The Prevalence of Abuse and Battering Among Homeless Women, and an Assessment of Current Services Provided for Battered Women: Should Homeless Women Receive Such Services?

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Introduction

With the rapid increase in homelessness over the past decade, increasing evidence has shown that the current homeless population includes large numbers of women and children. Historically, homelessness affected socially isolated men, most of whom were alcoholics. The limited research that has been done on homeless women indicates that they experience homelessness differently than men. In her article on homeless women, Jan Hagen states:

Women and children are at risk for homelessness because of poverty and the disruption of their families resulting from divorce, separation or widowhood, conflict, and domestic violence. Alcohol and drug problems appear to play a less significant role in contributing to the homelessness of women than of men.\(^1\)

While women become homeless due to different factors than do men, services for the homeless are still based upon the model of the skid row alcoholic male. In order to better provide services for the new homeless population, it is necessary to gain an in depth understanding of the characteristics and needs of homeless women.

There is some evidence that a majority of homeless women are victims of child and/or battering. While it has been noted in the literature, few articles have focused on this aspect of homeless women. This paper seeks to study homeless women within the framework of their experiences with abuse and battering.

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Homeless women are treated as a distinct population from battered and abused women by the service industry. Over the last two decades, services have been developed aimed at helping abused and battered women. If most homeless women have histories of abuse, these services may be utilized as a model for providing services for homeless women. Before developing these types of services for homeless women, it is important to know 1) to what extent homeless women are abused and 2) whether the services provided for abused and battered women are effective.

This paper will review the relevant literature to this area of study, present research questions, describe research methods used in the study, and present and discuss the findings.
Review of the Literature

Homeless Women

Statistics/Background
In the past, homelessness was a phenomenon which affected single men who were often alcoholics. Much of the social science literature on the homeless focuses on this male stereotype. In his article on gender differences within the homeless population, Stephen Crystal states:

Most of the classical studies that have shaped views of homelessness in social science literature - often identifying it with skid row... emphasized the absence of family relationships among the homeless, stressing their social isolation... this "disaffiliation" perspective, largely based on (male) skid row samples with a high prevalence of alcoholism, has characterized much social science literature on homelessness." 2

In the last decade, there has been a surge in the literature on the homeless, yet little of it has been concerned either exclusively or primarily with the experiences of women.3

By the 1970's homeless women had acquired their own stereotype as "bag ladies" - older, socially isolated women who lived on the street. Yet in the past decade young women and children

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have become the fastest growing subgroup in the homeless population\textsuperscript{4}. Hagen states:

> While it appears that women represented only 25\% of the homeless population until the late 1970's, data indicate that women now make up one half of the homeless population.\textsuperscript{5}

The exact percentage of homeless people that are women and children is virtually impossible to measure precisely. Many people who are homeless, especially women and children, do not live on the streets or in shelters. Instead, they are in constant transition, staying with friends and relatives, or even in their cars for extended periods of time.

An important aspect of the current homeless population is the prevalence of African American women. The exact proportion of African Americans among homeless women has yet to be determined. While Hagen and Ivanhoff report that African Americans only made up 24\% of the women in their sample, Gerald R. Garrett and Howard M. Bahr found that 44\% of the women in their study of homeless women were African American. Garrett and Bahr conclude: “... it appears that blacks are overrepresented among homeless women in the [New York] city.”\textsuperscript{6} The possible differences between the experiences of Whites and African Americans have been

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{5}Hagen, p.312
\end{footnotesize}
practically ignored by the media and literature on homelessness. Arewa, First, and Roth, state:

Homelessness is not one problem but many, and minority group homelessness is an issue that has been neglected in research and practice efforts and merits further inquiry.⁷

In studying homelessness, it is important to recognize the unique experiences of African American women.

Causes of Homelessness Among Women

Research in this area is scarce. Only in the last five years has there been a directed effort to study homeless women apart from homeless men. Mills and Ota state:

Some literature does address the feminization of poverty in relation to the plight of homeless women, but little information exists on the economic, social, and psychological factors that are precursors and precipitators of homelessness among women and children.⁸

Johnson and Kreuger support the notion that homelessness for women is caused by a separate set of factors than cause homelessness among men. They state:

Multiple causal factors commonly associated with situationally homeless women include the feminization of poverty, scarcity of affordable housing, unemployment,

⁷First, Richard J., Roth, Dee, and Arewa, Bobbie Darden “Homelessness: Understanding the Dimensions of the Problem for Minorities,” Social Work, March-April, 1988, p.120.
teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and family disruption.\textsuperscript{9}

In fact, women experience homelessness differently than do men in a variety of ways. Feltey suggests: "As a group, women tend to be homeless for shorter periods of time, are more likely to be evicted and to be victims of domestic violence." \textsuperscript{10} She also suggests that homelessness causes a greater amount of anxiety for women than for men because women are susceptible to sexual assault and pregnancy. Hagen summarizes:

Women and men experience homelessness somewhat differently, particularly in terms of their reasons for homelessness...women and their children were at high risk for becoming part of the situationally homeless due to eviction and domestic violence. Men were more likely to experience homelessness as a result of unemployment, alcohol abuse and jail release.\textsuperscript{11}

Hence it is clear that while men more commonly become homeless as a result of the factors listed above, homeless women often suffer from a complex interaction of problems including familial as well as economic disruptions.

\textbf{Family disruption}

Research indicates that many women become homeless as a result of family disruption. Feltey found that 38% of homeless women became homeless as a result of a change in a relationship with a man; 19% became homeless when the relationship ended, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10}Feltey, p.6
\item \textsuperscript{11}Hagen, p.316
\end{itemize}
19% became homeless as a result of domestic violence. Mills and Ota found that 22% of the women in their sample became homeless as a result of a domestic conflict and 21% became homeless due to unsafe living conditions. In their study on homeless women, Anderson, Boe and Smith found:

81% of the women stated that a particular loss or critical incident had precipitated their homeless situation. The loss of a spouse, child, parent, either by divorce or death, was the most frequently mentioned incident.

Mills and Ota also report that in some cases, the woman's spouse or partner was a drug addict or alcoholic, and it got to the point where the woman opted to leave with her children.

Economic Factors

One reason for the drastic increase in the number of homeless women in the last decade is that the Reagan and Bush Administrations have cut numerous social service programs. Mills and Ota state: "Between 1981 and 1986, federal support for low-income housing dropped from $28 billion to $9 billion." Because 40% of the inadequately-housed in the United Housed are single-female-headed households, women are especially vulnerable to these cuts. Mills and Ota recognize the relationship between lack of government support and increase in homeless families: "Inflation and

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12 Feltey, p.18-19.
13 Mills and Ota, p.487
15 Mills and Ota, p.487
16 Mills and Ota, p.488
17 Feltey, p.5
unemployment combined with decreasing federal income support programs, have caused many families to become homeless.”

African American women are especially vulnerable to economic difficulties. Even when African Americans have more education than Whites, they tend to suffer from higher rates of unemployment. One reason for this is that African Americans and other minority groups suffer from racial discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination against African Americans also prevents them from moving into certain neighborhoods and from attending certain educational institutions. These factors interact to put African American women at a disadvantage in gaining economic stability - and hence, at a greater risk for homelessness.

In sum, it is apparent that a different set of conditions and factors cause homelessness of women than of men. The overriding circumstances which seem to cause homelessness among women are: eviction, domestic violence, divorce, and death of a loved one. African American women experience additional susceptibility to homelessness as a result of racial discrimination by the larger society.

Abuse Histories of Homeless Women

Child Abuse/Sexual Abuse

The literature also reports strikingly high levels of abuse among homeless women. Physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse

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18Mills and Ota, p.488
19First, Roth and Arewa, p.122.
has been a common experience in many homeless women's lives. In their study of 190 women in Portland, Oregon, Anderson, Boe and Smith quoted the following homeless woman who presumably had spent some time on the streets. She states: "I'm glad I don't have any teeth in front because if I had teeth I'd be raped a lot more. The worse you look, the more they leave you alone." In Feltey's sample of 102 homeless women in rural Northeastern Ohio, 66% reported that they had been abused at some point in their lives: 12% as children, 42% as adults and 12% as both children and adults. In Anderson, Boe and Smith's study of homeless women, they found the following rates: Over two thirds of the women had been physically abused at some point in their lives: 27% were abused as children, 53% were abused as adults, and 20% were abused as both children and adults. The rates of sexual abuse among homeless women are also high. In Feltey's study, 31% had been sexually abused in their lifetime. Anderson, Boe and Smith found that 46% of the homeless women had been sexually abused at some point in their lifetime. Star found that "35-60% of battered women she studied were victims of sexual abuse as children." The extent and type of abuse that homeless women have experienced spans a wide range, but it is clear that on the whole homeless women experience high levels of abuse. In her study of homeless women, Feltey states:

20 Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.67
21 Feltey, p.15
22 Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.65
23 Feltey, p. 2
It is difficult to unravel the complexity of the abuse and violence in the lives of these women. They have suffered multiple abuses at the hands of a number of people with whom they have had relationships.\(^{25}\)

Overall, these findings are suggestive of a possible causal relationship between past abuse and homelessness of women. Despite the fact that abuse of homeless women is a recurrent finding in the literature, few studies have been designed to specifically examine this aspect of homeless women.

**Battering**

Many women become homeless in the process of escaping a violent marriage or relationship at home. Bassuk found that 40% of the sheltered homeless women in her study had been involved in at least one relationship in which they had been battered.\(^{26}\) The notion that many homeless women are escaping domestic violence is supported by Stoner, who reports:

> Many homeless women and adolescent females report that they left their homes after repeated incidences of abuse by their spouses, rape, incest and desertion.\(^ {27}\)

Battered women face a situation whereby they can choose to remain at home in danger from their husbands, or they can leave. Bassuk and Ryback state:

> Although for many the [family] disruption was not the immediate precipitant of the current homeless episode,
attempts to extricate themselves from the battering relationships left these women without their homes.\(^{28}\)

Hence, because many women are economically dependent upon their spouses, the decision to leave an abusive relationship often results in homelessness.

Some statistics on the ratios of women who are homeless because of battering are becoming available. Hagen and Ivanhoff found that 20% of the homeless women in their study were victims of domestic violence and 39% said that “family problems” were the main reason for homelessness.\(^{29}\) Anderson, Tome and Boe report that one-third of the homeless women in their study were escaping domestic violence situations.\(^{30}\) Hagen and Ivanhoff also found that 18% of the homeless women in their sample had made use of a battered women's shelter in the previous year.\(^{31}\) They conclude:

Although family conflict or dissolution was previously identified as contributing to the homelessness of women, the role of domestic violence has been overlooked. Given that domestic violence contributed to the homelessness of 22% of the women in this study, it is imperative to examine this relationship further. The potential enormity of this problem is reflected in the estimate that “about 1.8 million wives are physically abused by their husbands every year”.\(^{32}\)

As this quote suggests, the reported rates of battering in the United States have increased dramatically in the past decade.


\(^{29}\)Hagen and Ivanhoff, p.25

\(^{30}\)Anderson, Tome and Boe, p.65

\(^{31}\)Hagen and Ivanhoff, p.26

\(^{32}\)Ibid, p.30.
Because many homeless women have been abused and/or battered, it is impossible to understand homeless women without understanding the nature of abusive and battering relationships and their impact on women. Also, the literature on abused women may have important implications about the service needs of homeless women. First, prevalence of battering in the United States will be explored.

Rates of Battering in the United States

In the past twenty years, reported rates of domestic violence have skyrocketed. Pagelow states: “In 1985, over 1300 women were killed by a husband or boyfriend, which was 30% of the total homicides of females.” 33 A statistic from 1984 reports that 1.8 million wives are physically abused by their husbands each year.34 Carlson states: “Violence occurs each year between at least one out of every six couples who live together, married or unmarried.” 35 The rates of homicide between marital partners are even more disturbing. 4,000 women are killed each year by their husbands, and 75% of these murders occur after the woman has left her husband.36 The exact rate of domestic abuse is unknown because “domestic violence is the most committed and least reported crime in

34Carlson, p.570
America.” However, since it is being reported more readily, and since the battered women’s shelters are constantly filled, we can safely assume that domestic violence is prevalent within many homes in the United States.

Domestic violence has been socially recognized for centuries. Women were (and to an extent still are) regarded as property of their husbands. A marriage license in effect was a hitting license. There used to be a law which specified that “men could beat their wives with a stick no thicker than his thumb.” This law publicly condoned domestic violence. Walker draws a connection between this stick rule and the modern form of dealing with domestic violence. She states:

Many states still have an informal stick rule they follow in deciding whether or not to arrest and prosecute an offender by counting the number of stitches the victim’s wounds need.

Hence, the problem of wife abuse has yet to be socially condemned.

African-American Rates of Battering

The battered women’s movement grew out of the women’s liberation movement, which was made up largely of white middle class women. While information on battered women has grown rapidly, unfortunately little information on the experiences of African American battered women is available. African American battered women were not acknowledged until only very recently.

37 Ibid
39 Ibid, p.12
Due to cultural stereotypes of the African-American family, it is often assumed by the larger society that rates of physical abuse are higher in African American families than in white families. The African American male is often stereotyped as being extremely violent; African American families are often labelled as deviant.

In estimating the rates of abuse of African American and white couples, police statistics show that African American couples have a rate of abuse 400% higher than that of white couples. Many scholars have used these statistics to reinforce their stereotypical images of the African American family. Lockhart states: "They have hastily concluded that black husbands are more violent toward their wives than are white husbands..." Lockhart points out that African American rates of domestic violence appear to be higher than those of Whites since African Americans are overrepresented in the lower class, and there is a higher incidence of abuse in the lower class.

Estimates of rates and conclusions regarding the extent and nature of marital violence based upon official police statistics and clinical populations do not provide an adequate basis for racial comparisons, because of the overrepresentation of black or lower class individuals in these populations.

She suggests that these types of statistical procedures are faulty in that they ignore the impact of class.

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41Ibid, p.602.
In fact, in studies where class is controlled, no significant difference in the rates of abuse of African American and white women has been found. In an article which summarizes findings from several different studies, Coley states: "The literature destroys the myth that African American and other minority women are more likely to be victims of spouse assault." 43 She reports that the National Crime Survey of US Households revealed no significant differences in levels of abuse between white and African American women. In their study of battered women, Cazenave and Strauss found:

When they controlled for family income, black husbands were less likely than white husbands to have slapped their wives in all income groups except those in the 6,000-11,999 range.44

Similar findings were reported by Lockhart, who designed a study to compare African American and white battered women using samples which were balanced according to race and social class. She concluded:

Overall, there is no significant difference in the proportion of black and white women who reported they were victims of husband-to-wife violence...the only significant difference is a large(r) proportion of middle class black women reported they were victims of violence from their marital partners.45

44Lockhart, p. 604.
Thus, the basic conclusion of these two studies is that African Americans reported less abuse in all cases but the middle class, which makes up 40% of the African American population. Lockhart provides an explanation for why violence in the middle class is greater among African American couples:

Many blacks have only recently arrived into middle-class positions as a result of some relatively recent changes in the social, economic and political structures of our society. Middle-class blacks who have recently acquired their status bring with them the norms, values and role expectations of their lower socioeconomic status developmental experiences as well as acquiring those associated with their new status.\(^\text{46}\)

The significant aspect of these studies is that they shatter the stereotype of African American husbands as being more abusive to their wives than white husbands. It is apparent that some African American women do suffer from abuse; their experience should be studied separately, for it may be different from that of white battered women.

