis of the Policies and Programs

Documents were examined to understand how they work to organize the lives of the women. The questions I considered were:

- How do these policies and programs affect the women using them?
- How can the policies and programs be altered to lessen the effect?

Analysis of these documents was combined with the analysis of the service providers interviews to determine if the policies and programs worked to organize the women's homelessness, and in addition, how text were used to organize the policies and programs (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The interviews with the women were important in identifying other layers of ruling relations that worked to organize their homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Reading and analyzing these documents enabled me to identify ideologies and discourses used in their creation.

Analyzing the policies and programs enabled me to explore the texts in detail and

incorporate their content in my research results (Neuman, 2003). When exploring the policies and programs I searched for sections that created difficulties for women leaving an abusive relationship to secure affordable, adequate housing. I also compared policies and programs as they were written to how they affected the women. The author of the text might not understand the themes, biases, and meanings of their text and how the text can affect individuals. This portion of my research project created an understanding of the policies and programs, how they affected the women, and whether they were being interpreted and implemented accurately.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability, or trustworthiness, in a qualitative research study means that the study is consistent, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Bernard, 2000; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2007). While establishing the quality of the data is important, how the data are put together shows why things are happening in the local setting the way they are which is the ultimate goal of IE research. As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002) the purpose of IE is not to give evidence of specific views but to explicate the social relations of the individual's everyday lives.

However, the importance of establishing reliability in qualitative research data, through trustworthiness, has been clearly established. Consistency is one means of establishing reliability. Because circumstances are unique for each study, even when conducted with the same participants and in the same setting, it is virtually impossible to replicate a qualitative research project and get exact results (Jackson, 2003; Neuman, 2003) but this does not mean that qualitative studies are not consistent. Reliability was

achieved through consistency in the recording of data and by transcribing the interview transcripts verbatim (Jackson, 2003).

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research to other similar situations or settings (Creswell, 1998). This involved providing a thick description of the data and enough detail to enable a reader to determine the usefulness of this study within another context (Creswell, 1998). I described the participants in detail, without identifying them, to allow for an understanding of their context. This enables the reader to visualize the situation and understand the participants' perspectives and assists them in deciding if these findings are applicable to their own research settings.

Dependability and confirmability was established through maintaining an audit trail of the research process, including ideas or changes to the study (Creswell, 1998; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). I kept this audit trail through my journal and by using the memo function in MAXQDA10. This process documented the thoughts, ideas, and decisions that were made throughout the research and analysis process.

Validity encompasses the credibility of a research project and the researcher's ability to demonstrate this credibility (Jackson, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007). Validity occurs throughout the research process, not just during analysis (Richards & Morse, 2007). It began with a thorough literature review so there was an in-depth understanding of what is known about the topic and what the limitations are of previous studies (Richards & Morse, 2007). The validity process continued with a purposeful selection of participants to fulfil the data requirements and achieving saturation of data collected (Richards & Morse, 2007). Saturation will provide the assurance that the analysis and the

research results are vigorous (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Credibility in qualitative research is the degree to which my interpretations of the participants' subjective realities are accurate (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) offers a set of procedures most commonly used to establish elements of credibility, such as prolonged engagement at the research site and peer review. Although I volunteered within various organizations that were identified as programs and services the women utilized when trying to secure housing following an abusive relationship, I did not spend a prolonged engagement at the research site. At the very least, however, I believe it can be stated that my personal experiences sensitized me to the issues the women faced and are comparable to a prolonged engagement at the research site. Peer review was used to provide an external check of my research process (Creswell, 1998). My thesis advisor reviewed my methods and interpretations along with the emerging themes and interpretations I discovered. My thesis committee members reviewed my findings.

Other processes identified by Patton (2002) were used to improve the credibility of my research project. In particular, I used the interview transcripts, identified documents, journal notes, feedback from peers, and my own position to verify and bring clearer perspective and description to emerging themes (Patton, 2002). Comparing and contrasting the interviews and my journal notes provided more context and clarity to the findings, subsequently, providing more credibility to the study (Patton, 2002).

Keeping these processes in mind I ensured my research question fit with the theoretical assumptions, research methods, types of data gathered, and analysis techniques in order to achieve optimal validity (Richards & Morse, 2007). In summary,

methods used to make sure validity was achieved were: ensuring what I studied was accurately portrayed; journaling any predetermined, personal assumptions about the data; ensuring I could account for my analysis; and keeping a well-documented audit trail of my research process (Jackson, 2003; Richards & Morse, 2007; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). These methods enabled me to be fully accountable for the outcome of my research (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Ethical Issues

It is imperative that researchers studying any sensitive field of research, such as relationship abuse or homelessness, are ethical because they could possibly re-victimize the participants if they are not. Basic ethical considerations are whether the participants fully understand the research project, that the interview may cause some discomfort, and the informed consent process (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Corbin & Morse, 2003; Larossa et al., 1981). The second basic ethical consideration is how the risk to the participants compares to the benefits of the research project (Larossa et al., 1981). Ethical considerations were specified in the participant's information letter and on the informed consent document. My study was reviewed and approved by Mount Saint Vincent University's Research Ethics Board.

Privacy and confidentiality were upheld to the best of my ability. The digital files from the interviews were stored on a secure flash drive and I was the only individual with access to them. Participants were informed that the transcripts from the digital files will be destroyed a year after the study is completed. Data were entered and stored on a password protected computer.

I made every attempt to reduce any position of power over the participants. This was important since the study was conducted from a critical theory framework. Although it is often believed that researchers have power over participants, there is also the understanding that in unstructured, interactive, face-to-face interviews the participant has substantial control over the process (Corbin & Morse, 2003). They can decide to discontinue their participation or to stop recording at any time (Corbin & Morse, 2003). They also determine what information they will disclose (Corbin & Morse, 2003).

The women were voluntary participants who indicated they fully understood the principle of written, informed consent. The participants also understood the audio recording of their interview was not mandatory and if they opted to have their interview audio recorded they could request the recording to be stopped at any time during the interview. One participant requested the recording be stopped so she could say something off the record. During this interview I also stopped the recording twice because she had family coming into her home to use her washroom. As well, twice I asked the participant if she would like to take a break and stop the recording because she was becoming very upset. Both times she accepted the offer. Each time I asked if she was willing and able to continue with the interview prior to starting the recorder again.

Participants were assured that although I would link individual names to specific responses, confidentiality would be maintained in the presentation of the data received. Confidentiality was upheld through the use of pseudonyms, the revision of information that would link the participants to the data or identify them in any manner, and rigorous attention to data management (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Larossa et al., 1981).

Research can place individuals in dangerous situations (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). A concern with my study involved the safety of the participants and myself regarding the reaction of abusive ex-partners should they find out the research was being conducted. This risk did not transpire, possibly due to the length of time between when the abusive relationships ended and the interviews occurred.

On an individual basis, I weighed the rewards of advancing knowledge in the field of IPV against women and homelessness among women over the costs that could be incurred by their participation (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Larossa et al., 1981). The data that was collected did arouse intense emotions during one interview. The participant's emotional response was such that I stopped the recording device and wait until she had regained control (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998; Larossa et al., 1981). Once she had regained control I ensured she wanted to continue before starting the recorder again (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). This strategy is known as *process consent*, in which consent is renegotiated when the conditions of the interview change (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). As well, I remained with her until she had calmed down (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The costs that may have been incurred by the women participating in my research project were not only emotional in nature (Corbin & Morse, 2003). They could have also been social, political, legal, or economic in nature (Corbin & Morse, 2003). However, to my knowledge, no other costs occurred.

Sensitive topic research can be exhausting physically, emotionally, and psychologically for both me and the participants (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Cowles, 1988;

Lee & Renzetti, 1990; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). Thus, it was imperative that I had resource options in place for both myself and the participants. I provided the participants with information on local counselling opportunities along with information on other resources (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998) (see Appendix F). I used my journal throughout the research process to protect myself (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Cowles, 1988; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). As well, I discussed any thoughts and feelings the data caused with my supervisor and my informal support system. It was also important that I ensured I did not conduct interviews too close together to provide me with the opportunity to debrief after each interview (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Cowles, 1988; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998).

Providing the research participants with the opportunity to debrief after the interview was also important. This was accomplished by asking what it was like to participate in the interview (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). Providing the opportunity to move to a calmer emotional level occurred following the end of the participant's story telling through discussing topics that are important, such as demographic data that has not emerged during the interview process, but not sensitive in nature (Corbin & Morse, 2003). At this point in the process I ensured they understood the resources available to them should they feel the need to talk to someone about the feelings elicited by the interview process (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). I also contacted the participants a couple of days after their interview to ensure there were no emotional effects still occurring (Brzuzy et al., 1997; Corbin & Morse, 2003).

Although there needs to be processes in place to protect participants in research

projects there are also benefits to participating in qualitative studies. These benefits are therapeutic and empowering in nature and are the result of being provided a voice and validation (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). Often it is only through an interview with a researcher that individuals have the opportunity to tell their full story in a non-judgmental environment (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998). The participating women discussed how positive the experience was for them to be able to tell their story and not have any component of it judged. One woman mentioned that she was amazed at how much she had accomplished over the last few years. She did not think she was any further ahead until she had the opportunity to sit down and tell her story from start to finish to someone who truly wanted to hear it. This led to emotional relief and a better understanding of her situation (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998).

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

When analyzing data from an IE the goal is to make the research project understandable and convincing (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). When I finished data collection and became aware of the volume of data I had collected I was faced with the task of trying to organize the data in a manner that enabled me to understand it. I had a strong understanding of the everyday world of the women participants due to their heartfelt story sharing and my own personal experiences. The challenge I confronted at this time was to organize that data with the data received from the service providers in a way that enabled me to write about the women's everyday experiences and how they were coordinated by institutional forces that are sometimes unknown to them. According to Campbell and Gregor (2002), my task was to "begin to make those connections and their implications explicit for others to understand" (p. 83). This chapter will map the social relations between violence against women and homelessness among women.

I begin the process by providing a descriptive summary of the findings from the interviews with the women and the service providers identified by the women participants as actors in their everyday world. I also provide a descriptive summary of how the texts associated with the participating service providers, along with other public texts relating to the ESIA, the RTA, and EI are embodied in the everyday lives of the women.

First I introduce the women involved in the study – Crystal, Laura, Melanie, Peggy, and Shirley – and the service providers. Following the introductions, I present the social relations that emerged from the analysis and were identified as organizing the women's homelessness. The mapping process continues with a focus on the coordinating

power of the service providers and their policies. I also discuss the historical patterns and structural inequalities and how they obstructed the women's potentials.

The Everyday World of Women Leaving Abusive Relationships

To begin to understand the social organization of homelessness in the lives of women leaving abusive relationships, their experiences in securing housing after leaving the abusive relationship were explored. Because this study maps the social relations the women experienced in their everyday lives, it is important for the reader to hear about the participants. This is a small but important glimpse into the lives of five courageous women who came forward to share their stories. These women experienced a multitude of violence in their lives before changing their lives by moving forward to leave the violent relationship in their past. There were many ups and downs during their travels to affordable, adequate housing, and some had yet to secure affordable, adequate housing. I am very grateful that they were brave enough to share the stories that enabled me to learn about the social organization involved in their homelessness.

The women

The process of finding women to participate was long and challenging. Women contacted me and wanted to share their stories to advance knowledge about IPV but were unable to participate because they did not fit the criteria set for this study. Five women who fit the criteria agreed to participate in the interviews required to begin the process of mapping the social relations between violence against women and homelessness among women.

Table 1 describes the participants. Each woman was over 18 years of age, could communicate in English (both written and oral), had left a heterosexual, cohabiting

relationship they identified as abusive, had experienced homelessness after leaving the relationship, and had experienced the crisis of leaving the relationship and homelessness at least one year prior to the interview.

Table 1

Criteria for Women Participants

Pseudonym	Age (Must be Over 18)	Communicate in English	Left Abusive Heterosexual, Cohabiting Relationship	Experienced Homelessness or Housing Instability	At Least 1 Year Passed Since Crisis Moment
Crystal	Yes	Yes	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes
Laura	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Melanie	Yes	Yes	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes
Peggy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shirley	Yes	Yes	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes

Melanie was a young woman who had a long history of housing instability beginning when she was in her late teens and continuing until approximately a year and a half before I met her. This unstable housing history was predominantly the result of a negative relationship with her mother. Her absolute homelessness occurred within HRM prior to meeting her abusive ex-partner. Melanie was the only woman whose ex-partner had been charged and spent time in prison for abusing her. Her housing instability continued when their relationship ended as she attempted to secure affordable, adequate housing for herself and her two children. Melanie completed high school and had attended college for a brief period. She was currently unemployed and living in supportive housing. Her source of income was Canada Revenue Agency's Child Tax Credit (CTC). She wanted to go back to school so she could secure employment.

Peggy's history of housing instability began when her abusive relationship ended.

She had been in a long-term marriage prior to it ending. Peggy had two children. One of them was living on his own when the relationship ended. The other child stayed with her ex-partner. Therefore, Peggy had to secure affordable, adequate housing for herself only. Yet, finding affordable, adequate housing was challenging for Peggy because of her mobility concerns. She spent a period of time in a shelter prior to finding housing. Peggy had completed high school and was employed prior to going on long-term disability income. At the time of the interview Peggy was living in her own apartment in a community in which she felt safe.

Laura did not experience housing instability until her abusive relationship ended. Her marriage was long-term prior to it ending. Her children did not live with her when the relationship ended as they were grown and were living independently at the time. Laura's biggest concern was finding housing that was safe from her ex-partner. Laura was employed full-time at the time of the interview and living in a house her and her ex-partner had purchased when they were married. She had bought out his half of the value of the house a few months after the relationship ended.

Shirley had a long history of housing instability. She had left her family home at the age of 15 to move in with her ex-partner. Once the relationship ended she moved in and out of homelessness at a frequent rate. She experienced homelessness in different provinces along with different regions of Nova Scotia. Shirley struggled with finding affordable, adequate housing for herself and her four children for years. At the time of the interview all of her children were grown and living independently. Shirley did not complete high school but wanted to go to school in the future. She also discussed a desire to find employment based on her experiences. Shirley had a fraud charge in her history

that made it challenging to go to school or secure employment. At the time of the interview, she was on IA and sharing an apartment with a roommate.

Crystal did not experience homelessness until her abusive relationship ended. She was in two abusive relationships and had children from each of them. She struggled finding affordable, adequate housing for herself and her children after the end of her first abusive relationship. When her second abusive relationship ended she made her partner leave the family home. Even though she did not need to find affordable, adequate housing she struggled to afford the housing in which she was living. Crystal had completed high school and some university. At the time of the interview she was renting an apartment after giving up her house and was employed full-time.

In summary, the ages of the women ranged from 30 to 64. All of them had children who added another dimension to their housing challenges, especially for the women who had four children each, since they were looking for housing for themselves and their children. Laura and Peggy were exception to this dimension since their children did not live with them. Two of the women had two children and three of them had four children. The relationships they left ranged from 4 to 31 years. Three of the women had identified as being in two abusive relationships and two of the women identified as being in one. Of the total relationships, four were classified as marriage and four were classified as common-law.

Two women were employed full-time, one identified CTC as their main source of income with IA supplementing it with transportation support, one identified IA as their source of income, and one identified Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Disability along with long-term disability (LTD) insurance plan as her source of income. Their income levels

ranged from under \$10,000 to \$50,000 with two women being under \$10,000 and one at \$18,000. Laura did not indicate her education level and the remaining four ranged from some university, some college, a high school diploma, or some high school. The women identified all of the types of abuse as occurring in their relationships. Table 2 demonstrates the characteristics of the women.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Women

Pseudonym	Year of Birth	Number of Children	Length of Relationship	Relationship Type	Income Source	Income level	Education level	Types of Abuse Identified
Crystal	1962	4	1 st – 3 yrs married (6 yrs total) 2 nd – 10 yrs married (11 yrs total)	M (2)	FTE	\$26-50,000	Some university	E, P
Laura	1948	4	31 years married (did not indicate total yrs)	M	FTE	\$26-50,000	Did not indicate	E, P, F, S
Melanie	1982	2	1 st – 4 yrs common-law (4 yrs total) 2 nd – 2 yrs common-law (5 yrs total)	CL (2)	CTC	Under \$10,000	Some college	E, P
Peggy	1954	2	30 yrs married	M	CPP; LTD	\$10-25,000	High school diploma	E, F
Shirley	1967	4	1 st – 7 yrs common-law then apart for 5 yrs then off and on for many yrs 2 nd – off and on for many yrs	CL (2)	IA	Under \$10,000	Some high school	E, P, S

Note. M = Married. CL = Common-law. FTE = Full Time Employment. E = Emotional Abuse. P = Physical Abuse. F = Financial Abuse. S = Sexual Abuse.

The Service Providers

A total of 46 service providers were identified. Eleven were outside of HRM and therefore not included in my study, as per the only study criteria for service providers. Thirteen of the remaining 35 eligible service providers agreed to participate in an interview. There were five categories of support provided: housing, food security, financial, legal, and emotional. All of the service providers gave permission for one employee to participate with the exception of one service provider who had two employees participate in an interview. Of the 24 service providers that did not agree to participate in an interview, 4 of them were government service providers therefore their policies are public domain. These service providers played an important role in the everyday world of the participating women. For that reason I reviewed and analyzed their policies to gain a more thorough explication of their ruling relations.

Beginning to Map the Social Relations

The task of mapping the social relations that organized Crystal's, Laura's, Melanie's, Peggy's, and Shirley's homelessness was very challenging. Their stories were very complex with many service providers and policies involved. Structural inequalities and historical patterns, along with how they hindered the potential of the women (Comstock, 1982; Morgaine, 1994), were abundant in their stories. In exploring their stories and the data from the service providers I had to work at understanding how structural inequalities and historical patterns were built up and reinforced by ideologies over time. Adding this layer of structural inequalities and historical patterns to the already immense data collection led to me making numerous attempts at drawing out the relations to keep everything organized in my mind.

My first step, as suggested by Campbell and Gregor (2002), was to begin with the women's stories and the social relations that organized their everyday worlds, as identified through their stories. This enabled me to take my first glimpse into their everyday worlds and start exploring them by focusing on the key factors found in critical theory research. It was imperative that I started in the local for the women participating since explication of local ruling relations is the essential core of the research process for IE. Being exposed to the women's local was an important step in mapping social relations. Beginning with their stories helped me to facilitate a deeper understanding of why homelessness occurs and what or who is affecting it. The three key factors that played a role in why the women's homelessness occurred were money, housing history, and support systems. I will discuss money first, then housing history, and then close this section with conversation about support systems.

This section also highlights findings on the different service providers organizing the housing experiences of the participating women as identified through conversations with the women. It will answer the second research question in this study: what is the relationship between the service providers' policies, available resources, and experiences of the women. The main areas of support the women were affected by were housing support, food security support, financial support, legal support, and emotional support. Although a complete explanation is beyond the scope of this study, the exploration of the belief systems of employees and the policies and programs that guide their work assisted in mapping the relations between IPV against women and homelessness among women by explicating the ruling relations that control the support the women received in five main areas as identified by the women. Ruling relations governed the women's lives in

ways that were not always visible to them. The key ruling relation that governed their lives within this study was the NS ESIA IA program.

The employees' perspectives regarding the support domains will be discussed along with the disconnect between the objectives of the current policies and programs of the service providers and the everyday lives of the women. To accomplish an in-depth explication of policies and programs, employees were interviewed and policies and programs from the service providers were reviewed and analyzed. These processes assisted in identifying additional ruling relations organizing the women's homelessness.

The Effect of Money on the Everyday World

Money was chosen to be discussed first because of the power money, due to the limited amount available, had in coordinating the women's everyday world. During all but one of the conversations with the women the topic of money, the daily struggles they experienced with money, and the influence their lack of money had on their lives quickly became apparent. The women expended a lot of energy on a daily basis worrying about money shortages and budgeting, including deciding which bills to pay and how to feed their children.

Even when they were able to find a place to live it was a struggle to maintain it. In the following quote Melanie described the challenge she had with keeping her apartment along with paying the other bills that were due every month. She described the stress and anxiety felt during that period in her life as she tried to maintain affordable, adequate housing.

It was definitely a really rough ride because, you know, um I was trying to keep it together, you know, so like pay rent and then pay this and pay that, you know, and I was just yeah really uh stretched in very many directions and um it pretty much it came to the point where um I yeah I had to move because I just I couldn't afford

it anymore.

[Melanie: 958 – 962]

Melanie's experience was echoed in different words by the other women. This situation was, for the most part, the result of their income being too low to afford adequate housing. They did not make enough money to cover all the expenses when housing was included. This had an effect on the housing they lived in and how long they were able to stay in that housing.

Melanie's story and the stories shared by some of the other women included conversation about budgeting skills, specifically not having good budgeting or money handling skills. The women also discussed how important it was for them to learn that life skill. One of the women expressed concern that her inability to properly budget her money was being passed on to her children. This caused her great worry for their futures.

And I was bad with managing money...So, you know, so I would want to make sure the kids had everything they needed. So my bills didn't get paid...My kids never went without food...They always had decent clothes, you know. I looked after them in that sense but I didn't teach them anything about responsibility about money...And there was several times where we would have, you know, we'd have to move because I didn't, you know, I'd get evicted. So and recently actually was when I heard the effects of that...from my daughter.

[Shirley: 745 – 759]

This worry was linked to the historical patterns in the women's lives that revolved about money. For some of the women there was a struggle with financial instability as far back as their childhood. The historical patterns affected the women by not providing the opportunity to learn how to manage money properly. Shirley spoke of her parents having trouble paying bills when she was younger and Melanie spoke of her mother almost losing her house to foreclosure. The worry was also connected to the ideology of patriarchy because for most of the women their ex-partner maintained all the control over

money so they were never in a position to require money management skills when they were living with their ex-partners.

Not surprisingly, for some of the women, the stress of always worrying about money created a real dislike for money, even after they had improved their knowledge about budgeting and money management skills.

Educating yourself on anything, you know, um so that you can uh budget [laughs] ...and that's the biggest thing that I've gotten out of being here for the last year is financial...You know, um I am so like I can actually have money in my bank account and know that it's there...and not be like "oh let's go here and let's do this" or, you know, like I just don't I am not blowing money...or I have a better concept of money. I'm, you know, a little bit more positive about it [laughs]. But um I still I still hate money. I just I hate it.
[Melanie: 1962 – 1977]

For Melanie, the continuous stress she had in her life regarding money also created a desire for a different way of doing things from our money-focused economic system. One option she mentioned was going back to a barter system.

I wish that they would work out a barter systems [laughs] ...For certain things anyway
[Melanie: 1979 – 1981]

At the time of the interviews Shirley relied on IA as her only source of income and Melanie had some of her expenses (transportation and medical) subsidized by IA with her main source of income being CTC. Crystal had been on IA immediately following the end of her relationship and had since secured full-time employment but still struggled financially. For those on IA, either presently or in the past, the shelter rates affected their ability to afford adequate housing. This was one area where the women had an understanding of the effect of policies on their everyday worlds. There was a line of fault that existed between the lived experiences of the women and the housing they could afford. The women knew that affordable, adequate housing was difficult or impossible to

acquire with the current rates and that the rates should be adjusted.

So and, you know, like housing is definitely one of them cause um well just knowing that the shelter amount for for uh me and them [her children] through Assistance [IA] is 620 dollars...you know, you might as well just say well, you know, “we want you to live in an area that is, you know, very uh unsafe” and...Like that, to me, I would say that that is one thing that um [pause] needs to be looked at...you should definitely uh put into place shelter allowance accordingly...You know, more realistically and that really, you know, falls more within the standard of living then it does now.

