Post-Transitional Housing for Single Mothers and their Children:

Uncovering the Realities and Exploring the Prospects of

Housing in Winnipeg

BY

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A Practicum
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

This research is founded on the assumption that single parent mothers and their children who live in transitional facilities have specific housing wants and needs that will help them to thrive after they leave transitional facilities.

By conducting a key informant interview with a domestic violence and housing expert and focus groups with residents who live in two transitional facilities I set out to answer the following questions. What are the benefits of living in transitional facilities? What are the top of mind issues and obstacles that women encounter when looking for post-transitional housing? What housing features will help women and their children to succeed post-transitionally?

This research yielded several findings. First, transitional facilities play an instrumental role in the lives of women and children who live there. The heightened feelings of safety, supportive environment and programs offered are invaluable. The realities of post-transitional living are less promising. Women noted that safe neighbourhoods, living near other single mothers, the availability of family resource centers and drop in centers, the proximity to main transit routes, schools, and

other services are housing considerations that would help them

to succeed after they leave transitional facilities. However

their reality of post-transitional housing, though, is that the

availability of affordable housing trumps all other factors.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand how housing in Winnipeg can better suit the day to day needs of single mothers and their children who have experienced domestic violence, currently reside in transitional facilities and will be venturing out to live on their own.

1.2   Definitions

To begin, it is important to establish some consistent terminology that will be used throughout this document. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) uses the following criteria to define housing needs. If these criteria are not met then residents are deemed to be in core housing need.

Affordable Housing: Housing is deemed to be affordable if it does not cost more than 30 per cent or more of household income.

Adequate Housing: Housing is deemed to be adequate if it is not in need of 'major' repair with respect to basic health and safety codes.

Suitable Housing: Housing is deemed to be suitable if it is not overcrowded. Over-crowding is based on the number, age, sex and

interrelationships of household members. (For instance, no more than two people are expected to share a bedroom.)

Sub-Standard Housing: Housing is deemed to be sub-standard if it fails to meet one or more of the abovementioned criteria.

Another term that is frequently used in this document is the concept of social support. This construct may mean different things to different people. For the sake of this project, social support will be defined as follows.

Social Support: Social support can be divided into three categories. Emotional support involves being comforted by physical affection or expressing concern for well-being. Guidance support involves giving knowledge of how to do something or suggesting some action. Tangible support involves providing housing, money, transportation etc (Duck, 1998).

Emotional support is the category that most closely captures the concept of social support in this project.

1.3   Problem Statement

Single-parent families are the fastest growing family type in North America (Sprague, 1991). The number of lone-parent

families has increased more than 60% since the early 1980s. There are now more than 1.3 million lone-parent families in Canada. Winnipeg's demographics mirror those across the country. In 2001, almost one quarter of Winnipeg children lived in single parent homes (Statistics Canada, 2001). The proportion grows to almost 40% in Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1996). Most single-parent households are headed by women (Donner, 2002). Though this family type is on the rise, "almost all housing units continue to be designed for the traditional nuclear family, or affluent empty-nesters" (CMHC, 2005, 2). Accordingly, the affordability of homes, their proximity to services, and the availability of nearby social supports become heightened considerations for single-parent families who do not have the day-to-day support of a partner and the financial cushion of two incomes (Roberts, 1990).

Within the broad category of single-parent households, there are unique groups that have even more specialized wants and needs. Women who leave abusive relationships and seek temporary shelter in transitional homes are one of those groups and are the focus of this practicum. Not only are these parents recently single as a result of leaving abusive relationships, they face a number of social, economic, and psychological obstacles.

The prevalence of transitional facilities is increasing throughout North America (Code, 2002). However, only a small body of research has focused on the comprehensive benefits of transitional housing for its users. This practicum is based on the reality that even less research is available on the need and suitability of housing *after* women and children leave transitional facilities.

The two-fold purpose of this research is to shed light onto the highly understudied housing wants and needs for single mothers and their children who currently reside in transitional facilities. A mixed-method research approach, using a key informant interview with a domestic violence and housing expert and focus groups with single mothers who resided in transitional facilities at the time of the research, was used. The key informant interview phase filled existing gaps in transitional housing literature by providing information on the programs and services generally offered within the facilities as well as the social, physical and emotional benefits that this housing model provides. This research yielded a baseline understanding of transitional housing in Winnipeg - how this housing model meets, and perhaps falls short of realizing, the social, physical, and

emotional needs of single mothers and their children who have faced domestic violence and are venturing to live on their own.

The second purpose of the research was to uncover the housing wants and needs for single mothers by conducting focus groups with women who live in transitional facilities. This research uncovered the benefits that women and their children experience as a result of living in the facility. The research also went one step further by exploring housing considerations that would help them to succeed after they leave the transitional facilities.

In sum, these two research phases set out to answer the following questions. What are the benefits of living in transitional facilities? What are the top of mind issues and obstacles that women encounter when looking for post-transitional housing? What housing features will help women and their children to succeed post-transitionally?

Providing suitable and stable housing for women can empower its residents (Sprague, 1991). Stable housing is much more than a roof overhead. When done properly, its physical, emotional, and social benefits are widespread. This practicum will add to

the limited body of research about post-transitional housing for women and their children.

1.4 Significance of the Research

This research is significant for several reasons. First, planners and other professionals have a responsibility to respond to evolving societal trends within the scope of their capabilities. It is only by carrying out research, and continually re-visiting that research, that policies and plans can evolve to adequately respond to societal trends.

Specific to this topic though, research on housing wants and needs for single mothers and their children who have left transitional facilities has never been formally conducted. There are several pockets of research that, combined, highlight the importance of this topic. Studies have found that women who have experienced domestic violence often feel socially isolated and face a number of negative social, emotional and financial effects (Weber, 2004). Transitional facilities provide safe and supportive environments to help women and their children overcome the cycle of abuse and make healthy, positive choices (CMHC, 2004). There is some speculation, though, that post-transitional housing hampers women's prosperity (Letiecq, Anderson & Koblinsky, 1998). These research findings have never

yet been considered in concert, and so this research is
significant.