\(^{46}\)Ibid, p.609.
Theories on Violence Against Women

Causes of Abuse

Feminist Perspective

There are two major theoretical perspectives on why violence against women in this society occurs: the feminist and the conservative, or family-focused perspective. In the past twenty years a shift in public policy reflects a change in the paradigm pertaining to the causal factors of abuse towards women. The Battered Women's Movement, growing out of the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960's, upheld a strong feminist perspective on violence against women. This perspective advocates that violence against women is a manifestation of male dominance and oppression of women by the larger society. Davis and Hagen state:

In the woman centered perspective, violence against wives is a major social problem that is deeply rooted in sexism and the powerlessness of women. It is caused by a host of social factors including the patriarchal social system, concern with preserving the family even at the expense of its more vulnerable members, and the ongoing socialization that causes women to be economically and psychologically dependent on men.47

The norms about power and authority within the family setting reflect larger sociocultural norms of male dominance in society. Carlson states:

...cultural norms and values permitting and sometimes encouraging husband-to-wife violence reflect the hierarchical and male dominant type of society which characterizes the western world.\textsuperscript{48}

Men and women are socialized to expect that men should dominate over women. This expectation often causes and perpetuates the incidence of domestic violence. Furthermore, if a man feels he is not dominant in all aspects of the home, he may resort to physical violence in order to assert his position of dominance within the home. Carlson states:

...in order for a male to legitimate his position of dominance in the family, he must demonstrate superior personal resources compared to his female partner. If he does not possess such validating resources - for example, if his wife has more education or earns a higher salary than he - he may resort to the ultimate resource, namely, physical violence, in order to maintain his position of dominance.\textsuperscript{49}

The quote shows how the societal expectation of male dominance and wife-beating are linked.

Furthermore, children are socialized to adhere to certain gender stereotypes, which contribute to the incidence of domestic violence. Walker suggests: “It is entirely possible that sex-role socialization in young children leaves women vulnerable to becoming victims of men who are socialized into committing violence against them.” \textsuperscript{50} Hence at a young age, children are socialized to adhere to roles which may eventually lead them into abusive relationships.

\textsuperscript{48}Carlson, p.578  
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid, p.572.  
\textsuperscript{50}Walker, p.16.
In her article on theoretical perspectives of wife abuse, Demie Kurz suggests that economic dependency is a powerful force which keeps women in abusive relationships. She states:

Feminists argue further that the use of violence for control in marriage is perpetuated not only through norms about a man’s rights in marriage, but through women’s continued economic dependency on their husbands, which makes it difficult to leave a violent relationship.51

Because of economic dependency, many battered women find it impossible to escape their abusive husbands. Women are taught not to be aggressive, a trait that works to keep women out of the leading positions in the job sector. Furthermore, stereotypes teach women to be teachers, nurses and social workers; all are fields with low economic gain. Sex discrimination in the work place also fosters economic dependency and traps women in abusive relationships.

Research supports the hypothesis that many women are often forced to remain in abusive relationships due to economic dependency. This notion is supported by the finding that: “...on the average, when a married couple separates the woman’s standard of living drops by 73% in the first year.”52 Furthermore, studies have shown that when provided with economic independency, battered women were more likely to leave their abusers. Davis and Hagen state:

... new evidence indicates that battered women, if provided with the proper resources, will leave their

52Davidson, Barbara Parmert and Jenkins, Pamela J., “Class Diversity in Shelter Life.” Social Work, vol.34, no.6, p.492
abusers...In a study of more than 6,000 sheltered women, Gondolf and Fisher found that the best service predictors of whether a woman would remain away from her abusive partner related to her having the resources to live independently, such as transportation, child care, and a source of income after leaving the shelter.\textsuperscript{53}

If women weren't economically dependent upon men, they wouldn't be trapped in abusive relationships. This notion is further supported in the following statement by Gondolf: "...one prominent study suggests that greater women's equality reflected in women's incomes, educational levels, and legal rights may be deterrent to wife abuse. States with the greatest "equality" tend to have less wife abuse." \textsuperscript{54} Hence, it is apparent that economic dependency fosters abuse against women in this society.

Overall, the feminist perspective on abuse of women suggests that the societal oppression of women, manifested in different aspects of the society, works to create and maintain male dominance and violence against women. Carlson sums up the impact of societal oppression on wife-battering in the following statement:

Sexism contributes to family violence...it is manifested in the manner in which we socialize our children - boys for independence and aggressiveness, and girls for dependency and passivity. Sexism is also manifested in the response of the criminal justice system to the dangers to which women are daily subjected and by its refusal to take women seriously. And it is manifested in the labor market, where it is more difficult for women to obtain jobs, hold them, and recover from their loss, and where

\textsuperscript{53}Davis and Hagen, "The Problem of Wife Abuse," p.18
\textsuperscript{54}Gondolf, Edward W. with Fisher, Ellen R., Battered Women as Survivors: An Alternative to Treating Learned Helplessness. Lexington Books, Massachusetts, 1988, p.88
women are still not assured of equal pay for equal work.\textsuperscript{55}

This powerful statement provides an explanation of how societal dominance and oppression of women work to cause domestic violence. This perspective advocates that change in the social structure of society is necessary in reducing violence against women. Hagen and Davis state:

The [early] writers emphasized that wife abuse would decline only when the sexist attitudes and policies that impeded women from becoming competent and independent adults and the norms that supported men's domination of women and their use of violence were changed.\textsuperscript{56}

Hence, the feminist perspective on abuse of women focuses on the societal oppression of women, and advocates that until societal attitudes are changed, women will suffer from domestic abuse.

**Family-Focused Perspective**

During the 1980's, the perspective on abuse towards women shifted to focus on individuals and families, rather than on sexism within the social structure of society. This perspective focuses on individual and family pathology and tends to underplay male domination and violence against women in the home and in society.\textsuperscript{57}

Hagen and Davis state:

...violence against wives, reconceptualized in the 1970's as a major social problem deeply rooted in sexism and the powerlessness of women, has been transformed

\textsuperscript{55}Carlson, p.576.
\textsuperscript{56}Davis and Hagen, "The Problem of Wife Abuse," p.17
\textsuperscript{57}Pagelow, p.88
during the 1980's into an intrapersonal and interpersonal problem in which violence is perceived as a way in which men resolve problems created by dysfunctional family dynamics.\textsuperscript{58}

The family focused perspective represents a shift in assessment of family violence - from attributing it to patriarchal values in society to individual and family pathology.

The family focused perspective has been labelled as patriarchal by many people who regard woman abuse from a feminist perspective. Gondolf states:

The first patriarchal assumption rooted deep in our society is that problems are caused by some individual pathology. Our social policies tend to address deviance and dysfunction in individuals or families rather than in the structures of society as a whole...our social science must therefore identify what is "wrong" with individuals and find ways to "fix" them or bring them back to the norm.\textsuperscript{59}

The family-focused perspective applies this individualistic approach toward domestic violence.

This approach also suggests that violence towards wives is just one aspect of the problem of violence in the family. Strauss and Gelles state:

It seems as if violence is built into the very structure of society and the family system itself... It (wife beating) is only one aspect of the general pattern of family violence, which includes parent-child violence, child-to-child violence, and wife-to-husband violence.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{59}Gondolf, p.24
\textsuperscript{60}Kurz, p.492
They attribute family violence to several factors including elevated stress from outside factors, and the increased amount of privacy accorded to the contemporary family.

The family focused perspective also suggests that the causes of domestic violence lie in faulty behavior of all individuals within the family. Hagen and Davis state:

[According to the family focused perspective] Contributing factors to family violence include a faulty learning environment that provides models of violent interpersonal behavior... escalating personal conflict in which abused and abuser both participate, and external stress.61

This quote introduces the controversy over whether or not abuse is an act which is learned and acted out as a result of growing up in a violent home. This notion is based on the social learning theory.

Social learning theory suggests that children learn how to act by watching others and learning the consequences of certain actions. If a boy watches his mother obey his father after he has hit her, then he may learn that physical force is an acceptable form of gaining what he wants. Carlson states:

...children learn at a very early age that it is legitimate to use physical force to accomplish your goals, and that those who love you are also those who hurt you.62

Ryback and Bassuk suggest that because battered women have generally been abused as children, they often marry early to escape the abuse they experience at home. At such a young age, they are more prone to become economically and socially dependent on their

61Davis and Hagen. "The Problem of Wife Abuse," p.16
husbands. High rates of battering among men who come from abusive homes have been reported. Carlson reports: “The sons of the most violent parents have a rate of wife-beating one thousand times greater than that of the sons of non-violent parents.” Hence it is apparent that being a child in an abusive household may predispose one to perpetrating violence or becoming its victim.

Yet, other findings fail to support social learning theory in terms of abusive behavior. Stark and Flitcraft found that 90% of children from 'violent' and 80% of children from 'most violent' homes are not now currently abusive. Their findings suggest that abuse is not necessarily passed along through families. Pagelow states: “Kaufman and Ziegler see history of abuse as only one risk factor out of many. They conclude, “the time has come for the intergenerational myth to be put aside.”” Hence, this is a controversial issue in the field of domestic abuse. The family focused perspective tends to support the idea that abuse is passed along, for it attributes the causes of abuse to individual dysfunctional families.

The Reagan/Bush Administration, adheres to the family-focused perspective on domestic violence. In 1990, Schacht and Eitzen compared studies on domestic violence which were funded by the government to those which were funded through other means. They found that “government funded studies focused on individual characteristics of abusers, while non-government supported research focused on patriarchal and structural reasons for women being

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63 Ryback and Bassuk, p.57
64 Carlson, p.574.
65 Pagelow, p.110
66 Ibid, p.110
battered." 67 This finding illustrates the power held by the Republican Administration in changing the theoretical framework for studying domestic violence in the social science literature.

**Race-Specific Theories of Battering**

Some view domestic violence in the African American community as a symptom of racial oppression. In her article, "Battered Black Women: A Challenge for the Black Community", Richie states:

> Domestic violence is not a problem in black communities. It's occurrence, like substance abuse, crime, and unwanted adolescent pregnancy, are symptoms of living systematically in a society that is designed to dominate and control third world people.68

This viewpoint is also expressed by Cazenave and Strauss. They state:

> Much of the black family violence in this country may simply be a reflection of the internalization and amplification of systematic violations (violence) against blacks in American society-at-large.69

In his article entitled "Sociocultural Aspects of Domestic Violence," David Gil presents an analysis of the causes of violence in the home. He attributes violence to societal oppression, stating:

67Ibid, p.88
The coercive processes by which social inequalities are established and conserved tend to induce violent responses from individuals and groups who are exploited, deprived, and oppressed within inegalitarian social structures.70

In Cazenave and Strauss's article, abuse within African American families is a result of societal oppression in the United States:

Robert Staples states that since blacks are not inherently more violent than whites, and in other countries may be less violent than either black or white Americans, the explanation for high rates of black family violence (where they do exist) must lie in the particular social predicament in which blacks find themselves in American society.71

This quote suggests that domestic violence in the African American community can be attributed to societal oppression of African Americans by the larger society.

Further, oppression of African American males by the white male dominated society is in turn deflected onto African American women and children in the form of domestic violence. Coley and Beckett explain:

The black male's anger toward the white system for his inability to assume or maintain economic and other social roles typically assigned to the male in this society is turned against black women, a less threatening and more available target.72

71Cazenave and Strauss, p.296
This notion is supported by other scholars in this field as well. In her book, *Women and Male Violence*, Schechter found: “For those [hispanic and black battered] women, there is a sense of protection and guilt toward black men because the larger society is so hostile.”

In her article on third world women, Richie states:

> Certain groups believe battering is due to systematic deprivation inflicted upon third world men, who in turn, take it out on their wives.

This perspective on domestic violence in the African American community has important implications for understanding battering at large. If abuse of African American women is primarily a symptom of societal oppression of African Americans, then treatment of the problem as if it were identical to white women's experiences will not be effective. Because the social work field sees battered women as one group of women in similar circumstances, the specific situations of minority women are being ignored. This is a prime example of structural discrimination.

However, the notion that domestic violence in African American families is caused by societal oppression of the African American male has been challenged by African American feminists. Some believe that often times concern over racism allows the African American community to ignore sexism within the community. Schechter states:

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74 Richie, p.44.
Among women of color, there are major disagreements over whether violence against them results from sexism or from the racism and powerlessness third world men experience.\textsuperscript{75}

The importance of racism and sexism as causal factors for domestic violence in the African American community is controversial.

\textbf{Effects of Abuse}

\textbf{Learned Helplessness}

A controversial issue within the literature is whether or not survivors of domestic violence suffer from “learned helplessness”. According to Learned Helplessness Theory, when a person is in a situation where s/he lacks control over a situation for a period of time, s/he eventually comes to the conclusion that s/he will never have control over it, and even when a possibility for escape from the situation comes along, s/he does not act upon it. Of Learned Helplessness, Schneiderman and Weber state:

The theory suggests that individuals, when faced with uncontrollable situations, initially react with anger and aggression, symptoms of “reactance”, in efforts to reassert personal control. If the loss of control persists despite individual initiatives, the individual will experience helplessness, which is eventually internalized after prolonged repetition and can become a generalized chronic state. The helpless state is characterized by motivational deficits, apathy, resignation, and an inability to recognize and respond to new opportunity.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75}Schechter, p.274.
More important than the actual control one has within a certain environment is the individual's perception of the situation. If she believes that she has lost control over the situation, then regardless if it is true or not, she will act according to this belief. Gondolf states: "One's own perceptions of the environment are what most influence one's reaction to it. If an individual perceives a series of punishments or failures as outside of his or her control, then learned helplessness is more likely."77 Supporting this notion, Kane states:

Learned helplessness implies a motivational deficit (people come to believe action is futile), cognitive interference (people will have difficulty learning that action can produce favorable results in new situations), and effective reaction (depression or resignation)...As time passes, if more information becomes available that confirms the fact that the outcome is uncontrollable, helplessness would eventually develop.78

These statements suggest that Learned Helplessness can result from a number of situations involving a individual's lack of control.