[Melanie: 1811 – 1833]

The women involved with IA discussed the challenges they had in applying for, and being accepted into, the program. They discussed the rules about what a person was eligible for and how, depending on whom they spoke to, which could differ person to person. There was a history of hidden patterns with the social interactions from IA. Moreover, there was also a history of power relations that benefited the ruling apparatus of NSDCS. These ruling relations worked at keeping the individuals who collect IA below the caseworkers who make the decisions about IA. They also worked at creating situations when the women did not question the benefits they received. They were key factors that contributed to the women’s values and perception of self as well as contributed to their individual situations.

The women discussed the frustration about policies that increased the expectation from them and sometimes made it impossible to follow through on applying for IA. All of these factors can contribute to oppression. For those who followed through on applying and secured funding through IA it did not mean they were able to secure affordable, adequate housing easily. There were still challenges to overcome. Crystal described the “luck” she had in securing an apartment shortly after leaving her ex-husband.

I lucked out in the apartment building that we were in because it was a woman that um had a daughter that was on Income Assistance...So she was really good at, you know, getting us in and and uh she said “no I’m sure that you’ll get the money for the rent” and all that kind of stuff so...because it’s hard because they won’t give you money until you have an apartment but if you don’t have an apartment it it, you know...it’s a catch twenty-two, you know.
 [Crystal: 158 – 167]

In this quote, Crystal discussed the need for an individual to have an address to receive IA, yet a person needs IA in order to get an address, and how frustrating that circle can be. For the women, it also appeared to be impossible to get out of that cycle. During our conversation, Crystal discussed the fight she had when trying to receive IA in order to maintain a home for her children while she looked for work. She talked about NSDCS being unwilling to give her any funding unless she sold her home even though she was only experiencing a temporary set-back that would require funding for a short period of time. In her opinion it made more sense for her to keep her house and struggle through the temporary set-back and have a home for her and her children when it was over than it was to sell her house to alleviate the financial pressure at that moment but then not have housing for her and her children. She was successful in securing temporary funding from IA.

Although Peggy had never been on IA she was currently on CPP disability and LTD funding. She was making approximately \$18,000 per year and living with a physical disability that made it challenging for her to get around independently because she was unable to drive. Although she did not find it challenging to support herself on the money she was making she required transportation and some in-house support yet could not afford to pay for it. She had requested financial support from NS DCS for these costs and was denied because she made slightly over the maximum amount she could make in

order to be eligible for assistance. The ruling relations affected her ability to question their decision and her sense of self.

And the thing is I'm not entitled to I'm not saying Assistance [IA] I'm I'm I make was it I guess maybe 18,000 and you have to make under 17 to get to get be entitled to any...any support of, you know, like and for example if I had someone to come to help vacuum and stuff and all that, you know, I would be entitled to someone to do that and like but I mean I'm not entitled so if I get I do have a friend that come [sic] once and a while but I mean the thing is I have to do pay for that myself so...I'm not telling someone take me to get groceries, take me to the doctor, take me, you know, and you do that the best way you can and that's tough luck you know what I mean...And it's it is hard walking, you know, it's not fun it's not it's not, you know, I'm in pain and eventually I'll end up in a wheelchair but that's how it is, you know...that's, you know. What do you do?

Interviewer: And you're just over that limit?

Yeah and when you have no family, no support, nobody that's, you know...You're just stuck.

[Peggy: 550 – 565]

Safe options were limited for those who had the ability to afford housing. The women did not indicate that lack of affordable, adequate housing caused them to hesitate about leaving but they did indicate that finding affordable, adequate housing was a concern after they left. As well, for Shirley, periodic crisis periods led to her frequently move back in with an ex-partners to avoid being absolutely homeless. The women also discussed the pressure they felt from the service agencies to accept housing even if they did not feel the housing or the neighbourhood the housing was located in was adequate.

Well one of the things and one of the staff told me here, you know, "well you gotta start somewhere. You can't be picky." Well, you know what, um I have two kids that are young...and very, you know, they're at a very vulnerable age where they take a lot of shit in...and I am not bringing them up in an area that, you know, they're going to walk outside their apartment building and see, you know, a few people, you know, um doing a drug transaction or something...and, you know, something goes wrong and...a guy gets shot. Not gonna do it. I don't care. You can tell me that I can't be picky but, you know what, those are my kids...and I'm gonna be picky. And not I'm not I don't feel like, you know, I have high standards, you know, but...I don't wanna be, you know, nervous walking anytime in a

neighbourhood that I live in...with my kids... You know. And like I've said to them, you know, if it was just me it would be totally different... You know. I um I can keep to myself or, you know, it would just be me... It wouldn't, you know, but my kids might be walking out in the street and, you know, say the wrong comment to me asking me a question about somebody that they see or whatever and who knows that person might be, you know, strung out or whatever... and like come and cause trouble and stuff and like I just don't I'm not putting them in a situation like that.

[Melanie: 2036 – 2071]

Some of the women were reluctant to move to certain communities due to what they heard in the media or from friends. One can see how the media contributed to assumptions, myths, and stereotypes that portrayed neighbourhoods as being unsafe, even if they were safe.

The women who lived in public housing were there because they did not have other alternatives. They could not afford to live in a unit where they were paying market rent. Even when they worked they often did not make enough money to pay market rent. Income levels of women are affected by patriarchy whereby women still live in a society where men's work is valued higher than women's. This effect presents itself as men earning more than women. This can contribute to women being in situations where they cannot earn enough, or find it very challenging to earn enough, to pay market rent.

The outcomes were not always negative though and the women did the best they could in the situations they were in, as noted in Shirley's comments on this concern.

Soooo I had no choice but to go into housing [public housing]... I had no choice I needed a big enough place, you know... So I got into housing... In uh [public housing complex in HRM, NS]. I was petrified... By the grace of God I met some really nice people who are still my friends today, you know, I fortunately you're usually a product of your environment and you basically become the chameleon. You do what you have to do to fit in... Um but I surrounded myself with people who wanted to be the same kind of parent as I did... So because that was my big thing I wanted to be a good parent. I wanted my kids to know that they were very important to me.

[Shirley: 334 – 350]

There was the extra challenge of have little or no input into the community you were going to live in.

I never wanted to live in [neighbourhood in HRM, NS]...and those places but I had no choice....I had no choice, you know.
[Shirley: 1643 – 1647]

For Peggy, although she was able to afford housing on her own, she was still limited in what she could afford. Also, there was the double concern of both safety and location due to her physical limitations. Again, her opinion was based on media reports and comments from friends.

It wasn't easy to find an apartment it's and not so much the price or the, you know, I didn't want to be way out in [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] or...And there's and like people know like certain areas like [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] actually the druggy parts but I mean, you know, you want something half decent.
[Peggy: 427 – 431]

Another financial challenge that was discussed by the women revolved around child care. The women raised multiple concerns about this topic. One concern was working and affording child care on the low wages they would be making.

If I'm working I'm trying to work to get ahead but then what I am making when I'm working is paying child care...I'm really not getting ahead.
[Melanie: 2103 – 2106]

Another challenge some of the women faced was being able to work the amount of hours required to make it worth paying the child care costs they would incur, especially if making minimum wage, as noted by Shirley “I was working. I couldn't afford a sitter” (677). For some women this challenge was alleviated to some extent with other money, such as child support.

That's what I'm trying to say is that I was able to go to work because I received child support. Had I not been receiving child support the type of jobs that I was doing I would not have made enough to be off of assistance [IA].
[Shirley: 823 – 825]

Another hardship the women faced was finding child care during the shifts they would be requested to work or having to turn down shifts because they did not have child care. This was especially true if they worked in the low-income job market because those employers are typically open longer hours than the standard 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Monday to Friday hours of offices. Also, there were usually numerous individuals available to fill the shifts so management would not work around individual schedules. In these work environments, the women believed management expected their staff members to be available for every shift on the schedule. For Shirley this created yet another situation where she brought her ex-partner back into her home for extra support.

Like I agreed to let him be there cause I needed his support. I needed it for someone else to be there with the kids for me. I was working. I couldn't afford a sitter...I was working nights he worked days. So we just did it that way and we co-parented, you know, at the best of our ability.

[Shirley: 676 – 680]

This was another example of the women's reality being shaped by gender, social, and economic factors. Gender factors shaped this reality because the women were the main caregivers for their children therefore child care concerns were their domain. Social factors had a role because of the traditional business hours that offices are usually open dictate child care centre hours but do not provide options for those individuals who do not work regular office hours. Economic factors shaped this reality because the women could not afford to pay extra child care costs during the evenings or overnight hours when rates are typically higher. It also led to situations in which the women felt like they were being judged for not trying hard enough yet it was systemic societal structures and ideologies that influenced their situations and created hardships, such as child care challenges, that created barriers to employment. Melanie shared an experience she had

with her ex-partner's stepfather:

His stepdad like he basically didn't feel I was trying hard enough and I was like, you know what, fuck you...I don't care...Just because you left your home when you were sixteen years old and never looked back and, you know, survived on your own...that's that's good. That's great, you know, I... Congratulations to you. However, you're a single man...and you were able to work your ass off... You were able to go out and work um at three in the morning until six at night if you had to...I have two kids and I cannot just work each and every hour of the day or night...and say okay I'm sorry, [daughter] and [son], you're going to have to get yourselves up for school in the morning...because, you know, um I gotta work. Be realistic. Don't be ignorant [laughs].
[Melanie: 1544 – 1567]

There was also the challenge of finding work when on IA because sometimes work positions did not start out as full-time yet for the women to take a part-time position they would lose their IA and would wind up bringing less money into their already tight budgets. Or they would have the extra costs occasionally associated with starting new employment and would have to juggle those costs while on a very tight income. These experiences pointed to a disconnect between the women's experiences and IA and identified another line of fault.

It's the same as with a job um I didn't have any work clothes I mean I had had two babies and three years since I'd had a job so...you know, I'm trying to get work clothes but I don't have any money so I said to them [NS DCS], you know, could you give me some money so I can get work clothes and I mean at the time I was only getting a couple hundred dollars from them because he was actually paying child support and um they were like "no."
[Crystal: 167 – 182]

The women discussed challenges with getting household bills in their name. Some of them had never had bills in their own name due to their ex-partner's control over the household finances. When trying to secure housing on their own this became an issue, sometimes with an additional expense attached for some of the women.

This was the first time I had a power bill so um it's the first time I had to turn around and um yeah I had to give them a hundred dollar deposit.

[Peggy: 582 – 583]

For Crystal, getting the bills in her own name also bought her freedom albeit at the cost of heavy financial burden for the coming years.

Um I got the mortgage put in my name because he wanted half of what the house was worth and he also said he wouldn't leave unless I took the [pause] the bills...So I had to get three jobs in order to get the mortgage to pay it all, that off.

Interviewer: Okay so the past debts...that you guys had accrued? He would he wanted you to take those?

Either the mort—he said either that or or sell the house.

Interviewer: Like plea bargaining.

Yup ...I said there's so many men out there think that said "god I wish I had you to divorce." [laughs]. They all get screwed and I just give it away! [laughs].

Interviewer: Yeah [laughs]. And take on all the bills. [laughter] Okay so then so you got the mortgage in your name?

Yup. Yup.

Interviewer: And the bills switched over?

Yeah I got the mortgage and paid off the bills and...Yup. And then I remortgaged every three to five years afterwards...to try to keep up.

[Crystal: 518 – 542]

I heard numerous stories about attempts to balance rent and other bill expectations. Often, the intention was good but there was not enough money to cover the monthly bills.

So it was rent day and I had enough money to pay the power bill...but not enough money to pay both [the power bill and the rent]...Right? We need power [laughs]. Right? It's a it's one of those things. You need to figure out what's more important at that moment. So I went over there because I knew that if I didn't pay my rent she was going to do whatever she needed to do to get me out of there. Right? And each time I would go in with the intention "okay you're going to do it right...You're going to do it right. You're going to do it right." I do! Honestly... That's how I set it out to be. It's not like it's just how it goes.

[Shirley: 2071 – 2082]

Juggling financial obligations on a limited income became even more challenging when children were involved. As Crystal stated when discussing her fight for support from IA, she outright told them "...you have to do something for me...because I got [sic] four kids and they need to eat" (Crystal: 608 – 610).

The women spoke of doing the best they could to support themselves and their children and making sure their children did not appear to go without.

So, you know, so I would want to make sure the kids had everything they needed. So my bills didn't get paid...My kids never went without food...They always had decent clothes, you know. I looked after them in that sense but I didn't teach them anything about responsibility about money.
[Shirley: 747 – 757]

Oftentimes this had severe repercussions as the women would wind up being evicted for not paying their rent. So although the intention was to protect their children by providing what they considered normal standards and experiences, it often had the opposite effect when their housing was unstable.

Another financial barrier the women struggled with was poor credit either due to never having had credit before or having a poor credit rating. For some of the women there was a long history of not having bills in their names because the bills were always in their ex-partner's name. For others it was a series of bad choices earlier in their lives that led to poor credit ratings and an inability to secure credit for emergencies. Additionally, most of the women had historical patterns of poor money management within their family of origin. As with most people who have poor credit histories, they did not always think of the effect their current actions would have on their future.

I regret that today, you know, and I encourage my girls and I encourage my sons all the time, take care of your name, look after your credit. Because in other situations I might have been able to get myself out of a situation...With a little credit or whatever, you know.

Interviewer: It's a hard lesson.

It is and and I'm gonna live it now til, you know, something a miracle happens and my name's erased or whatever, you know.

[Shirley: 936 – 943]

During our conversation it became clear that Melanie was already preparing herself for the future challenge of paying rent, other household bills, and affording food once she was in her own housing. She spoke of experiencing anxiety about leaving her supportive housing environment and, in her words, “failing” again. She had conversations with her support team about how to budget and financially manage her home and was working diligently on becoming more financially aware. She believed she was succeeding in being more financially aware and had a “better concept of money” but was anxious that when she was in her own housing, responsible for rent, power, food, and other household bills, that it would be too difficult and she would not be able to maintain stable housing for her and her children, especially while dependent on IA. She talked of getting herself in a position where she would not have to be on IA. She also spoke about the amount of financial support she would receive for food through IA and how beneficial the food bank truck had been in assisting her with stretching her food budget.

And that's one of the things that I think I probably will miss when I go cause it's like it's so nice to have that food truck because really forty dollars a week for groceries.

Interviewer: Yeah. It doesn't go far.

Maybe if it was just me I could probably like, you know, make it work but not with two kids and not, you know, having to make them a lunch daily cause I mean uh just that alone just making, you know, um like buying fruit and stuff like that for their lunch...that can take twenty bucks like that [snaps fingers] so...and then to have to, you know, try to figure out [clears throat], you know, each week what I'm going to have for supper and breakfast and all that kind of stuff....Like forty dollars doesn't go that far.

[Melanie: 2489 – 2501]

Unpaid bills would often accumulate to levels that became impossible for the women to pay. This created situations where they would be disconnected from a service, such as power or phone, or they would move and not be able to have service hooked up in their new place because of past bills. The women recognized this as a barrier they created themselves but neither recognized the effect minimum wage or IA rates had on their ability to pay their bills nor recognized the effect of the service providers enabling the bills to accumulate to very high amounts.

Sure enough I wasn't paying the rent...And, you know, not paying my power bill. I had a 2,800 dollar power bill...It's still not paid [pause] um so that creates another barrier. All those barriers and I created them for myself.
[Shirley: 929 – 934]

The women discussed many techniques they used to get by, including balancing multiple jobs along with other household responsibilities as in Crystal's case when she stated she secured three jobs in order to pay her household bills. Earlier it was also presented that Crystal would continuously re-mortgage in an effort to keep her home. Shirley would reside with her ex-partner again, which enabled her to remain in her home. For a while Melanie was living in her sister's apartment even though she was not on the lease and therefore, in effect, breaking the NS RTA. The energy that went into making ends meet was incredible.

Interviewer: And at that point in time, so you were working three different jobs, were any of them like was one a full-time and a couple part-times or three different part-time jobs sort of...piecing together full-time?

I babysat through the day...And then he [her ex-partner] had them Tuesday, Thursday, and every other weekend so I babysat five days a week and in between that I did um the school monitoring...You know like...at lunch time...and and that sort of thing um and then Tuesday, Thursday evening I worked and then one week one week blah blah one week it'd be Tuesday, Thursday evening, the next week

it'd be Tuesday, Thursday, Friday evening and Saturday, Sunday... Yup. So that's how I did it.
[Crystal: 543 – 563]

The resourcefulness of the women resonated in their many stories of balancing acts that included money, housing, child care, parenting, and self care. For example, Crystal lived a lifestyle of multiple jobs for many years before she finally secured a full-time position that paid enough so that she could give up her multiple jobs. The position started as part-time and she still worked a full-time position along with it until it became a full-time, permanent position.

I will use a comment made during my conversation with Crystal as a way to close this section because I believe she spoke for all the women in this one statement. When discussing what her financial and housing experience was like Crystal summed it up when she said it was not finances that created her concerns it was a "...lack of finances!" (Crystal, 986). The lack of money in their lives created many housing concerns for the women. Even if they learned to manage their money the bottom line was they did not make enough money to be able to comfortably afford adequate housing. Housing history also impacted their everyday lives.

The Effect of Housing History on the Everyday World

Housing history played a role in the women's everyday lives. All but one of them described unstable housing histories that included multiple moves, a history of evictions, periods of time within shelters and other housing support providers' facilities, and leaving the family home at a very young age. The instability of the women's housing history and the institutions that played a role in that instability assisted in mapping their everyday world. Once again, there were historical patterns from their family of origin

visible within their housing stories.

It was very challenging to keep track of the number of times Shirley, Laura, and Melanie moved, even within their relationships. Laura lived in most provinces across Canada, including isolated communities in the far North, and internationally with multiple moves over the course of her marriage. Shirley identified at least 32 moves from the time she left home and moved in with her boyfriend at the age of 15 until she participated in the interview. Five of the 32 moves were to transition or recovery houses. The remaining 27 moves were due to staying with friends and family, moving in and out of relationships, being evicted, fleeing abuse, trying to find a safe place for her and her children, and moving to communities with more services for her and her children. Melanie moved several times due to being evicted.

These moves were often not the choice of the women. Oftentimes they spoke of not being able to find housing. They also spoke of systemic societal structures and ideologies embedded in societal beliefs affecting them finding housing, such as landlords not wanting to rent to them when they realized their source of income was IA. The systemic structures led the women to participate in unwanted living arrangements with family members they did not get along, such as in both Shirley and Melanie's stories when they moved back in with their mothers and described the situation as tension filled because of negative relationship histories. These arrangements were strenuous on everyone involved.

Although they knew they would be moving into tension-filled environments the women had no choice and it often led to them leaving quickly and moving into other unstable housing arrangements that often did not last. Melanie shared this story:

We stayed for with my mom for a bit but, you know, like my mom and I bump heads so we're just not we just don't live well together and uh ...I rushed very, very quickly into getting my own place and um [pause] like I was working um [pause] but uh yeah like I had a really uh well I didn't have control of money.
[Melanie: 942 – 946]

And Shirley shared this one:

Anyway um so I'm in the position of looking for a place, I have four young kids, I'm on assistance [IA], nobody wants to take me, you know, um I tried well what end—I ended up doing was calling the [service provider in HRM, NS]And they put me up in [military housing in HRM, NS] ...But it was military housing then but they had emergency housing so they put us in a one bedroom apartment [laughs]...and we were only allowed to stay there a month... Soooo I had no choice but to go into housing [public housing] ...I had no choice I needed a big enough place, you know. Oops. So I got into housing.
[Shirley: 319 – 339]

During the course of living in multiple places Shirley was always trying to find a safe place for her and her children. She would leave housing options when they were not safe for her children.

And so we ended up moving from [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] because I couldn't handle how the well there was a couple of boys in the neighbourhood that really tormented my kids and I was concerned.
[Shirley: 386 – 388]

Shirley also discussed moving back to communities where there were more services for her and her children, especially when she was living in rural areas of Nova Scotia.

Barriers came up during discussion regarding the women's housing histories. The barriers the women faced were related to their ability to look for housing, their rental history, or their source of income. Time was often a constraint when looking for housing especially if the women had children and no one to watch them while they attempted to find housing or if they worked full-time, as was the case for Peggy.

I worked in the daytime and then you're still supposed to be looking for an apartment well I was looking and trying on the weekends and that, you know, I had to hoof it and that I had to go call people and go look and that...try try to do

the calling on the phone before because I mean I didn't wanna get all the way out there and say "oh no it's taken" or "no blah blah," you know what I mean?
[Peggy: 614 – 619]

If the barrier was related to rental history it often affected a landlord's willingness to rent to the women and limited their housing options even more. As Melanie stated:

One of the barriers that I had was that I really didn't have a whole lot of rental experience.
[Melanie: 1348 – 1349]

She then went on to say:

I cannot force someone to rent to me if, you know, it's their property like they have to approve me.
[Melanie: 1574 – 1575]

Once again, this is an example of the hidden patterns within social interactions based on systemic societal structures. Crystal discussed her fear of not being able to find housing for her and her children because she was on IA and how she got "lucky."

I lucked out in the apartment building that we were in because it was a woman that um had a daughter that was on Income Assistance...So she was really good at, you know, getting us in and and uh she said "no I'm sure that you'll get the money for the rent" and all that kind of stuff.
[Crystal: 121 – 123]

Melanie also raised concerns over policies about children's welfare and how they could affect housing choices. Once again another systemic societal structure affected her reality. There was a line of fault that existed between the lived experiences of the women and the size of the housing they could afford. Although other women were in situations that would not fall within the current policies (i.e., Shirley with all four children in a one bedroom apartment or Crystal and her two children sharing one room in a friend's apartment) they did not raise the concern surrounding children of opposite gender not being able to share bedrooms. Melanie was the only woman who raised this concern and

indicated she had been questioning it.

Um so do I need to have them each in a bedroom...Or do they can they share a bedroom and whatnot. But uh I think he said basically that there not um how do I put like if Children's Aid is involved [knock at the door] I think it's a little different.

[Melanie: 1863 – 1867]

During this conversation Melanie also alluded to her belief that the rules and regulations were not followed in the same manner for all individuals and mentioned the confusion that created when trying to decide how large her housing needed to be. This, once more, speaks to the hidden patterns within social interactions and how they negatively affect individuals. The historical realism about this concern was that the differential treatment was perceived to be real because it became crystallized over time.

But I mean who's to say I mean one worker may not approve you because you do not have a three bedroom...one worker might say "well I guess you're sleeping on the couch." I don't know like, you know... It's hard to say...and that really um gets under my skin too because if you have [pause] policy [laughs] then shouldn't you be following policy...for every individual...I know that there's certain um circumstances and there's, you know, each person is different and so sometimes it's hard to find follow the same, you know, um guidelines with every situation... But [laughs] if someone has three kids, or four kids, or two kids, or one kid and the next person that comes in and has three kids, four kids, six kids, or one kid, you know, uh that's not a policy that really needs to be like, you know, applied to this person and then changed for this person... You know? Um so I think there's certain uh yeah [sighs] that whole system just uh doesn't make sense.

[Melanie: 1900 – 1923]

The women often did not have a plan in place when leaving housing to ensure they had other housing secured. Sometimes this meant they went to one of the shelters in the community or it meant they stayed with family or friends until they decided what they were going to do and where they were going to live.

Interviewer: And what was your...had you had time to set up a plan? Like what was what was your...

No.

Interviewer: Experience like to find housing then?