This research is significant because it is adding to the
growing and important practice of meaningfully involving a group
in sharing their thoughts and opinions about housing wants and
needs that make sense for them. From European countries
(McCamant & Durrett, 1988) to here in Winnipeg (Prairie
Architects Inc., 1989), resident input in the information
gathering and design stages is being used more often and makes
sense. One of the transitional facilities that participated in
this project is in the midst of conceptualizing what kind of
post-transitional housing will fit the wants and needs of future
residents. The information gathered in this practicum will help
to inform that process.

1.5   Biases and Limitations

While this practicum is going to fill an important gap in
housing research for single mothers, this study may also present
some potential limitations and biases that need to be considered
in light of the results.

This practicum is based on the assumption that alternative
housing models, characterized by higher densities and physical

designs to promote social interaction are desirable housing

models for various populations. This assumption about

alternative housing models is a bias of the research. Studies

show that the 'human' and social aspect of housing cannot be

overlooked (McCracken, 2004). Housing research with single

mothers found that opportunities for social interaction are an

important ingredient of adequate housing for them (Birdsall,

Clifton & Wood, 1992).

A limitation of this research is that this practicum alone

cannot effect tangible change in housing provisions for single

mothers and their children. As stated, this topic has limited

research and so this practicum can, at best, help to promote a

further body of research about broadening housing options for

the defined population in this research, and the greater

community. With that said, the director of one of the

transitional facilities that participated in this project has

expressed an interest in the findings of this research for real-

life purposes. The said facility is working towards providing

post-transitional housing for its residents. The results from

this practicum will be used to help guide that work.

A limitation of this research may be a function of the time

period in which this research will be carried out. The

participants in the study currently reside in transitional

facilities and were asked to talk about housing features that

will accommodate their lifestyle once they leave transitional

facilities. As such, women were asked to infer what their

housing wants and needs will be *after* they leave transitional

facilities. Having the participants make inferences on future

wants and needs may yield a different set of thoughts and

beliefs than if they were actually in a post-transitional

housing situation. Conversely, the shared spaces and heightened

social interaction that the participants experience while living

in the transitional facilities may have evoked salient housing

features that they might not have otherwise considered.

A possible limitation to this research may be the omission

of single fathers in this research. I decided to focus this

investigation on single mothers for a few reasons. The first

reason is that most single-parent families are women. Women

comprise 89% of lone-parent families in Winnipeg (Statistics

Canada, 2001). Since women make up an overwhelming majority of

lone-parent households, a gender specific analysis is sensible.

Another reason for limiting this research to women is that all

of the study participants have experienced domestic violence.

Granted men are victims of domestic violence as well, but the

prevalence of male victims of violence is drastically lower.

Third, research shows that women and men have different coping mechanisms and seek support in different ways (Weber, 2004). Carrying out gender specific research can help to understand women's unique needs.

This research is based on the assumption that the women in this study have experienced domestic violence by male partners. This assumption was loosely confirmed over the course of the focus groups. Some women did mention male partners. However, this was not unanimously disclosed. Regardless, the intent behind this research, the focus group questions, and the results are not limited to heterosexual relationships.

By nature, qualitative research cannot be transferred to a population outside of the scope of this research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The participants in this practicum are based on a sample of convenience, not a random sample. As such, the findings of this practicum cannot be generalized to other single mothers who have experienced similar circumstances. In the recommendations section of this document, I discuss directions for future research to gather more widespread information on suitable housing for single mothers and their children.

A limitation of this research is that only one key informant interview was conducted. The purpose of the key informant interview was to fill gaps in the literature about transitional facilities, particularly relating to Winnipeg's context. While the key informant interviewee has extensive experience in the field of domestic violence and housing, the information gathered in this first research phase is limited to one lens through which thoughts, experiences and opinions on the topic are expressed.

A limitation of this research is that the focus group participants were a sample of convenience. The research topic is sensitive, and ensuring the confidentiality of the facility and its residents was important to the facility directors. For these reasons the transitional facility directors served as the initial point of contact with the participants about this project. The participation in this project is limited to the women who spoke with the director and expressed an interest in participating. Moreover, I was told that some women were currently in a state of crisis and would not be able to participate in the project. Their experiences and input may have yielded some different research findings from the ones here. Due to the recruiting procedure used, the participants are not a true random sample of the facility residents. Nonetheless,

conducting research with samples of convenience can still provide some significant insights, particularly in exploratory research and pilot studies (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993).

1.6 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduced the purpose of this research by referencing some social and demographic trends that underscore the research. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical trends that have shaped the built environment and the subsequent effects it has had on the lives of women. The rational comprehensive model, the feminist movement and postmodernism are all discussed and provide the historical and current backdrop to this research. Chapter 3 moves from the broader theoretical influences of the topic to explore the economic, social and familial trends of the project. This chapter describes the poor fit between housing and the lives of women, the increasing prevalence (or reporting) of domestic violence and the subsequent emergence of transitional facilities to offer a refuge for women and children from domestic violence. These topics form the inquiry about post-transitional housing for women and their children. Chapter 4 describes the two research methods used to uncover the benefits of transitional facilities for women and children and what housing wants and needs will

help them to succeed post-transitionally. Chapter 4 also

describes the rationale behind, and benefits of, conducting a

key informant interview and then two focus groups with women who

resided in transitional facilities at the time the research was

conducted. Chapter 5 reveals the results of both research

methods. Chapter 6 takes the results from this study and applies

them against the gaps in the literature laid out in the

introductory chapters. This final chapter also discusses

directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section is to establish an understanding of the theoretical influences that have shaped this practicum. These predominant theoretical influences, in the most general terms, have shaped the way that planners, architects, policy makers and others have perceived and responded to the form and function of cities. The design of residential dwellings and their corresponding lifestyle effects have been directly impacted by these theories. First, the rational comprehensive theory will be introduced, followed by a discussion of the feminist movement and its critiques of the rational comprehensive model. Lastly, postmodernism will be discussed.