Learned Helplessness has been applied to theories of abuse. The literature suggests that the lack of control a child or women experiences when abused over a period of time, may result in learned helplessness. Gondolf states: "...studies have suggested that learned helplessness may be rooted in childhood exposure to violence."79 If a child learns at an early age that s/he has no control over abuse, s/he may adopt this outlook toward other aspects of her life, and hence may suffer from learned helplessness.

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77 Gondolf, p.16
79 Gondolf, p.14
The theory is often used in explaining the behavior of battered women. Many people question why battered women don't leave their abusers. If a battered wife believes that she has no control over the situation, then she will experience learned helplessness. The key is that she does not necessarily lack control over the situation, but she believes that she does. Walker states: “Once the women are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive, “helpless.””

Repeated batterings diminish the woman's motivation to respond to the violence or the situation. Over a period of time, “a climate of fear is established which is maintained by the ever-present potential for extremely violent explosions.” This climate of fear succeeds in preventing the woman from escaping the situation. In their book on abused women, Nicarthy, Merriam and Coffman state: “While to an outside observer it might look as if battered women could either defend themselves or leave, they have learned to be afraid and to believe that no matter what they do, nothing will bring about change.”

These quotes illustrate how the theory of Learned Helplessness has been utilized in studying abused women, and specifically how it can explain the behavior of battered women who stay with their abusers.

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80 Walker, p.147
81 Ibid, p.148
The Survivor Hypothesis

Learned Helplessness Theory has been challenged by those who see it as a manifestation of a conservative "blame the victim" approach to woman abuse. In Gondolf's article on this issue, he suggests that although not originally intended, Learned Helplessness has been used to implicate masochistic tendencies of battered women.\(^{83}\) He states:

[According to Learned Helplessness Theory], Battered women...appear to need specialized counseling to address their debilitated psychological state...Feminist critics, however, have strongly objected to the implication that battered women prolong or provoke abuse and generally require psychological counseling.\(^{84}\)

In contrast to learned helplessness, Gondolf offers the following theory of battered women's behavior: Over a period of time, battered women start to blame themselves for the abuse. This self-blame allows the victim a degree of control over the abuse. Therefore, battered women actually increase their attempts to escape the situation as the violence worsens. He states:

We offer, therefore, a survivor hypothesis that contradicts the assumptions of learned helplessness: Battered women increase their help-seeking in the face of increased violence, rather than decrease help-seeking as learned helplessness would suggest.\(^{85}\)

Gondolf suggests that as the victim of abuse perceives that she and her children are in more and more danger, she reacts by seeking help. Furthermore, the battered woman will leave the relationship

\(^{83}\)Gondolf, p.14
\(^{84}\)Ibid, p.13
\(^{85}\)Ibid, p.18
when she no longer has hope that the abuser will change. He concludes: “Rather than treat the symptoms of learned helplessness in victims, we need to help them better appraise dangerousness ...” 86

In sum, it is apparent that within the literature, there is some debate as to whether or not battered women suffer from and should be treated for “learned helplessness”.

**Self-Esteem and Depression**

Self-Esteem is not easily defined. In their article on the measurement of self-esteem, Baker and Gallant define it as: “the evaluative aspect of self, or self-regard. It relates to how much we like or do not like ourselves.” 87 Trimpey summarizes: “[Most definitions] of self-esteem centered around the behavioral and emotional processes by which the self was judged, evaluated, regarded or appraised.” 88 It has been suggested that low self-esteem can contribute to social problems. Smelser states the importance of boosting self-esteem of citizens in the following statement:

> It [is] essential for the leaders of society, first, to establish social conditions that will maximize the development of self-esteem among the population, and second, to establish social arrangements that will rescue and

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86Ibid, p.38
rehabilitate those who have emerged from families and communities with a sense of diminished self worth.\textsuperscript{89}

He suggests that self-esteem is a primary factor in affecting how well or poorly an individual functions in society. He goes so far as to suggest that "many, if not most of the major problems plaguing society have roots in the low self-esteem of many of the people who make up society." \textsuperscript{90}

In fact, abuse has been linked to a lowering of self-esteem. In their article on child maltreatment and self-esteem, Bhatti, Derezotes, Kim and Specht state: "There is considerable evidence that lowered self-esteem is one result of child sexual abuse, particularly as a long term effect." \textsuperscript{91} Lowered self-esteem as a result of abuse has also been associated with battered women in specific. Women in physically abusive relationships are often subject to emotional abuse which serves to lower self-esteem.\textsuperscript{92}

It is controversial whether or not battered women who seek shelter often suffer from psychological distress, such as depression or anxiety. In a comparison study of battered women and psychologically depressed persons, Trimpey states:

The preponderance of low self-esteem and high anxiety scores and the similarities between anxiety scores in

\textsuperscript{90}Smelser, p.1
\textsuperscript{92}Trimpey, p.298
depressed patients and the abused women in this study raise the question of whether the abused women studied are experiencing clinical depression.\textsuperscript{93}

In support of the notion that battered women do suffer from psychological distress, Gelles and Harrop state:

...the literature to date reports emotional and psychological deficits among battered women who have sought psychiatric help or refuge in a battered women's shelter. Virtually every study mentions depression, anxiety, somatic problems, and suicide attempts.\textsuperscript{94}

This quote suggests that many studies have alluded to the psychological distress experienced by battered women. Yet, others have suggested the contrary. Gondolf states: "...the battered women in the Walker sample did not score significantly lower on psychological tests for the externalized control, weak self-esteem, or depression...than did a control group of women not in abusive relationships." \textsuperscript{95} Hence, while it has been common for studies to support the hypothesis that battered women experience lowered self-esteem, anxiety and depression, this has been challenged by the findings in at least one study.

It is important to find out whether or not abused women suffer from depression and/or lowered self-esteem. By comparing women who were abused as children and/or as adults to non-abused women, it is possible to find out specifically which types of abuse affect levels of self-esteem and/or depression. Information on the levels of

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid, p.307  
\textsuperscript{94}Gelles, Richard J. and Harrop, John W. "Violence, Battering, and Psychological Distress Among Women," \textit{Journal of Interpersonal Violence}, vol.4, no.4, December, 1989, p.403  
\textsuperscript{95}Gondolf, p.18
self-esteem and depression of abused women would offer implications to the service providers of this population.

**Current Service System**

**Homeless Women**

The current service system for homeless women consists of a limited shelter network. Certain agencies, such as The Salvation Army, provide emergency shelter for up to two days for both men and women. Shelters which house residents for up to 30 days are available so long as they are not full. The latter often serve homeless men and women, and provide residents with food, shelter and minimal transportation. Residents do not usually receive any programs such as counseling, job training or support groups while staying at the shelter.

It is important to recognize how the current service system has been set up and why it is not meeting the needs of homeless women. Because the majority of the homeless used to be older white male alcoholics, the support system was set up to serve this type of population. However, since the present homeless population is no longer dominated by white male alcoholics, the system is not necessarily equipped to meet the needs of the new homeless population. Mills and Ota state:

The changes in the overall composition of the homeless population from the traditional middle-aged, white, male alcoholic to young adults, elderly women, and families

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96Feltey, p.6
with children - suggest that the homeless population is heterogeneous, with complex problems and multiple needs.\textsuperscript{97}

The emergence of families and women in the homeless population presents a complex set of problems for the service provision system. Specifically, homeless women with their histories of abuse constitute a significant challenge for clinicians.\textsuperscript{98} Also, the specific needs of African American women should not be overlooked. It has been suggested that unless the current system is modified to serve their needs, many homeless women may experience chronic homelessness.

**Battered Women**

In the past, there were virtually no social services provided for battered women. Marital disputes were traditionally left alone - intervention was seen as "off limits". Up until very recently, a marriage license was a license to batter. In the past twenty years, the battered women's movement has grown tremendously. Battered women's shelters have sprung up throughout the country, allowing women a safe retreat where they can receive support from other women. The leaders of the movement advocated that battered women receive a range of public services allowing them economic as well as psychological independence from their abusers. Davis and Hagen state:

> Early writers emphasized concrete services that would enable women to live independently, welfare and legal

\textsuperscript{97}Mills and Ota, p. 485.

\textsuperscript{98}Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.68.
advocacy to ensure access to services and resources, and counseling to help them make effective use of these resources. 99

Under Carter, legislation on domestic violence responded to the specific needs of battered women. The United States Commission on Civil Rights, introduced under the Carter Administration, recommended providing battered women with: pay equity, enforcement of child support, adequate low-cost housing, child care and job training. 100 This approach reflects feminist notions of gender inequality as being at the root of the problem of domestic violence.

With the change in executive leadership from the Carter Administration to the Reagan/Bush Administration, the government's approach toward domestic violence shifted to be family-focused. The goals of the Republican Administration were to enhance family functioning and to use the criminal justice system to protect and punish family members. This change in perspective is summarized in the following quote by Hagen and Davis:

In a relatively short time, concern for women who were abused by men and the structures of patriarchal society had been radically altered. Men's victimization by women's false claims of rape, sexual abuse and battering was to be the focus of attention...this shift has been caused by the country's increasingly conservative and anti-feminist sociopolitical climate, which has influenced both policy makers and practitioners. 101

Under the Republican Administration, emergency protection for victims coupled with efforts to reinforce familial values were

99 Davis and Hagen, “The Problem of Wife Abuse,” p.17
100 Ibid, p.16
101 Ibid, p.18
instituted. Hagen and Davis criticize the service response to domestic violence under the Reagan Administration:

Rather than creating conditions to enable women to take control of their own lives, interventions [such as legal protection orders, or teaching of non-violent means of resolving conflict], were designed to stop the individual acts of violence...and to improve interpersonal relationships so that families could stay together....These models signified an anti-feminist backlash.... Reliance on such family focused strategies may create the illusion that the problem has been resolved while keeping women in their historically dependent and vulnerable position within families.102

It is important to recognize the position of the Reagan/Bush Administration on this issue, and in turn how the current services affect battered women who seek help throughout the country today. The current service system for battered women consists of: police intervention, legal assistance and shelters.

Police Intervention

In much of the literature on battered women, the role of the police is overlooked. While only one tenth of domestic violence victims call the police, one third of the calls to the police concern domestic conflict103. This illustrates the magnitude of the problem. In most cases, the police are unhelpful to the victim of the violence. Historically, police were trained to get control over the situation, and then leave. Pagelow states: “Officers’ instructions were based on an

102 Ibid. p.16
103 Mark Wynn
official nonarrest policy; they were to “cool down” these “domestic disputes” by “adjustment without arrest.” 104 Walker states: “Police have been trained to counsel the victim and the batterer, to calm them down, and then to leave them alone.” 105 In some cases, the police actually serve to exacerbate violence within the home. Walker found that “most women report that violence increases after the police leave.” 106 The reason for this is that the police often question the victim when the abuser is present. Sergeant Wynn compared this to the tapes released of prisoners of war siding with the enemy. Just as those tapes are made with a gun to the prisoners head, the battered woman knows that if her husband hears her testify against him, he will surely beat her badly as soon as the police leave. The battered woman is smart enough not to trust that what she says will be respected, nor that her partner will be arrested.

A study done in Kansas City found that police had been to the home at least once in 90% of the homicides in which a woman had been killed by her abusive partner. Even more alarming, fifty percent of the homes in which the homicide occurred had been visited five times or more by the police. These striking results show that in homes where the police had been summoned numerous times, and hence where help was sought, the lack of intervention ended up in the death of a woman. At the site of the murder of a wife and three small children, and the suicide of the batterer, the local officer was asked if he had ever been to the home. “Oh yeah, all of the time.

104 Pagelow, p.92
105 Walker, p.64
106 Ibid, p.64
We were always getting calls from the neighbors. We would show up and the woman would tell us that everything was fine. What a waste of time." 107 As the officer was saying this, his face changed as he realized that he in part had contributed to the slaying of this entire family. Upon realizing this, the officer broke down. This anecdote illustrates that police non-intervention in domestic violence situations can contribute to the incidence of marital homicide.

The institution of mandatory arrest in certain states has proven to reduce battering. A study conducted in Minneapolis in 1981 found that a mandatory arrest policy was more successful than sending the abuser away temporarily, or giving him advice, in reducing violence.108 In Newport, before they instilled a mandatory arrest policy, the figures for homicide in 1984 and 1985 were 9 and 7, respectively. After the mandatory arrest policy, the number of homicides in 1986, 1987, and 1988 were 4, 3 and 2, respectively. These figures show that mandatory arrest by the police can serve to prevent the slaying of battered wives.

Legal Services

In the past decade, battered women have gained some ground in the legal system, yet full protection from their abusers has yet to be gained. Under the Reagan/Bush Administration, "the problem [of wife abuse] was redefined from a social problem with responsibility in the Department of Human Services to a criminal problem with

107 Wynn
108 Pagelow, p.92
responsibility in the Department of Justice.” 109 Under the current legal system, the chances of an abused women convicting her abuser are very slim. Few women take their abusers to court; even those who do prosecute face a battle which is rarely won. Many battered women are afraid to leave their abusive partner because they don't want to lose their home and/or their children. Pagelow states: “...battered women have profound fears of losing custody [of their children]... Abusive spouses [use custody] to maintain domination and control of their wives when they seek escape.” 110 This fear is justified due to the “new phenomenon of battered women losing custody of their children to their abusers because of their “failure to protect” the children from their own fathers.” 111 While battered women have come along way just to be recognized by the legal system, the support they need and deserve from it is lacking. Due in part to their knowledge of the failure of the legal system to protect them, many battered women choose to remain with their abusers.

Shelter Services

In the past twenty years, underground shelters have been established throughout the United States, providing battered women with a safe, secret space to which they can flee from their abusers. Walker states: “The importance of the shelter movement is that it provides a sense of community and support system.”112 Battered women's shelters often make an effort to cut the victim off from the

109Davis and Hagen, “The Problem of Wife Abuse,” p.16
110Pagelow, p.104
111Ibid, p.111
112Walker, p.198
outside world and instill her with a sense of self-confidence and inner-strength. The shelter system has provided many abused women with a place to go as well as the attention that they need to overcome their situation. Many times, battered women will go back to their abusers from the shelter; it usually takes five to seven times for a battered women to make the final break. The battered women's shelter provides a place for women to go during this period. The process of leaving an abusive relationship is difficult and complex. Recognizing it as a process, the battered women's shelter provides a vital step in the direction away from the abusive partner.