I just had to the three of us went and stayed in one room....At a friend's house...And that's what we had...Until I could call um Social Services [NS DCS] and see if I could get an apartment.

Interviewer: And how long did that process take? We're they able to provide you with assistance?

No it was a couple months...It was a couple months before we got into a place.
[Crystal: 97 – 110]

Having a plan in place was a skill some of the women did learn through their experiences after leaving the abusive relationship. Shirley spoke about the tools she received from the various transition houses and shelters she had stayed in over the years, especially when it came to planning leaving an abusive relationship.

I had some tools right? So I, you know, made sure I had everything packed that I want, you know, and I was able to maneuver that, you know, that he wasn't able to know um I packed stuff up for the kids...And you know where I hid the stuff? In the dumpster...And I hid money outside under a brick. I don't know how I was I don't know how nobody didn't find it...Right? But obvious places I guess. And first chance I got, I took the car...Because then that time I knew I had some rights [laughs].
[Shirley: 397 – 410]

One thing that came out of the women's experiences was a desire to never be in that situation again. This led to planning, such as Shirley's, about how they would leave a future abusive relationship if they found themselves in that position again. Other times it led to extra planning before leaving supportive housing to ensure that once they left they would not be living in that environment again.

And, you know, one of my very like biggest um wants goals whatever when I leave here is to be so much more prepared and, you know, um stable that when I get to an apartment or wherever I'm going I am not um [pause] going to fall back into this.
[Melanie: 2021 – 2023]

It also led to a desire for something better. They discussed securing better housing or living in a better community. For example, when discussing her housing experiences Shirley stated that she has:

Always been trying to strive for better...A little better. Each time it got a little better
[Shirley: 1649 – 1651]

The women also discussed what they were grateful for. During a conversation about whether she ever had to go to a shelter when leaving her relationships Crystal mentioned she never had to stay in a shelter and she was grateful for that.

And I was...very fortunate that way...I can't imagine what you'd have to go through...Like, you know, I mean as bad as it was I never had to go there so...Like I don't know if you get your own room or whatever in there but at least when I went to my friend's house we had that one room...I could close the door and we could just be together as a family. The three of us.
[Crystal: 829 – 846]

She also discussed how she was grateful for the support provided to her by IA during that period of her life.

So I was very lucky in that respect and then when I was gonna move to [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] I actually went to the worker and said I wanted to move to [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] and they gave me they cut me an extra cheque so I'd have moving expenses.
[Crystal: 213 – 215]

Some of the women were able to purchase their own home or rent their own apartment shortly after leaving the abusive relationship. Crystal was able to purchase her own home prior to her second marriage and Peggy was able to find her own apartment, although it did take some time for them to be settled in their own place. Laura was also able to maintain the apartment she and her ex-partner were in prior to the marriage ending and then shortly after the relationship ended she was able to move back to the matrimonial home and take over the mortgage. The advantage these women had was they

were employed or able to find work after leaving the abusive relationship and they owned houses with their ex-partners prior to the relationship ending. Peggy's ex-partner remained in their matrimonial home. This created concerns for her when she was looking for housing because she wanted similar quality to what she had left.

Like I say I gave my house away...I gave it to him, you know, my ex with...in the divorce and if I gave I want something half decent, you know what I mean?
[Peggy: 440 – 443]

Safety concerns were also raised during this area of conversation, especially if the women were living in, or going to be living in, public housing.

And, you know, like I don't know like I know that even the areas that are Housing [public housing] housing um, you know, don't always have necessarily the best reputation. But uh my sister lived in [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] for a bit [sniffs] in one of the high risers and I stayed there with her for a little bit um after I graduated and [pause], I don't know, I didn't have any problems...And I walked [pause] in the night time I walked, you know... it wasn't like, you know, there was any um [pause] I didn't witness any crime or any, you know, any violence or anything like that...Um now I do know now like in the last little bit there's been shootings and whatever but I mean like what neighbourhood hasn't had shootings.
[Melanie: 2200 – 2211]

Shirley discussed this concern as being a reason for some of her frequent moves.

Interviewer: And what about the safety of the neighbourhoods that...

Oh no no...

Interviewer: That you lived in?

No um like I said like a lot of the moving around like from one area to another was to try to get them away from what I could see mounting...You know, no they did not feel like they were the only time they were ever in a good neighbourhood was when we were in [co-op community in HRM, NS] ...which was a co-op and when we were at um oh when we were in the military of course...And then when we were um in [neighbourhood in HRM, NS].

Interviewer: So there's always been safety concerns...

Yeah.

Interviewer: With where you've been living?

Yeah ...Definitely.

[Shirley: 1624 – 1643]

The women participating in this study faced many housing struggles and the impact of these struggles was evident in their stories. What was also very evident was the variety of support systems, both formal and informal, that they utilized during their experiences with homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship.

Support Systems

The support systems that shaped the women's everyday lives were both formal and informal. They identified 46 service providers as being important during that period of their lives. The individual women accessed a range of 4 to 24 formal support systems during the time they were leaving their abusive relationship and trying to secure affordable, adequate housing. The organizations were a mixture of government organizations, for-profit organizations, and non-profit, charitable organizations. The formal supports were categorized in five groups: (a) housing support, (b) food security support, (c) financial support, (d) legal support, and (e) emotional support.

Housing support. Housing support was very important for most of the women participating in this study. Housing support included support organizations where the women lived for a period of time (i.e., shelters, transition houses, second stage housing, public housing, and co-op housing) as well as public policies such as the Nova Scotia RTA and the IA shelter funding section of the ESIA.

Three of the five women used housing support organizations to assist them on their path to affordable, adequate housing. In their history there were both short and long

stays within service providers' organizations, ranging from a couple of days to almost a year and a half. These organizations provided them with shelter along with new life skills to assist them in the future and direction in accessing other support organizations that would be beneficial in assisting them. There were historical patterns regarding housing support with some of the women having experienced living in a shelter or public housing as children.

As well, the other support organizations identified but not directly associated with housing support provided support with housing issues. Depending on the situation, the direction provided may have included an advocacy component or information on the rights of the women. The type of housing support service provider the women used at the time determined how satisfied or dissatisfied they were in the policies that guided the support they received.

The policies affected the length of time a woman could reside at a facility, lack of choice within the living environment (i.e., rules to follow, expectations placed on her, and communal living environment), the housing she could secure on her own, and the protection she had from landlords while in rental housing. Sometimes there was flexibility in the policies and sometimes there was not, depending on the organization and the staff member. Moreover, this flexibility could be beneficial or detrimental, depending on how the policy was being altered. As well, sometimes policies were not followed at all and those situations almost always had a negative effect on the women.

When using transitional housing the women were always affected by policies about length of stay. It became apparent during conversations with the women and service providers that policies focusing on length of stay were often flexible, some more

than others. For example, most times the length of stay, although stated within a policy as one length, could be extended depending on the individual circumstances of the women. The flexibility was typically decided on a case-by-case basis and could be deemed necessary because the women were finding it challenging to secure affordable, adequate housing or had other life challenges that required extra time to develop the necessary skills for living on their own.

We find that women can easily fall into a rut...or into a maybe stages of comfort. Uh some women come in and they wanna get out of dodge as quickly as possible, and they work very hard, and get out within just a very short time frame...Uh other people, who we're seeing more and more, have more mental health challenges, um more life challenges...and don't have the strategies to cope. They become very comfortable very quick. Um and also women have, some of those women, have experienced extreme amounts of trauma which have pact-impacted them greatly so a fear of living alone um, you know, fear of going out in community and stuff. So we we see women who come to [service provider in HRM, NS] who rarely leave [service provider in HRM, NS]... and um and will still be with us.

[Service Provider 1: 423 – 428]

Length of stay was affected by a variety of factors that the women were not aware of, including social, political, and economic factors. The ruling relations led to the women feeling pressured to leave the housing support environment even if they were not ready to support themselves and their family or if they had not been able find housing they believed was safe. The length of time the organizations provided housing to the women had an effect on the employees. They recognized there was a need for longer time frames for some women but the need could not be met for a variety of reasons including financial and benefits for the women.

We ship them off to their own place so uh it's really I don't feel effective um but, you know, again it's a fine line like there's such a demand for our service...that we could have keep women there forever but then we gotta whole slew that are not safe out here. So we it we are just kind of literally filtering them through.

[Service Provider 1: 1054 – 1059]

Service providers also recognized that when the length of stay was determined on a case-by-case basis, it could appear to other women that the service provider was giving differential treatment to some women.

Well it used to be a year...So now it's like it's definitely client-centered. It's family by family. Um and you can imagine too this creates another thing like it might look unfair to if I'm a single women with no children and I come in and I've been here for a year and I'm being encouraged to move on and people are really wanting me to find housing and whatever but yet I see that there's a woman with children here who's been here for a super long time, you know, it doesn't feel fair to me. I do hear a lot of that too. Inconsistent application of policies because of the client-centered focus where I'm not going to explain to you or to another client why we made a decision about this person because of confidentiality...when it can really seem on the service like it's like, you know, unfair.

[Service Provider 2: 849 – 858]

Although polices and rules are in place to protect the women using the services, for some women it was challenging to live within the rules because they were different from how they would live if in their own home. Moreover, some women were unaccustomed to rules as part of their regular daily routine. According to one service provider, the lack of rules in the everyday world assisted in forming the women's opinion of the rules once they were in a rule-based situation and led to them believing the rules are "stupid." The women then resisted following the rules.

One of the challenging expectations of some housing support service providers was the requirement for the women to develop goals for themselves while residing there. This process was often mandatory, and it was more challenging for the women who had never set goals for themselves before. Although challenging, for some women the requirement of the organizations to set goals while using their housing support services was stated as being beneficial for them in their quest to move toward affordable, adequate housing.

One of the biggest reasons for, I think, even coming here um, you know, my goals were to, you know, really work on the relationship with my kids...and uh the second was to, you know, give them something more stable...and give them, you know, like that feeling of security um and, you know, just having more consistency in their life...because I mean for their age they definit–like they’ve gone through a lot...of shit [laughs] ...Just not something, you know, that the average children their age probably have experienced...and all that kind of stuff. So [pause] while I’ve been here though, you know, like I still faced um a lot of challenges...So and, you know, like housing is definitely one of them...

[Melanie: 1792 – 1816]

Melanie then discussed how the organization supported her in her search for housing and worked with her on having realistic expectations about what she could afford with the shelter funding amount she would be receiving from IA.

When residing at a housing support service provider’s facility the women’s living spaces were not private, were shared, and often inspections were conducted. This was a very intrusive procedure that the women did not like. In some living situations they were not allowed to be in their rooms during certain periods of the day, which created challenges. Even the women who did not live in those environments mentioned how challenging it must be.

Like I don’t know if you get your own room or whatever in there but at least when I went to my friend’s house we had that one room...I could close the door and we could just be together as a family. The three of us.

[Crystal: 843 – 846]

One of the biggest challenges service providers noted with their policies is the lack of choice regarding roommates.

You’re kinda stuck with who you’re stuck with...Um it’s really challenging. So like personalities don’t always mesh well. Um standards of cleanliness, lifestyles, that kind of thing, and it can create like quite a bit of conflict and um so that would be another challenge. Especially since you’re coming from a situation where you are accustomed to being on your own, you know, with your own family. Also, um uh, you know, raising children in an environment where people make different parenting choices than you do or raising children in an environment where even though you’re not being observed like we’re don’t we don’t observe

people parenting um as part of our program by any means I um I know like I can imagine that you would how could you not help but feel that everything you were doing is being noticed or judged. So those things are certainly, you know, like barriers as well.

[Service Provider 2: 337 – 349]

The rules within the communal living environments were sometimes so challenging for the women using the services that they were not able to stay as long as individuals typically stay to reap the most benefit from the service provider.

People almost always stay [pause] longer than six months though we do have some folks who come here and they're here for like a month they're like "I can't do it." Like... "this isn't for me."

[Service Provider 2: 797 – 801]

The housing support providers I spoke with recognized the effect their rules had on their clients, which sometimes led to rules being altered for particular situations.

I mean something like okay they're not allowed out on Wednesday nights right... They have to stay here on Wednesday nights because it's chore night and that. With exception. If somebody's going to meet, you know, with their child or and they couldn't do it on their other personal, you know, with exception... to everything. We have to look at it from an individual basis.

[Service Provider 3: 1459 – 1466]

The understanding also led to documents being created to ensure the women fully understood what was expected of them when using the housing support service providers' facilities, including that it was their responsibility to follow the rules of the service provider. Employees would review the guidelines to assist the women in understanding the guidelines.

We also give out a guideline book so that people have have that with them but also it's their responsibility to be able to uphold them, to know what they are. Um and we would go over uh that if guidelines aren't followed then that could lead to discharge. There are some things that are automatic automatically we'd ask folks to leave so any sort of violence in the space, um weapons in the space. Um other things that may lead to discharge would depend on the situation. For example, someone gets really verbally aggressive with me in my office we might be able to de-escalate that and work it out. If it's in front of other residents then it it makes

them feel unsafe then that would probably be a discharge. Um so we have some of those conversations with people.

[Service Provider 4: 352 – 361]

One of the main consequences for not following the rules of a housing service provider was eviction. I sensed that the service providers I spoke with did not want to take that step and attempted to avoid it by offering warnings or opportunities to sign contracts stating the behavior would not occur again. In situations where they did have to evict, some of them would attempt to secure other housing support for the women. For many, eviction was one of the most challenging aspects of their career.

We sometimes have to put some women at risk to for the greater good of everybody else... You know? And that's a really hard decision. You know, when when you're telling a woman she has to leave and she says "I have nowhere to go but back to my partner." [pause] And...that's really hard. That's really hard. And we al-of course, we always give them other options and we we'll call like if we're asking someone to leave we'll call the other shelters first and we-so when we tell them we say "you have to leave but um this shelter has room and we're happy to send you there. We'll dro-take you we'll transport you there with all your stuff..." Um so we give them options cause we don't want we we rarely just throw somebody out without well we almost never throw someone out without an without alternatives.

[Service Provider 1: 673 – 687]

Another service provider (employee 2) discussed having to evict a woman and the effect that had on her and her staff (employee 1).

Employee 2: She has to go. So we asked her to leave and uh she was pretty unhappy about it...and I it was stressful. We don't like to have to do that... You know, at the end of the day when we go home we always know, pretty much, that we've done the right thing cause it feels right. And there's been times that it hasn't felt right and we go back to that...And we've had to change things...Um and we're okay with saying...we made a mistake...This is not the best thing for this person so we've gone back and changed it and I have no problem with that...I'd rather do that and be called inconsistent or whatever...then uh [pause], you know...

Interviewer: Not change it and...

Employee 2: Yeah and it be not good for that person.

Interviewer: Be not good for somebody else in the future too.

Employee 2: Yup.

Employee 1: And, you know, and it is it it, you know, I mean as much as, you know, we'd like to keep it professional um it's it's hard not for it's hard not for it to affect us as staff because...

Employee 2: I've cried! I've gone away and cried [laughs].

Employee 1: ...we're with these women, you know, um a a majority of their time here and we wouldn't be in this field if we didn't have empathy and compassion right? So I mean yes it does affect us in those ways. Try not to take it home with you.

[Service Provider 3: 681 – 712]

One area that could potentially have an additional impact on women leaving abusive relationships and struggling with homelessness was housing service providers' policy regarding male children. Because some of the housing support services women access were female-only living environments there were rules in place as to how old male children could be. The maximum age was typically 12 years old. Although only one of the five women that participated in my study had male children old enough for this to be a concern it could create another barrier that affected women's ability to make choices about their safety. The service providers spoke of the challenges for women trying to find safety and being told that they cannot come to their organization because their male child was too old. The women could not send their child to one of the male housing support providers on his own so they often stayed with their partner or left their children behind, as was the case for Peggy. The rule was in place for safety reasons and the housing support providers did mention that they would work with families to see how they could provide support for them off-site, such as outreach support or funding for a hotel room.

Policies could also affect the housing women secured on their own through how

much funding was provided for housing, the length of time women had to find housing, the limited amount of affordable, adequate housing in HRM, and the women's rental history. Funding for shelter provided through IA is very low especially when considering rental costs in HRM. Melanie was anxious about how she was going to afford housing for herself and her children considering the shelter rates provided by IA. The low shelter rates meant that she would have to use some of her personal allowance funding from IA to top up her rent money, which would then make it challenging to afford her other household bills.

When I when uh I was getting to, you know, the point where it was starting to come up close to us being here a year I was thinking like 620 dollars am I I'm not even going to find a two bedroom for that...let alone a three bedroom.
[Melanie: 1845 – 1849]

This concern was also raised by service providers:

When they live in the low rentals the the crack areas and the drug like over in [community in HRM, NS] or [community in HRM, NS]...okay so they're on Community Services [NS DCS] already so they're living that lifestyle. They're either homeless or whatever. So then they get a referral and they come to the [service provider in HRM, NS] so we give them the programs, the tools they need, mo—a lot of them have criminal records...a lot of them have very little education and support, low self-esteem. So all those things are big factors... I mean we can keep someone sober here for a year. That's not a problem...We can give you all the tools you wanna use but if Community Services [NS DCS] is only gonna give you 520 dollars a month when you leave here...you're going right back to crack central [bangs on table]. And they're not gonna support you with your education. And they're not gonna support you to do a better life because they have an umbrella...of policies that if this is what you qualify for this is...what you qualify for...So there's noth—so sometimes it's like we know we can write the ending.
[Service Provider 3: 499 – 523]

Safety in the areas they could afford to live was a concern for the women. In order to feel safe in some housing situations Shirley would move ex-partners back into her housing.

So he [first abusive ex-husband] actually moved in with me at that time to keep

the other fella [second abusive ex-partner] away...Right? And I knew that I would be protected if he was there right...Because I had no mom I had no dad I had no, you know what I mean? There were so many litigating [sic] factors like so but that worked for a while but I was unhappy...You know, he was happy. He was fine with it all, you know.
[Shirley: 694 – 702]

This phenomenon was also alluded to by the housing support service providers.

Well we had one yeah we had one woman who who left not that long ago and she went to see her place, she said, she came back, and she she asked the landlord “am I safe here?” She [landlord] said “I can’t guarantee you that...” Um she was a single mom with two daughters um like, you know, kind of pre-teen tween age and uh and the building had a big someone had been murdered right outside of where she was go-gonna be hous-like housed and she was scared to death... And I can’t imagine her lasing very long there without a partner coming in.
[Service Provider 1: 1430 – 1439]

The service providers recognized the impact the critical housing situation had on the women they provided support to and this affected them. They attempted to provide as much support as possible to ensure the women were ready to secure housing on their own. The support provided could be in the form of housing finding tips such as make a list of housing priorities, how to be creative in searching for housing, suggested websites to use, how to evaluate housing, how to check the safety of the living environment, what would be expected regarding a damage deposit, and what to look for in a lease. Service providers discussed having conversations with the women about budgeting, what they could realistically afford, how to get their damage deposits, and assistance in looking for available housing. Some service providers had a housing support worker who assisted the women in finding housing.

We work with a housing worker uh that will help women try to find housing...But it’s really about trying to find housing, not particularly safe housing. So a lot of the women end up on, you know, not so nice parts of town...which put them right back into their areas of risk...oftentimes, you know, in terms of where the partner lives, or the partner’s family, or partner’s friends and, you know, all that kind of stuff so...Yeah. It becomes very challenging for them.

[Service Provider 1: 379 – 390]

As an added barrier, the limited amount of affordable housing was often owned by the same rental companies in HRM and was not always adequate housing. Typically the women residing at housing support service providers' facilities only had a limited amount of time they could stay. As with other policies, there was some flexibility in the length-of-stay policy. Yet even though there was some flexibility, this policy created additional stress for the women if they were having a challenging time finding affordable, adequate housing.

Interviewer: So how long did you stay at [service provider in HRM, NS]?

I think it was like it was three months I think it was I...I I think I got one extension cause like I was there for my birthday and I don't know what it May I think or I just forget exactly the date that I but I mean I had, you know, cause it was it wasn't easy trying to find um yeah yeah I moved in my apartment May the 30th. It wasn't easy to find an apartment it's and not so much the price or the, you know, I didn't want to be way out in [community in HRM, NS] or...And there's and like people know like certain areas like [community in HRM, NS] actually the druggy parts but I mean, you know, you want something half decent.

[Peggy: 421 – 431]

Some of the women had a long history of rental issues that included eviction, breaking policies for the housing they were in, loss of property, and charges of fraud. The biggest concern of those listed was eviction due to not paying their rent. This was a frequent occurrence for some of the women, such as Shirley. Regarding eviction, the RTA states “where a year to year or a month to month tenancy exists or is deemed to exist and the rent payable for the residential premises is in arrears for thirty days, the landlord may give to the tenant notice to quit the residential premises fifteen days from the date the notice to quit is given” (2002, p. 10). Often landlords enforced their eviction power swiftly because they knew they could rent the unit out again almost immediately

due to the affordable housing shortage in HRM.

This factor sometimes created situations where women had to reside within the housing support providers' facilities longer than anticipated because they could not find housing, especially if they had a history of paying rent late, being evicted, or poor credit.

My biggest beef is that we have the same people same businesses buying up all the apartment buildings and so when you get rejected from one because you have um poor landlord history, or you have bad credit, which happens to a lot of women because they have no control of their own money, um but because everything's forced to go in their name, or jointly, they're credit gets um put to crap, and so then they can't get houses. They can't get housing. So they're stuck—so I mean we've had women in our shelter for months because they can't get a house...can't get an apartment, can't... They get like turned down the worse slum places and, you know, in the city... won't take them.

[Service Provider 1: 1076 – 1087]

The need for a security deposit was also a challenge for some of the women.

Sometimes they did not get their last security deposit back. That deposit could have assisted them in paying the new security deposit. Also, if they were entitled to the refund, the process often took a long time so they would not have it available for their new rental unit. Although the RTA states “no landlord shall demand, accept or receive from a tenant as a security deposit a sum of money or other value that is in excess of one half of the rent per month that is or would be required to be paid for the residential premises” (2002, p. 14), it was challenging for individuals on a low-income to initially set aside even half a month's rent as a security deposit.

The housing concerns the women faced with regards to the safety and location of the housing they could afford and the repercussions of those concerns were summed up by one housing support provider, who stated:

I think I touched on it really so it's just my gripe more than anything, um the whole housing issue. Um, you know, you're everyone's program is always limited by what's external. Right...And, you know, when we ship women out, you know,

we're we wanna and we're hoping that we're sending them to a safe location cause that's what we've done for the last six weeks is try to keep them safe but then we're sending them to these [pause] rat-infested...crack-holes that uh that are uh beyond anything that's acceptable um and, you know, yup that's just, you know, we have no our rent controls are, you know, in decent housing is just pot...Like it really is. And it's hard because we that's where women fall...like no they get into these really awful places that are not safe for their children. It's not safe for them.

Interviewer: So they go back?

They go back. Because they're not feeling safe in their own place...And so they go back. They'd rather the abusive partner...where they at least...felt safe.
[Service Provider 1: 1392 – 1416]

Some of the housing support service providers were able to recognize the impact that having everything, such as shelter, food, and spending money, provided for the women while they resided in their facilities created when the women left.

You can get, you know, kind of cushy in that sense, you know...And so it's a big reality check I think at times...after leaving here when, you know, so that's...some of the life skills that we try to offer them as far as far as programming goes too. To be so they'll be able to, you know, budget and pay their bills and, you know, uh what kind of food they can actually afford to buy and to set them up for that success, you know, instead of giving them everything they need here and then sending them off with nothing, you know, so...we also look at that as well.
[Service Provider 3: 542 – 553]

They worked on developing exit plans and providing support to reduce that impact.