2.1 Rational Comprehensive Planning Model

The dominant planning theory of the 20th century is the rational comprehensive model. It is the backdrop against which cities have been planned and designed. The general tenets of rational theory are that planning should be practiced through an objective, value-free lens, and that one outcome is able to satisfy a common good (Ritzdorf, 1992). Modernists believe that genders, social classes, and minority groups experience and perceive the city in a like manner, as such, one plan was able to satisfy a common good (Alexander, 1986).

Rational planning is rooted in positivist science, which assumes that quantitative, measurable methods are optimal decision-making tools. As well, it assumed a 'gender blind' method for planning cities. This notion is reinforced in statements such as, "…women, that's not a land-use matter" (Greed, 1994, 184). Under this planning model, which was carried out nearly exclusively by white, middle-class males, the unique needs of women were simply overlooked as rationalists assumed that women's needs were identical to those of men.

2.2 Feminist Movement

Feminist discourse, analysis and critiques are not new phenomena. Early feminist movements date back to the early 1900's where architects, feminists, suffragists, socialists, and urban planners advocated for communal kitchens, multipurpose rooms, and housing lay-outs to ease women's domestic duties (Spain, 1992). While their efforts were not fruitless, they did not receive widespread recognition. A stronger wave of feminism swelled in the 1970's (hooks, 2000). This time, their critiques could not be stifled.

Although the feminist movement has been around for decades now, it is continually important to recount the history of

feminist critiques in planning work and other disciplines that affect the city form and relationships within them. Before this is done though, it is important to establish a definition of the feminist movement that will be used throughout this document. I acknowledge that feminist perspectives hold multiple influences, beliefs, and views. There is no single type of feminism. However, at the core of all feminist movements is a recognition that "feminism in the most general terms seeks to develop a sense of women's own subjectivity" (Liggett, 1996, p.452). This practicum espouses Liggett's definition of feminism.

Women's subordination is woven throughout planning theories, processes, and practices. A fundamental tenet of city planners is to plan environments in an equitable and responsive manner for those who occupy them (Canadian Institute of Planners, http://www.cip-icu.ca). As such, understanding feminist theory and critiques will help planners and other decision makers to understand where power and gender imbalances lie. It will provide an understanding of how housing and neighbourhood design has discriminated against women. It will also help to inform how planning theories and practices continue to, implicitly or explicitly, undermine the unique needs of women in the city.

Scholar and planner Marsha Ritzdorf was committed to heightening planners' responsiveness to women and children within the context of the declining nuclear family and increased female participation in the workforce. Ritzdorf claimed that, "gender is a significant aspect of the social, political, and economic construction of reality" (1992, p. 455). As such, gender considerations must play an integral role in all public plans and policies.

Feminists contend that often men and women do not participate on an equal playing field. Gender equality can only be achieved when we understand the subordinate mechanisms in public and private spaces and then re-build them in an impartial manner. The built environment is not benign. It reflects social inequality and perpetuates inequality unless it is understood (MacGregor, 1995).

Feminist discourse and critiques are responsible for awareness that the built environment often subjugates and disadvantages marginalized populations (Wekerle, 1982). Feminists assert that women have different daily lives than men. Women move through space differently. Women perceive their environment differently (Ritzdorf, 1992). Safety considerations (Wekerle,1982), transportation patterns, house and building lay-

outs (Hayden, 1981), and washroom designs have all been designed by men, with men in mind. They do not accommodate the unique wants and needs of women (Cavanagh & Ware, 1990). The feminist perspective argues that gender is and must always be a fundamental consideration in planning.

The emergence of feminist theory and discourse has challenged time-honoured ways of thinking about the environment and social relationships within it. It is responsible for recognizing that the rational comprehensive planning approach can no longer pride itself on being value-free and objective (Ritzdorf, 1992). This recognition created momentum for re-examining planning concepts and epistemologies (Fainstein, 1992). The emergence of postmodernism was carried by the impetus of the feminist movement. It brought a new way of conceiving of, and responding to the diversity within cities.

2.3 Postmodernism

The theoretical backdrop of the planning profession has been restructured over the last thirty years. Postmodernism was conceived to overcome the social exclusion and narrow understanding of needs that modernism perpetuated. Postmodernism brought about a new way to understand how the design of city streets, parks, neighbourhoods, and the lay-out of homes impacts

members of society differently. Feminists are not wholly

responsible for the paradigm shift. Advocates for minority

groups, religious groups, and physically and mentally disabled

people came together to uncover the way cities were not

accommodating their needs (Sandercock, 1998).

The essence of postmodernism is to recognize that cities

are plural. To truly accommodate and embrace the diversity

within cities, the experiences and input from minority, quieter

and fringe voices need to be considered in the process and

products of plans (Sandercock, 1998). For instance, a mother

with a child in a stroller may have very different opinions on

the design of a bus or feelings of safety in an unlit park than

a man would. Both opinions are valid, but they may be quite

different.

In her book *Towards Cosmopolis*, Leonie Sandercock (1998)

puts forth the basic tenets of postmodernism.

Postmodernism is:

- ° A vehicle for moving away from rational thinking as the
  primary planning instrument;
- ° A shift away from grand, comprehensive plans to account for
  people in the process;

° Recognizing and validating the alternative epistemologies
  that exist;

° A community driven, bottom-up approach, that focuses on
  empowering community members;

° Recognizing that multiple publics exist and need to be taken
  into account.