Battered women's shelters include support groups for their residents. The focus on support groups reflects feminist aversion to individual therapy, which inherently involves a hierarchical relationship between the patient and the therapist. Trimpey explains: "The support group concept was designed to foster the idea that members are capable of helping not only themselves, but others in the group."\textsuperscript{113} Under the guidance of a trained facilitator, the group sessions are geared towards increasing the self-esteem and providing battered women with the support they need to stay away from the abuser. Nicarthy, Merriam and Coffman explain the positive affect of support groups in the following statement:

Individual women who feel stigmatized, isolated, powerless and to blame for their problems benefit greatly from exchanging information and expressing feelings with others in similar situations and women who have been battered especially so.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113}Trimpey, p.300
\textsuperscript{114}Coffman, Merriam and Nicarthy, p.25
Once a woman recognizes that she is not alone, she begins to stop blaming herself for the violence she has experienced. Trimpey states: “A support group ... does have the potential to be a powerful weapon that builds on the need people have to share common problems in an environment that supports knowledge and growth.”

Within the group, women learn from each other and use each other as impressive models of how they can change their lives. The group can have a positive effect on self esteem. Trimpey states: “Working with others in a group setting diminishes isolation and helps foster a positive self concept through guidance and reinforcement from other group members.” Self-esteem is further enhanced through the actions of the group facilitator.

The support group leader also reinforced self-esteem. Knowledge of the theories of violence were used to diminish a woman's sense of personal responsibility for her abuse and combat the idea that violence is a sign of her personal worthlessness.

Support groups provide an environment in which battered women can gain support, inspiration and self-esteem. While this notion is widely accepted, few studies have actually tested if this is true. Gondolf states: “Despite the strong demand for shelter care, there is relatively little research that empirically assesses the impact of shelter services on their residents.” It is important to explore whether or not the support group actually increases self-esteem, and

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115 Trimpey, p.307
116 Ibid, p.299
117 Ibid, p.306
118 Gondolf, p.81
further, how it affects other aspects of the battered women's psychological well-being.

**African Americans in Battered Women's Service System**

It is important to find out if the needs of African American battered women are being met through current social services. The first issue to address is whether or not African American women even receive support services. In their study of marital violence in the African American community, Lockhart and White report:

Help seeking by Black women experiencing marital violence was primarily evident among the lower-class women in the survey. The largest percentage of this group turned to relatives and friends rather than to more formal sources of help, a clear indication that social policy and service efforts must build broader support for such families.\(^{119}\)

Comparing African American help-seeking behavior to that of white women, Coley and Beckett state: "Black battered women may be less apt to seek shelter services than are white battered women."\(^{120}\) Their study displays different patterns of help-seeking behavior for African American and white women. They found: "Black women were more likely to seek medical services and least apt to go to a shelter or obtain assistance from human service professionals."\(^{121}\)

Conversely, white women were more likely to seek human services and less likely to seek medical help. The literature attributes three

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\(^{119}\)Lockhart, Lettie and White, Barbara W. "Understanding Marital Violence in the Black Community," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol.4, no.4, December 1989, p.433

\(^{120}\)Coley, and Beckett, "Black Battered Women: Practice Issues," p.484.

\(^{121}\)Coley, p.489.
main causal factors of this phenomenon: 1) lack of outreach into the African American community to inform women of shelter services, 2) the African American women who are informed about shelter services believe they were established for white women, and 3) limited employment of African American women in the shelters. These factors work together to make African American battered women feel unwelcomed by the current service system.

Furthermore, it is apparent that when African American women do choose to come to shelters, they often feel excluded. Schechter states:

Because of white middle class bias of most battered women's programs, some women of color have been reluctant to use shelters. When they do so, they often feel isolated or ostracized.

This quote illustrates that the standard battered women's shelter is set up and run in such a way that makes many African American women feel uncomfortable. One problem in many battered women's shelters is in the attitude of many staff members. They often assume that all of the residents have the same needs. Schechter states:

In most shelters, where staff is predominantly white, workers are often unaware of differences in family patterns and socialization experiences and are not

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122 Coley and Beckett, p.489. This is also supported by Schechter, p.272
123 Coley and Beckett, p.488
124 Schechter, p.272
necessarily sensitive to the impact of racism on women's lives.126

The general attitude of the staff is rarely accommodating to the experiences of African American women.

Furthermore, the physical set-up of battered women's shelters generally reflects white middle class values. This does not mean that shelters were specifically designed to exclude them, but because African American women are not running the shelters, their needs have been overlooked. Coley and Beckett state:

All too often, the selection of games, toys, (for example dolls) and books for children; adult reading materials...reflect a white norm and ignore minority experience. Shelter decor, including posters and pictures, may offer subtle messages to women of color that they do not belong.127

This quote suggests that even after a African American woman makes the decision to seek shelter, she may be made to feel uncomfortable because it is designed according to the white middle class norm.

Beyond the physical nature of the shelter, African American battered women do not always benefit from shelter programs as much as do white battered women. For example, counseling is often mandatory as an element in the “healing” programs of the shelter. Coley and Beckett state:

The general literature on counseling with blacks indicates that blacks are reluctant to seek counseling services and after they enter

127 Coley and Beckett, p.486.
psychotherapy they tend to have lower expectations, experience less trust, feel less understood, and are more likely to drop out of therapy before mutual termination is agreed upon.\textsuperscript{128}

Coley suggests that African Americans do not benefit from counseling as much as Whites do because it does not respect their racial identity. She explains:

The results of these studies parallel discussions in the cross cultural counseling literature indicating that blacks usually do not seek mental health services because they regard them to be contrary to their own cultural experiences and inappropriate or insufficient to meet their perceived needs.\textsuperscript{129}

These quotes provide evidence that African American battered women do not necessarily benefit from the shelter experience as much as do white battered women. Although it is not intentional, African American women's needs for different programs may be ignored in the current structure of battered women's shelters in the United States.

Research Implications from Literature Review

In order for homeless women to fully benefit from social services, their experiences which differ from those of homeless men must be acknowledged. Many women have survived abuse; this should be recognized by the service providers for this population. It is possible that homeless women would benefit from services which

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid, p.489.
\textsuperscript{129}Coley, p.269.
are currently being provided for battered women. Furthermore, the abuse histories as well as demographic characteristics of homeless and battered women should be compared, for it is possible that these two groups represent the same population of women.

Although the literature does recognize that abused women often suffer from psychological distress such as depression and low self-esteem, few studies have assessed the impact of programs provided for them. Before suggesting that homeless women be offered similar services as those provided for battered women, the current programs for the latter should be tested to see whether or not they are beneficial. Furthermore, empirical information on the benefits of battered women's programs for African American women in comparison to white women should be assessed, for the needs of the former are possibly being neglected by the current social service system.

Questions:

1. Do women staying in homeless shelters have similar histories of abuse as women staying in battered women's shelters? In addition, do the two groups share similar demographic characteristics?

2. Among battered and homeless women, is there a relationship between past abuse and self-esteem and/or depression?

3. Does living in the battered women's shelter increase self-esteem and decrease depression of battered women?

4. Is staying in the battered women's shelter less beneficial for African American residents than for white residents?
Study Design

This study explores several aspects of the relationship between battering and homelessness for women. The first segment of the study is a replication of previous studies on homeless women, exploring the abuse histories of homeless women, including the status of their current relationship(s). This is significant in that the high rates of abuse reported by other studies of homeless women have strong implications for social service providers of this population.

The study also involves a comparison of the change in levels of self-esteem and depression of women residing in the homeless and battered women's shelters. This aspect of the study is designed to test the idea that residents of the battered women's shelter, receiving support group sessions in a single-sex environment, should experience a greater increase in self-esteem than women staying at the homeless shelter. Finally, within the battered women's shelter, changes in self-esteem levels of African American women are compared to those of white residents. This comparison is driven by the notion that the shelter may improve conditions for white residents before African Americans, since it is run and dominated by white women.

Procedures

Selection/Description of shelters

For this study, I selected two shelters, one for battered women and one for homeless women and men, which would be comparable
in terms of location, size and length of stay. The shelters used in this study are located in Elyria and Lorain, Ohio, both of which are small semi-urban satellite settlements to Cleveland, Ohio.

The homeless shelter was originally located in Wilkes Villa of Elyria, Ohio. In the middle of the study, the shelter was relocated to Lorain, Ohio. Therefore, my sample includes women who were staying at the shelter while it was located in Wilkes Villa, as well as women who were at the shelter after it had moved to Lorain County. While in Wilkes Villa, the shelter housed thirty-nine residents. The shelter consisted of five apartments which were dispersed throughout the neighborhood, which is a drug ridden public housing project. The main office was located inside of the single men's unit. The other units were occupied by either single women or families.

Since it has been relocated, the shelter consists of one building which holds up to fifty-four men, women and children. The single-sex bedrooms, which hold seven occupants in each, line the main hallway. A kitchen, dining area and television area are located downstairs. The homeless shelter does not provide social services to the residents beyond food, shelter, transportation, and a limited amount of guidance in the seeking of jobs and housing. Residents are provided with shelter for up to 30 days.

Less than a mile away from the location of the original homeless shelter is the battered women's shelter in Elyria, Ohio. This shelter, which is staffed and housed exclusively by women, shelters residents for 30 days as well. The shelter holds twenty-four spaces for women and their children. It is set up to provide a safe environment for women who are trying to escape an abusive
relationship. The general rule of thumb in accepting women to the shelter is that the woman must be "in danger" - and hence in need of a safe environment. At the battered women's shelter, residents are required to attend a group meeting every morning to arrange the plans of the day - and each night a mandatory group session is held. The nightly support groups focus on specific issues such as Child Care, Women's Health and Self-Esteem. The groups are facilitated by a trained leader, yet they are designed such that women provide and receive support from each other.

**Survey Design**

This study utilized a survey which would include information about demographics, abuse histories and levels of self-esteem and depression. Upon arrival at the battered women's shelter, all residents must participate in an intake session, where they are asked to provide a detailed description of their history of abuse, as well as demographic information. The director of the battered women's shelter allowed me access to this information. I decided to use this form as the instrument for collecting demographic and abuse history information from the homeless women. I copied the form and used it in my interviews with the women at the homeless shelter. Although I was not satisfied completely with the form design, I felt it was practical to take advantage of the fact that information for half of the sample could be automatically provided. The director of the battered women's shelter also kindly offered that the staff would be willing to administer my questionnaire as part of their intake
process. This saved me a tremendous amount of work - and allowed me the time to conduct interviews at the homeless shelter.

The survey instrument used for this study covers demographic information including age, race, number of children, birth dates of children, income, present place of employment, occupation, referral source to the shelter, number of marriages, and age first married. The instrument also includes extensive questions on abuse history such as: number of abusive relationships, number of abusive marriages, injuries suffered from battering, information about legal action, and questions regarding whether or not they experienced child abuse and/or sexual abuse as children. Women in the sample were also administered self-esteem and depression scales when they arrived at and left the shelter. The questions on self-esteem consisted of the ten-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The 25-item Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale was utilized to assess level of depression. Before leaving the shelter, the women in the sample were asked about: what type of living situation they had arranged, whether or not they had a job, their goals for the future, whether or not they felt the shelter had provided a comfortable environment, and which aspects of the shelter were most and least helpful to them during their stay. The survey instrument is included in the Appendix.
Conducting the Study:

The non-randomized sample used in the study consisted of every woman who stayed in either shelter between November 21st and March 12th, who was available for an interview during the times that I was at the shelter. I wished to set up the study such that I could include the greatest number of participants, while maintaining the use of the extensive questionnaire explained above. Since women at the battered women's shelter were asked questions on demographics and abuse histories in an interview, I felt it was important to conduct interviews with the homeless sample in a similar fashion. The self-esteem and depression surveys were administered during the interview, yet these were usually filled out individually by the women (these questions were not answered verbally but written down by the participant). Women in both shelters were to fill out the self-esteem and depression surveys upon first arriving, and then before they left the shelter at the end of 30-days. This way I could compare the difference in the change in self esteem and depression while the women were at the shelter.

The nature of this design meant that I would have to be at the shelter when each woman arrived in order to give her the questionnaires to fill out, as well as before she left. Because I would be conducting this study alone, it seemed unrealistic that I would be able to be at each shelter to conduct the interviews and administer the questionnaires at any time of any day of the week. For these reasons, I opted to expand the time frame around the administration of the questionnaires.
Instead of taking place on the participants' first day at the shelter, interviews were to be conducted within a 3-day period of the woman's arrival at the shelter. This would allow me to come in to Elyria twice a week and interview all of the women on the same day. The outtake questionnaires would be filled out within 3 days prior to departure and within one week after departure from the shelter. The reason that this period of time is so long is that it was hard to know exactly when the women would be leaving the shelter. Often times they would find an apartment and be out of the shelter within hours. Many women would be so busy getting out of the shelter that they would forget to fill out the outtake form, or would decide that they didn't have the time. Since there were so few women that actually stayed in the shelter for the full 30 days, it was vital to the study that I track down these women and ask them to fill it out. This created drawbacks because I would have to go to their new homes and often it was hard to reach them there. For this reason I gave myself a week to have the outtake form completed.

Because the sample turned out to be so small, some women who did not quite fit the criteria for the study were included in the data analysis. That is, there were a few women who left after two or three weeks of living in the shelter. Technically, these women should not have been included in the study because they did not stay for the full 30 days. Yet, I included them in the results because the numbers were so limited. Furthermore, a few women received extensions, and hence responded to the questionnaires after staying for more than 30 days at the shelter. Finally, a couple of women responded to the initial surveys after having resided at the shelter.
for more than three days. This happened because even though I would go to each shelter at least twice a week, sometimes I could not track down a certain resident within her first three days of shelter. Overall, several questionable cases were included in data analysis because the numbers in the study were so limited.

**Hypotheses**

**H1:** Women residing in homeless and battered women's shelters are similar in terms of demographic variables and abuse histories. These characteristics of the women in the sample will not determine which shelter they end up in.

**H2:** Of the women in this sample, those who have experienced abuse will be experiencing lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression upon shelter entry than those who have not been abused. The independent variable is abuse and the dependent variables are self-esteem and depression.

**H3:** Over the 30-day period, the women in the battered women's shelter will experience a greater increase in self-esteem than will those women in the homeless shelter. The independent variable is shelter environment and the dependent variable is self-esteem.
H4: Over the 30-day period, the women in the battered women's shelter will experience a greater decrease in depression than will those staying in the homeless shelter. The independent variable is shelter environment and the dependent variable is depression.

H5: Within the battered women's shelter, African American residents will experience a smaller increase in self esteem than will the white residents. The independent variable is race and the dependent variable is self-esteem.

H6: Within the battered women's shelter, African American residents will experience a smaller decrease in depression than will white residents. The independent variable is race and the dependent variable is depression.
Methodology

Operationalization of Variables:

Independent Variables

1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics used in the data analysis consist of: race, age, marital history, number of children and their age(s), source of income, and current employment. Age was measured in years. Marital history was measured by the following categories: never married, married, widowed, divorced, or separated. Number of children was measured by the number and children's ages were measured in years. Source of income was a discrete measure by whether or not the participant responded with "yes" or "no" to receiving Public Assistance, and if they were specifically receiving Aid to Dependent Children. Current employment was a discrete "yes/no" response to whether or not they were currently employed.