So people probably have more money at [service provider in HRM, NS] than they would if they're on their own...But we're try what we try and that is so that when folks in terms of like encouraging independent living that they're operating on roughly the same budget as when they're they're off and and paying rent.
[Service Provider 2: 275 – 280]

Numerous housing support providers began providing programming that focused on life skills development. The skills provided in the programming included financial, coping, nutritional, communication, parenting, self-care, educational, employability, and advocacy along with programs on exercise and body image. These programs were

typically mandatory for the residents, but even when the programs were not mandatory, they were often taken by most of the women residing in the facilities.

So she does the healthy living program I mentioned before and she does the financial literacy program um that's an elective but pretty much everyone uses that one.

[Service Provider 2: 1000 – 1002]

The expectation was the new life skills would enable them to secure and maintain affordable, adequate housing on their own. It was apparent that teaching new life skills was as important to the service providers as providing shelter for the women. The new life skills they learned came up frequently during the conversations with the women. Some of the women recognized that they did not have good life skills to begin with. As Shirley stated:

[Crying] I'm proud of my kids. I am proud of them. And I didn't do a bad job. I did a good job! I did. But I didn't have very good life skills.

[Shirley: 1148 – 1149]

Learning new life skills was a positive experience for the women and one that raised their perception of self. The skills they spoke of ranged from parenting to coping to financial skills.

I know that uh I've definitely learned to handle and cope with things a lot better... since I've been here.

[Melanie: 2691 – 2694]

Yeah and that's the biggest thing that I've gotten out of being here for the last year is financial... You know, um I am so like I can actually have money in my bank account and know that it's there...and not be like "oh let's go here and let's do this" or, you know, like I just don't I am not blowing money...or I have a better concept of money. I'm, you know, a little bit more positive about it [laughs].

[Melanie: 1967 – 1976]

The women questioned eligibility in particular supportive housing environments, especially when they were not accepted themselves. This questioning was sometimes due

to a misunderstanding of the organizations' policies and other times it was due to hearsay about the other person who was supposedly chosen over them. In some situations they did not understand a policy and this created conflict. In one particular situation, Melanie went to the police because the superintendent had changed the locks on her sister's apartment. Melanie was living in the apartment but her sister had not changed the lease to include Melanie's name as well as her own. Melanie got in a dispute with the superintendent.

Anyways [sic] and she [superintendent] basically at that point told me that, you know, "well um I wouldn't really um be surprised if you come home one day and the doors are" or "the locks on the doors are changed." So that was one evening and the next day um I got off work, went to pick up my kids, and went to unlock the door and the key didn't work...So I went down to her apartment and like I'm pretty easy to get along with and I can, you know, I can negotiate, I can compromise, you know, I have no problem doing that but when it comes to my kids, you know, and you're just straight out being a bitch and...you know, just completely, you know, I don't know, getting a high because you're, I don't know, on a power trip or something like that just isn't something that sits well with me. And this was at like probably about five o'clock in the evening and my kids had no jackets. No nothing...And I was like, you know what, I don't even care about anything else I just want to go and get my kids', you know, pajamas and and something because, you know, they do have to go to school tomorrow. They have, you know, I have things that I gotta do. She was like "well nope sorry your name's not on the lease yet." I was like "but hold up because you had no problem coming to my door asking me...for rent money right? Because, you know, if I'm not on the lease then you have no business coming to ask me for rent money." [Melanie: 1029 – 1050]

The dispute escalated and Melanie called the police on the superintendent. The police arrived but would not do anything because it was not in their jurisdiction to enforce tenancy law. This situation escalated to where the police were involved because Melanie did not believe the superintendent had the right to change the locks on the apartment door. She was living in her sister's apartment and her name was not on the lease. Yet, the NS RTA clearly states "only those tenants and occupants named are

allowed to live on the premises without written consent of the landlord” (Form H, Standard Form of Lease, Residential Tenancies Act, R.S.N.S., 1989, c. 401).

Participants often recognized the power relations between themselves and the individuals providing the support. Sometimes when they had concerns regarding the differences between the support they received and the support they perceived other women to be receiving they would question the difference but not receive an adequate answer that assisted them in understanding. This led to a lack of respect for service providers that could have been avoided with conversation and understanding. Shirley shared this story about how her differential treatment made her feel regarding the service provider she was dealing with:

For instance, every person that left you got a gift basket and you got a Tim Hortons card and you got some gift certificates for McDonalds, you got bus tickets and a food box to go. I never got the food box because I didn't need it. Why didn't I need it...Right? I didn't get bus tickets because I got a bus pass [from IA]. So did every single other person in the place. Like really do you hear yourself!? Like I had a hard time respecting her. I really did. Because she reminded me of a parent that changed the rules all the time. Basically. And she's the one that "if you fail to plan you plan to fail..." Well so I like I said I had a hard time respecting her because she couldn't even do what she was telling us to do. [Shirley: 1371 – 1376]

This experience led to a situation where, when she needed the support of that service provider in the future, she refused to turn to them even though it was a very serious matter that could have cost her life.

Food security support. Food security support was important for the participating women because after they paid their housing costs and other bills the money they had remaining for feeding their families was very limited. As well, in some situations it provided them with education about healthy eating, especially on a very limited budget. The food security support they received often assisted them in having enough money

each month to cover their bills. It was provided in a variety of ways including having their meals provided for them while residing at a housing support service provider's facility, special meals being prepared by service providers during holiday seasons for current or former clients, having food available while residing at a supportive housing facility, having healthy snacks provided when participating in programming, being transported to and from a food bank, being given food when they left a housing support provider's organization, or being given funding to purchase food on their own.

Three of the five women utilized a food security support organization. One of them used a food security support system in a somewhat traditional way (i.e., visiting a food bank type set up) whereas the other two women received food security support when leaving a housing support organization. None of them mentioned currently using food security support in the traditional sense of going to the food bank although some organizations had food banks at their location that present and former clients could utilize. One unique example of food security support occurred at the facility where Melanie resided. The food bank sent a "food truck" to her facility. In the past Melanie had used traditional forms of food bank support so she was able to compare the two alternatives.

The food truck service was especially intriguing because Melanie was given choices as to what she wanted unlike food banks where participants are presented with a box of food, some of which they may not use because their families do not like it or it has passed its shelf life. The value of choice came up in conversation about food security support. For Melanie, she appreciated the opportunity for choice when using the food truck service.

I do remember...going to the food bank and them like just like like shoving food in and it's like, you know...you know, you know, really you should probably ask cause I mean, you know, I might not like it but the next person behind me might like it so you can give them two.

[Melanie: 2609 – 2614]

Melanie valued the driver of the food truck being honest and upfront with her regarding the quality of the product he had available on that particular day.

And actually quite honestly um Bob, the guy who is the regular driver, um he's really good with that...If you see something and he kind of has passed it or whatever and you say like "oh is that any good?" and he's like "no no that's way past date" or... "oh no those are too green and fuzzy."

[Melanie: 2569 – 2575]

She was also appreciative of the overall quality of the food products being offered.

I mean I know there's uh um [pause] yeah there's I would have to say there's more uh good items and um, you know, and it's not crap food...It's not like it's all just, you know, actually I very rarely does he come in with like, you know, a crap load of canned food or like um [pause] just, you know, really processed food or anything...that's like blech! Like, you know, we get um [pause] a really good choice of fruit...um yeah so I mean I I it's really good having it around actually.

[Melanie: 2586 – 2595]

Melanie discussed the benefit having access to the food truck provided to her tight food budget and how she would miss that when she leaves the housing support facility.

Um [long pause] we use the food truck here [laughs] ...And that's one of the things that I think I probably will miss when I go cause it's like it's so nice to have that food truck because really 40 dollars a week for groceries...Maybe if it was just me I could probably like, you know, make it work but not with two kids and not, you know, having to make them a lunch daily cause I mean uh just that alone just making, you know, um like having fruit and stuff like that for their lunch...that can take 20 bucks like that [snaps fingers] so...and then to have to, you know, try to figure out [clears throat], you know, each week what I'm going to have for supper and breakfast and all that kind of stuff...Like 40 dollars doesn't go that far.

[Melanie: 2487 – 2501]

Service providers recognized that women were not always given the choice of which food items they would take home from the various food banks. This created

situations where, if the women and their families did not like an item, they would have lower food supplies for the month because they received items they would not use. Moreover, this created situations where food was not being used that could be used by other food bank clients. One of the solutions service providers came up with to deal with this concern was to offer a food trading cupboard, also known as a community cupboard. The principle was you bring in items you do not use and trade them for items in the cupboard that you do use. There were a couple of different systems set up. One particular service provider had a well-established system developed for their community cupboard that had a clearly defined policy about its use which made it beneficial for women to use. For this particular service provider, their community cupboard was used 782 times by 31 different families between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 (Food Security Service Provider Annual Evaluation Update, 2012).

Often for the women, food security support came in the form of food boxes when they left a housing support service provider or gift cards from local grocery stores when they were in need of extra funding for groceries. The frequency and amounts of funding depended on the individual food security support provider. Occasionally there were differences in the support provided by two or more different locations of one service provider organization. This was recognized as a concern by the service provider that raised the topic. She identified the confusion and frustration this created for individuals utilizing the services of her organization.

So there was a time some groups, for example, if it's food they might help every month, some groups every two months, some groups every three months...some groups every six months. So do do you see what I mean? It's it's different based on...on the group.

[Service Provider 5: 133 – 136]

The main reason for limiting the frequency of food security support in the form of gift cards was to assist the women on their path toward becoming more independent. These service providers would also pay attention to any patterns of support requests that particular clients were exhibiting and work with that client on an individual basis to assist them in improving their ability to provide for themselves and their family. This would often take the form of budgeting support where there were opportunities for the women to learn budgeting skills that assisted in ensuring they could provide healthy food for their families on a limited budget.

Some of these programs were very thorough and included the women committing to supplying their staff member with the receipts from their grocery shopping to ensure they were using their food budget for groceries and doing so within the limits of their budget. Staff would provide feedback on their spending to assist them in making better choices for their budget. Although it used to be mandatory at one service provider to hand in grocery receipts it had become a voluntary part of the program through suggestions from residents. The voluntary program was for women who decided they needed more strict support with their budgeting.

I asked the residents what they wanted and they wanted the option um to be able to hand in receipts or not. So if it was something like budgeting was something that you were working on...then you could make a commitment with your IPP [Independent Program Plan] worker to be handing in your receipts on a regular basis...And that she could hold you like, you know, you could hold you're holding yourself to it or whatever. You could make that arrangement if you wanted and if you didn't want to you don't have to.
[Service Provider 2: 1234 – 1243]

This particular organization provided the women with \$90 every two weeks for groceries which was the amount of grocery money they would receive monthly from IA. Learning to budget their food consumption within that amount would be beneficial to the

women when they were living independently. They have distributed the grocery money in a variety of ways over the years but had recently switched to a bi-weekly distribution system.

And then they like instead of doing it in one lump sum a month, like you would get um out on your own when you get your cheque, um they preferred it bi-weekly cause it's a little bit more money at once so you could buy say bulkier sale items, etc...So that was done again something else in consultation with residents.
[Service Provider 2: 1243 – 1247]

Funding amounts provided depended on the funding service providers had available to them. Sometimes the funding they provided was donated to them by individuals or charitable organizations so the amount they had at any given moment was dependent on those donations. Therefore, the amount and frequency of funding they provided to each woman was dependent on the donations they received. The type of funding they had to provide also varied depending on what had been donated; most often though they would have access to gift cards from local grocery stores.

If the service provider was not the type of service provider that typically offered a standard amount of funding on a regular basis the funding they offered was usually on a case-by-case basis. These variations created difficulties for families using the service. These concerns were sometimes recognized by the service providers. For example, some service providers had a requirement that the woman requesting support must be a current client. Even if they had used the service in the past they were no longer eligible. Another example was sometimes families wanted support for paying an overdue bill but the financial service provider only had access to grocery store gift cards. Another challenge would be the women's access to the grocery stores for which they had been given gift cards. As well, it could be difficult for the women to get to the financial support service

provider's office to receive the gift cards. Sometimes funding provided to service providers was mandated by the funder for use in a particular manner.

We also have another fund specifically for infant care needs...So if a client of ours were to call and needed formula then, as long as we're able to access that particular funding or as long as there's enough in there uh that it wouldn't drain it, uh then we are able to access that.

[Service Provider 6: 777 – 782]

The amounts available were dependent on what the women was asking for, the size of their family, and the last time support was requested. Some service providers had requirements in place for funding requests to confirm they were a last resort. This was done in an attempt to ensure their funding lasted as long as possible.

As far as the amounts specifically goes the first thing that we're recommending the clients do is access everything they possibly can. So if we're their first phone call then it's not "here's the voucher" it's "okay we're going to need you to call this place, this place, this place" and go down the list of resources that we currently have...If they've accessed all that and they can't get Income Assistance and every other avenue is blocked basically then we can look at giving them food vouchers.

[Service Provider 6: 791 – 798]

There were numerous policies that affected the women during their interactions with the food security support organizations. Some policies were recognizable to the women and others were not. As with housing supports, the ones that were recognizable to the women were often those they deemed as unfair because they would notice perceived differences in the support they received compared to the support they noticed other women were receiving. Peggy described how she felt she was treated differently than the other women because she was employed and the other women had their children with them and she did not.

Everybody got got a box of groceries, you know, I got the dent-dented apple juice can and the peanut butter there's no label on that so um, you know, but I mean that's, you know, if you have kids usually you got I'm not saying better stuff but I

mean, you know, that's, you know, you get the the, you know, and then of course if you have kids you get the more stuff and all this but I mean that's you get what you get...and that's, you know, because I was working so, you know.

[Peggy: 632 – 639]

Shirley also perceived she was treated differently when leaving a housing support organization.

Even though it was, you know, tumultuous for me...while just it wasn't I just didn't feel like they did so much more for other people and I know it wasn't my, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: So that's that service imbalance that you mentioned earlier?

Yeah and that's also validating the feelings of "not good enough..." "Not enough." You know.

Interviewer: Because you know other people are getting different services than you?

Exactly! For instance, every person that left you got a gift basket and you got a Tim Hortons card and you got some gift certificates for McDonalds, you got bus tickets and a food box to go. I never got the food box because I didn't need it. Why didn't I need it...Right? I didn't get bus tickets because I got a bus pass [from IA]. So did every single other person in the place.

[Shirley: 1357 – 1371]

Financial support. This type of support service was utilized by all of the women, even those who were working. It was crucial for those who were not employed or had made poor financial choices earlier in their lives that were negatively affecting them in the present. Because it had such an impact on the women's everyday world I discuss the ESIA first. Three of the women utilized the ESIA, to varying degrees, at some point during their journey to affordable, adequate housing. Regrettably, NS DCS did not agree to participate in an interview. Due to the impact their policies and programs had on the women accessing them it was imperative that I examined their documents to further understand how they work to organize the lives of women.

The ESIA consists of two parts: (a) employment support through Employment Support Services (ESS), and (b) financial support through IA. It states that “the purpose of this Act is to provide for the assistance of persons in need and, in particular, to facilitate their movement toward independence and self-sufficiency” (NSDCS, 2011, p. 10). Three of the women in this study accessed the IA component and one of the women accessed the ESS component. The IA component has the mandate to provide assistance with basic needs, such as food, rent, heat, electricity, and clothing (NSDCS, 2011). It also provides support for other needs, such as child care, transportation, prescription drugs, emergency dental care, and eye glasses (NSDCS, 2011). Individuals need to apply for assistance after determining their eligibility, and the rate schedules indicate how much funding from the different categories individuals are able to obtain. The rate schedules are divided into three categories: Personal Allowance, Maximum Shelter Allowance, and Items of Special Needs. The support services of ESS are only available to individuals who are on IA.

The eligibility criteria for IA is that one must be 19 years of age or older, unless under special circumstances where one can be eligible from 16 to 18, one must live in NS, and can prove one cannot pay for one’s basic needs as listed above (NSDCS, 2011). A person must have a Social Insurance Number and NS Health Card for oneself and one’s children, and a bank account (NSDCS, 2011). Moreover, individuals must have tried all other avenues of increasing their household income, be looking for employment opportunities, and be willing to complete an employability assessment and develop an action plan for becoming self-sufficient (NSDCS, 2011). The ESIA is not the only Act that affected the living standard of the women. Employment Insurance was also a source

of income for some of the women while trying to secure affordable, adequate housing.

Along with the government funding just discussed, funding was provided by some of the service providers. This funding came in a variety of forms, such as assistance with paying overdue bills, transportation, physical and mental health necessities such as prescription medications, pay-as-you-go phone cards, school supplies, Christmas gifts, or moving expenses. As well, one financial support service provider offered women gift cards at Christmas time that they could use to shop for their family. One financial support service provider mentioned an increase in requests for rent assistance occurring within her organization over the past couple of years. The funding from financial support service providers could be continuous or a one-time offering that enabled someone to get through a period of short-term financial difficulty (i.e., the wait period before EI benefits begin). Service providers also discussed assisting individuals who were working but were not making enough money to cover their household bills even though they may have been working several jobs.

Several residential organizations provided a weekly allowance. At some organizations this money was also given to children residing with the women. The allowance gave the women, and their children, spending money when they otherwise might not have had any. The money could be attached to chores at their place of residency or not and could vary depending on the chore work the women. If the money was not attached to chores it would be the same amount each week for every woman. The amount was also dependent on organization budget amounts and the value placed on the chore performed.

[The amount] that is decided on the household coordinator um looks after all that piece with the chores....So she has a budget each year for the chore system and

then she decides which chores obviously um, you know, sweeping the front steps and um doing the dinner dishes after sixteen people have eaten are very different chores um so she tries to weigh those things and then within her budget what she can afford. There's also some flexibility in that because if, for example, something is um our budget right now is such that the chore system is not quite as lucrative as it used to be. I think what we found was that um there was a time when we weren't having a lot of chores done so we upped the amounts in the hopes that more of the chores would be done and then they were all done to the point that we had overspent [laughs] ...Uh so we had to cut back a little bit. Um but there is some flexibility there where, for example, um dinner chores' worth two dollars but if it gets to dinner time and five other chores haven't been done then maybe it looks more attractive to someone if I can say "it's gonna be three or four dollars tonight because it's particularly bad" and I've got room for that in the budget because other chores haven't been finished. So um so there is some flexibility around that as well.

[Service Provider 4: 694 – 711]

The financial support service providers often had policies attached to their funding that indicated how frequently their support services could be used. Financial support service providers either offered continuous funding on a monthly basis, funding as required, or funding once over a certain period of time (i.e., once every two years). Moreover, at times the amounts were the same for all participants and other times they were decided on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes there were eligibility criteria connected to the funding supplied and the women would be required to complete an application or intake procedure. Other times the only eligibility was that the woman was a client of the service provider. Some financial support service providers offered their funding as a loan option but the majority of financial support did not have a requirement to re-pay the amount given.

The women knew which financial service providers to go to for different financial concerns. There could be a time frame between receiving support and being eligible to receive support again from the same service provider. Occasionally an individual was only able to receive support from a financial support service provider once and then never

again. Usually the circumstances of the situation were taken into consideration and a decision would be made on a case-by-case basis.

I will actually I should say um we have a database we keep on people who have been assisted with power and, again it's just the ones we're coordinating through this office, and some groups um assist with power once only... Uh other groups will look at it if, you know, five or six years have gone by. So sometimes if a call comes in and we find them in the database and they've been helped and it's been three or four years ago we'll contact the president and say, you know, "what do you think? Should we do it again or not?" And those decisions are based on what are our what are the resources we have at the moment. Right? How many other requests are coming in? And what seems to be their circumstances. Sometimes they'll tell us to go ahead and and go through the process and just see what the circumstances are.

[Service Provider 5: 1076 – 1087]

As noted in the above statement, the financial support service providers would track individuals in a database, and they would typically use NS Health Card Numbers for tracking. The above quote also mentions the decision being based on what funding the financial support service provider had available for the individuals. The support funding was provided to the service providers through different means including donations from the local community. Therefore, sometimes the funding was not available or was not available at the levels it had been in the past. Funding support being reduced had an impact on service providers.

Interviewer: And then how do you determine that amount? I know you've mentioned that it's dropped down. Is it based purely on the funding that you receive and what...

Yeah.

Interviewer: You can fit in your budget?

Yup. Absolutely. Yeah ...That was one of the hardest things, you know what, the staff the staff, you know, um knew that we had to do a lot of cuts but they boycotted, you know, they knew we had to cut a staff, they knew we were cutting hours, but they boycotted the the cuts to the...funding to the women the most.

Interviewer: Wow.

Yup. Like the the staff really, really, really, truly support like, you know, they might not support each other as much but let me tell you they'll the women unbelievable. Yup. Absolutely unbelievable.

[Service Provider 1: 1373 – 1387]

When funding was not available the financial support service providers would frequently make referrals for the women. As well, some service providers advocated on behalf of the women using their services while some of the service providers informed the women of their rights so they could advocate for themselves. Examples of areas service providers would advocate with or for the women were special diet allowances from IA or having overdue bills paid by another financial support service provider. As well, some financial support service providers required the women to approach a variety of other financial support service providers to deplete all other avenues of support before they would provide them with the assistance. This could be undertaken by the woman alone or with the support of the service provider.

During our conversation, Shirley shared a story about a time that she had the money for the rent or the power but not for both. Her landlord was waiting to evict her and the power was about to be disconnected. She believed it was a situation where having a conversation with the landlord would not help. She described turning to a financial support service provider. This was the first time she had approached this particular organization and she described how she made sure to leave the door open for support from this organization in the future. Although the service provider was willing to pay the rent either directly to the landlord or to Shirley so she could pay the landlord she had heard from friends that she would be more likely to receive funding from this service provider again if the rent money went directly to the landlord. This offered the service

provider the comfort of knowing the individual did not spend the money inappropriately and therefore secured the option of future funding for Shirley.

So um I went over to [service provider in HRM, NS] and told him what was going on and what happened and um he paid it. He paid my rent. He paid my rent. He said "you know what" he said because I told him I said "I'm trying really hard to stay off the system" I said "I'm trying to do right and show my kids you have to work for a living," you know, and all those things and because I said those things and he realized that it was a legitimate thing and he said "do you want me to make the cheque out to you?" and I said "nope could you make it out to the landlord please..." You know, that way that secures him he knows that that went to her. Do you know what I mean? And then if it ever came about again then maybe he would help.

[Shirley: 2084 – 2094]

As with the housing and food security support organizations, sometimes the women did not believe they received equal treatment when compared to other recipients of the support providers.

I think there were a lot of times throughout my um [pause] life that I was dependent on Social Services [NS DCS], or some type of services...that I was [pause] not offered what was available, do you know like...Do you know what I mean? Like...

Interviewer: So what you were receiving from that service, there was more that you didn't know about?

Exactly!

Interviewer: More support you didn't know about?

Exactly! Exactly! And like...

Interviewer: Do you have some examples?

Let me think, um let's see, well [pause] oh my god now I can't even think about what it was. One was about medication one time...Like them taking the money that I had to pay for a prescription, they paid for it, and taking the money from me.

[Shirley: 781 – 796]

Once again, it is difficult to know whether this was differential treatment toward her or if

it was perceived by her. For example, the decision regarding her prescription could have been due to policy about fulfilling prescriptions for that particular drug. Regardless, it was her perception that she was not being treated like others using the services due to the decision not being explained to her and this played a role in her everyday world. If power relations were removed from the situation then the woman could have received an explanation as to why her prescription was approved to be covered, paid for, and then had the decision reversed which meant the money was taken off of the woman's monthly amount.