It is interesting to note that although postmodernism is
the dominant framework through which most planning practices are
carried out, many of its practices *continue* to favour
patriarchal forces that undermine women's basic needs. In other
words, there seems to be a disconnect between the idyllic and
all-encompassing theory of postmodernism and the less than
inclusive plans that are carried out. This elevates the
importance for feminist critiques and analysis more than ever.
We must continue to think of city plans in a critical and
comprehensive manner - to constantly ask ourselves if any group
is being excluded from this way of doing things.

2.4 Chapter Summary

There are the main highlights from this chapter. First, the
built environment is not benign. As such, the objective and
value-free lens of the rational comprehensive planning model has
been refuted as the theoretical backdrop to guide the way

environments are conceived and built. Second, the feminist

movement played an important role in uncovering that power and

gender imbalances exist within the built environment. Women have

a different lens of the world and their thoughts, beliefs, and

day-to-day experiences need to be considered and responded to

appropriately. Third, the swell of postmodernism complemented

feminist thought and critiques. Postmodernists recognize the

plurality of cities and contend that thoughts and opinions of

marginalized groups need to be heard. These theoretical shifts

exert direct influence on the design of environments and the

effects that it has on marginalized groups. The next chapter

will show how the lay-out of neighbourhoods and housing has

hampered the lives of women. The chapter will also discuss the

importance of understanding and validating the thoughts and

opinions of single mothers who have experienced domestic

violence.

Chapter 3: Housing and Domestic Violence

This chapter will weave from historical to current housing factors that have had an effect on the lives of women. Next several economic and familial trends will be raised to demonstrate the interplay between the physical environment and its impact on women, specifically the growing demographic of single mothers. The topic of transitional homes will then be raised to introduce some of the physical and social characteristics that single mothers and children experience while living in the facilities. Research shows that transitional houses are much-needed intermediary residences for women and children who have experienced domestic violence (Melbin et al., 2003). Not only do these facilities provide a safe physical refuge for women and children, but they often meet important emotional and social needs as well. This practicum pre-supposes that transitional housing benefits its users and that its physical and social characteristics may be useful in post-transitional housing too.

3.1 Housing

Post WWII housing experienced burgeoning suburban development. These developments shared several common features across North America. As residents moved farther from the city core, travel times between home and work increased along with

automobile use. Urban planner, sociologist, and historian Lewis Mumford contended that suburban developments evoke feelings of social, economic, and lifestyle monotony. Mumford described suburbs as "a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mould" (Mumford, 1961, 486).

On top of the physical and social monotony that suburban developments presented, they also hampered the day-to-day lives of women and mothers who lived there. The feminist movement was paramount in uncovering the gender imbalances within this popular housing type. Conceptions about the nuclear family were that man's role was to work outside the home to financially support his wife and children. Fewer than 20% of women worked outside of the home in the 1950's (Sprague, 1991). During this time, the role of most women was to maintain a clean and orderly house for their families, raise children, and cook meals. This sharp division between men's and women's roles translated into sharp divisions in conceptions of male space and female space. Men were associated with the public realm of the working world,

whereas women were associated with the private realm of the house (Spain, 1992).

Within the private realm, inequalities existed that undermined women's roles and disadvantaged their lifestyles. The kitchen and washing area consumed most of the housewife's time. Due to the lay-out of homes, this meant that she was often relegated to the back areas of the house, far removed from public streets and public views. The location of these facilities meant that women had scarce contact with the public realm. They had limited opportunity to connect with their neighbours or passers-by because their primary responsibilities were located in the rear areas of the house (Roberts, 1990). While men may not have explicitly designed homes to limit women's important social interactions, this is what happened.

Women with young children had to juggle child rearing and domestic responsibilities (Madigan & Munro, 1991). Rooms were compartmentalized, which left few to no sightlines between rooms. This meant that women struggled daily to finish the laundry or cook a meal while supervising their children who were often playing or napping in other rooms.

A unique feature that distinguished women from men is that women lived and worked in the same area. Men would come home from work and unwind in the relaxed setting of their home. Women were never afforded the opportunity to separate their working identities from their private identities since they were entrenched in the same environment (Madigan & Munro, 1991).

Marion Roberts (1991) relays an example of the exclusion of female representation in the design of houses in London, England. In the 1960s a survey was administered (by men) to housewives. It asked whether they would prefer to live in high-rise buildings constructed from tower blocks, slab blocks, or deck access schemes. The women unanimously responded that none of these alternatives would be suitable. A criticism of positivist research is, "a research product that has managed to measure everything and understand nothing" (Chadwick, Bahr, Albrecht, 1984, 207). This example highlights women's lack of representation in planning matters that impact them directly. Even when people are consulted and options are presented they can be unanimously rejected because appropriate representation was lacking in the planning stages.

This section illustrates how the design of neighbourhoods and homes hampered women's daily lives. The geographic division

between the working realm and the domestic realm evoked feelings of isolation for women. The same feelings of isolation were felt within the home as women's primary roles were situated in the rear areas of the house. While suburban and residential spaces were not intentionally designed to disadvantage women this was the result. This section illustrates that the design of housing and its situation within the public realm needs to be carefully conceived.

3.2 Domestic Violence

While a detailed review of domestic violence it beyond the scope of this paper, it is an important topic to raise to understand some of the emotional, psychological and familial effects that women and children experience.

Domestic violence is all too common. In Canada, 29% of all women have been physically, sexually, or psychologically abused by a spouse (Statistics Canada, 1996). Domestic violence brings about psychological, emotional and financial consequences for those who experience it. In domestic violence situations women are often confronted with a series of negative push and pull factors. When working class or low income women experience domestic violence, women often escape the adverse situation by leaving home and living on the streets. Another strategy women

use to escape an abusive partner is to (often hastily) enter

into another relationship to provide physical and emotional

refuge from their abusive partner (Novac, 1996). It is

unfortunate that women resort to the streets to escape from

dangerous domestic situations, or hastily enter into a new

relationship to establish a sense of real or perceived safety

from their former partners. Women deserve the right to make

informed decisions that will benefit them and their children for

the short and long term.