2. Abuse

Abuse was measured through discrete yes/no responses to the following questions: Was there abuse between your parents?, Have you been involved in a previous abusive relationship?, Are you currently involved in an abusive relationship?, Were you abused as a child?, and Were you sexually abused as a child?
Dependent Variables

1. Self-Esteem:

Self Esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. This is a ten-item scale which has been used extensively in a range of populations, and is easy to administer. Many researchers in the field of psychology agree that this scale is the most effective in measuring self-esteem. In their article on the measurement of self-esteem, Baker and Gallant compare three different types of self-esteem measures. They conclude: “Overall, Rosenberg’s scale was superior to the other scales in terms of both convergent and predictive validity.”130 Furthermore, they found that Rosenberg’s scale was most effectively utilized according to an additive index. “Although Rosenberg’s scale is normally used in a Guttman format, it was found that... a simple additive index proved more valid than the Guttman version.”131 Scores for this study were calculated using an additive index which ranged from 10 (low self-esteem) to 40 (high self-esteem). Within this study, the reliability of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was .86.

3. Depression:

Depression was measured through the use of the Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale. This scale has been used on various populations. In fact, in their study in 1990, Belcher and Deblasio

131 Ibid, p.36
used the Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale to assess levels of depression among the homeless population.\footnote{Belcher, John R. and Diblasio, Frederick A., "The Needs of Depressed Homeless Persons: Designing Appropriate Services", \textit{Community Mental Health Journal}, vol.26, no. 3, June 1990.} The scale includes 25 items which together form a score of between 1 (low depression) and 100 (high depression). The scale has three cutting scores: 30, 50 and 70. The scoring manual states:

Clients who score below 30, assuming accurate responses, can be presumed to be free of a clinically significant problem in this area. Clients who score above 30 can be presumed to have a clinically significant problem in this area...Clients who score above 50 are often found to have some suicidal ideation...Clients who score above 70 are nearly always experiencing very severe distress...\footnote{The WALMYR Assessment Scales Scoring Manual, WALMYR Publishing Company, Arizona, 1990, p.3-2}

According to the manual, the scale has strong reliability (Alpha coefficient \(> 0.90\)) and validity (coefficient \(> 0.60\)).\footnote{The WALMYR Assessment Scales Scoring Manual, p.3-2} The reliability for the Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale was 0.91 for the sample used in this study.
**Findings**

The study officially commenced on November 21st and terminated on March 12th, running for exactly sixteen weeks. There were a total of 29 battered women and 31 homeless women completed the intake form. Women at each shelter stayed for different periods of time, and left for different reasons. Because of this, only 18 women were given the second set of self-esteem and depression scales. Similarly, the information about plans following shelter residence were limited to the few women who stayed for 30 days and who could afford time to answer questions at such a stressful point in their lives.

**Comparison of Women in Homeless Shelter to Women in Battered Women's Shelter**

**Demographic Information**

Hypothesis #1 suggests that the women at the homeless and battered women's shelter would have similar demographic characteristics.

**Table 1: Mean Age of Women at Each Shelter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[T = .86\]

\[+ = p < .1, * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001\]
The average age of the battered women was 29.2 (Table 1), slightly but not significantly older than that of the homeless women, who averaged 27.4.

Table 2: Racial Breakdown of Women at Both Shelters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Makeup</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= (29) (31)

X²= 4.97, df= 3
+ = p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

The battered women were 55.2% white, 41.4% African American, and 3.4% Mexican (Table 2). The sample of homeless women was 48.4% white, 38.7% African American, and 12.9% Puerto Rican. These differences are not statistically significant.
Table 3: Income Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% On Public Assistance</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= (29)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = 1.68, df=1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% on ADC</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= (23)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 = .88, df=1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Employed</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n= (25)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2 =1.53, df=1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<.1, **=p<.05, ***=p<.01

The income characteristics of the battered and homeless women did not differ significantly, although a higher proportion of homeless women (86.2%) were on public assistance in comparison to the battered women (72.4%) (Table 3). Of the 23 battered women who responded, 82.6% are on ADC, while 71.4% of the homeless women reported receiving ADC. 4% of the battered women and 13.8% of the homeless women were employed upon shelter-entry during the study. None of these differences are significant.
In terms of marital history, the two groups did not differ significantly, yet it is apparent that homeless women have a higher tendency to be single (Table 4). 46.4% of the battered women's sample and 58.1% of the homeless women sample had never been married. While 39.3% of the battered women were currently married, only 16.1% of the homeless women were currently married. 10.7% of the battered women were divorced in comparison to 19.4% of the homeless women. A small percentage of women in each
shelter were either separated or widowed: 6.5% of the homeless women are separated in comparison to 0% of the battered women; 3.6% of the battered women were widowed in comparison to none of the homeless women. The battered women average slightly higher in number of marriages (.82%) than the homeless women (.64%). Of the women who had ever been married, the average of age at the time of their first marriage in the sample of battered women was 19.3, in comparison to the homeless women who averaged 19.9.

Table 5: Current Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Single</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Married</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>3.99*, df=1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant difference ($p<.05$) in the marital status of the homeless women and battered women: 83.9% of the homeless women were single, in comparison to only 60.7% of the battered women (Table 5). This is not surprising, for battered women are necessarily involved in a current relationship, while this is not so for homeless women. Battered women are more likely to be married than homeless women because the situation of the former is contingent upon being involved in a heterosexual relationship, while the condition of being homeless is not determined by this factor.

Table 6: Parental Status
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children:</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = (24) (30)

$X^2 = 1.81$, df = 5

Mean # of Children

n = (24) (30)

T = .29

Mean # of Children > 18

n = (25) (31)

T = 1.39

Mean age of children under eighteen years

n = (22) (26)

T = -.20

$^+ = p < .1$, $^* = p < .05$, $^{**} = p < .01$, $^{***} = p < .001$

Although a greater proportion of the homeless women (13.3%) had no children in comparison to the battered women (4.2%), the proportions in each sample followed a similar distribution for those
who had one or more children (Table 6). The two samples were also very similar in terms of the mean number of children (2.5 for battered and 2.4 for homeless) and the mean age of children under eighteen years of age (6.2 for battered and 6.5 for homeless). The mean number of children over eighteen was .44 in the battered women's sample and .13 in the homeless women's sample. Hence, from the table it is apparent that in terms of parental status, these two samples were quite similar.

Abuse

My first hypothesis also states that the abuse histories of homeless and battered women would be similar.

Table 7: Abuse Between Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuse Between Parents</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= (23) (31)

$X^2 = 4.05^*, \ df=1,$

$+ = p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001$

The differing rates of abuse between parents of battered and homeless women are statistically significantly different ($p<.05$) (Table 7). 70% of battered women reported abuse between their parents, while 42% of the homeless women reported such abuse.
This finding supports the idea that abuse can be passed along through families.

Table 8: Percent of Women Involved in Previous Abusive Relationship(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involved in previous abusive relationship(s)?</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= (27) (30)

$X^2 = .02, df=1$

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

The proportions of women in the battered and homeless shelters that had been involved in previous abusive relationships were quite similar - in fact the women in the homeless shelter reported a slightly higher rate of its incidence (Table 8). 48% of the battered women had been involved in previous relationships, while 50% in the homeless shelter reported involvement in previous abusive relationships.
The proportions of women in the two shelters who were abused as children are not statistically significantly different (Table 9). 45% of the battered women in the sample had been abused as children, and 42% of the homeless women had experienced abuse as children.

The proportions of battered and homeless women who had been sexually abused are not statistically significantly different, yet the homeless women experienced a higher rate of abuse (Table 10). 26% of the battered women in the sample had been sexually abused, while 36% of the homeless women had experienced sexual abuse. In
comparison to the estimated national rate of sexual abuse, it is not especially high. For instance, Russell reports that 38% of all women have been sexually abused before reaching the age of 18.\textsuperscript{135}

Table 11: Percent Currently involved in an abusive relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involved in current abusive relationship?</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 6.17^*, \text{ df}=1\]

\[+ = p<.1, ^* = p<.05, ^** = p<.01, ^*** = p<.001\]

Homeless and battered women's samples were statistically significantly different (\(p<.05\)) in terms of current involvement in an abusive relationship (Table 11). 48.4% of the homeless women in the sample were involved in an abusive relationship when they moved into the homeless shelter. Many of them became homeless to escape this abuse. 79.3% of the battered women were currently involved in an abusive relationship upon entry to the shelter. This difference is to be expected, for the battered women's shelter is a service for women who are involved in current abusive relationships. The fact that almost half of the homeless women were experiencing abuse lends support to the notion that battered and homeless women are at shelters due to a similar set of circumstances.

Table 12: Percent Ever Involved in an Abusive Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever been involved in an abusive relationship?</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2=5.75^*$, df=1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$+ = p<.1$, $* = p<.05$, $** = p<.01$, $*** = p<.001$

As would be expected, the two groups were statistically significantly different ($p<.05$) in terms of ever having been involved in an abusive relationship (Table 12). 93% of the women in the battered women's shelter had been in an abusive relationship at some point in their lifetime in comparison to 67% of the homeless sample. Yet, the fact that 67% of the homeless women had been battered at some point in their lives suggests that similar to battered women, many homeless women have experienced lifetimes of abuse.

Table 13: % Ever been physically/sexually abused as a child or involved in an abusive relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever been abused?</th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2=3.14^*$, df=1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$+ = p<.1$, $* = p<.05$, $** = p<.01$, $*** = p<.001$
The proportion of homeless (80%) and battered women (96%) that had experienced either physical or sexual abuse as children, or battering in adult relationships, was statistically significant (p<.1) (Table 13). Yet, the fact that 80% of the homeless sample had experienced abuse at some point in their lives offers support for the idea that abuse could be a related factor to homelessness.

Self-Esteem

Before comparing the changes in self-esteem of women in the two shelters, it is important to establish if there is a relationship between abuse and self-esteem. The following table shows the level of self-esteem upon shelter entry of women who have experienced different types of abuse. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale, used in this study, ranges from 10, meaning very low self-esteem, to 40, meaning very high self-esteem.
There is a negative trend between past abuse and self-esteem (Table 14). Survivors of each type of abuse were overrepresented in the low self-esteem slot, and underrepresented in the high self-esteem slot. Women who had experienced battering at some point in their lives entered the shelter experiencing statistically significantly lower levels of self-esteem than those women in the sample who had never been battered (p<.05). This supports the notion that women who have been battered suffer from lowered self-esteem. The difference
between the levels of self-esteem of women who had experienced abuse at any point in their lifetime, and the women in the sample who had never been abused, was statistically significant (p<.1) as well. This strongly supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between (past) abuse and lowered self-esteem.

The 2nd hypothesis states that over the 30-day period, the women in the battered women's shelter will experience a greater increase in self-esteem than the women in the homeless shelter. This is hypothesized because the women in the battered women's shelter receive group support in a single-sex environment while at the shelter and the homeless women do not.

The women staying at the homeless and battered women's shelters in this study experienced similar levels of self-esteem upon entry to the shelter. Battered women averaged 27.69 on the first self-esteem scale, while homeless women averaged 27.47. This suggests that the two groups were very similar in levels of self-esteem upon shelter entry. The following table compares the change in self-esteem of the women who completed the self-esteem scale at the end of their shelter stay.
Table 15: Self Esteem During Shelter Stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Battered Women</th>
<th>Homeless Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean self-esteem upon shelter entry</td>
<td>26.82</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( sd = )</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>8.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( T = .56 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean self-esteem upon shelter exit</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td>27.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( sd = )</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( T = 1.17 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean change in self-esteem</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( sd = )</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( T = .52 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n = (11) )</td>
<td></td>
<td>( (7) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(+ = p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001\)

Upon shelter entry, the battered women in this sample averaged 26.82, while the homeless women averaged 25.00 (Table 15). The average self-esteem upon shelter exit was 30.82 for the battered women and 27.43 among the homeless women. The average change in self-esteem was 4.00 for the battered women and 2.42 for the homeless women. From this, it is apparent that the women at the battered women's shelter did experience a greater increase in self-esteem than did the women at the homeless shelter. The data are in the direction of the hypothesis. However, the results are not statistically significant. The small sample size in the second self-esteem test affects the level of significance.
Depression

Before assessing differences in levels of depression of women staying in the two shelters, it is relevant to examine the relationship between past abuse and depression.

Table 16: Levels of Depression Upon Shelter Entry with Respect to Abuse History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Score on 1st scale</th>
<th>Abused as a Child (a)</th>
<th>Sexually Abused as a Child (b)</th>
<th>Ever Been Battered (c)</th>
<th>Ever Been Abused (a, b, or c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Than 30</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-69</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 70</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td></td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 9.07, df=3 \quad X^2 = 5.41, df=3 \quad X^2 = 5.67, df=3 \quad X^2 = 7.25^*, df=3 \]

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

It is evident (Table 16) that there is a relationship between past abuse and depression for the women in this sample. Survivors of each type of abuse were underrepresented in the lowest depression slot and overrepresented in the highest depression slot. The table also indicates that there is a statistically significant difference (p<.05)
in levels of depression of women who had experienced child abuse in comparison to those who had not. This finding strongly supports the notion of there being a positive relationship between child abuse and depression. In comparing women who had experienced abuse at any point in their lifetime to those who had not, it is apparent that the former were experiencing statistically significantly higher levels of depression than the latter (p<.1). Overall, these findings indicate that there is a pattern whereby women who have been abused experience higher levels of depression than those who have not been abused.

The 3rd hypothesis states that the women in the battered women's shelter will experience a greater decrease in depression than the women in the homeless shelter. This was hypothesized because the women in the battered women's shelter receive support in a single-sex environment and the women at the homeless shelter do not.

Within their first week at the shelter, the average level of depression was similar among the women in the two groups. Those at the battered women's shelter averaged 45.9 while the women at the homeless shelter expressed an average of 45.5. The following table compares the change in level of depression of the women who completed the second depression scale.
Upon shelter entry, the battered and homeless women in this particular sample were experiencing similar levels of depression: 47.6 and 47.7, respectively (Table 17). Yet at the end of 30 days, the women at the battered women's shelter had experienced a marked reduction in depression, while those at the homeless shelter remained at virtually the same level of depression as they had upon shelter entry. The average level of depression after 30 days was 33.2 among the women at the battered women's shelter, and 46.1 for the women at the homeless shelter. This difference is not statistically significant. The small sample size is possibly a factor in undermining the statistical significance between the scores.
The mean reduction in depression over the 30-day residence is -14.5 for those who stayed in the battered women's shelter and -1.6 for the women who resided in the homeless shelter. This dramatic difference is not statistically significant most likely due to the miniscule sample size. With a larger sample size, the results of the depression scales displayed in the above table, would support my hypothesis that residents, of the battered women's shelter would experience a greater reduction in depression than those in the homeless shelter.