In conversation it often came up that the service the women received, especially from financial support organizations, was dependent on the staff member assisting the women at the time. Shirley described this belief as:

You have to get the right person... You have to get the right person it's just that's the bottom line.

[Shirley: 2210 – 2212]

Crystal shared numerous experiences of getting the “right” person or requesting assistance at the “right” time.

So she was really good at, you know, getting us in and and uh she said “no I'm sure that you'll get the money for the rent” and all that kind of stuff so...

[Crystal: 161 – 162]

They were pretty good because I went in and said it was an abusive relationship so they tripped over themselves...It was it was really kinda weird...because um it was like they didn't know what to do with me...I think it's probably because all that abuse stuff was coming out and I told them what had happened and they were just like “oh my lord. I can't believe it...” And, you know, they couldn't sign the cheque fast enough...So I was very lucky in that respect and then when I was gonna move to [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] I actually went to the worker and said I wanted to move to [neighbourhood in HRM, NS] and they gave me they cut me an extra cheque so I'd have moving expenses...

Interviewer: Covered.

I know! Like...[laughs] I was in shock...Because everybody was like that won't happen that won't happen.
 [Crystal: 201 – 221]

Crystal believed this organization was willing to support her because she was leaving an abusive relationship at a time when IPV was getting a lot of media attention. This is a perfect example of systemic societal structures being affected by outside factors. In this case, the factors were political and societal because there was pressure through the media for the government to ensure women leaving abusive relationships were protected.

Crystal also felt that the decision regarding her financial support was affected by her getting child support from her ex-partner since all that was required from them was that they “top up” what she was receiving from him.

Legal support. The women used a variety of legal support systems during their experiences. The legal support could come from organizations one would typically consider to be involved in the legal field, such as police, courts, or lawyers, or it could come from other organizations focusing on legal issues. All of the participants were involved with a legal support organization, some once with one provider and others multiple times with multiple providers. The support provided within this category consisted of anything to do with the Canadian legal system.

Support provided from legal support service providers included police support, support understanding the legal system including: what would occur in court if the woman was going to court; assistance in coordination of court processes; providing case information from their police file such as status of the investigation, charges, and how to contact the investigating officer; referrals; support in keeping themselves safe such as installation of panic alarms for women experiencing high-risk-for-lethality situations;

tours of the court house when it was not open so the women know what to expect; reviewing evidence; and transportation to the court house. Support would also be emotional in nature when a service provider accompanied a woman to legal appointments or court appearances.

As with other service providers, the satisfaction in the response varied. There were times when the women were very satisfied with the response they received, sometimes because they felt there was an understanding of what they were going through.

Interviewer: So then what about your experience with the uh [police]? I know you mentioned that one female officer that came over to see you at the apartment...

Yes.

Interviewer: So what was your experience like with their support?

[coughs] She was very positive because she had been through it...And uh she wasn't going to let him get away with anything...No matter what.

[Laura: 1044 – 1052]

Another example of positive interactions with legal support organizations was when Laura had a law enforcement officer show up at her apartment to support her in getting her ex-partner's belongings to him and to give him the message that he was not to be near her.

So she found out what was going on and she said "do you have diaries?" And I said "yes." She said "I'd like to have your diaries please. I wanna photocopy them and I'll bring them back to you tomorrow..." And anyway she showed up with the diaries the following night and she said "by the way, you're going to hear this phone call. I want you to listen." So she called [Laura's ex-husband] and she said "Uh there's a protect property protection act going into effect against you so don't come near this apartment building..." And uh [pause] the following, that same night she said "I want you to prepare garbage bags. Get some garbage bags. I do not want suitcases. I want garbage bags with all his things in it..." I said "you're gonna need some help." She said "fine." So I helped her with, the following night, I helped her with all her stuff stuff we took it down to the car, and she put it in, and she took it over to him so it wouldn't have no chance to come back.

[Laura: 535 – 552]

Policies also affected the service providers. Examples of the policies that had the most impact on employees included ensuring one had a police officer with one when one was assisting women retrieving their belongings from their former home, clients' files being subpoenaed, and child protection being called by police every time there were children in the family and police respond to a domestic violence call, regardless of whether or not the children were home.

Clients' files being subpoenaed created situations in which staff members had to be cautious when recording information in clients' files. This led to concerns regarding getting pertinent information to all employees when it was something that was not beneficial for the woman to have in her client file. This policy revision had produced a lot of concern among some legal support service providers because they perceived it creating situations where women were not calling the police during an IPV episode for fear that their children would be removed from the home.

Another big thing now, which is a policy issue really for the province, is we have um child protection um requires the police to call child protection whenever there's an incident in the house where the police have been called for um with the children if the children, originally it was if children were home...they had to call child protection, now they're trying to press it that even if they weren't children home that witnessed it they want you to talk call child protection. So now we have women who are literally calling us saying "he's just tried to kill me. He's just tried to strangle me." And we say "well you need to call police." "No. Would you send a cab?" And so these reports are never being they're not being reported to the police...They're not. Nothing is being reported to the police cause the women don't want they don't wanna be involved cause they don't want child protection involved.

[Service Provider 1: 1546 – 1558]

There was also a concern it would begin to create a system of support that may not be safe for women because it will be secretive.

Cause we said what will happen is an underground system will be created because there's no way women will we're already seeing that now with the police the police are not they're not making those calls... You know? And the or they make tho—make it once cause they never knew that and but they'll never make it the second time.

[Service Provider 1: 1568 – 1573]

Some legal support service providers had concerns regarding the conflicting messages women receive from other legal support service providers.

The other the other big thing for us is the court the court stuff. I mean the the court is always supporting the kind of joint parenting stuff and how do you do that when you have a very dangerous...life situation between you and your partner. That just reminded me cause we've had women who um who technically could apply for an EPO [Emergency Protection Order] like she had an EPO no contact order um like death threats, all kinds of stuff, and then went to court [Family Court] and the judge gave joint access [to their children]. So now they have to try to figure out how do they communicate access, how do they communicate pick up stuff, um the and how do you how do you deal with the control and the kind of innuendos of violence... You know? The continued threats but they're not direct threats of violence. Um and it's been court supported.

[Service Provider 1: 1496 – 1508]

Well they always think it's in the best interest...best interest of the child, you're always going to work in the best interests of the child, but they're forgetting that whole piece where they didn't care less and they tried to kill you. You know? They've missed that whole piece. Or they tried to, you know, they [unintelligible 1:08:12.6] you, and thrown you against the wall, and they've threatened to kill you, and they've threatened to kill your mother, and your father, and your grandmother, and your children's friends...Like whatever right? They they've threatened to do all of that and um but yeah come together, and sit, and kumbaya, and let's talk about the kids...Right? It makes no sense to me.

[Service Provider 1: 1521 – 1533]

This confusion rippled through a variety of service providers, including police officers, and was acknowledged in documents on IPV such as the *Framework for Action against Domestic Violence Review* which stated that “frustration was expressed by both victims and police in cases where there are multiple, conflicting orders governing the existence of a family. Such orders often include a Family Court order allowing an accused access to children and a conflicting peace bond or order for interim release containing a no-contact

provision. Conflicting orders of this kind pose a problem for police in determining how to respond to a breach of the peace bond or no contact provision” (2001, pp. 54-58). This policy also created concern amongst service providers that incorrect statistics were beginning to surface as a result of changes in calling the police when children are in the family.

So we're seeing they're [government and police] talking about numbers are going down uh the incidences of of the reports going down and so all this stuff is working. I'm like oh no no. And then child then uh DCS [NS DCS] child protection try to implement a bunch of new programs where we were required uh by law that we were gonna be required by law to report any woman that comes into [service provider in HRM, NS] to child protection... And we just said "you can no that's that will never happen uh and good luck with that." And so we wrote a letter to the minister [NS DCS minister] and then the minister kind of then backtracked and said "absolutely that won't happen."
[Service Provider 1: 1560 – 1568]

After she moved back into the matrimonial home Laura received support from local law enforcement officers in the form of safety suggestions to reduce the likelihood of her home being broken into. At this point in time her separation was still within the court system and it had not been legally determined who would retain the matrimonial home, although the unofficial arrangement was she would purchase it from her ex-partner.

And there was no curtains. I knew the locks on the doors didn't work... properly [coughs]. And I was really scared so the first thing I did was if I had material I put them all up over...the windows and everything else. And I used knives on the back door [for extra security]...And one day the [police] showed up about something and I said is this okay at the back door [knife in the door] and he said "you can just forget about that. All he's gonna do is just push the door and he's in..." So they told me to go and get get somebody at [her place of employment] to make me get me a metal piece...about this long [indicates approximately eighteen inches] and about this wide [indicates approximately three inches] with a bunch of holes in it...and you put it in between the door and the frame. You know...And put it down in between...and then get somebody to screw it in, put the frame back over it. Now if a man comes along and they attempt to get in [pause] ...

Interviewer: It won't give like the wood would.

*No...it would give uh give the wood away...And then the [police] and them allowed me to put a deadbolt on the back door...Because anybody could break the glass...and undo [pause] any other type of lock.
[Laura: 668 – 695]*

In addition, Laura received assistance from the local law enforcement officer that assisted her in getting more support.

I got involved with the [service provider in HRM, NS], they sent representatives from various groups, anyway uh [police officer] ...that worked in this area knew about my case, there was [sic] things going on and he said "that's it! You're going to follow me. We are going in to [service provider in HRM, NS] ..." And he said "you're not even going to have to pay for parking..." And they handed me money to get in and...do whatever it was they wanted me to do...So that was very, very helpful...A lot of things.

Interviewer: And [service provider in HRM, NS]? What was your experience with them?

*I had some positive uh they were very positive. They gave me uh feedback on what to do [pause] and it was [pause] it was more or less along the same lines that the [police] gave me...But what I did with all the information I used a little bit here and a little bit from each one...so that I had myself [pause] covered and I knew what one had said I could apply to another situation...and protect myself...So it was very helpful.
[Laura: 1077 – 1106]*

In these situations Laura was made to feel a little safer and a little stronger after being provided with new tools to protect herself. The individuals she was supported by in all of these situations did not give the impression that they held a power relation over her.

The support received was not always a positive experience for the women. Some of the women were not pleased with the interactions they had with some legal support service providers. Yet, during interviews with legal support service providers they indicated their support was typically a positive experience for recipients. Melanie spoke of filing a complaint regarding her ex-partner contacting her from jail while he was

serving his sentence for assaulting her and not being satisfied with the response she received.

Um and in that, you know, he was not allowed to have any contact with me, he wasn't...allowed like initiate nothing...not anything whatsoever. And I just wanted him to know like this is what you do, these are your consequences, you know...you're doing something you know you're not supposed to and you think you're gonna get away with it and it's just not gonna happen so she [police officer] um said "well, you know, if you just want to either, you know, as the letters come keep them or and then just kind of make sure that uh, you know, you can either bring them to us or, you know, whatever you want to do." But uh I think I only got one after I called and talked to them. She basically just said, you know, if they become more frequent and more like almost like a harassing kind of thing then yeah but if it's just every so often so I don't know if, you know, maybe they caught on to the fact.

[Melanie: 588 – 604]

She also experienced disappointment and anger in the response given to her when she discovered where her ex-partner was after the police warned her that they thought he might be in HRM and requested she let them know if she found out where he was.

So basically I did that and their response was that [pause] uh well is he threatening you, is he doing anything, dah dah dah. I was like no I was just to call and let you guys know and I'm just letting you guys know...Um but he is violating his probation, you know, like that, you know, you just wanna slap him on the wrist and say like "don't ever hit a woman again..." You know, but uh basically um his [police officer] answer was that ... "well we can verify them out there but it really is a matter of what they choose to do about it. If they really feel that it's worth um, you know, spending the money on, you know, either sending one of our guys out there to get him to bring him back or having them, you know, bring him in and da—you know, do all that stuff." I was like "you know what? I'm just gonna tell you very clearly right now that if he decides to be irrational and, you know, he does end up back on my door I don't care what I have to do..." "...to protect me and my kids. I'll do it. And you can take that for what it's worth. You can write it down. You can record... I don't care. But I'm just letting you know if this is, you know, you're guy's extent to what you're offering for protection or anything like that I'm letting you know that I will definitely have to do what I need to do."

[Melanie: 667 – 685]

Unlike other service providers, there appeared to be outdated and damaging views of IPV portrayed by some individuals within the legal support category. Peggy described

the scenario she experienced numerous times when requesting legal protection from her ex-partner before they permanently separated. She spoke of the perceived disrespect she received from the female officers and why she would request male officers when requesting police response.

It's difficult and my favourite people that showed me respect were [police] that used to come and I and I'd call them and uh, you know, I'd say "I want a man" because when the female officers came it's like "we told you," you know, "blah blah" it's, you know, at least when when I called them, particular [police] officers, they gave me what I was looking for...And do you know what that is? That's respect.

Interviewer: And you'd get respect from the...male [police]?

Yes.

Interviewer: And you didn't feel you received that from the females?

No. To give me the attitude "we told you not..." I said "excuse me!?" This house is still mine too," you know...Until I have the until I gave the house to my ex that's that's when no you're not supposed to fine but I still had, you know, say clothes whatever, you know...And, you know, and they gave me what I was looking for...The men the [police].

Interviewer: Right. Whereas the females would question why you were back...

Yes what are you doing...

Interviewer: In your own home?

Here...I we we told you not to come... You know. "Excuse me!?" You know.

[Peggy: 176 – 214]

Shirley also experienced archaic and judgmental views from legal support providers after a physically abusive episode with her ex-partner.

And I called the [police] and they said "we have to take you to [service provider in HRM, NS]" he said. I said "why can't you take him?" And this was when that law was just changing about them charging. So the the cop was a nasty piece of work, he told me I should listen to my husband and do what I was told. I kid you not. Those words come out of his mouth.

[Shirley: 132 – 135]

The unfortunate outcome of judgmental reactions like this, especially when the women were feeling vulnerable, was they no longer turned to those organizations for support, as was the case with Shirley. She had contacted the police for support and the experience was a negative one for her because of a comment made by the police officer who arrived at the scene. When I asked her what her other experiences were like with the police she stated that she never called them again after that incident. I questioned her reasoning, especially whether she no longer felt safe turning to them, and she responded by saying she did not feel safe contacting them and “figured all men had the same attitude” (Shirley, 1909). What Melanie, Peggy, and Shirley might not have realized was there is a process in place where citizens can file a complaint if they are not happy with how they were treated by a police officer.

Emotional support. Emotional support was provided both by service providers whose only mandate was emotional support and by service providers who had other mandates along with emotional support. Although not fully connected to homelessness, the emotional support provided the women with the opportunity to begin to heal so they could secure housing on their own. Emotional support was available 24 hours a day from some service providers and on a more limited basis from others. For some service providers it was part of mandatory programming for the women and for others it was voluntary. It was free from most service providers, although some did charge a fee. It was available in person or over the phone and could be short- or long-term.

Service providers offered a variety of emotional support options to the women using their services including someone to talk to informally and formal counseling, which was either individual or group based. Other emotional support programs and topics

included healthy relationships, art, communication skills, meditation, acupuncture, anger management, safety planning, parenting support, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and journal writing. Typically the support offered was holistic in nature, as is evident by the variety of topics covered. Often the type of support provided or the topics covered during programs were decided upon by recommendations from the women participants.

We do, as I say, survey um quarterly and and there's always open dialogue too about the usefulness of programs...So we do have a sense of like where people are getting like the most benefit from the programs. And we ask for suggestions for programming as well. So we will change and adapt the programs um that way.
[Service Provider 2: 548 – 553]

It was the directive of several of the emotional support service providers to empower the women by providing emotional support that assisted the women in healing and supported them in developing positive goals and plans for their future.

Ways that um we work, or that I work in particular, around uh, you know, is helping women sort of uh uh re-author their story so they're not stuck in that victim story right? So that they're able to recognize that "hey I have stood up to the abuse all along in whatever ways that may look like." Right...Even if it's the, you know, a response [unintelligible 0:30:49.8] "he said I couldn't wear that makeup but I wore it anyway" right? So it's like they're always ways that women have resisted violence. Right...And so that's um kind of the way we work in sort of re-authoring that and...helping women find those uh those stories and and making those stories richer...and taking that strength and and uh being able to then move their lives forward in the direction they want it to go.
[Service Provider 7: 880 – 894]

This particular emotional support service provider recognized the importance of assisting the women to deconstruct and uncover their stories to begin the process of healing and moving forward. If the programs the service providers offered could not fulfill the directive they would refer the women to other service providers that would support them as they moved forward in their lives in a healthy manner.

Some of the emotional support service providers also offered outreach support for

the women. Outreach support varied depending on the service provider offering it. For some service providers it was only to be used by individuals who were currently using their services or had used their services in the past. There was also a range of time frames outreach could be accessed after a woman left an organization. Outreach accessibility could change due to staff members' recognition of what works best for the women.

Um there was a time when it was very guidelineed so if you left you could have it I think once a month for three months and then [pause] tapered down and then at the year you no longer had it...But as long as I've been in this job I don't put a cap on it at all. If you need it once a week and if we can plan and we can do it you're gonna have it...You have [unintelligible 0:42:24.5] and that doesn't stop at the year. We've got somebody calling me now who was here two and a half years ago...You're right we're gonna be there...And if you need us come see, we're gonna be there...I don't care. So they can call on the phone twenty-four seven the staff are here twenty-four seven. I mean you might now always get somebody first time but we'll call you back...You know, so if you're in a crisis in the middle of the night a lot of times there's no one to call and who do you call? Someone who doesn't know you typically...you know, all they can do is just look at the immediate situation where we can go a little bit deeper...And "what the what the heck's going on here?" Right... "Where'd this come from?" cause we know them...So that's one thing we're proud of. We don't just...you know, say here you go you're on your way.

[Service Provider 3: 1136 – 1167]

Some service providers did not have the capacity to offer outreach but recognized the need for it.

I mean we need an outreach program. Women leaving here deserve to be able to have some sort of consistency um, you know, as they as they transition back into the community...But there's no transitioning back into the uh to the community... Um, you know, we would love to be able to work with women who don't need a place to stay but need the counselling. We can't offer that... We just don't have the capacity.

Interviewer: And you have no outreach?

Yeah. No outreach. We have ex-clients that will come back, they will use our food bank, they will use our donations room, um any-anything I can do for them I will but in terms of seeing a counsellor, no...She's got a full caseload... You know, and that's a gap. And it's not gonna be filled anytime soon.

[Service Provider 8: 416 – 435]

As mentioned by several emotional support service providers the amount of support they could offer was often impacted by fiscal restraints, such as not being able to afford to offer outreach or only being able to offer very limited outreach services. Some emotional support service providers had experienced budget cutbacks creating fiscal restraints that resulted in the loss of their outreach program but had managed to re-establish outreach through fund raising.

We found ourselves in a really hard situation a few years ago because we went back to the government and said “listen you haven’t increased our operational costs for quite some time and um so we we need something.” And they just said “no. [pause] Figure it out.” So we had to. So we cut um we cut the hours of our our admin person...uh we cut the hours of our fund development person, and we cut our outreach completely. And um so we lost all of our outreach program.
[Service Provider 1: 974 – 981]

Several of the emotional support service providers spoke of a need to build relationships with the women with whom they were involved. They understood that through building relationships one hears more in-depth details about the individual’s concerns. There was an understanding that relationships were built out of respect, trust, compassion, confidentiality, safety, and valuing the individual’s dignity combined with being non-judgmental and non-discriminatory. Some emotional support service providers had an understanding of how to move toward achieving the goal of building relationships.

And if you ever need to come back just call us. You know, it’s we always try to ensure that our judgments aren’t in there and that they don’t feel judged by returning. That’s I think one of our biggest things. And we have very long-term staff, you know, uh some staff have been there almost as long as [service provider in HRM, NS] been open...And uh so they have a really beautiful way of working with the women and making sure that they feel okay...with that.
[Service Provider 1: 575 – 583]

Some believed that through developing relationships with the women who utilized their services they put themselves in ideal positions for the women to disclose their concerns to

them, and such disclosure would open opportunities for them to assist the woman or to make a referral that would assist her. Service providers also recognized that they could create unique opportunities to care for the women's emotional health.

Advocacy was brought up in discussions about emotional support, as it was with the other support types given by the service providers. It was during emotional support discussions that the conversation about advocacy shifted and consisted of dialogue about supporting the women to begin to advocate for themselves.

The women were involved with a variety of emotional support services with the majority of them being offered through other support service providers they were already accessing. Sometimes the emotional support was beneficial. The women talked about being shown a lot of positive things about how life could be. They defined the service they received as being very supportive and helpful. The women that had good experiences were grateful for them.

The [service provider in HRM, NS] were were amazing...They were the greatest support I could have used when I was going through. That was the best place to be...The best place...And I knew it's a lot of them from years before but...it was very, very helpful.

[Laura: 1202 – 1211]

Other times it did not appear to be as beneficial. For some of the participating women the emotional support offered by service providers was not what they expected. They spoke of challenges accessing the level of emotional support they felt they required, either while residing at a facility or through outreach.

Sometimes it would have been nice, you know, looking back if if they would have had maybe a bit more say outreach stuff afterwards or, you know, call ya "how [sic] you doing?" But I mean the thing is things even even even now like if you happen to call now well, you know, they're busy, they've got the phones going, and then there's kids there so, you know what I mean...It's I mean even now it's still, you know, sometimes you still you still get lonely, you know...and you're by

yourself and, you know.
 [Peggy: 731 – 739]

As well, there was also the perception that emotional support was not fairly allocated.

Interviewer: And do they do um did they have opportunities for counseling...

Well they did...

Interviewer: When you were at [service provider in HRM, NS]?

But but that was kind of I shouldn't say between but where I wasn't there in the daytime they did some in the evenings or the weekends but I mean the other ones were always there I shouldn't say ahead of me but, you know, they were, you know, they, you know, they had a worker and they, you know, and they had kids and...you know what I mean? So it's kind of like they had more of a priority or, you know, you're at the back of the line and...you know, or the change of staff so the door's closed, you know what I mean?
 [Peggy: 644 – 655]

A couple of the women identified parenting support as being beneficial at that period in their lives. Although not directly connected to homelessness the women identified the support as helpful because it enabled them to keep their children in their home, improve their parenting skills, and provide emotional support for their children. As well, having support with parenting meant one area they had to worry about less while trying to re-establish their lives. Their experiences were described as positive and supportive.

Emotional support also came from informal support systems. They were identified by the women as family, friends, neighbours, employers, and co-workers. The women spoke of co-workers making sure they were protected at work, neighbours watching out for them when they were home and keeping an eye on their home when they were away from home, friends and family offering them a place to stay, and family members offering to co-sign leases so the women could move into their own apartment.

The informal support received could affect the women's experiences and made them more positive or more negative. For most of the women the informal support they received was positive and came in the form of both emotional support and tangible support.

As with all the other types of support sometimes informal support systems were not beneficial. Laura talked about her grown children not understanding why she left their father and said that although her sons were starting to understand, her daughter refused to accept the divorce and still did not understand the dynamics of abusive relationships. An ideology of familialism was clear in the beliefs of Laura's children because although her sons were beginning to understand now they did not always understand why she left their father and ended her marriage. She no longer lived within the principle of the ideology and this created conflict between her and her children. Laura also had other family members that did not provide the support she had expected. For some she understood why they did not provide support but in other cases she was not sure why they did not.

I think [pause] no I think if my mother-in-law had been [pause] had been feeling a lot better she would have helped out...My support was my mother...my cousins, my sister...Uh my brothers kind of well I don't know if they weren't told...or if they just kind of it went over their heads...or what but it worked out.