Clearly, resorting to homelessness to escape violence, or to

bounce from one relationship to another to avoid living on the

streets are not suitable options, yet these situations exist.

Fortunately, transitional houses provide a refuge for women and

children who end up leaving abusive partners (LeFeuvre, 1992).

3.3 Transitional Housing in Canada

Transitional housing facilities emerged in the 1970s in

Western Europe and North America as a safe place for women and

children to go after they leave abusive relationships (Code,

2002). The *2001-2002 Canada's Shelters for Abused Women* report

outlined that the most common reasons women go to transitional

facilities is to escape one or more types of abuse. These include: physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, psychological abuse, threats, and harassment.

Approximately 11% of women seek shelter in transitional facilities to escape the cycle of abuse (Statistics Canada, 2001). This percentage is disconcerting considering that 101,248 women use transitional facilities every year (Code, 2002). As such, the number of women who move to shelters to escape domestic violence represents only a fragment of a much larger societal problem.

From 1997-1998, 90,792 Canadian women and dependent children were admitted into shelters. In 2001-2002, this number rose to 101,248 - a 9% increase (Code, 2002). Caution must be taken when interpreting these results. Although the number of women and children using shelter facilities is increasing this does not necessarily mean that domestic violence is on the rise. Women may be feeling more empowered to leave their abusive relationships, and / or they may have greater access to resources and programs relating to domestic violence.

The prevalence of shelter use across Canada varies province by province. Surpassed by only the Yukon and the North West Territories, Manitoba has the third highest rate of shelter use throughout the country - the highest shelter rate in all of the provinces. Whereas the national average of abused women residing in shelters is 18.7 women per 100,000, Manitoba has 21.3 women per 100,000 seeking refuge in shelters. The most prevalent cohort of women who reside in shelters is the 25-34 age category. This age group is followed by the 35-44 age group and the 15-24 age group. The majority of women who are admitted into facilities have dependent children (Code, 2002).

Transitional facilities differ from emergency shelters in the length of time that people stay and the programming components of the facility. In emergency shelters residents are generally permitted to stay for up to 3 months. In transitional houses, residents tend to stay for up to three years (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2000). Transitional facilities provide much more than the physical needs of a warm bed and roof overhead. Most often these residences have social and programming components built into them. In-house services provided in transitional shelters include: individual, family, and group counselling; medical and legal services; financial assistance;

job training and employment search assistance; recreational services; parenting courses; and much more (Sprague, 1991). Quite often these services are provided in culturally appropriate manners (Code, 2002). These programs operate in concert to empower residents and bolster their feelings of self-sufficiency (Washington, 2002). Children in the facilities are also in a state of crisis, so group and individual counselling is given to help them deal with the reality of their parents' separation, feelings of loss and confusion, and other issues (McDonald, 1989).

Transitional facilities incorporate a blend of public and private spaces. Women and their children live in private suites that are generally equipped with bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and small living area. The units are like small apartments. However, transitional facilities are also equipped with communal rooms. While their children are at school, women can congregate in these spaces to enjoy heightened levels of social support. Women who have lived in transitional facilities reported that being in the company of people with similar experiences is often a source of comfort and support, in addition to the support from facility workers (CMHC, 2004).

Considering that women and children go to transitional facilities to escape domestic violence, safety is a principal consideration. Women often report feeling safe by living in transitional facilities because of the volume of people in close proximity (Melbin, Sullivan & Cain, 2003). This natural surveillance provides a sense of comfort. Additionally, the discreet location of the facilities reduces the possibility of ex-partners locating the facility, which can ease the residents' safety concerns as well.

Research has found that transitional living is instrumental in bridging the gap for women and their children from a period of crisis and distress to self-growth (Code, 2002). However, this positive transformation is only temporary unless adequate housing is available for women to continue to actualize the positive transformations after they leave transitional facilities. There is limited research on transitional facilities and the limited research that does exist seems to be consistently founded on the assumption that women and their children want to assume independent living arrangements after they leave the facility (Letiecq et. al., 1998). The Canada's Shelters for Abused Women (Code, 2002) reports differently though. While a small percentage of women and their children do return to their partners after leaving the facilities (12%),

most are left to find alternate and suitable housing
arrangements after leaving the facilities. Sherry Ahrentzen
describes, "many design features of transitional housing also
are desirable in permanent housing" (1989, 144). In essence,
what has been created (and maintained) is a discrepancy between
housing needs and housing availability.

To determine whether post-transitional housing accommodates
the wants and needs of women and their children after they leave
transitional facilities I carried out a preliminary
investigation on this topic for a research methods class. The
information being sought was exploratory in nature, and so I
carried out open-ended interviews with three transitional
facility directors in Winnipeg. In addition to their directorial
experiences the three participants had several years of
experience working in the field of domestic violence. The
information gathered during this process did not yield a first
hand assessment of the post-transitional housing realities.
Because the directors worked closely with the residents though,
I thought they could reasonably comment on post-transitional
living for women and children.

I carried out a content analysis procedure to analyze the
results and sort the findings into categories that were

determined after the research was conducted. The content
analysis provided some insight on the most salient themes
relating to post-transitional housing. The participants reported
that the location of housing was the most important
consideration for women after they leave transitional
facilities. They reported that women are hesitant to relocate to
areas where they previously lived for fear of encountering their
ex-partner. Participants reported that many of the women want to
live in the area where the transitional facilities are located,
but this is often difficult to secure due to the lack of
available and affordable units. Neighbourhood choices are often
influenced by safety perceptions. The participants noted that
women are often hesitant to locate to inner city neighbourhoods
because of safety concerns. Since most residents have limited
incomes or are on social assistance it is hard to find housing
they find suitable housing in non-core neighbourhoods.

The proximity to services was another frequently reported
characteristic of post-transitional housing. Participants noted
that women want to relocate to areas where they can easily
access services and where there are nearby schools, where they
don't have to rely solely on public transit, and where they have
social supports close by.