Battered Women: Racial Comparisons

Demographic Characteristics

Within the battered women's shelter, the racial makeup was 55.2% white, 41.4% African American, and 3.4% Mexican American. The latter category accounts for only one woman. Because her experiences cannot fully represent the experiences of Mexican American women, I have decided to take her out of the racial comparison section of the findings.
Table 18: Age of Residents of Battered Women’s Shelter Across Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>30.81</td>
<td>27.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd=</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

The findings show that the mean age of white women in the battered women's shelter was slightly higher (30.8) than that of the African American residents (27.1) (Table 18).

Table 19: Income Characteristics Within the Battered Women’s Shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Public Assistance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X²=3.11+, df=1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving ADC?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X²=2.89+, df=1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001
The income characteristics of the African American and white women who stayed in the battered women's shelter are quite different (Table 19). While 91.7% of the African American women were on public assistance, 62.5% of the white women were on public assistance. The contrast between these rates is statistically significant (p< .1). None of the women in either group were employed while at the shelter.

Table 20: Current Marital Status of Residents of Battered Women’s Shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Single</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Married</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X = 7.63**, df=1

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

Within the battered women's shelter, the proportion of African American women who were single is much greater (91.7%) than the proportion of white women who were single (40%) (Table 20). This difference is statistically significant (p< .01).
In terms of marital history, the differences between African American and white women are striking (Table 21). Of the African American women, 91.7% had never been married, while only 13.3% of the white women had ever been married. 60% of the white women were currently married in contrast to only 8.3% of the African American women at the battered women's shelter. 20% of the white women were divorced, and 6.7% were widowed, while none of the African American women in the sample were either divorced or widowed. The differing marital histories of the African American and white women are striking (Table 21).
American and white women at the battered women's shelter were statistically significant (p< .001).

The mean number of marriages is also very different among the African American and white women staying at the battered women's shelter: For white women, the mean number of marriages was 1.25, while it was only .09 for the African American residents of the shelter. This difference is also statistically significant (p<.001). These findings suggest that white and African American women in the battered women's shelter sample came from very different family structures.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children:</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 1.46$, df=5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean # of Children</th>
<th>2.36</th>
<th>2.78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T$</td>
<td>-.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean # Children over eighteen years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean # Children over eighteen years</th>
<th>0.73</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T$</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean age of children under eighteen years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean age of children under eighteen years</th>
<th>6.50</th>
<th>5.33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$sd$</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$T$</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$+ = p<.1$, $* = p<.05$, $** = p<.01$, $*** = p<.001$
The distribution of the number of children for each group was similar (Table 22). Most white women at the shelter had two children, and most African American women at the shelter had two or three children. African American and white women were similar in terms of average number of children as well. The white women had a mean number of 2.4 children, while the African American women averaged 2.8 children. While the white women had a mean of .73 adult children, none of the African American women in the sample had any adult children. The African American women's children under eighteen were slightly younger, averaging 5.3 years, than the white women's children, who averaged 6.5 years. These differences are not statistically significant.

Self-Esteem

Hypothesis #5 states that within the battered women's shelter, African American residents will experience a smaller increase in self-esteem than the white residents. Upon shelter entry, the white women averaged 26.7 on the Rosenberg scale, while the African American residents averaged 28.0. The following table provides a racial comparison of the change in self-esteem within the battered women's shelter.
Table 23: Self Esteem within Battered Women's Shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean self-esteem</td>
<td>25.75</td>
<td>29.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upon shelter entry</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=-1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean self-esteem</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>30.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upon shelter exit</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean change in self-</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esteem</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=1.17</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001

Although none of the results are significantly different, the provided information (Table 23) does support hypothesis #5. While the African American women experienced higher levels of self-esteem (29.7) upon entry into the shelter as compared to the white women (25.8), they left the shelter experiencing a lower average level of self-esteem (30.3) than the white women (31.0). The mean change in self-esteem, was 5.25 for the white women and .67 for the African American women in the battered women's shelter. This average change in self-esteem nears statistical significance (p=.110). The small sample size definitely affects the significance level for this result, for it is apparent that white women at the shelter experienced
a greater increase in self-esteem than the African American women staying at the battered women's shelter.

**Depression**

Hypothesis #5 states that within the battered women's shelter, African American residents would experience a smaller decrease in depression than white residents. This was hypothesized because the battered women's shelter is run and staffed by all white women, and perhaps as a result of this, African American residents may not benefit form the programs as much as white residents. Upon shelter entry, both the white and African American women were experiencing high levels of depression. White residents averaged 45.58, while African American residents averaged higher on the depression scale, at 49.83. Both groups were suffering from a clinically significant problem in the area of depression, and were nearing the second cut off point of above 50 - the point over which suicide often becomes a possibility. The following table provides a racial comparison of depression between the first week of residence and after 30 days at the shelter.
It is apparent (Table 24) that within the first week of shelter, the African American residents in this sample were experiencing similar levels of depression (47.8) to the white residents (47.6). After 30 days, the depression scores of the two groups had dropped significantly. The mean depression score after 30 days for white residents was 32.0, while for African American residents it was 36.2. There is not a statistically significant difference between these two scores. At this point, both groups had dropped to a level of depression nearer to but still above the first cut off point of 30. The mean change in depression during the 30 days was -15.6 for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean level of depression within 1st week at shelter</td>
<td>47.58</td>
<td>47.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd=</td>
<td>21.66</td>
<td>19.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean level of depression after 30-days at shelter</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>36.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd=</td>
<td>20.17</td>
<td>13.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean change in depression over 30-day period</td>
<td>-15.58</td>
<td>-11.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd=</td>
<td>21.57</td>
<td>14.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= (8) (3)

+=p<.1, *=p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001
white residents and -11.6 for the African American residents. Although these are not statistically significant, it is apparent that the white residents experienced a greater decrease in depression than did the African American residents. With a larger sample and the same results, Hypothesis #5 would be supported.

**Additional Findings**

During the study, three women at the battered women's shelter and four women at the homeless shelter were dismissed from the shelter as a result of violating one or more of the shelter rules. Nine women at the battered women's shelter and eight women at the homeless shelter secured housing for themselves and their children. Two women from each shelter opted to stay with family or friends when their shelter time ran out. The post-shelter living arrangements for nine women at the battered women's shelter and eleven women at the homeless shelter, were unknown. At the cessation of the study, five study-participants still resided at the battered women's shelter and seven were still staying at the homeless shelter.\(^{136}\)

\(^{136}\)The information in this paragraph is not official; that is, it is made up of what I picked up while working as a volunteer. In the cases where the information on the whereabouts of a client is unknown, I am specifying that it is unknown to me; I did not search the shelter records on each woman.
Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

Comparison of Homeless and Battered Women

Both the battered and homeless women in this sample experienced lives filled with abuse. The women in the two groups experienced similar rates of child abuse; approximately 43% were abused as children. In this study, Homeless women experienced a slightly higher rate of sexual abuse (36%) than the women at the battered women's shelter (26%). Many of the homeless women (45%) were involved in abusive relationships upon entry into the shelter. Approximately 50% of each population had been previously involved in (an) abusive relationship(s). The statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of abuse were: women at the battered women's shelter had witnessed a higher rate of abuse between their parents, were more likely to be currently involved in an abusive relationship, and were more likely to have ever been abused than those in the homeless shelter. Since the battered women's shelter is specifically for women who are currently escaping abuse, it is not surprising that the women staying there would be more likely to be currently involved in an abusive relationship. This variable positively affects the battered women's representation in the group that have ever been involved in an abusive relationship, and that have ever been abused. Therefore, while the groups do differ significantly in terms of these variables, it is important not to overlook the finding that 80% of the homeless women had experienced abuse at some point in their lifetime. Almost half of the
homeless women were currently escaping abusive relationships. These findings suggest that both battered and homeless women have survived lifetimes filled with abuse.

In interpreting rates of abuse among homeless women, it is relevant to compare the findings from this study to those of other studies done on homeless women. The proportion of homeless women in this study who had survived child abuse (42%) was higher than that found by both Feltey (16%)\(^{137}\) and Anderson et. al. (33%)\(^{138}\) in their samples of homeless women. The proportion of homeless women in this study who had survived sexual abuse (36%) is similar to that found by Feltey (31%)\(^{139}\), Anderson et. al. (28%)\(^{140}\) and Star (30-60%)\(^{141}\). 45% of the homeless women in this sample were currently escaping domestic violence situations. This finding is somewhat higher than that found in Hagen and Ivanhoff's sample (22%)\(^{142}\) as well as that of Anderson et. al. (33%)\(^{143}\). The proportion of homeless women in this study who had ever been involved in an abusive relationship (65%) was higher than that reported by Bassuk (40%)\(^{144}\) in her study of homeless women. Finally, the proportion of homeless women in this sample that had ever been abused (80%) was higher than that found in Feltey's study (66%)\(^{145}\). The results from this study strongly support the findings in the literature that

\(^{137}\)Feltey, p.15  
\(^{138}\)Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.65  
\(^{139}\)Feltey, p.2  
\(^{140}\)Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.65  
\(^{141}\)Carlson, p.573  
\(^{142}\)Hagen and Ivanhoff, p.25  
\(^{143}\)Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.65  
\(^{144}\)Bassuk, p.430  
\(^{145}\)Feltey, p.2
homeless women experience high rates of abuse. Furthermore, this study suggests that current rates of abuse among homeless women may be even higher than those reported in the literature on characteristics of homeless women.

The battered and homeless women in this study entered each shelter experiencing similar levels of self-esteem and depression. Averaging a 46 on the Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale (which assesses level of depression), both battered and homeless women were initially experiencing levels of depression well above the first cut off level on the scale, which signifies a clinically significant problem in that area.

The battered and homeless women in this sample also had similar demographic characteristics. The two groups had an average age in their late twenties, had a mean of about 2.5 children, and their children were approximately 6.5 years old. Each shelter had similar proportions of African American residents to white residents, yet while four Puerto Rican women stayed in the homeless shelter during the study, none stayed in the battered women's shelter. Both groups contained high rates of women on public assistance, especially on ADC. The only demographic difference was that the women at the homeless shelter were much more likely to be single. This is not surprising, for all battered women are currently involved with men; this is not necessarily true for homeless women.

My own personal experience also supported the idea that these two groups of women were similar. Working at both shelters on a regular basis, I witnessed the women's decisions about which shelter to move into, from talking to phone callers to acting as a consultant
about each shelter for women who were considering moving from one to the other. Four women actually stayed in both shelters within the duration of the study. I personally consulted with three other women who were considering moving to the other shelter, yet did not end up doing so. The majority of the women who moved between shelters went from the battered women’s shelter to the homeless shelter when their residence expired at the battered women’s shelter and they had not found a place to go. Several months after one resident of the battered women’s shelter had left, I answered phone call from her mother while I was volunteering there. She was very concerned about her daughter; she said that the former resident had been homeless for two months.

Several women who came into the homeless shelter considered moving to the battered women’s shelter after talking to me, because they were actually escaping abusive situations. Other women staying at the homeless shelter told me that they had tried to get into the battered women’s shelter and had been unsuccessful; due to lack of any choice, they ended up at the homeless shelter. One women at the homeless shelter had stayed in the battered women’s shelter several years before, and was currently running from the same abuser. She said that she did not return this time because she did not want to take her daughter out of school. (Children staying at the battered women’s shelter go to day care while staying at the shelter). My experiences lead me to conclude that the majority of the women in these two samples are in similar situations - their shelter destination was a result of an interaction of many factors including:
access to information, how they perceive their situation, accessibility to transportation, and luck.

In comparing the battered women to the homeless women in this sample, I identified two distinct types of women. There were the older white women at the battered women's shelter who would have been unlikely to use the homeless shelter. These women were of at least middle class status, and seemed very comfortable at the battered women's shelter. I quote one older white woman: "The day after I got here I felt this weight lift off of me." However, this type of woman only made up a minority of those staying at the battered women's shelter. The rest of the women staying there were young, had young children, and were suffering from economic hardship as well as emotional distress. Most were receiving Aid to Dependent Children. In my opinion, this pool of residents, who made up the majority, could have been staying at either shelter.

Relationship Between Abuse and Self-Esteem and Depression

Hypothesis #2 states that among women staying in homeless and battered women's shelters, the experience of past or present abuse would lower self-esteem. In order to test this, the women's initial levels of self-esteem were compared with respect to the type of abuse they had experienced in their lifetime. The findings indicate that upon shelter entry, survivors of each type of abuse were experiencing lower levels of self-esteem than the rest of the sample. Women who had been battered were experiencing statistically significantly (p<.05) lower levels of self-esteem than those women who had not. Women who had been abused at any
point in their lifetime were experiencing statistically significantly lower levels (p<.1) of self-esteem upon shelter entry in comparison to women who had never been abused. Overall, the findings indicate that there is a positive relationship between past abuse and lowered self-esteem.

Hypothesis #2 also suggests that battered and homeless women who have survived abuse will experience higher levels of depression than those who have not. Survivors of each type of abuse scored higher on the initial depression score than women who did not experience that type of abuse. Women who survived child abuse scored significantly higher (p<.05) on the depression scale than the rest of the sample. This finding strongly supports the idea that survivors of child abuse experience increased depression. The findings also indicate that women who had been abused at any point in their lives scored statistically significantly higher (p<.05) on the depression scale than those who had never been abused.

Overall, the results from this study support the notion that abused women experience depression and lowered self-esteem. In light of this, it is necessary to see if services for this population are successful in increasing self-esteem and reducing depression.

The Effectiveness of Battered Women's Shelter Programs

It is impossible to accurately measure the success of programs offered in an uncontrolled environment. This study was not an experiment; therefore it is difficult to determine if the differences in outcomes are due to the (lack of) shelter programs or to other aspects of the two environments. Women who stayed in the homeless
shelter were provided with food, shelter and minimal transportation. They lived in either an apartment or a room with all women, but outside of this the shelter consisted of a co-ed environment. The battered women's shelter consists of a large house, with only female inhabitants. The women staying at this shelter were required to attend nightly group sessions which were aimed at providing a base of support for the residents. Based on the total sample of women's responses to the completed questionnaires, it is possible to explore the effects of the two shelter environments on the women's self-esteem and depression.

Upon entry into each shelter, the battered and homeless women were experiencing similar levels of self-esteem. Yet, after 30 days the self-esteem of women at the homeless shelter increased by 2.4 points on the average, while those staying at the battered women's shelter increased by an average of 4 points on the Rosenberg scale. These findings do not demonstrate conclusively that the battered women's shelter had a positive influence on the self-esteem of the women who stayed there. If similar results were found with a larger sample, one could conclude that the battered women's shelter environment has a positive effect on self-esteem.