[Laura: 1172 – 1183]

Some of the women made choices based on input from informal support. As seen in the case of Shirley and Melanie, sometimes this worked out positively for the women and other times it did not. For Shirley, the advice coming from her mother put her back into the abusive relationship after she had left. She talked about leaving and going to a shelter with her two young children but it was only for a short period of time because of her mother's opinion regarding her leaving her relationship, which was rooted in

familialism.

I had [daughter] and [son] with me. I stayed two days and I went back. I went back home. Because my mother told me I needed to make it work... And I was always trying to please my mother.

[Shirley: 119 – 122]

For Melanie it was comments made by her mother that created a desire for her to become a better parent for her children. Shortly after her mother expressed her concern about whether Melanie was caring for her children while living in a rural area of Nova Scotia, she moved back to HRM and began trying to stabilize her life. Once again, as with Shirley's mother, the belief system of Melanie's mother was rooted in familialism.

But uh [pause] my mom [laughs] fought me and basically said like "you're not getting your kids down there and you're not, you know, you're not taking care of them." And I was like "how am I not taking care of them..." Like, you know, I I I was definitely sleep deprived but it wasn't that I wasn't taking care of them. I mean I probably, you know, wasn't um the mother that I could have been or, you know, that I wanted to be... But I mean, you know, like as a single parent when you don't have, you know, the support, you know, financially from their father um or, you know, whichever else like [pause] how what are you supposed to do right?

[Melanie: 1186 – 1196]

Determination came up numerous times throughout the interviews. For some of the women their determination revolved about never being in that situation again. For others their determination revolved around asking for what they needed and their resolution to turn their experience around as much as they possibly could by taking control of what they could take control of. When Crystal was requiring assistance with her moving expenses she was told by friends that she would not get support for that from IA. Her response was if she did not ask she would not receive support. She asked and received the support. I was very privileged to have the opportunity to meet these women and hear their stories.

Conclusion

This chapter exposed the ruling relations and lines of fault identified through the stories of the women. During the interviews it became clear to me the amount of navigating within the system that the women did on a daily basis. This navigating had an overlapping and intersecting nature. One intersection that was evident was that of the service providers mediating sensitivities to the women's reality while balancing those sensitivities with a system they have to support. As well, although some of the women were aware of the fault lines, it was the service providers who were mediating the disjuncture of the fault lines.

Income and limited affordable, adequate housing clearly influenced the housing experiences of the women. This section worked to summarize the ruling relations identified that were working to organize the women's homelessness. This section also helped illustrate the ideologies that facilitated in coordinating the women's homelessness. Central to critical theory is the principle that structural inequalities, the influence ideologies have on these inequalities, and how they hinder the potential of individuals need to be explored in order for systemic societal change to occur. The critical theory position on these relations has great implications when deciding what actions need to be taken to address homelessness, an area to be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explicate the social relations organizing women's homelessness after leaving abusive relationships. Institutional ethnography enables explication to occur by starting with the women's stories about their everyday world. Beginning with their stories provided richly detailed accounts of their everyday experiences with homelessness and the different relations they entered that coordinated their homelessness and affected their housing experiences. The other stages of IE, interviews with the service providers and analysis of related policies, provided the opportunity to develop an in-depth look at the institutions, structural inequalities, and historical patterns of the relations involved in the coordination of their experiences. These findings are significant in showing that hidden patterns within social relations are embodied in the experiences, values, meanings, and perceptions of self. These patterns also contribute to the women's individual situations. However, the relations organizing the women's housing experiences go beyond what is perceptibly experienced in their everyday lives.

Within this final chapter I move beyond describing the social relations to situating the findings within relevant literature in an attempt to articulate the main conclusions. These conclusions focus on the lines of fault created between the identified social relations and the women's everyday experiences. In particular, I explore the points of disjuncture, or fault lines, present and embodied in the everyday lives of the women and how they are sustained and mediated. This section also identifies the impact of existing social relations and provides recommendations that can potentially change the social relations. Then I identify the limitations to the findings of my study. Following this,

recommendations for further research are presented.

Mapping the Findings

I used IE because of the importance of beginning my inquiry in the everyday world of the individual (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987) and using this as a starting point for analysis. This is in keeping in the critical principle that the social organizations of the everyday world embody the broad social relations people enter into and how these social relations are present in an individual's knowledge and experiences.

I begin this section with a visual (Figure 2) of the everyday lives of the women participating in my study. Following the lines from each of the women enables a view of the multitude of service providers the women used during their journey. As seen, the women's lives intersected in a numerous ways through the use of the various service providers, yet these intersections were not visible to them. The outer circle portrays the ideologies embedded in the social relations the women discussed. These ideologies move freely in and out of the diagram as they reinforce the social relations, conversely the social relations sustain the ideologies. The section of diagram between the women and the ideologies displays the fault lines between the ideologies and the women's everyday lives. This disjuncture can be referred to a canyon between the policies that guide the women's everyday lives and their experiences.

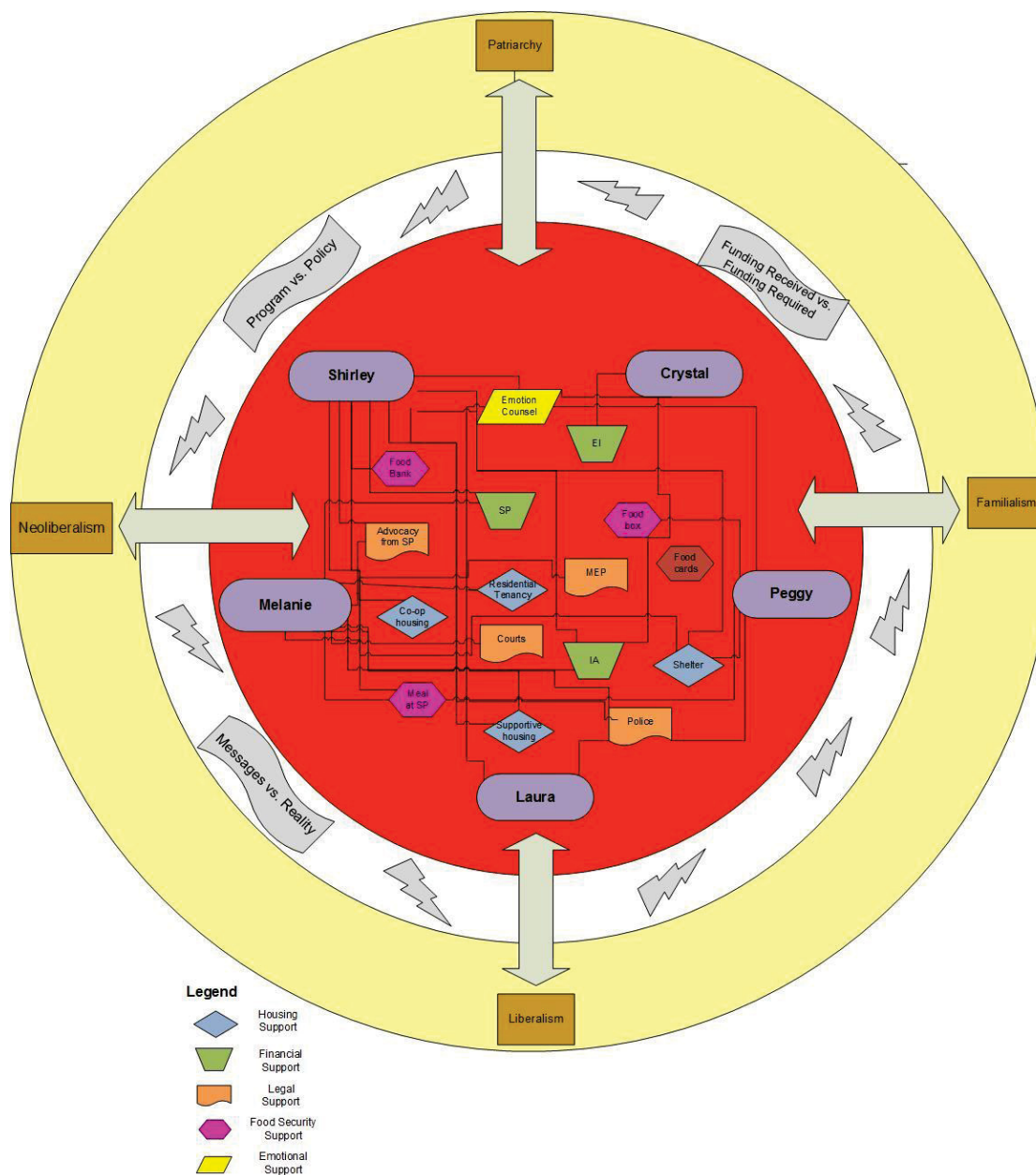


Figure 2 Everyday Lives of the Women

As noted in the previous chapter, there were many factors that shaped the women's housing reality including gender, social, economic, political, and cultural factors. The key influences I would like to focus on are four main ideologies: (a) patriarchy, (b) familialism, (c) neoliberalism, and (d) liberalism.

How do the ideologies of patriarchy, familism, neoliberalism, and liberalism work to organize the women's homelessness? Liberalism and neoliberalism promote the belief that individuals should be able to support themselves and if they cannot then their family should. Familism and patriarchy sustain the belief that the family is a safe haven and that men rule the family and women are their property. They lead to stigmas being attached to the individuals who cannot provide for themselves and to families that separate (Novac et al., 1996; Reid et al., 2005). These ideologies also worked to organize the women's homelessness; the individual values of each ideology played a role in organizing the women's homelessness. When these values are combined and take into consideration the findings of this study, which strongly suggests that the major coordinating factor of homelessness was income and limited affordable, adequate housing, and consider the main source of income for most of the women came from the social program IA, the coordinating factor of these ideologies appear.

Ideologies lead to historical realisms, which sustain oppression. The ideologies, especially neoliberalism, reinforce a conviction that there should be fewer social programs and less social spending because of society's belief in individualization. The ideologies also coordinate ruling relations identified within the women's stories regarding homelessness. Historically these ideologies have influenced the belief that individuals should support themselves and everyone is equal regarding choice, therefore, individuals experience homelessness because of faults of their own; not due to society and social programs failing at protecting vulnerable populations. Historical realism impacts public policies regarding spending on social programs and creates situations in which vulnerable populations become even more vulnerable. Historical realism does not take

into account the fact that society privileges some groups at the expense of others and that oppression creates challenges and barriers that individuals who are not oppressed do not experience. Historical realism was embodied in the women's everyday lives through their perception of self and the belief that their homelessness was an individual problem. For example, Shirley blamed herself for her frequent bouts of homelessness stating that it was her own fault and that she did not know how to keep housing.

Ideologies are not separate entities but rather they work to support and reinforce each other with the support of the media. The media, as an ideology, contributes to assumptions, myths, and stereotypes that portray homelessness as an individual or family issue (Meyers, 1994). Studies indicate that homelessness is a social problem connected to gender, social, economic, political, and cultural factors yet this is not reflected in media reports. The media contributes to homelessness by supporting the dominant power structure, neoliberalism, and liberalism in society (Meyers, 1994).

Structural inequalities were very apparent when discussing money with the women. As with other structural inequalities, inequalities about money hindered the potential of these women. These inequalities hindered their potential in finding housing, finding employment, paying for child care, feeding their children, getting an education, and in numerous other areas of their lives. Nowhere else is the belief that society privileges some groups at the expense of others more evident than when exploring women's attempts to try to find affordable, adequate housing.

Often individuals do not recognize the influence the systemic social structures have on their everyday experiences and perspectives because the social structures are so embedded in their lives. As with privileging particular groups over other groups, systemic

structures create oppression but often in ways that are not visible to the individuals experiencing the oppression. Individuals need to develop an awareness of the systemic oppression they are experiencing in their everyday lives before they can experience emancipation from the oppression. There were very few areas where the women had developed an awareness of the systemic oppression they were experiencing.

Women experiencing oppression are often too embedded in survival to recognize that the causes of their situations are not individual. This was no different for the women participating in this study, especially Shirley who did not recognize that her housing concerns were not individualistic and there were many other women who struggle like she does. For these women, their experiences are justified by the social structures in their lives and through social realities. The systemic social structures affect the women by becoming factors in their values and perceptions of self. They also contribute to their individual situations. Women experiencing homelessness experience oppression created by social conditions and their limited knowledge in how their situation is historically created and sustained through social power.

Inherent in the conversations with the women was the reality that most of them did not have the income required to be able to secure affordable, adequate housing, especially when first leaving the abusive relationship. The ideologies of familialism and patriarchy both contribute to the women's lack of income. Familialism created family environments where the woman put the needs of the family above her needs, even if her needs include education and employment. Patriarchy leads to the man having power over the woman. It leads to relations of ruling and oppression due to the power disparity between men and women. This led to situations where some of the women are not able to

immediately support themselves after leaving the abusive relationship because of their dependency on their ex-partner.

As mentioned earlier, the ideology of neoliberalism supports an economic system based on private ownership and individualization. It also creates a belief system that promotes everyone having the same freedom of choice and opportunities available to them. Most of the women participating in this study did not have the same opportunities as the general public since housing is predominantly based on private ownership, even for those renting since they are expected to rent their own shelter. There is no rental cap protection in HRM, and the cost of housing is high. As a result, renting or purchasing their own housing in HRM was out of the question for most of the women, especially shortly after leaving the relationship. Shirley did speak numerous times of moving to a more rural area a couple of times and securing housing there that she could afford but then leaving it and moving back to HRM to be closer to resources.

These factors work toward creating a false consciousness regarding homelessness among the women, society, and policy makers (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Smith, 1987). A false consciousness impacts the ability to alleviate social inequalities. Homelessness statistics will not be reduced until social inequalities are reduced. It also impacts the recognition women have of their situation and how, as a society, we are governed by social organizations that are directed by ruling relations and discourses.

The findings suggest that these ideologies do not represent the women's everyday lives. Working within the current system to find solutions for women who have had similar experiences as the women in my study does not work. What are required are long-term sustainable changes that remove the power relations and individuality from the issue

and focus on assisting individuals secure affordable, adequate housing. The explication of the ruling relations discussed next is the first step in the work that is to be conducted to alter the power these ideologies have in coordinating individual's everyday lives.

Ruling Relations

There were numerous ruling relations discovered in my study. The ruling relations that were recognized were those that are most knowable by the women since they are physically present within their everyday worlds. I began this process with the women because I needed to enter their everyday worlds' as means to assist the explication process.

The main ruling relation situated within the women's everyday worlds was the relationship with money. This was the most coordinating power that existed within their lives. Money, or the lack of money, coordinated their everyday worlds by creating daily struggles and the need to spend energy worrying about it. It was the key deciding factor in the women's housing experiences and organized many of the relations that existed in their everyday lives. For example, the relations that the women entered into with the service providers were mediated by money, more specifically by a need for support due to limited financial resources. As well, historical patterns from their family of origin were visible within their stories about money. The major relations explicated were those between the women and IA program along with the policies, regulations, and act that guides the program. The IA program had a significant impact on the women's income.

Housing experiences also affected the women's everyday lives. As with money, historical patterns in housing experiences played a role in the women's everyday lives. The instability of the women's housing history and the institutions that play a role in that

instability affected the women's everyday lives. Historical realism includes beliefs that are passed through generations historically and viewed as being true (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Historical realism affected the women's ability to secure affordable, adequate housing by influencing the beliefs of landlords regarding individuals renting when their main source of income is IA. If the landlord historically experienced individuals with limited rental history as being poor tenants then they are going to be less likely to rent to someone with limited rental history. As well, historical patterns from their family of origin were visible within their housing stories especially when Shirley and Melanie discussed insecure housing during their childhood.

Relations with support systems, both formal and informal, were another coordinating power that existed within the women's everyday worlds. The women utilized these relations as a means to cope with their situation as it related to homelessness. The support systems offered support in five key areas: housing support, food security support, financial support, legal support, and emotional support.

The ruling relations identified through the service providers were not as visible to the women. Nonetheless, the power these ruling relations held over the women's housing experiences played a critical and fundamental role in organizing their everyday lives and homelessness. Policies impacted the women's ability to reside at certain facilities. Policy dictated the length of time women could stay at some housing support service providers' facilities and it also dictated how women were to behave when residing at the facilities. Policy also had an impact on the type of housing women were able to reside in and dictated the relationship between the woman and her landlord. This impact was beneficial when it worked to protect the women but sometimes it worked to protect the landlord

instead. Service providers' policies had varying levels of flexibility depending on the service provider and, occasionally, depending on the individual for whom they were implementing the policy.

Many of the participating service providers did recognize the impact their policies had on the women that utilized their services. Unfortunately, for the most part, the impact was due to external forces beyond their control, such as governmental funding. The service providers had been requesting increases in funding from the government having recognized the impact their limited funding had on the support services they were able to provide and the length of time they could assist the individuals utilizing their services. That being said, one of the policies – length of time that women can reside in a transition house environment – that I thought was purely a funding policy was actually due to, according to a housing support service provider, research in that field that indicates the longer an individual resides in a transition house environment the more detrimental it is to their independence and their ability to move forward. An unsuccessful attempt was made to find studies that provided verification of this understanding.

Present in the everyday lives of the women in my study were social forces from the extra local that implicated they should be able to house themselves and if they could not then there was something wrong with them. The women accepted their situation as being their fault and did not recognize the ruling relations that worked to organize their everyday lives. Some of them did not recognize the potential for change in support they receive but others did and were beginning to question the differential treatment and ruling relations that organized their lives. For example, Melanie was questioning how many bedrooms she would require for her and her children and opened discussion on how that

policy would negatively affect her ability to find affordable, adequate housing. Shirley and Peggy both highlighted a possible abuse of power that negatively affected their everyday experience when leaving a housing support provider. They perceived other women receiving different support when leaving than they did. Without a doubt the individual implementation of the policy had negative impacts on their self-esteem. As well, as noted earlier in this paper, questioning and the role it plays in developing awareness is the first step in emancipation.

This data indicates that service providers have a direct impact on women leaving an abusive relationship and attempting to secure affordable, adequate housing. For the most part, the service providers recognized the positive and negative impacts of their policies on the women utilizing their services. Unfortunately, in situations where the impact was due to limited funding there is little the service providers can do to alter this impact since the shortcomings are predominantly the result of fiscal restraints due to low funding oftentimes provided by the provincial government.

There were two crucial relations that were identified by the women as influencing their homelessness – money and limited affordable, adequate housing. Money was identified as the predominant coordinating resource. Three of the five women indicated that IA was a source of income for at least part of their experience with homelessness. One of the remaining two women, although had never been a recipient of IA, had financial concerns that were not addressed by IA because of their funding eligibility policy. Therefore, she was still affected by IA policies and procedures. The NSDCS, which implements the IA program, did not agree to participate in an interview. Regardless, I was able to explore ESIA because it is a public document.

The review and analysis of the most recent ESIA resulted in the recognition of numerous systemic societal structures embodied in the women's experiences. The ESIA is influenced by political factors because it is a provincial government policy therefore it has to be approved by the government, which takes time and contribution by numerous individuals from different roles within the governmental departments. It is also influenced by economic factors. Funding is reflective of the political party that is in office. The political party that is in office is reflective of the values, beliefs, and ideologies of the individuals that voted that political party to office. Therefore, funding can change based on public opinion regarding the level of support that should be provided for vulnerable populations.

Because the funding comes from tax dollars, society's beliefs on the level of funding for vulnerable individuals, if any at all, becomes known at the election polls. This creates situations where elected officials hesitate to change public policy for fear of a backlash of public opinion removing their party from office during the next election. Economic factors affect ESIA because the rate schedules that outline the amounts of funding provided to individuals are reflective of the funds the government was willing to distribute. Fiscal restraint has always had a negative effect on the rate schedules. The belief system of the minister assigned to NSDCS can also affect IA rates.

The ESIA has undergone beneficial changes during the past few years. These changes were part of the provincial government's 2011 investment of more than \$18 million to help low-income families pay for family necessities (<http://www.scotiaweb.ca/201104084459/nova-scotia/community-services/new-support-for-nova-scotia-low-income-families.html>). Some of these changes would have been very beneficial to the

women who participated in this study. For example, as of January 2011 individuals on IA who “move in with a partner will be allowed to keep a substantial portion of their benefit for the first year of the relationship” (http://hpclearinghouse.net/blogs/poverty_public/archive/2010/11/04/announcement-of-changes-to-nova-scotia-s-employment-support-and-income-assistance-esia-program.aspx). As well, as of January 2011 eye exams are fully funded and allowable personal asset levels doubled (<http://www.scotiaweb.ca/201104084459/nova-scotia/community-services/new-support-for-nova-scotia-low-income-families.html>).

Other changes that came into effect on July 2011 would also affect the women participating in this study. These changes included a \$15 per month increase in personal allowance, 250 additional child care subsidies, and a change in the amount of money employed individuals on IA are allowed to keep (<http://www.scotiaweb.ca/201104084459/novascotia/community-services/new-support-for-nova-scotia-low-income-families.html>). Previously, individuals working while on IA were allowed to keep 30% of their earnings without it affecting their IA rates. As of July 2011 they are now allowed to keep the first \$150 earned each month, plus 30% of the remaining amount (<http://www.scotiaweb.ca/201104084459/nova-scotia/community-services/new-support-for-nova-scotia-low-income-families.html>). Since 2009, government has made other significant efforts to help families, including increasing minimum wage, building more affordable housing and removing the provincial portion of the HST from children's shoes, clothing and diapers.

Income Assistance rates directly affect housing options for women leaving abusive relationships. Other local studies, such as Tota (2004, 2005), have verified the

line of fault between NS IA policies and the women's everyday experiences explicated in this study. Homelessness can be a social consequence of IPV (Rice, 2001; Riger et al., 2002; Statistics Canada 2006b). Studies have indicated the main reason given by women for their homelessness was IPV, with up to 70% of participants in some studies citing this cause (Hatty, 1996; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Layton, 2000; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Novac et al., 1999; Statistics Canada, 2011a; Zamprelli, 2003). This was also the main reason indicated in two studies on homelessness in HRM (Tota, 2004, 2005).

For the women participating in my study, their homelessness occurred after leaving an abusive relationship. Even Shirley, who had a long history of housing instability, was stable in her housing before leaving her first ex-partner. Other social consequences of IPV that can impact homelessness rates include higher risk of poverty for women and children, unemployment, inability to finish education, and heavier burdens on shelter resources (Rice, 2001; Riger et al., 2002; Statistics Canada 2006b). The women participating in my study also indicated they felt the impact of all of these social consequences as women in previous studies did.

This study, and other studies on homelessness among women after leaving abusive relationships, indicates that the strategies women use are not safe and do not assist them in finding affordable, adequate housing (CAH, 2009; Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1996). As well, these strategies assist in hiding the true reason for their homelessness – societal inequalities reinforced by ruling relations. These strategies included remaining with service providers longer than anticipated, committing fraud to provide some relief in their financial situation, not paying bills and negatively affecting their credit history, and residing with individuals they did not want to reside with

including abusive ex-partners.

As stated in the literature review, often the housing women can afford is not safe or they cannot afford housing at all. As well, homeless women will often participate in unhealthy relationships or behaviours in order to protect themselves from the dangers of living alone on the streets (Klodawsky, 2006; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999). The inability to secure affordable, adequate housing also leads to situations where the women will take their chances and return to their ex-partner rather than live in the housing they can afford, especially if they have children or they will move a new or old partner into their housing to provide protection (Baker et al., 2003; Charles, 1994; Malos & Hague, 1997; Merritt-Grey & Wuest, 1995; Moore, 2003; Sev'er, 2002a, 2002b; Stainbrook & Hornik, 2006; Williams, 1998), as Shirley did multiple times. These strategies only provided short-term relief for the women but are often detrimental long-term as they did not assist them in securing affordable, adequate housing.