The results from this preliminary investigation provided a good snapshot of housing considerations for post-transitional women. These findings highlighted the interplay between several post-transitional housing considerations and affirmed the importance of further investigation.

Sherry Ahrentzen's (1989) comments on the benefits of transitional facilities for its users and the hypothesized benefits of transitional facility elements for women and children after they leave transitional facilities are important foundations of this practicum. I agree with Ahrentzen's suggestion that there is merit in exploring the benefits that transitional facilities provide its users while they live in the facilities. It is also worthwhile to understand what features of transitional housing may help them to thrive after they leave the facilities. As such, these topics were explored by engaging women who currently reside in transitional facilities. The primary themes of the current research focused on:

1)   Understanding the social, physical and emotional benefits that transitional facilities provide its users.

2)   Looking into the housing challenges, opportunities and realities that women face after they leave transitional facilities.

3)   Understanding if there any features of transitional

        housing, or other housing considerations that would help

        women and their children to succeed post-transitionally.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the topics of housing, domestic

violence, and transitional housing. All three of these topics

interplay and support the importance of the practicum. The

chapter began by introducing the effects of the built

environment on the lives of women. Since most of the workforce

was composed of men, the lack of female input meant that their

perspectives were not considered. The social, emotional and day-

to-day inequalities put a sharp focus on the need for

inclusively and participation. The chapter briefly touched on

the topic of domestic violence since the participants in this

study have all experienced it. To that end, it is important to

understand some of the social and emotional effects of violence.

Lastly, the discussion on transitional facilities described the

important bridging role these facilities play to help women

escape the cycle of abuse and thrive.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

Broadly, the interplay between housing availability, social supports and economic constraints for women and children who have left transitional facilities, combined with a lack of research in this area, particularly in Winnipeg, led me to design a multiple research methods approach to uncover how housing for this particular population could be improved.

4.1   Theoretical Foundations of the Research

This practicum was founded on a constructivist method of inquiry. The work of Guba and Lincoln (1989) was used to guide the research. In their work, the authors explained four criteria for constructivist research.

1) Research should be conducted in natural settings. Naturally occurring environments, unlike highly controlled laboratory settings, are more likely to draw out truer accounts of human behaviour, thoughts, and beliefs.

For this practicum, data was collected in the transitional facilities where the participants lived, and in the key informant interviewee's office. I believe that conducting research in a familiar atmosphere helped to increase the participants' willingness to share information that may be difficult to disclose. As well, both locations were private and

did not present a risk of having others overhear the conversations.

2) The researcher enters the inquiry with a knowledge and appreciation that he/she is not an 'expert' on the topic, and seeks to learn from the expertise of the participants.

The primary objective of this research was to learn from the participants. I wanted to understand their beliefs about their current housing situation and their thoughts, hopes and fears about post-transitional housing. I wanted to gain an appreciation for "other individuals' stories because they are of worth" (Seidman, 1998, 3). I believe that I played a facilitative role in this research. The participants have the expertise in the topic and my role was to gather information, distill its parts and draw out prominent themes and recommendations.

3) The research methods used in constructivist research are naturally occurring to humans.

By nature, humans are social beings. Conversations come naturally to most humans, as opposed to the unnatural setting of the laboratory and its manipulations. The research methods and locations used in this practicum support this criterion.

4) Constructivist research incorporates the use of tacit

knowledge in the research procedure and reporting of

results.

The information gathered in this practicum relied solely on

the thoughts, perceptions and beliefs of the participants.

'Right' and 'wrong' answers do not exist. The information that

was disclosed is real to the participants who conveyed it. It

needs to be respected. Moreover, I anticipated that participants

would sometimes express their opinions and beliefs without

always being able to trace them to factual or observable

information. The outcome of a constructivist method of inquiry

is not a depiction of a universal state of affairs that rings

true for other people in similar situations. One person's

reality can be quite different from somebody else's, even if

they experience comparable situations. As Neuman, (1997)

acknowledged- "the social world is largely what people perceive

it to be" (69).

Concepts of the constructivist method of inquiry complement

feminist approaches to research. Feminists contend that research

must extend beyond the observable, testable, and quantifiable

measures. Quantitative research, founded in science, is not a

preferred method when conducting research with women as it

undermines the qualities and characteristics that come naturally to them. Men's approaches to decision-making are characteristic of the rational comprehensive planning model, which emphasizes objectivity and the 'head over heart'. On the other hand, feminist researchers believe there are others ways of experiencing and understanding the world. These ways rely on intuition, emotionality, and tacit knowledge (Sandercock, 1998). Sandercock and Forsyth "suggest that a feminist perspective involves the relevance of the following ways of knowing into practice and planning...the importance of oral traditions, of storytelling, of "gossip", of social listening,...tacit or intuitive knowing,...creating symbolic forms...more important ways of communicating" (1992, 472). This practicum espoused these tenets.

4.2 Participants

    There were two groups of participants in this research: a housing and domestic violence expert who works at the Province of Manitoba and single mothers who currently reside in two transitional facilities in Winnipeg.

4.2.1 Key Informant Interview Participant

    The key informant interviewee has worked in the field of domestic violence and housing for 24 years. This person was

asked to participate in this research because I believed that their experiences in the area of housing and program delivery for women who have experienced domestic violence would help to fill some of the gaps in the research on transitional facilities, particularly relating to Winnipeg's context.

4.2.2 Focus Group Participants

Eleven transitional facility residents participated in the focus group sessions. Six residents from one transitional facility (Facility A), and five residents from another transitional facility (Facility B) participated in the research. All of the participants were mothers and had anywhere from two to nine children. All participants in Facility A identified themselves as Aboriginal. Participants from Facility B did not identify themselves from a particular cultural group.