Also, residents of the battered women's shelter experienced a significantly higher decrease in depression, in comparison to those of the homeless shelter. While both groups of women entered the shelters at a similarly high level of depression, after 30 days the depression levels between the two groups were dramatically different. The mean reduction in depression was nine times greater (-14.48) in the battered women's sample than in the homeless
sample (-1.62). This difference did not reach statistical significance, yet if similar results were found in studies with larger samples, they would suggest that the battered women's shelter provides a better environment for reducing depression than does the homeless shelter.

Overall, the results did not reach statistical significance, probably because of the small sample size for the second set of scales. Yet, even so, it is apparent from the findings that the women in the battered women's shelter did experience a greater increase in self-esteem, and decrease in depression, than those staying in the homeless shelter. These results suggest that the programs offered by the battered women's shelter may be beneficial to those residing there.

Racial Comparisons Within the Battered Women's Shelter

African American and white women were compared on their responses to the self-esteem and depression scales, with the idea that if the shelter programs (which are designed to empower battered women), are equally beneficial for African American and white women, then the two groups would experience similar changes in self-esteem and depression during their residence at the shelter. The findings indicate that although there is no statistical significance in the difference in their scores, white women did experience a greater increase in self-esteem, as well as a greater decrease in depression, than did the African American women residing in the battered women's shelter. White women entered the shelter with a lower mean level of self-esteem, and left the shelter experiencing a higher average level of self-esteem than the African American
women. The mean change in self-esteem for white women was eight times greater than that of the African American residents of the shelter. This information suggests that the current programs at the battered women's shelter may not be as beneficial for African American residents as for white residents.

The depression scores of African American and white women in the battered women's shelter reflect a smaller difference. African American women entered the shelter feeling more depressed than did white residents, according to the Hudson Generalized Contentment Scale. Both groups experienced a significant decrease in depression while staying at the shelter. The mean change in depression of the two groups was fairly similar, although the white residents did experience a slightly more dramatic drop in depression. The evidence is not strong enough to conclude anything about the programs' differing affects on African American and white residents of the battered women's shelter.

While within the battered women's shelter, white residents did experience a greater decrease in depression than African American residents, the latter did experience a much greater decrease in depression than the African American residents of the homeless shelter. African American residents of the battered woman's shelter experienced a large decrease in depression (-11.6), while those at the homeless shelter actually increased in depression by 2.2 points. While this difference is not statistically significant, it does suggest that while they did not benefit as much as white residents, African American women may benefit more from the battered women's shelter environment than from that of the homeless shelter.
Overall, the results on the change in self-esteem and depression are not statistically significant because so few women completed the scales the second time around. Because of this lack of numbers, it is difficult to make any assessment of the effects of the battered women's shelter on African American and white women. Yet, the study results do offer some insight into the different effects of the current programs within the battered women's shelter. The programs do serve to increase self-esteem, and to dramatically decrease depression for all residents. Yet, the programs may benefit white residents to a greater degree than African American residents.

Studies which focus on African American women have suggested that they often feel excluded in battered women's shelters. One important factor is that battered women's shelters are often structured according to white middle class values. These values are often manifested in various aspects of shelter life. The physical design of the shelter and the structure of the healing programs often unintentionally serve to exclude African American women. Most battered women's shelters are organized to include group sessions to help the residents gain support from each other in breaking away from their abusers. For African American women, this may not be fully beneficial because they might see battering as a symptom of racial oppression. They may regard their battering experience as a result of racism experienced by their husbands/boyfriends, who in turn take it out on them.

Being a white volunteer, my perspective on race relations within the battered woman's shelter is limited. Presumably African American residents would not approach me about racial issues.
because I am white (and therefore would not necessarily appear to be sympathetic to their situation) and am also not part of the staff. Often when I was alone with an African American resident, I was tempted to inquire about her feelings about staying in a place staffed by all Whites, but I never felt comfortable enough to do so. The fact that the shelter was run by white women suggests that perhaps African American residents may not have been comfortable as they might have been if the staff had been more heterogeneous.

Yet, I did notice that the staff was responsive to African American residents' specific experiences as long as they were brought up. For example, one African American resident said that she thought she was being discriminated against while seeking an apartment. The director of the battered women's shelter was very responsive. She sent me as a tester to see if the landlord would rent to a white woman who was in the same situation. I posed as a mother of two, receiving ADC and staying at the shelter. When we returned and told her that the landlord had been much more helpful to me than she had been to the African American resident, the director of the battered women's shelter advised us to report the case to the Urban League. After the landlord agreed to rent the apartment to me, the incident ended up going to Federal Court, and the resident of the battered women's shelter was granted ten months of free rent at that apartment. Due to the director's active response to the possibility of racial discrimination, this African American resident gained access to housing which she would have otherwise been denied. The director's actions suggest that the staff of the battered woman's shelter staff is aware and sensitive to racial issues.
Perhaps the reason that African American residents did not fare as well as did white residents in the battered women's shelter is not due to outward racist actions or attitudes by the staff or residents, but to more subtle aspects of the environment, such as the prevalence of white middle class norms and values.

**Study Limitations**

The most fundamental weakness of this study is in the small numbers. Although I was able to find out demographic information and levels of self-esteem and depression of most women upon shelter entry, few women completed the second set of scales. When I designed the study I did not realize that so many residents would leave the shelters early or unexpectedly. Many women were just too overwhelmed with moving out of the shelter to take the time to fill out the surveys. As a result, the numbers were too small to reach statistical significance in comparing before and after measures of self-esteem and depression.

The limited numbers also made it impossible to compare only battered women in the homeless shelter to the women staying at the battered women’s shelter. A comparison of change in self-esteem and depression between these two groups of battered women would have provided a more powerful test of the programs offered at the battered women’s shelter.

One important weakness within the research design is that the study does not include women who do not speak English. Several weeks into the study, the caseworker at the homeless shelter told me that a new woman had arrived, but she spoke only Spanish. Because
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the questionnaire was only in English, and I do not speak any other languages, non-English speaking residents of the shelters were excluded from the study. There were approximately three women who fell into this category, all of whom stayed at the homeless shelter.

**Service Implications**

**Micro-Strategies**

**Recognizing Abuse of Homeless Women**

This study has social service implications for both homeless and battered women. Service providers should recognize that many homeless women are currently or have previously experienced abuse. This population should be provided with services designed to help victims cope with abuse. In her study, Hagen suggests that homeless women should be provided with support services:

The needs of clients as assessed by professional social work staff parallel the differences for men and women in their reasons for homelessness...men were in greater need of employment and alcohol and drug treatment. Women were assessed as having a greater need for referral to the department of social services and for long term counseling.\(^\text{146}\)

While I was volunteering at the homeless shelter, several residents indicated to me that they were in need of counseling services. The nature of the study was such that I had to inquire about the personal lives of the women in the study. Because my interview was often the most personal interaction the women experienced from the shelter staff, several residents saw me more as a counselor than as a

\(^{146}\)Hagen, p.315.
researcher. Their readiness to accept me as a counselor, even though I was not trained nor trying to act as one, suggests that they were in dire need of support services. The following incidences illustrate homeless women's need for psychological support.

While conducting an interview with a young woman staying at the homeless shelter, I discovered that she was at the shelter to escape her abusive boyfriend. She was distraught over the abuse she had experienced; she had not told anyone about it. I asked her if she had considered staying at the battered women's shelter and she said that she had not. I explained that at the battered women's shelter she would receive support to cope with her experience. I was urging her to consider moving, and she responded by asking: "Well, how often do you come here? Maybe I could just talk to you about it." This suggests that this woman was in need of counseling, and further that she had received so little support that she interpreted the interview as a counseling session.

One day I was casually talking with several residents of the homeless shelter who I had previously interviewed. I asked them how things were and one woman said that things were getting tense around the shelter. Then she said: "See, we need someone like you around here all the time. Things are getting tense, with all of us staying in the same room all day together. We need a counselor who we can talk to individually." The other women at the table nodded their heads in agreement. This was an outward expression of their need for counseling. Overall, it is necessary that homeless women, who are similar to battered women in many respects, be similarly provided with support programs.
Developing a Complex Service System

Many articles in the literature on homeless and battered women suggest that their service needs include a complex interaction of various services, which involve economic as well as psychological support. In reference to homeless women, Feltey states:

The longer term solutions are based on changing the individual [homeless] woman with the support of programs such as transitional housing and the expansion of subsidized housing coupled with social programs...Without a comprehensive system of support to launch them into an independent self-supporting life, the women will inevitably fail. Unfortunately, this failure will be used as evidence of a woman's lack of motivation and will contribute to a continued cycle of poverty and homelessness.147

This quote powerfully suggests that social programs need to be focused on both economic as well as social support in order to successfully break the cycle of female homelessness. Safe, affordable permanent housing coupled with the development of independent living skills, child care, and emotional support are integral to the needs of homeless women.148 Unless they are provided with a comprehensive and ongoing system of support, the odds that homeless women will achieve independent lives are slim.

The specified service needs of battered women are similar to those suggested for homeless women in the literature on these two populations. Battered women also need a complex interaction of services which provide emotional as well as economic support in

147Feltey, p.50.
148This idea is supported by: Anderson, Boe and Smith, p.67, Mills and Ota, p.488, Hagen and Ivanhoff, p.32
helping them to achieve independence from (the) abusive relationship(s). Davis and Hagen state:

A coordinated and comprehensive service network to enable battered women to exercise self-determination must include accessible emergency, transitional, and permanent low-cost housing; job training and employment opportunities; affordable and accessible child care; and transportation. Non-sexist counseling that has the primary goal of empowering women...is also a necessary component.” 149

It is apparent that both homeless and battered women require similar social services which recognize their emotional as well as financial needs.

Social service agencies should be coordinated to help individuals who do not necessarily fall into the specific categories which divide and classify women into different subgroups. The following woman’s experience illustrates this. During the course of her interview, a homeless woman told me that she had been raped by a stranger just four days before, and had not yet told anyone about the incident. She did not know that Rape Crisis existed. She promised me that she would call them the next day. Two days later I returned to the shelter and to find that she had not yet called. When I attempted to find the number of Rape Crisis, I found that the number was not listed in the telephone directory, nor with Directory Assistance. Finally, I got the number by calling the battered woman’s shelter. The fact that it was virtually impossible for me to find the number to Rape Crisis illustrates the incredible lack of

149 Davis and Hagen, “The Problem of Wife Abuse,” p.19. This is also supported by Gondolf, p.103
outreach of social services for women in this country. It is easier to find the number of the nearest Jiffy Lube than to contact Rape Crisis in an emergency.

What I realized throughout this experience was that because the different social agencies are separate, they are not set up to deal with situations which involve more than one issue. Homelessness and rape are treated as two different social problems. This rape victim happened to be homeless, yet there was no service which could accommodate all of her needs. The homeless shelter does not provide counseling in a supportive environment for women residents. The Rape Crisis center provides counseling, but has limited transportation and does not provide shelter. The battered women's shelter gives priority to battered women who are in danger - this woman was not in immediate danger but she needed a safe, supportive environment to live in. Overall, social agencies need to recognize that women seeking help may be experiencing more than one type of social problem. These agencies should be coordinated to serve women who fall into more than one category of need. The social service system must be structured to serve women who are victims of both homelessness and abuse.

Macro-Strategies

While this study does not directly address the issue of violence against women from a macro perspective, it is important that this perspective be included in considering service needs of homeless women. Instead of creating dualisms, and believing that the issue must be treated either on an individual basis or on a social
structural basis, it is important to include both in assessing the service needs of this population.

Gender Inequality

While it is important to explore the positive and negative aspects of the two shelter environments, it is equally important to regard woman abuse as a symptom of living in a society where women are dominated and oppressed. Both violence and homelessness work as mechanisms of control over women in this society. Economic dependency, which is strongly supported by the social structure of society, must be recognized as a powerful force in contributing to violence against women. The relationship between economic dependency and battering is exemplified in the following situation explained by a former resident of the battered women’s shelter. She would visit occasionally “because it was the only place where she could really relax and think.” She told me that she was currently living with her abuser because she needed an address in order to receive her paycheck. (She works at a fast food restaurant). She was planning on leaving him as soon as she had earned enough money to pay for her own apartment. In the mean time, she was being abused on a daily basis. Her situation illustrates why many women stay with their abusers: due to economic hardship. The economic obstacles which many battered women face is referred to in the following quotation:

150Feltey, Kathryn, Talk to Sociology of Gender Class in Oberlin, Ohio: November 4, 1990
The prospects of obtaining employment sufficient to support oneself and children are minimal for most shelter women, especially considering their lack of previous experience and education. This coupled with the feminization of poverty in America makes a return to the batterer the lesser of two evils.151

Although shelters are necessary in providing abused women with a safe place to go and to receive support, they are not the solution to the greater problem of gender inequality in our society. Hagen and Davis state: "The current legislation, although it may facilitate breaking the psychological dependency of women on their husbands, does nothing to break their economic dependency." 152 Feltey states:

What is critical is that as long as women are dependent upon men for economic and social survival, they will be at risk of homelessness in the public world. And as long as that dependency is politically, economically, and socially justified, women will swell in the ranks of the poor and homeless.153

This quote powerfully summarizes the notion that because women are economically dependent upon men, women are more susceptible to becoming homeless and getting trapped in abusive relationships. This idea cannot be ignored when exploring service needs of homeless and battered women.

Racial Inequality

This study indicates that African American residents of the battered women's shelter did not benefit as much as did white residents from the programs and/or environment of the battered

151 Gondolf, Edward, p.22
152 Davis and Hagen, "Services for Battered Women," p.664.
153 Feltey, p.51.
women's shelter. The battered women's movement needs to be reorganized in order to be inclusive of women from all races. In her article, Schechter quotes a black feminist who states: "Until the feminist movement actively and publicly deals with eliminating racism within its own ranks, service to black women and other women of color will be seriously lacking." 154 The leaders of the battered women's movement need to examine their power over all abused women's ability to heal. The current system must be challenged and transformed. Social service workers must recognize the needs of African American women. Coley and Beckett state:

Social workers and other professionals who are likely to come into contact with black battered women must be cognizant of the impact of racial and ethnic identity and concomitant cultural experience on the client's willingness to seek and use services for the battered.155

Programs must be restructured to include women of different cultural backgrounds. They go on to say, "From boards and committees to staff positions, multi-ethnic perspectives are needed to develop policies, procedures and programs that encompass cultural differences." 156 The process of restructuring the battered women's movement to be inclusive of minority women will not be easy, and it may not even be fully possible. Yet, some groups are making it a priority. Schechter states:

154Schechter, p.273.
155Coley and Beckett, p.484.
The stated commitment of coalition member groups often has been changed to include combatting racism through developing training materials, sensitizing staff, hiring third world women, and encouraging third world women to take leadership positions.\textsuperscript{157}

These efforts reflect sensible tactics to breaking down the barriers which African American women face in the current system.