The experiences of those who are homeless may not be recognized to their full extent because of the strategies women use to secure housing and the short-term options they utilize. These findings can have serious repercussions and consequences for a variety of reasons including the safety of the women. Short-term strategies women use to secure housing can put them in dangerous situations, such as Shirley moving her abusive ex-partner back into her home. Another short-term strategy utilized by the women in my study was moving frequently to avoid money owed to landlords. This negatively impacted their credit and their ability to find adequate housing.

These strategies affect statistics on homeless individuals and statistics affect funding. Inaccurate statistics that portray the issue of homelessness as being less of a

concern then it truly is decreases recognition of the problem by society. Society's response to concerns often affects the response of the government and leads to increases or decreases in funding. If there is no recognition of a need to improve responses to homelessness by society, either through funding or other long-term solutions, then individuals will not work to pressure the government to improve funding support to reduce levels of homelessness.

The interviews with the women indicate that the availability of affordable, adequate housing in HRM had an impact on their housing experiences. A key influence was the amount of funding the women had available for housing. For the majority of the women participating in my study this was a direct result of the amount of funding received for shelter from IA. There have been studies conducted on this concern within HRM. These studies identified concerns about IA rates and levels of homelessness. This supports other research such as Tota (2004, 2005) on homelessness in HRM where it was discovered that almost half of the homeless individuals participating in the study received some form of government assistance. Approximately a quarter of them had no income and less than 10% received income from employment. Another study conducted by the Cities and Environment Unit, School of Planning, Dalhousie University (2006) indicated that a key cause of homelessness was increased poverty due to changes in EI and IA policies.

Although housing costs are a key influence, the main coordinating aspect affecting the housing experiences of these women was the availability of safe housing versus the cost of housing. Other studies focused on exploring homelessness in HRM have noted the effect of limited affordable, adequate housing. Tota (2004, 2005)

discovered that 35% of individuals surveyed for her study were homeless because of housing related issues (i.e. lack of affordable accommodation, eviction, and fire or unsafe premises). The Cities and Environment Unit study (2006) also made note that lack of affordable housing due to Provincial and Federal budget reductions is a key factor in homelessness. They also state that people are spending more of their household income on housing or are not able to afford housing at all (Cities and Environment Unit, 2006).

The findings of my study indicate that the policies and programs currently in place to address homelessness in HRM are not addressing the social inequalities being experienced by women within HRM. This has serious implications for women leaving abusive relationships and attempting to secure affordable, adequate housing, and also has serious implications for our community. As noted in previous research, there are many emotional, physical, and societal effects of homelessness that are very detrimental to women. Emotional and physical effects impact the women's health in a negative manner (Klodawsky, 2006; Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Novac et al., 1999; Pavao et al., 2005; Tota, 2005; Zamprelli, 2003). The societal effects can impact women's abilities to work and keep their children (Hatty, 1996; Novac et al., 1996; Novac et al., 1999; Pavao et al., 2005; Sev'er, 2002b; Tota, 2005). This study emphasizes the need to immediately address homelessness to ensure the health and well being of women leaving abusive relationships, along with other citizens and society in general.

Exploring the Lines of Fault

In this study, many lines of fault were identified such as the disjuncture between IA and the policies, regulations, and Act that guide it and the everyday lives of the women. This indicates that IA does not reflect the everyday needs of the women who

were involved in my study. The lines of fault identified are not unique and have been previously acknowledged by other studies, including studies conducted in HRM.

Major factors that created the lines of fault recognized in my study are the women involved did not have a voice in the development of policies and programs that impacted them, either directly or indirectly, and short-term solutions affect statistics on homelessness which then impacts understanding of the need for long-term solutions for women leaving abusive relationships. These factors would not have been present if I had not started in the local for the women and heard them tell me about the realities of their everyday lives when trying to secure affordable, adequate housing.

Beginning my study in the local enabled the lines of fault to be identified through conversations with the women regarding their real experiences with homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. The lines of fault that arose from these conversations encompassed three main areas. First, there were lines of fault existing between the services provided to the women and the public policies and acts that organize these programs. Second, there were lines of fault between the amount of the funding provided to the women, mainly through the public program IA, and the amount of funding the women required to secure affordable, adequate housing. The third area was the lines of fault that existed between the messages the women received from society and their ability to meet the expectations of these societal messages. The women's voices were absent in all three of these areas. I will now explain how the women's experiences are being overlooked due to these lines of fault.

Program versus Policy

As discussed in the previous chapter, these lines of fault work to coordinate the

women's homelessness. Often the women were in the beginning stages of recognizing these lines of fault but were not in a position to make changes to them. Take, for example, the program versus policy line of fault. The women discussed being treated differently than other women, and they were beginning to develop an awareness of the differences in how the public program IA was being implemented.

Shirley and Peggy shared experiences with ruling relations and how they made them feel. They questioned whether a procedure was policy and if it was policy why it was not enacted the same for all of the women using the service. Power relations between the organizations, the employees, and the women would have impacted the outcome of these situations. If the women had dealt with a different employee the outcome may have been different in that they may have received the same as the other women or, at the very least, they may have received an explanation for the differences. If one reads the ESIA, which governs IA, it claims individuals will not be treated differently and all individuals utilizing the program will be treated with respect and in a non-judgmental manner yet this was not always true for these women. However, they did not have the power to question the differential treatment. A key reason for this lack of questioning may be because often individuals who are experiencing oppression are too embedded in survival to recognize the causes are societal and not individual.

There were situations discovered where the power relation between the women and the service provider was such that it negatively affected the women's perception of self. In one example, Shirley shared how the difference in the tangible support she received when leaving a housing support service provider's organization made her feel. In this particular story she discussed what other women received when they left (i.e., food

box, bus tickets, and gift cards) and that she did not receive those items. Due to not receiving the same tangible support items she did not feel as worthy as the other women.

Peggy also described being in the same situation whereby she believed the tangible items she was receiving were different than what the other women received. She also discussed this affecting her feelings of self-worth. As well, Peggy did not feel as worthy as the other women because she was not at the service provider's facility all the time due to full-time employment. She also perceived the difference in the treatment she received to be due to the fact that the other women had their children living with them and her children had remained with their father when she left the relationship. Her belief was just because she was not in the facility all day long and her children were not living with her does not mean she required less emotional support from the service provider.

Shirley's and Peggy's stories provide powerful examples of how power relations are key factors in individual's perception of self. They provided verification of situations in which society privileges some at the expense of others. Ironically, these women were all within the same group in that they all required emotional support after leaving an abusive relationship yet they perceived the other women to be detrimental to their well-being and competitors vying for the limited support available. The ideology of neoliberalism, and its belief system around individuality and private ownership, is very evident within this power relation. The competition the women felt was apparent within their experiences embodied the "us" versus "them" mentality as well as created every-woman-for-herself scenarios.

It was also intriguing that Peggy mentioned that the women who had caseworkers from IA were the ones who moved to the "front of the line" when it came to counseling.

This indicates a belief that the women with caseworkers who would advocate for them received different treatment than the women that did not have caseworkers. The concept of having a caseworker is a systemic structure that creates oppression for the individuals who do not have caseworkers. Whether a woman has a caseworker or not depends on if they are a recipient of IA; women who receive IA have caseworkers assigned to them and women who do not receive IA do not have caseworkers.

The fact that this differential treatment was often exhibited by service providers in a position to assist the women during this challenging time leads to increased oppression for the women. It led to a belief among the women that they were not worthy of the same treatment as other women within the same organization. Recognizing how societal forces are embodied in individuals' everyday lives is imperative in an IE study. The power relations the service providers had over the women using their services affected the women's sense of self and contributed to their individual situation. These power relations also contributed to the social inequalities the women faced in their everyday worlds.

Funding Received versus Funding Required

Income Assistance is a prime example of a ruling apparatus in which policies and programs are created that do not reflect the need of the individuals utilizing the policies and programs. The findings regarding this line of fault indicate there is a lack of inclusion of individuals using public programs, such as IA, by the individuals creating and revising the policies and programs for the organizations. This lack of participation of individuals who use the policies in policy development and revision leads to policies and programs that do not meet the needs of the individuals who are utilizing them.

The IA shelter allowance for a family of three or more is \$620 yet average rent in

HRM begins at \$690 for a bachelor apartment. If a family of three is comprised of a woman and her son and daughter she would require a minimum of a two bedroom apartment with an average rent of \$954 per month. The shelter allowance provided through IA made it impossible for some of the women in my study to find shelter they could afford without using their IA personal allowance, which includes their household expenses and grocery money for the month. Shelter costs provided by IA do not provide the opportunity for individuals to secure affordable, adequate housing. The women receiving IA recognize this; as do the service providers working with these women. Studies have been conducted in HRM identifying a disconnect between the shelter allowance provided by IA and the cost of housing in HRM (Tota, 2004, 2005). Yet the policy regarding shelter funding from IA does not change.

This line of fault was also recognizable in the interviews with the service providers and affected them in a similar way as it affected the women participants. For many service providers, the support they provided was limited due to the funding they received from NS DCS. The difference is the service providers were in a position that they could recognize the disconnect between the funding required to operate their organizations and the funding provided and were in positions to question the ruling apparatus. Unfortunately, the questioning has not changed the funding levels. Therefore, between the effect IA rates have on women and the effect NS DCS funding rates have on service providers, it became apparent to me that change must occur at the provincial funding level to decrease homelessness within HRM.

Messages versus Reality

For the women participating in my study there was a line of fault between the

messages they received from society and what they experienced in their everyday lives. The messages they received were varied but typically were focused on ideologies that supported beliefs about IPV and inability to find housing. In Peggy's situation she did not want female police officers to assist her anymore because they would question why she was back in the relationship or back in the matrimonial home. She would request male police officers each time she called to protect herself from the questioning and judging. There were power relations governing these interactions and they had an impact on Peggy's perception of self. The power relations are supported by the ontological position of historical realism, which works to ensure certain taken for granted assumptions transmitted across time sustain ideologies related to women and IPV, such as women asking to be abused when they return to their relationship or to their home to gather their belongings. The media, as an ideology, also plays a role in the belief that women in abusive relationships are masochistic (Meyers, 1994).

Shirley shared her story about the reaction she received from a police officer when the police officer suggested "she listen to her husband and do what she was told." In this story, she provided an example of the impact that social, cultural, and gender factors have on our society's belief system on IPV, as well as how it affects individual beliefs. She believed that all men had the same attitude regarding IPV because that was what she had been exposed to. It created a historical realism for her regarding support from legal systems. Over time this became crystallized into structures perceived to be real. There would be no other opportunities given to men to prove they do not think like the men to which she had been exposed.

The real experiences the women had regarding housing were that it was

challenging to find housing due to societal inequalities; not due to individualistic reasons. The messages the women received about finding housing were especially worrisome. The messages they received were they must find housing and not be “picky.” The reality for the women was they were scared to live in some of the neighbourhoods where they could find housing. The next section of this chapter will provide recommendations to improve the homelessness situation for women leaving abusive relationships in HRM.

Recommendations

During our conversations, the women and the service providers provided recommendations they wanted implemented. The women also spoke of service provider policies that affected their housing experiences. When I spoke to service providers about their policies they, for the most part, had a good understanding of the impact their policies had on the women using them. What also arose through these conversations was that most service providers would change their policies, when possible, to improve the situation for the women utilizing their services. Service providers often spoke of holding meetings with the women using their services and taking their perspective into account when developing or revising policies. It is imperative that service providers continue to ensure that the individuals utilizing their services have a voice in their policy and program revision and development since they are the individuals that are most impacted by policy revision and development.

Many of the recommendations made revolved around proposing the IA rates for shelter be increased. The increase in IA rates suggestions came from the women, as well as the service providers. Melanie also discussed the need for women leaving an abusive relationship to be eligible for subsidized housing ahead of people who are not in a

dangerous situation. Her understanding was this was how the system worked in the past but has since been changed to not give priority to individuals leaving abusive relationships. There were also suggestions about where new affordable, adequate housing could be created to reduce the need.

During our conversations the women had suggestions for service providers that they feel would have improved their experiences. Along with conversation suggesting an increase in financial support especially for housing costs, the women also spoke about service providers making the effort to ensure that funding is provided equally and improvements in fairness in eligibility for support. For service providers, an increase in IA rates would reduce some of the pressure on their continuously tightening budgets coupled with higher levels of need within their communities.

It quickly became apparent in my conversations with the service providers that many policies within their organizations that required revision were not able to be revised due to fiscal restraints. This concern was typically present for service providers who were funded through NS DCS. Although these service providers participated in fund raising activities in order to improve their funding to make changes that are sustainable there needs to be core funding so the services offered are consistent and do not fluctuate year to year based on fund raising results. Because the majority of the service providers were funded by the provincial government, the first recommendation section will focus on government policy changes.

Recommendations for Government

The majority of the programs utilized by individuals experiencing homelessness are social programs funded by the government, with the provincial government providing

the bulk of the funding. For that reason, the majority of the recommendations in this section are for the NS government. It became apparent during conversations with both the women and the service providers that there were numerous recommendations focusing on key governmental areas: shelter funding; personal allowance amounts; service provider funding; and housing costs.

Policy recommendations regarding shelter funding. The women who relied on IA included in their conversations the need for more financial support toward housing costs. As mentioned numerous times throughout this paper, the IA shelter allowance amounts do not reflect the true cost of housing in HRM. There can be differences of over \$500 between the amount provided and the required shelter costs, depending on the size of the family. The extra money to cover rent then has to be taken from funding for other monthly expenses, often leaving the women in arrears for other expenses. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- NS DCS increase shelter allowances to adequately reflect housing costs in HRM.

Policy recommendations regarding personal allowance amounts. The participating women who were dependent on IA also discussed the limited personal allowance funding they received. They alluded to the anxiety they experience as they attempt to pay their household expenses and provide nutritional meals for their families on a very limited budget. As noted earlier in this paper, the 2012 monthly allowance rates are \$238 per month per adult and \$133 per month per child up to age 18 (NSDCS, 2012). These monthly allowances are expected to cover household expenses and food. With the rising cost of living in HRM, including high rate increases for essential utilities such as

power and increased food costs, it is challenging for the personal allowance rates to cover monthly expenses. If a woman is fortunate enough to secure housing that includes utility costs then these amounts are closer to adequate. If she has to pay heat, water, and electricity in addition to rent then they are nowhere near adequate. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- NS DCS increase personal allowances to adequately reflect cost of living in HRM.
- NS DCS implement a program whereby individuals who cannot secure housing with all utilities included in the rent can receive higher personal allowance rates.

Policy recommendations regarding service provider funding. Service providers discussed how their funding, whether per Diem rates or block funding had not increasing for years. The rates given by the service providers were \$9.75 per Diem if they were per Diem funded or approximately \$34,000 and \$45,000 per year if they were block funded. Some service providers spoke of their funding from NS DCS being the same as it was in the mid-1990s. Yet, as just mentioned in the personal allowance discussion, the cost of living in HRM has increased exponentially in the past few years. This cost of living also affects the service providers, especially those running residential facilities.

The service providers spoke of reducing the number of staffing to maintain program levels. Ironically, the reduction in staff members also led to fund development staff members being reduced in one organization. The service providers also spoke of reducing programming and services offered. As well, they spoke of the extraordinary amount of time executive directors' used for grant applications and fund raising to

support their core programs. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- NS DCS increase funding to service providers to adequately reflect the cost of providing support to homeless women in HRM.

Policy recommendations regarding housing costs. The women spoke of the challenge they had finding affordable, adequate housing. The service providers also discussed this concern. As stated earlier in this paper, any housing that costs more than 30% of a household income can increase the risk of homelessness (Lewis & Jakubec, 2004; Tota, 2005). According to previous research conducted, HRM has one of the highest percentages of renters paying more than 30% of their income on shelter alone with figures at almost 50% (Tota, 2004). Nova Scotia had rent control legislation in place until 1993 when it was abolished; while HRM had rent control until the 1980s. Vacancy rates in HRM are approximately 3.2%. The cost of renting in HRM is too high for low-income individuals and does not leave enough for basic needs (CMHC, 2005). Therefore, it is recommended that:

- The NS provincial government and HRM municipal government re-instate rent control legislation.

Recommendations for Service Providers

During our conversations the women had many suggestions for service providers that they feel would have improved their experiences. Recommendations that arose through conversation with the women related to equal policy implementation, increased emotional support provided, more supportive housing options, and respectful treatment by legal support service providers.

Equal policy implementation. During conversations with the participating women

it became very apparent that they were negatively affected by perceived differences in treatment between themselves and other women within the organizations they were using for support. These differences were included in both tangible and intangible support.

Power relations are key factors in an individual's perception of self and contribute to individual situations. Women who felt they received differential treatment stated they felt they were not as worthy as the other women to receive the same treatment, and this belief moved forward with them throughout the rest of their housing experiences. Consequently, it is imperative for the service providers to recognize that differential treatment does occur and attempt to ensure that it does not occur. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- Service providers ensure policies are implemented the same for all individuals using their services.
- Service providers ensure individuals regard themselves as being treated equally by ensuring that tangible support provided is equal for all women utilizing their services.
- Service providers ensure women utilizing their services have access to equivalent amounts of emotional support provided by their organization, as required.
- Service providers ensure that the individuals utilizing their services have a voice in their policy and program revision and development.

Increased emotional support provided. Some of the women discussed not receiving enough emotional support after leaving the abusive relationship and experiencing homelessness, especially after leaving the service providers facilities. This

spoke of a requirement for more outreach programs that occur for longer periods of time than at present so the women have access to the length of support they require to move forward in a healthy manner. It is acknowledged that the funding for the outreach programs would need to be developed, preferably through increased funding from NS DCS. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- More outreach programs are developed by service providers.
- Current and newly developed outreach programs are made available to women requiring them for longer periods of time.
- Service providers ensure women utilizing their services have access to equivalent amounts of emotional support provided by their organization, as required.

More supportive housing. Most of the women and service providers recognized a need for more affordable, adequate housing. Several of the individuals interviewed went further with this recommendation and discussed the need for more co-operative housing options and supportive housing options. Co-operative housing options, if implemented appropriately, can create situations where families can develop safe communities for their children and positive relationships with their neighbours.

As for supportive housing, there are a variety of options available that can accomplish numerous goals. Supportive housing can prepare women for living on their own and making healthy choices. It can develop positive rental and bill paying history with support from service providers so the women can then secure housing on their own. Second-stage housing, which is short-term, safe, affordable, and independent housing combined with some services, is especially important for women leaving abusive

relationships and experiencing homelessness. The women and service providers both noted vacant housing stock in HRM that could be developed into affordable, adequate housing that would benefit women leaving abusive relationships and experiencing homelessness. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- More supportive housing, in the form of second-stage housing, is developed within HRM.
- New family-only co-operative communities be developed in HRM.
- HRM utilize vacant housing stock to develop affordable, adequate housing.

Respectful treatment by legal support service providers when involved with IPV. In the past, citizens and organizations were not satisfied with how IPV was being treated by the justice system and recommendations were made to change to a pro-charge, pro-arrest, pro-prosecution policy. This new policy is widely supported but there are still concerns. For example, women in my study shared stories of disrespect by legal support service providers, typically reflecting archaic ways of thinking about IPV.

In 1995 the NS government initiated the *Framework for Action against Domestic Violence* in an attempt to improve the response of the legal system toward IPV. Numerous recommendations evolved from the review of the Framework for Action against Domestic Violence including: the justice system should respond to IPV as it would to any other criminal activity; keep the pro-charge, pro-arrest, pro-prosecution component of the Framework; offer ongoing training to assist in understanding the dynamics of IPV; and quicker court dates for IPV charges. The development of a domestic violence court program that would offer early, appropriate interventions, encourage agencies to work together, and develop a program that is culturally appropriate

and relevant was also part of the Framework. This program is currently being piloted in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

There are already a variety criminal justice responses in place currently in Nova Scotia including the Domestic Violence Intervention Act, the pro-arrest, pro-charge, and pro-prosecution policy, a province-wide intimate partner violence risk assessment by police, a High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework, and domestic violence coordinator positions within police agencies (Domestic Violence Action Plan, 2010). These responses are changing the way the justice system deals with IPV but, as is noted in the responses from the women participating in my study, the NS legal system must continue to improve the response given to IPV. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- There be ongoing sensitivity training for legal support service providers.
- Legal support service provider organizations react to complaints about their service providers and work to ensure that women are not revictimized by their organization.

Recommendations for Society

Although I did not engage in specific conversations about societal forces with the women or service providers, the subject area came up informally during the conversations. There was always an underlying perception of how the four key ideologies – patriarchy, familialism, neoliberalism, and liberalism – affected the women’s experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that as a society we:

- Begin to create, within society, an understanding of how societal forces affect individuals and their experiences.
- Reduce the power that ideologies have over our everyday lives. More

specifically:

- Transform the levels of power within our society, especially between men and women.
- Change our understanding of poverty and homelessness by recognizing it as a societal problem, not an individual problem.
- Recognize that we all have a role in supporting the vulnerable individuals in society.

Limitations

One limitation is that conversations were not conducted with many of the significant government organizations. There were numerous government departments identified by the women, at all three levels of government, which did not agree to participate in my study. This means I did not have any first voice accounts from employees regarding how the government's policies and programs work and their understanding of the affect these policies and programs have on the individuals using them.

Because this was a Master's thesis I had to impose criteria on participants that I may not have if it was a funded study. For example, women and service providers were limited to those living or operating with HRM due to the cost of travelling. This affected the data I received as service providers tend to be predominantly located within urban environments. I missed the opportunity to gather data regarding what women living in more rural areas experience when leaving an abusive relationship and experiencing homelessness. As well, I was limited to only including women and service providers who could communicate in English because of my own language restrictions.

Another criterion that affected participation was the length of time between the women's homelessness and participation in my study. I stipulated that the homelessness had to occur at least one year prior to participating in my study. This criterion was put in place to provide protection for the women so they were not in crisis mode and telling their story. I had several women contact me to participate who did not fit this criterion and were therefore ineligible to participate. This criterion could have created situations when women who had been homeless at least a year ago opted not to participate so they did not have to relive the experience.

Lastly, I would have appreciated the opportunity to have observed the interactions between the women and the service providers. During conversations with the service providers they would recall what different processes, such as intake or implementation of a policy, look like but I was not able to observe these processes taking place. Being able to observe would have added to my understanding of the interaction between the women and service providers. It would have also provided the opportunity to witness ruling relations in action and how they affect the women at that moment.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of my study suggest the need for further research to continue explicating the ruling relations that organize the everyday worlds of women leaving abusive relationships and then experiencing homelessness. This research could explore the everyday worlds of other women who did not fit the criteria for my study in an attempt to understand the ruling relations that organized their worlds. For example, the same research could be completed with newcomer women or women living outside of HRM.

Further research is also required that includes conversations with employees of government departments. For example, no one from NS DCS offered to be interviewed but the IA program is one that individuals discussed experiencing differential treatment from, depending on the caseworker they had assigned to them, and recognized different interpretations of the same policy by different caseworkers. Conversations with NS DCS caseworker employees would have been particularly beneficial as they would have provided a more detailed understanding of how their programs and policies are interpreted by employees.