Because of the sensitive nature of the population under investigation and the importance of ensuring the confidentiality of the facility and its residents, the transitional facility directors made the initial point of contact with the residents about the purpose of the research and described what their involvement would entail. The facility directors played an intermediary role between the participants and the researcher during the organization stages of the research. The facility

directors arranged the room, date and time of the focus groups with the residents and then let me know the details. Because of the way that the participants were recruited, the residents at both facilities were samples of convenience.

Participants in both focus groups received remuneration for participating in the research.

4.3   Apparatus

The key informant interview and the two focus groups were recorded on audio-cassette. The audio-cassette was only turned on upon receiving participant consent. At times the device was turned off when participants did not feel comfortable disclosing information that could be used in the dissemination of the findings.

The key informant interview guide and the focus group questions can be found on Appendix A and B, respectively. While these questions are ordered, they did not necessarily follow in the sequence that is laid out in the Appendices. More importantly, rather than following a pre-determined order the intent was to create a comfortable, open-ended dialogue between the participants and the researcher. I believed that this approach would produce truer accounts of their thoughts,

beliefs, and feelings on the topic. Additionally, creating informal and conversational settings is consistent with feminist research approaches.

The first research method was a key informant interview with a domestic violence and housing expert. This method was used to add to the limited body of research on transitional facilities in Canada, and more specifically in Winnipeg. I wanted to get a snapshot of transitional facilities in Winnipeg. I wanted to understand how their designs and programs help to improve the lives of women who have experienced domestic violence. I wanted to understand what happens to women after they leave transitional facilities and how adequate post-transitional housing could potentially help women and their children succeed after they leave the facilities. I wanted to understand what can be improved to make a more positive difference in the lives of women and children who have survived domestic abuse. The key informant interview was conducted to inform these topics.

The second research method, focus groups, was conducted with single mothers who reside at two transitional facilities in Winnipeg. Both focus groups were carried out to get the residents' first-hand thoughts and feelings about living in the transitional facility. As well, I wanted to understand their experiences with,

and thoughts about post-transitional housing for them and their children.

4.4 Procedure

The key informant interview was carried out a few weeks before the focus groups. It was conducted in the interviewee's office. Before the interview started I described the rationale for my project and the role that the interview played. The interviewee signed the research consent form (Appendix C) before the interview started. Most of the interview was recorded on audio-cassette. At times though, the participant asked that it be turned off to ensure that information being disclosed would not be publicly shared. The interview guide (Appendix A) served as a rough template for the interview. All of the questions were answered during the course of the interview, albeit not necessarily in the pre-determined order. The interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours.

The focus group sessions took place in the transitional facilities where the participants lived. The focus group in Facility A took place first. The focus group in Facility B was carried out just over a week later. Arrangements were made for childcare at both facilities. However in Facility A, two toddlers and one infant were also present in the room. Before the focus groups started I described the rationale for my project and the purpose of the focus

groups. The participants signed the research consent form (Appendix

D) before the focus groups started. All participants agreed to be

audio-taped. To try to create a comfortable atmosphere for the

participants the focus groups took place in rooms that they normally

gather and socialize in. I also provided food and drinks. I followed

the focus group questions to guide the discussion and asked several

probes to gather more detailed information. The focus group covered

some potentially sensitive topics. As such, I was careful not to

direct questions to specific participants. In both sessions the more

outspoken participants directed the flow of conversation. This

worked out well as their candidness helped the less vocal

participants to share their views as well. Both focus groups lasted

approximately one hour.

4.5 Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is an elaborate and time-

consuming process. Based on the readings and recommendations of

several authors, I used content analysis during both phases of

the research (Sommer & Sommer, 2002; Patton, 2002). This is a

useful technique for distilling large volumes of information and

making inferences about the findings by identifying

characteristics of the messages (Krippendorff, 1980). To carry

out a content analysis, the researcher can either form preset

categories before conducting the research or after data

collection. I used the latter approach because of the

exploratory nature of the study. Forming categories after

conducting the research also eliminated the risk of omitting

important categories that might have been revealed.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Key Informant Interview

As previously stated, the key informant participant has 24 years of experience working in the area of domestic violence and housing. The participant's experiences in Winnipeg and across Canada provided valuable information on transitional facilities and input on post-transitional housing considerations that can help women to succeed.

5.1.1. Women in Transitional Facilities

Women who enter transitional facilities to escape the adverse effects of domestic violence represent a small fraction of women who experience domestic violence. Approximately 10% of women who experience domestic violence move to transitional facilities (Code, 2002). Therefore, when considering these results it is important to keep in mind that these women represent only a fraction of a much more widespread societal problem that is not being adequately addressed.

The most interesting finding from the key informant interview is the comments about why women enter transitional facilities. The interviewee stated that women are propelled to leave abusive partners to escape the effects of domestic violence for them and their children. Perhaps contrary to

popular assumption though, most women and children do not enter transitional facilities because they are in a state of crisis from the abuse or because they are fearful for their lives. Most women in this situation move to transitional facilities because they lack housing options. The social, economic and emotional effects of domestic violence are intertwined. However these comments reveal that adequate and affordable housing, or a lack thereof, is a significant reason why women and children move to transitional facilities.

Most women who seek short-term housing in transitional facilities benefit from their time there. The most salient benefit of living in transitional facilities is the connections that are formed with the other residents. The women are no longer alone, they no longer feel isolated and they reap social and emotional benefits of "being in the company of women who understand their situation."

Often, the friendships that are formed in the transitional facilities last much longer than the time spent there. For some residents they are "still tightly bonded to one another"- even years later. The participant spoke of women who mutually supported each other through the justice system and shared babysitting services. The act of "surviving and thriving through

an abusive relationship" is so powerful that it transcends age, faith, and socio-economic status.

Another prominent benefit of transitional housing is the sense of safety that the facility provides. This is achieved two ways. First, systems in place at the facilities instill a sense of safety in the participants. Facility doors are locked at all times and visitors need to be buzzed in. Second, a heightened sense of safety is achieved because of the number of people that live in the facility. The volume of women and facility staff creates a natural surveillance that makes women feel at ease.