Because the situation is so different for minority women, some African American women in the battered women's movement have expressed the necessity of forming their own battered women's network. Schechter states: "When we (women of color) make women's issues a priority in our work, we need to define this in the context of our lives as women of color."\textsuperscript{158} This quote discloses the inherent need to redefine the needs of African American battered women as women of color and as battered women, not solely as the latter. She explains:

For many of us, the ties to our community are stronger than to the women's movement. This doesn't mean we don't also struggle against sexism, but it is a more complex struggle for us. Because it means struggling to become free from violence on all levels - class, race and sex...we have to gather support on all fronts.\textsuperscript{159}

Thus, as Schechter suggests, the most powerful solution to this problem is that African American women form their own shelters, to be structured according to their experiences. She states:

\textsuperscript{157}Schechter, p.276.
\textsuperscript{158}Ibid, p.281.
\textsuperscript{159}Ibid, p.275.
Third world women have thus declared forming relationships and networks among themselves as a priority.\\(^{160}\)

Overall, it is vitally important that the white leaders of the battered women's movement work towards racial equality within the movement. At the same time, it would be beneficial for African American battered women if a service network was designed specifically to meet their needs.

**Further Research**

This study suggests that the battered women's shelter environment may be more successful than that of the homeless shelter in increasing self-esteem and reducing depression of female residents. Yet, it does not tell us which elements of the former environment contribute to its success. That is, the battered women's shelter may be more beneficial because it offers support groups, safety, a single-sex environment, more transportation, or a variety of other factors which interact to create that specific environment. Further research is needed to determine which aspects of the battered shelter should be provided for homeless women. For example, one way to test whether or not support groups are beneficial would be to compare women in shelters that utilized support groups to those in shelters which were similar in most respects yet did not offer support group sessions. Although this study did offer evidence which indicates that the environment of the battered women's shelter reduces psychological distress, further

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160Ibid., p.280.
research is needed to determine which aspects of this environment contribute to its success.

Furthermore, research must explore how to better meet the needs of African American battered and homeless women. While this study suggests that African American women fared better in the battered women's shelter than in the homeless shelter, it also indicates that they did not benefit from the battered women's shelter environment as much as did white residents. It is unclear which factors contributed to this discrepancy between African American and white residents of the battered women's shelter. Therefore, research focused on the service needs of African American homeless and battered women is required.

Further research is also needed to explore the relationship between abuse and homelessness. The fact that 80% of the women in this sample had experienced abuse at some point in their lives suggests that a causal relationship between abuse and homelessness is plausible. One possible explanation would be through the development of learned helplessness and welfare dependency. There is some literature on this topic which suggests that welfare recipients experience learned helplessness. Learned Helplessness (explained in depth on pp.26-29) is a condition under which a person accepts that s/he has no control over a situation. Because s/he behaves according to this belief, the victim of Learned Helplessness may not act on an opportunity to escape the situation even when s/he has the means to do so. This argument may be applied to the issue of welfare dependency. That is, the welfare recipient may not act on an opportunity to get off of welfare because of Learned
Helplessness. 161 This approach suggests that “perceived helplessness in one situation may generalize to other spheres of action.” 162 Kane states: “Repeated experience with uncontrollable events in persistent poverty - such as unwanted pregnancies and discrimination - may interfere with one's ability to recognize new opportunities for advancement.” 163 Hence, lack of control in one aspect of a person's life can cause them to react with learned helplessness in unrelated situations.

It is possible that abused women who experience learned helplessness may be more prone to get stuck on welfare. It is recognized in the literature that learned helplessness can result from chronic abuse. According to the theories linking learned helplessness to chronic welfare dependency, victims of learned helplessness transfer their response-behavior to other areas of their lives. Hence, abused women could be less prone to act upon opportunities to get off of welfare as a result of the abuse they (have) experience(d). This could lead to and perpetuate homelessness. This idea has not been studied extensively. It is important that the relationship between abuse and homelessness be recognized and studied in the future.

161 Schneiderman, Furman and Weber, p.236
162 Kane, p.411
163 Ibid, p.416
Conclusion

This study sought to explore several issues: 1) The possibility that women residing in homeless and battered women's shelters are similar in terms of their abuse histories and demographic characteristics, 2) The relationship between abuse and self-esteem and depression in this population, and 3) The success of the battered women's shelter environment in providing support for abused women as well as in providing equal support for African American and white residents. It found that both battered and homeless women had experienced lifetimes of abuse. Women who had survived abuse were initially experiencing lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression than women who had not been abused. The battered women's shelter increased self-esteem and reduced depression of residents to a greater degree than did the homeless shelter. African American women did not experience as great of an improvement in these areas as did white women at the battered women's shelter. The results are not statistically significant due to the small number of women in the sample.

Much more research on abuse and homelessness is needed. If supported in other research with larger samples, the findings from this study would suggest that 1) services for homeless women need to address the issue of abuse, 2) homeless and battered women who have been abused suffer from lowered self-esteem and increased depression, 3) the current shelter system for battered women is successful in increasing self-esteem and decreasing depression of all
residents, 4) the needs of African American battered women are not being fully met in the current shelter system.

The process of solving the problem of homelessness for women is a complex issue. The fact that the current system was developed to meet the needs single white men may prevent it from helping women to break the cycle of homelessness. Homeless women need to have access to services which deal with abuse, dependency, job training, and housing; furthermore they need to have access to transitional housing, counseling, and affordable day care. Societal factors such as racial oppression and trained economic dependency are powerful forces which act to trap women in abusive relationships and/or homelessness. The current system must be restructured to focus on the needs of homeless women and children; they are being badly neglected.
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PLEASE READ AND SIGN BEFORE COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a study concerned with women's experiences, thoughts and ideas. What we learn from this research will be used to develop programs which best meet the needs of women at the shelter.

Participation in this study consists of responding honestly to the questions on the attached sheet. You also will be asked to answer another set of questions prior to your departure from the shelter. Note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

The results from the study will have no influence on you as a participant. All of your responses will be strictly confidential, and will be used only for the reasons stated above. Information collected from this study will be analyzed collectively, thus no individual responses will ever be revealed.

I (Liza Oktay) will be available to answer any questions you may have about the study. My phone number is (216) 775-7901. To maintain confidentiality, please do not sign your name on any of the attached sheets. I sincerely appreciate your cooperation.

I have read the above and give my consent to participate in the following study (please sign and date below).

____________________________  _________________________
Signature                        Date

PLEASE RETURN THE CONSENT FORM WITH THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE.
This questionnaire is designed to measure how you feel about yourself, your life, and your surroundings. It is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and as accurately as you can. For the first set of questions, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree, by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most people.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
[ ]Strongly Agree [ ]Agree [ ]Disagree [ ]Strongly Disagree
For the next set of questions, please place an "X" next to the answer which best describes your response to the statement.

11. I feel powerless to do anything about my life. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
12. I feel blue. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
13. I think about ending my life. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
14. I have crying spells. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
15. It is easy for me to enjoy myself. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
16. I have a hard time getting started on things that I need to do. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
17. I get very depressed. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
18. I feel that there is always someone to depend on when things get tough. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
19. I feel that the future looks bright for me. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
20. I feel downhearted. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
21. I feel that I am needed.

22. I feel that I am appreciated by others.

23. I enjoy being active and busy.

24. I feel that others would be better off without me.

25. I enjoy being with other people.

26. I feel that it is easy for me to make decisions.

27. I feel downtrodden.

28. I feel terribly lonely.

29. I get upset easily.

30. I feel that nobody really cares about me.

31. I have a full life.

32. I feel that people really care about me.

33. I have a great deal of fun.
34. I feel great in the morning. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

35. I feel that my situation is hopeless. [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Thank you very much for your cooperation.
INTAKE FORM

1. Age____ Birth date
2. What circumstances took place that made it necessary to flee your home?

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

3. Indicate Race: White___ Black___ Oriental___ Mexican___
   American Indian___ Puerto Rican___ Other___
4. Marital Status: Never married___ Married___ Widowed___
   Divorced___ Separated___
5. Birth dates of Children: _______________ _______________
   _______________ _______________

6. Income: (Check One)
   ___Above 20,000
   ___10,000-20,000
   ___Under 10,000
   ___Not Known
   ___On Public Assistance: check one: ADC CR SSI___
6a. (Other) Source of income:
   ___Pension
   ___Alimony
   ___Disability
   ___Employment
   ___Unemployment
7. Present Place of Employment________________________________
8. Occupation_______________________________________________
9. Referral Source: CCYS___ News Media___
   Law Enforcement___ Counselor___
   Medical___ Other Social Services___
   Human Service Dept. ___ Self___
   Friend or Relative___

10. What are your goals while at the shelter? ____________________________

11. Number of Marriages____

12. At what age were you married the first time? ________

13. Have you been involved in previous abusive marriages or relationships? ___Yes ___No
   13a. List number of abusive relationships _____
   13b. List number of abusive marriages _______

14. In this current relationship are you: (may check more than one)
   ___Married                 ___Living Together
   ___Common Law (own joint property, use his name, children with his name, present yourselves as husband and wife)
   ___Living Apart from abusive partner:
      Give length of time living apart _______________________

15. How long did you know your partner prior to cohabitation or marriage? ____________________________

16. How long have you lived together or been married? ________
   16a. Did your partner ever slap or strike you before you lived together? ____________________________
   16b. How long had you lived together before he struck you?
17. In your opinion, what conditions or factors were present before or during the assault?

- Pregnancy
- Financial Problems
- Quick Temper
- Jealousy
- Disagreements about children
- Work
- Problems with relatives
- Alcohol
- Unemployment
- Other (Specify)

18. What was your reaction to being struck or slapped? Anger____ Fear____
   Surprise____ Hurt____ Tried to fight back____ Felt I deserved it____
   Other (specify)_______________________

19. Did you try to defend yourself? Yes____ No____ If yes, did it induce or reduce attack. Circle one.

20. Have you ever told anyone about these attacks? Yes____ No____ If so, list who and their reaction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supportive</th>
<th>Critical</th>
<th>Condescending</th>
<th>Disbelief</th>
<th>Other (Specify)</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>Other (List)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Check injuries you have had as a result of battering. May check more than one:

- Bruises and cuts
- Emotional
- Broken bones
- Required medical attention
- Head injury
- Required hospital stay
- Psychological hospitalization
- Other (specify)_______________________

If hospitalized, length of stay_______________________

Name of hospital_______________________

22. Are beatings becoming more frequent? Yes____ No____ Unknown____

23. Are beatings becoming more severe? Yes____ No____ Unknown____

24. Is there indication of alcohol usage before beatings? Yes____ No____

25. Is there indication of drug usage before beatings? Yes____ No____
26. Check your partner's attitude about violence toward you:
   Ashamed___ Proud___ Sorry___ She deserves it___
   Feels it is his right___ Other (specify)___________________________

27. Was there physical violence between your parents? Yes___ No___
   Unknown___ Are your parents currently married___ Divorced?___
   Separated___ Widowed___ Never Married___ Common Law___

28. Were you abused as a child? Yes___ No___ If yes, how and by whom?
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

29. Were you sexually abused or molested as a child (under 18)? Yes___ No___
   If yes, by whom and at what age?_______________________________

30. Have you ever been abusive to your children?____________________

31. Were your children planned?_______________________________

INFORMATION ABOUT MATE

32. Mate's full name___________________________________________

   Age_____ Height_____ Weight_____ Race: White ______
   Black ______
   Oriental ______
   Mexican ______
   American Indian ______
   Hispanic ______
   Other ______

   Color of eyes__________
   Color of hair___________

   Occupation__________________________

   Place of Employment__________________

   Education (check one) Grades 1-8 ___
   Grades 9-11 ___
   High School ___
   Some College ___
   College Graduate ___
   Vocational ___

   Number of marriages_____. At what age was he married the first time_____.
   Was he involved in previous abusive marriages or relationships?___________
List number of abusive marriages________.
List number of abusive relationships________.

33. Does he own weapons? Yes____ No____

34. Has he threatened you with a gun____ Knife____ Other (_____): ____________________________

35. Has he used a weapon to assault you? gun____ knife____ other____

36. Does he have a criminal record? Yes____ No____

37. List reasons for his prior arrests__________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

38. Did he serve in the Armed Services? Yes____ No____ Unknown____
   Was he involved in combat? Yes____ No____ Unknown____ Number of years? ______

39. Was there evidence of abuse between his parents? Yes____ No____ Unknown____

40. Are his parents married____ divorced____ separated____ widowed____ never married____
    common law____

41. What kind of relationship do you have as a couple with his parents?____________________

42. Was he abused as a child? Yes____ No____ Unknown____
   If yes, how and by whom?___________________________________________________________

43. Has he physically abused children or step-children? Yes____ No____
   If yes, has Children Services been involved? Yes____ No____
   List how he abused them___________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
44. Has he sexually abused or molested children or step-children? Yes ___ No ___

45. If so, when and who was the worker involved? __________________________________________

46. Have you ever contacted the police because of abuse? Yes ___ No ___

47. Did the police come to your house? Yes ___ No ___

Were they helpful and what was their attitude, also what was their response time?
_________________________________________ 

48. Was an arrest made? Yes ___ No ___

49. Have you ever pressed charges? Yes ___ No ___

50. If yes, what were the results? __________________________________________

51. Have you ever been separated? Yes ___ No ___ When? __________________________

For how long? __________________________

52. Have you ever filed for divorce? Yes ___ No ___ When? __________________________

Name of lawyer _________________________________________________________________

If you didn't follow through, why? _________________________________________________

53. Have you ever attended counseling? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, who was the counselor?
_________________________________________ 

54. Have you and your mate attended counseling together? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, who was the counselor? ______________________________________________________

55. Do you think your mate would consider counseling now? Yes ___ No ___
NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ___________________________

Types of Abuse

- Pushing/Slapping
- Punching/Kicking
- Sexual Assault
- Use of Weapon
- Verbal Abuse
- Mental Abuse
- Other (specify)

Frequency of Abuse

Is this the first time?  ____Yes  ____No

If no, how often does the abuse occur?

- Everyday
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- More than once a week
- Once a month
- Other (specify)

Has your life been threatened?  ____________________________________________

Most recent incident which promoted coming to Genesis House?

Explain: Length of attack, extent of injury, medical treatment, how started, what did you do, etc.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Information Concerning Children

Have they been abused?  ____Yes  ____No

If so: Type of abuse:  ____Verbal  ____Physical  ____Sexual  ____Other (specify)

Frequency of Abuse:  ______________________________________________________

Cause of Abuse:  ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________