Another area that should be investigated in future research is the exploration of funding levels for transition houses in other provinces. According to one service provider funding varies across Canada from less than 10% to 100% of the funding coming from the different provincial governments. There were indications given from other service providers that NS tends to provide lower levels of funding to transition houses compared to other provinces. Research on the rates of funding in other provinces would assist our provincial government in improving funding allotments to transition houses in NS as an attempt to improve the support provided.

A final suggestion for future research would be to explore the level of input individuals who are utilizing policies and programs are given during policy and program development or revision. During conversations with the women it appeared that those most affected by policies and programs were not being consulted for policy and program development or revision. During conversation with some of the service providers it appeared as though they requested and valued the input of the individuals who utilized their services. Further research could clarify how much of a role the women are given and

if that varies depending on the service provider type.

Conclusion

The goal of my study was to map the social relations between IPV against women and homelessness among women. There were numerous social relations, such as the effect of money and housing history along with the impact of support systems, discovered during the process and they were explored to determine how they were coordinating the women's homelessness. As identified by the women participants, money was the most significant factor in the women's homelessness followed closely by limited affordable, adequate housing. These factors were focused on during the final stages of my study which included conversations with service providers and analysis of their policies and programs.

Findings suggest that there are numerous social relations working to organize the homelessness experienced by women leaving abusive relationships. My study also explicated many lines of fault that existed between the women's everyday worlds and the policies and programs that organize them. The lines of fault were upheld by not including the women's voices in the development and revision of policies and programs and by the strategies the women used at the time to ensure they had shelter. Not including the voices of individuals utilizing the policies and programs will continue to create policies and programs that do not work for the individuals utilizing them. Using multiple short-term strategies to ensure they have shelter creates short-term options for women to use instead of long-term policies and programs. As well, it masks the true statistics for homelessness.

These findings take on important significance when the repercussions of homelessness on the physical and emotional health of individuals, and the overall impact

on society, are considered. Government and society must take immediate action toward societal changes that are sustainable and concentrate on the core causes of homelessness. The first step to take in reducing homelessness for women leaving abusive relationships in HRM, aside from eradicating IPV against women, is to begin to listen to the voices of those who have experienced homelessness. This process is beginning to develop and should continue to increase in importance, both in research projects and policy process. Only when we start with the local, with the voices of those living the experiences in their everyday worlds, can we begin to shift the experiences in their everyday lives for the better.

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Appendix A Poster

Are you interested in taking part in a research project?

Intimate Partner Violence against Women and Homelessness among Women

Intimate partner violence often leads to homelessness. Homelessness means being without a home of your own and includes housing instability which means being insecure in your housing situation. Insecurity can come from feeling unsafe, having a difficult time affording your home & home related bills, or living in a home that is not big enough for your family. It is the feeling of not being stable where you live & constantly worrying about losing your home.

We want to learn:

What women who have experienced homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship face in their daily lives.
Is there anything we can do to decrease homelessness in Halifax Regional Municipality?

If you:

1. Are over 18 years old;
2. Have left an abusive relationship;
3. Have experienced homelessness, including housing instability, since leaving the abusive relationship; and
4. Can communicate in English.



We would like you to take part in a 2 hour interview.

If you want to know more about these interviews or would like to take part in an interview, please contact Michelle Boudreau at michelle.boudreau@msvu.ca

Appendix B Tentative Screening Questions for the Women Participants**MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN
THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY**

Please answer yes or no to the following questions:

Are you over 18 years old?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have the ability to communicate in English?

Yes _____ No _____

Did you leave an abusive relationship?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever worried about how you were going to keep your home?

Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever been homeless?

Yes _____ No _____

Appendix C Information Letter for the Women Participants

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research project being done as part of a Graduate Studies Program in Family Studies and Gerontology at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Whether or not you take part in this project is up to you and you may withdraw at any time. If you do choose to take part you should make sure you know the details about this project. If at any time during or after this interview you feel that you would like to talk about, or ask questions about, any part of this study please feel free to contact myself, Michelle Boudreau, or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Deborah Norris using the contact information provided.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to get to know more about what women who experience homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship face in their daily lives. This project will also focus on service providers that affect the housing experiences of women and will analyze the policies and programs that direct these service providers. Homelessness means being without a home of your own and includes housing instability. Housing instability means being insecure in your housing arrangements. This insecurity can come from feeling unsafe in your home, having a difficult time affording your home and home related bills, living in a home that is not big enough for your family, et cetera. It is the feeling of not being stable where you live and constantly worrying about losing your home. Governments and other organizations have many policies and programs in place that impact on housing experiences and therefore on homelessness. By learning more about what it is like to experience homelessness following an abusive relationship, I hope to find some key service providers that impacted on your housing experiences. I will then invite some of the people involved with those service providers to take part in an interview. I will also read some of the service provider's policies and programs that have affected the lives of women experiencing homelessness to try and find out if there are ways that these public policies and programs can be changed so that homelessness among women can be decreased within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia.

Who is participating in this study?

The first part of this research project will include women who have experienced homelessness following leaving an abusive relationship. The responses I receive from these women will guide the rest of this project. You can participate in this study if you are over 18 years old, have left an abusive relationship, have experienced homelessness, including housing instability, since leaving the abusive relationship, and have the ability to communicate in English.

Who will be conducting the research?

I will be the primary researcher for this project. However, my research committee will have input into how I carry out this project and in describing the information that I

collect.

What am I asking you to do?

For this project, I am asking you to take part in an interview that will last about 2 hours. During the interview I will be asking you questions about your experiences with homelessness. You will also be asked to identify your age, employment status, income, marital status, number of children, length of relationship you left, and education level. You can choose not to answer any question if you wish. These questions will enable me to describe basic information about the women who participated in the interviews. You should also feel free to offer opinions and information on issues or subjects not raised by me that you think are related to my research. With your permission this interview will be audio taped and later it will be typed out. After it is typed out and I have had time to read it, I will contact you again to arrange another visit so we can review the answers you gave during your interview. During this time you will also have a chance to go over my initial understanding of the information I have collected for this project.

Benefits

Although no benefits can be guaranteed, the information you provide may enable me to identify parts of policies and programs that could be changed so that the problem of homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be decreased.

Risks and discomforts

There will be little risk to people who take part in this research project, however, some risk may be present. First, there is a risk that the information gathered will not let me identify ways that policies and programs can be changed so that homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be decreased. Some individuals may share experiences that are stressful or painful to them so there is also a risk that you may become upset when talking about your experiences with homelessness following your abusive relationship. You can withdraw from the process at any time should you decide that is the best course of action. You are free to refuse to comment or to answer any particular question.

Confidentiality

All written material, such as the informed consent letters, transcripts, and notes, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Access to the original data will be limited to me and my supervisor, Dr. Deborah Norris. Following the transcription of the audio tapes I will destroy the tapes. When the research project has been finished, data will be kept for five years in the event that an audit of the research project is conducted, or that the information is required for further analysis. Any information that would let others figure out who took part in this project will be removed from all records or reports.

Other considerations

Any information you tell me in this interview may be used in future publications.

Questions

If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact Michelle Boudreau at (902) xxx-xxxx or michelle.boudreau@msvu.ca or Dr. Deborah Norris at (902) 457-6376 or Deborah.norris@msvu.ca

In the event that you have any problems with, or wish to voice concern about, any part of your participation in this project, you may contact the Chair of the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board at (902) 457-6350 or by email at research@msvu.ca.

Appendix D Informed Consent Form for the Women Participants

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

My name is Michelle Boudreau and I am a Graduate student in the Family Studies and Gerontology Program at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. For my thesis project, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Norris. I am inviting you to participate in my study, “**Mapping the Social Relations of Violence and Homelessness in the Everyday Lives of Women: An Institutional Ethnography.**” Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The study is described below. This description tells you about the risks, inconvenience, or discomfort you might experience. Participating in this study will likely not benefit you, but I might learn things that will benefit other women. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with me.

Why are we doing this project?

Many women find it difficult to secure affordable, adequate housing after they leave an abusive relationship. In the beginning of this project, I found that there were a variety of reasons for homelessness. The purpose of this project is to get to know more about homelessness among women after they have left an abusive relationship. This research project will also look at current service providers that impacted on your homelessness. My project will try and to discover if some public policies and programs that direct these service providers can be changed so homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be decreased. In this stage of the study, I wish to conduct interviews with women who have experienced homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. The interview will be about 2 hours long and will be audio recorded with your permission. You will be asked to discuss and reflect on your individual experience. Quotations from the interviews will be used in the research report, but your name will NOT be used.

Taking part is quick and easy!

You may participate in this study if you are over 18 years old, have left an abusive relationship, have experienced housing difficulties since leaving the abusive relationship, and have the ability to communicate in English. To take part in this study I will ask you to complete an interview that will last about 2 hours. You can chose not to answer any question if you wish. I will ask you to tell me about your experiences in securing housing after leaving your abusive relationship. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to hear about YOUR individual experience. After you tell me your story you will be asked to identify your age, employment status, income, marital status, number of children, length of relationship you left, and education level. Again, you can refuse to answer any question if you wish. These questions will allow me to describe basic information about the women who participated in the interviews. You should also feel free to offer opinions and information on issues or subjects not raised by me that you think are relevant to my research.

Possible benefits

You will not receive direct personal benefits from participating in this study. A key benefit associated with participating in this research is being part of an effort to identify parts of some policies and programs that can be changed so that homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be reduced. This information may help to make the process of securing housing after leaving an abusive relationship easier for women in the future.

Possible risks and discomforts

There will be little risk to people who take part in this research project, however, some risk may be present. First, there is a risk that the information gathered will not let me identify ways that policies and programs can be changed so that homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be reduced. Some individuals may share experiences that are stressful or painful to them so there is also a risk that you may become upset when talking about your experiences with homelessness following your abusive relationship. You can withdraw from the process at any time should you decide that is the best course of action for you. You are free to refuse to comment or to answer any particular question. I will provide you with a list of resources should you feel the need to talk with a professional after the interview.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Because you are taking part in a face-to-face interview you will not be anonymous to the researcher. However, confidentiality will be maintained. The record of the interview will not include any names of the participants. If you should wish to withdraw part way through the interview, your right to do so will be acknowledged. The researcher will immediately erase the audio tape of the interview. Any documentation will also be destroyed. A report containing summaries and unidentified quotes from the interviews will be prepared as part of the researcher's thesis research project. Other manuscripts may also be prepared for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Key considerations

- All the information you provide is confidential.
- Any feedback or comments you provide during the interview may be used in future publications.
- You do not have to answer any questions or take part in any discussions if you so choose.
- You can stop this interview at any time.
- I will contact you again to arrange another visit so I can review the answers you gave during your interview and my initial understanding of the information I have collected for my project.
- You will be given a copy of the project information sheet and the signed consent form.

Contact us

Contact Michelle if you have any questions about this research project or want to have a copy of the results.

Thank you for your participation,
Michelle Boudreau, Graduate Student
Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
(902) xxx-xxxx
Michelle.boudreau@msvu.ca

Dr. Deborah Norris, Thesis Supervisor
Chair, Family Studies and Gerontology Department
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The University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University has approved this research project. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) at Mount Saint Vincent University by phone at 457-6350 or by email at research@msvu.ca

I have been read the consent form for the study entitled “**Mapping the Social Relations of Violence and Homelessness in the Everyday Lives of Women: An Institutional Ethnography**” and I have had the study explained to me. I understand the information given about the research project. I have been provided with enough information to make a decision as to whether or not I would like to participate in this research project. I am willing to participate.

I have been informed that:

- I am being asked to participate in an interview discussion about my experiences with homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship.
 - The interview will be audio taped and all information will remain strictly confidential.
 - Any quotations used will not be connected to a specific participant and any information that might identify me will not be used.
 - My participation is voluntary and I can refuse to answer any question or withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.
- I have been given sufficient time to consider the above information and have had the opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I give permission for unidentified quotes from this interview to be used by the researcher.
- I am voluntarily signing this consent form and have been informed that I will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in the study.

Participant’s Name _____

Participant’s Signature _____

Date _____

Primary Researcher’s Name _____

Primary Researcher’s Signature _____

Date _____

One signed copy to be kept by the researcher, one signed copy by the participant.

Appendix E Tentative Interview Guide for the Women Participants

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Duration: Approximately 2 hours

Location: To be determined by the participants

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of my research project is to get to know more about what women who have experienced homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship experience in their daily lives. My project will also focus on service providers that affect the housing experiences of women and the policies and programs that direct these service providers. Homelessness means being without a home of your own, and includes housing instability. Housing instability means being insecure in your housing arrangements. This insecurity can come from feeling unsafe in your home, having a difficult time affording your home and home related bills, living in a home that is not big enough for your family, et cetera. It is the feeling of not being stable where you live and constantly worrying about losing your home. Homelessness is caused by lots of factors and most individuals consider more than one factor to be the cause of their homelessness. Poverty and homelessness have always been linked. Family violence and family breakdown are also key factors in homelessness. There are many service providers that have an impact on whether or not women live in stable housing. Through my project I hope to find some key service providers that have had an impact on your housing experiences. I will then invite some of the people involved with those programs to take part in an interview. I will also read some of the policies and programs that affect the lives of women experiencing homelessness to try and find out if there are ways that these public policies and programs can be changed so that homelessness among women within Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia can be decreased.

Hearing about your daily activities is very important to my research. There are no right or wrong answers of course because the responses are based solely on your housing experiences. Your responses will guide the rest of my project.

As indicated in the consent form, I will be using a recorder to capture this interview. If the taping of the interview makes you feel uncomfortable at any time please let me know and we can turn it off. Also, this interview will be held in extreme confidence. No identifying information will be used in this study.

There is no set time limit for the interview; however, it often takes about 2 hours. Please let me know if you want to stop at any time. Feel free to ask me any questions throughout the interview.

Before I begin, do you have any questions? May I begin?

Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me about your relationship?

Probes:

- How long were you together?
- How old were you when you met your partner?
- Did you have children?
- Describe a typical day in your relationship.
- How did you come to your decision to leave?
- Did you leave and return?
- How long ago did your relationship end?

2. What was your housing experience like following leaving the relationship?

Probes:

- How were you going to finance your housing?
- Were you employed at the time?
- Was it easy or difficult to find housing you felt safe in?
- Were you able to find housing in neighbourhoods you wanted to live in?
- Can you tell me about your experience in getting household bills in your name?
- What strategies do you use to ensure your budget can cover your household bills?

3. What resources did you utilize during that time?

Probes:

- Did you stay at any of the shelters in Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia?
- Were you employed at the time?
- What was your main source of income?
- Were the resources you used helpful?
- How did using that resource make you feel?

4. Demographics (if not discussed previously):

- Do you have children? If yes, how old are they?
- What was the length of relationship you left?
- What year were you born?
- What is your main source of income?
- What is your income level (under \$10,000; \$10,000-20,000; \$20,000-30,000; \$30,000-40,000; \$40,000-50,000; over \$50,000)
- What is your current education level?
- Are you currently in a relationship?

5. Closing Questions:

- How did participating in this interview make you feel?
- I usually like to contact participants a couple of days after the interview to ensure they are still doing alright. Would you like me to contact you?

Appendix F Resources for the Women Participants

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Following are a list of local resources for you to contact in case you wish to speak to a professional following your interview:

Adsum for Women and Children – 423-4443

For homeless women and their children

Alice Housing – 466-8459

Second-stage housing for abused women and their children

Barry House – 422-8324

Emergency shelter for homeless women and children at risk

Bryony House – 429-9008 Outreach

For abused women and their children

Family Service Association – 420-1980

For counseling referrals

Help Line – 421-1188

For persons in emotional distress

Appendix G Information Letter for the Service Providers

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study, being performed as part of a Graduate Studies Program in Family Studies and Gerontology at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Whether or not you take part in this study is completely up to you, and you may withdraw at any time during the research process. If you do choose to participate you should be aware of what the study involves. If at any time after the interview you feel that you would like to discuss or ask questions about my study please do not hesitate to contact myself, Michelle Boudreau, or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Deborah Norris using the contact information provided.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of my research is to gain a better understanding of the everyday experiences of women who have experienced homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. This research is also aiming to identify different relationships, especially those related to current public policies and programs these women are involved with that have an impact on their homelessness. This will enable me to determine if current policies and programs are meeting the needs of women experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship. It will also enable me to make recommendations for changes to these policies and programs, if needed, so they are better able to address homelessness in Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia. For the purposes of this research homelessness means being without a home of your own and includes housing instability. Housing instability means being insecure in your housing arrangements. This insecurity can come from feeling unsafe in your home, having a difficult time affording your home and home related bills, living in a home that is not big enough for your family, et cetera. It is the feeling of not being stable where you live and constantly worrying about losing your home.

This research began by interviewing women who have had episodes of homelessness after they left abusive relationships to better understand their experiences. By better understanding their experiences I was able to identify programs that affected their homelessness. **(Enter service provider's name here)** and related policies and programs were identified through this process as having an impact on the women's homelessness. The purpose of this interview is to understand more about **(enter service provider's name here)** and the policies and programs that guide your work. Please note that you will not be personally tied to the responses you give, as you are a representative of **(enter service provider's name here)**. Also be aware that the outcome of this process is to provide recommendations for policy and program changes, if any are identified, not to shed any negative light on **(enter service provider's name here)**. You will also have a chance to review your transcript and my initial analysis of the results of this research project to ensure I am correctly interpreting your answers. Overall, through this process I will try to determine if anything can be changed in the policies and programs of **(enter**

service provider's name here) or other current programs and policies to better enable us to address homelessness among women here in Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia.

Who is participating in this study?

Individuals who are employed with **(enter service provider's name here)** will be included in these interviews.

Who will be conducting this research?

I will be the primary researcher. However my research committee will have input into describing the data I collect and how I carry out the research.

What I am asking you to do?

For this project, I am asking you to take part in a one to two hour interview. During this interview I will be asking you questions about your everyday work activities with **(enter service provider's name here)** and the policies and programs that guide this work more specifically, how you work with women who are experiencing homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. This interview will be recorded and later it will be typed out. After it is typed out and I have had a chance to analyze the data I have collected, you will have the chance to read it over to check your responses and review my initial analysis of this study.

Benefits

Although no benefits can be guaranteed, your responses will be used to help me understand more about policies and programs that impact women who experience homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship, specifically those related to **(enter service provider's name here)**. This information, along with the experiences of the women who have experienced homelessness, will be used to make recommendations for changes to programs and policies, which could ultimately work to decrease the prevalence of homelessness for women in Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia.

Risks

There is a risk that the information gathered will not uncover ways that policies and programs can be changed in order to improve the lives of women experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship. There is the chance that the information that is gathered about **(enter service provider's name here)** may indicate that it is not truly addressing all the needs of women experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship and changes to these policies and programs may be suggested. You will have a chance, however, to review the initial analysis of the data and the completed thesis project and offer input at any point.

Confidentiality

All data will be analyzed in an aggregate manner, and will be presented without any identifiers so the participant cannot be recognized. All correspondence (informed consent forms, transcripts, and notes) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Access to original data will be limited to me and my thesis supervisor. Following the transcription of the

audio recordings, the recordings will be destroyed by the researcher. The transcripts will be kept for five years in the event that an audit of the project is conducted or that the information is required for further analyses. No identifying features of participants will be present on any documentation or reports to ensure participant anonymity.

Other considerations

Any information that you provide in this interview may be used in presentations, such as my thesis presentation, in my thesis write up, at relevant meetings, and in future publications in peer review journals.

Questions

Michelle Boudreau, Graduate Student
Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
(902) xxx-xxxx
michelle.boudreau@msvu.ca

Deborah Norris, Thesis Supervisor
Chair, Family Studies and Gerontology Department
Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
(902) 457-6376
Deborah.norris@msvu.ca

In the event that you have any problems with, or wish to voice concern about, any part of your participation in this project, you may contact the Chair of the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board at (902) 457-6360 or research@msvu.ca

Appendix H Tentative Interview Guide for the Service Providers

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about **(enter service provider's name here)**. Please note that you may decline from answering a question or stop the interview at any time.

Questions:

1. To begin this interview, please discuss your role at **(enter service provider's name here)**.
2. What policies and programs of **(enter service provider's name here)** would women leaving an abusive relationship and experience homelessness utilize?
3. How do these policies and programs affect the people you serve?
4. What are the main goals and objectives of **(enter service provider's name here)**?
5. Who or what is involved with the development and/or revisions of the policies guiding **(enter service provider's name here)**?
6. How has funding changed to **(enter service provider's name here)** in recent years?
7. Have there been recent changes to **(enter service provider's name here)**'s budget? How do you think these changes have affected the workloads of employees?
8. Please explain for me the rational for any current changes to **(enter service provider's name here)**.
9. How many different types of employees are currently employed with **(enter service provider's name here)**?
10. Please discuss with me the amount of flexibility employees are given in **(enter service provider's name here)**'s policy manual to address each client's individual situation.
11. What do you think an employee's responsibility is in regards to informing the client of possible benefits that they can receive through **(enter service provider's name here)**?
12. If a client is having problems with their assigned employee, what procedure does a client go through to attempt to lodge a complaint or change the employee?

13. How is this information provided to clients?
14. Are there any supports available to employees to assist them with any difficulties that may arise when working with clients?
15. How are the funding amounts decided upon? (if funding is provided)
16. Are they based on an index or benchmark? Under what circumstances would they change? (if funding is provided)
17. How do you determine the frequency that a client gets paid (monthly, weekly, or biweekly)? (if funding is provided)
18. How is eligibility determined for support from **(enter service provider's name here)**?
19. Can I have a copy of the questions asked to determine an applicant's eligibility?
20. Can I have a copy of any of **(enter service provider's name here)**'s policies and programs we discussed today?

Appendix I Informed Consent for the Service Providers

MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF WOMEN: AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

If you have read the information sheet that explains the research project and are willing to participate, please read the following and sign below.

I understand that:

- This is a study being conducted by Michelle Boudreau, a Graduate student in the Family Studies and Gerontology Program at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of homelessness among women after they leave an abusive relationship and to determine if current policies and programs are addressing homelessness or if changes need to be made to these policies and programs. Specifically, the purpose of this interview is to understand more about **(enter service provider's name here)** and the policies and programs that guide them because **(enter service provider's name here)** was identified as impacting women's experiences with homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship.
- All information I provide is confidential.
- A potential benefit for me as a participant is that my responses will begin to enable the researcher to identify if current policies and programs could be changed to better address homelessness among women in Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia.
- A potential risk for me as a participant in this project is that information gathered will not lead to policy and program changes that will decrease homelessness among women leaving abusive relationships. There is also a chance that the information that is gathered about **(enter service provider's name here)** may indicate that **(enter service provider's name here)** is not truly addressing the needs of women experiencing homelessness following an abusive relationship and changes to policies and programs may be suggested. I will have a chance, however, to review the initial analysis of the data and offer input at any point.
- Any feedback or comments I provide during the interview may be used in future publications.
- I do not have to answer any questions or take part in any discussions if I so choose.
- I can withdraw from the research project at any time.
- The researcher will contact me again to arrange another visit so she can review the answers I gave during my interview and her initial understanding of the information I have provided.
- If I have any questions about this research project, I can contact the Primary Researcher, Michelle Boudreau, at (902) xxx-xxxx or her thesis supervisor Dr. Deborah Norris at (902) 457-6376.
- I will be given a copy of project information letter and the signed consent form.

I have read this consent form and understand the information given about the research project. I am willing to participate. I have been provided with enough information to make a decision as to whether or not I would like to participate in this research project.

Participant's Name _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

Primary Researcher's Name _____

Primary Researcher's Signature _____

Date _____

The University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University has approved this research project. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) at Mount Saint Vincent University by phone at 457-6350 or by email at research@msvu.ca