All transitional facilities have programming components. Parenting classes, individual and group counselling, and skills training are some of the services offered that help women to cope with the abuse they have experienced. The programs equip women to make positive, healthy decisions for them and their children after they leave the facility.

The length of time residents stay in transitional facilities varies between residents because of their differing experiences and needs. Generally though, residents do not stay longer than a year.

5.1.2. Women Who Leave Transitional Facilities

Understanding what happens to women and children after they leave transitional facilities is difficult to track and has not yet been formally researched in Canada. The participant said that it is much easier to get a sense of what happens to women post-transitionally in smaller urban centers because the opportunity to run into people is that much greater. In smaller cities like Brandon facility staff and service providers can learn about women's whereabouts when they run into them at schools, shopping malls or other public places. In larger urban centers like Winnipeg though, this is not the case. After leaving transitional facilities, women "just go out and disappear", the participant explained.

To get a better understanding of where women do end up after they leave transitional facilities, a longitudinal study is being carried out in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The interviewee is a co-principal investigator in this project. While this study is only in the beginning stages, once completed, it will help to track the outcomes of women who have left transitional facilities and will provide information on the most salient features that contribute to, and detract from, their success.

As stated, there has yet to be any formal study or tracking process about where women end up after they leave transitional facilities. At best, we can explore some of the struggles and key issues that women are confronted with when making arrangements to leave the transitional facility. As well, the participant spoke anecdotally, based on her years of experience, about some of the post-transitional realities that women face.

The availability of affordable housing (or lack thereof) is the biggest determining factor in where women and their children will live after they leave transitional facilities. After the dissolution of a relationship women almost always end up at a lower economic level, thus limiting their housing options. The participant noted that most women who leave transitional facilities in Winnipeg move to public housing units.

The availability of adequate housing units is another noted challenge. For example, if a woman began looking for a place to live in the middle of the month, the only available suites for the beginning of the next month tend to be those that are in disrepair that nobody else wants. There are a variety of factors that should be considered when deciding on where to live. However the harsh reality of post-transitional housing for this group is that housing affordability and availability trump all

other considerations. The participant spoke anecdotally about the adverse effects on women and children when this happens. The participant discussed commonly reported problems with public housing units. Public housing units are often inadequate and can have the following problems: no running water, doors and windows that don't close properly, rowdy neighbours, and landlords who don't respond to tenant service requests.

The participant said that living far away from schools, bus routes, places of employment, and friends and family all detract from adequate living arrangements that impinge on their quality of life. Combining these factors with constraints of affordability and availability makes post-transitional living difficult for many women.

The effects of sub-standard housing are far-reaching. Women and their children tend to be more transient, moving from one place to another in search of better housing arrangements. Continually moving disrupts the children's school year and their ability to form friendships. Because of sub-standard housing, women may be more inclined to return to their abusive spouse. The participant noted that very few women leave a partner after one or two abusive incidents. Women who have experienced domestic violence and then face the reality of sub-standard

housing afterwards are confronted with a series of push and pull factors. Often, the pull towards stable, adequate housing for her and her children and a partner's financial cushion supersedes her push away from an abusive relationship.

The participant noted that housing is so much more than a roof overhead for these women and their children. Yet all too often this population is confronted with housing obstacles that prohibit them from surviving and thriving on their own after they leave transitional facilities.

5.1.3 Helping Women to Succeed Post-Transitionally

As noted, there is a lack of research about where women and their children end up after they leave transitional facilities. The limited knowledge about the challenges and opportunities of post-transitional housing makes it difficult to know how to be more responsive to women's needs. However anecdotal evidence, observations and 24 years of professional experience have given the participant some well developed views on what kind of post-transitional housing can help women and their children to succeed.

The participant noted that one of the most important components of post-transitional housing needs to be housing

models that provide opportunities for social support. All too

often, though, women who leave supportive transitional facility

environments wind up feeling alone and isolated with their

children. To address this important element the participant

noted, "I absolutely, strongly believe in co-op housing for

women who have left abusive relationships." The participant

believed that a co-op housing model would benefit this

population.

Like any apartment or house, housing co-operatives, better

known as co-ops, are a place for people to live. The biggest

differentiating factor between co-ops and more traditional forms

of housing is that co-ops are "democratic communities where

residents make decisions on how the co-op operates" (CMHC,

2005). Co-op houses are managed by the residents who live there.

When residents move into a co-op they become a member of the co-

op. Membership entitles the residents to participate in the

management of their co-op and decisions that impact their

housing. As such, decisions like the setting monthly housing

charges, approving annual budgets and policy setting are made

through a democratic process among the membership (www.chf.bc).

Co-ops can have non-profit or for-profit structures,

although most across Canada and all in Winnipeg are non-profit.

This means that co-op members cannot sell their shares in the co-op or receive any profits the co-op incurs.

There are 45 co-ops in Manitoba, comprising 2,982 units. Monthly membership fees for Winnipeg co-ops range from $600 to $1000. The average membership rate is $800 (McCracken et al., 2004). Co-ops members can receive a subsidy on their fee and pay only 30% of their net income if the co-op receives a subsidy through a provincial or federal program (CMHC, no date). In Winnipeg, 25%-30% of co-op members pay a reduced monthly rate.

Co-ops tend promote heightened social interaction among its residents. Residents interact to make decisions on the management and operations of the co-op. The participant believed that the affordable and social benefits that this model provides would benefit a post-transitional population.

The participant talked about the importance of shared housing spaces for women and children at several points throughout the interview, and stated, "We all want a sense of community, but so often for abused women it's out of their reach." When most women leave transitional facilities they lack emotional and social support from a partner and friends and family, leaving them to feel isolated. Incorporating shared

spaces in housing complexes, where women and children could gather and socialize, could play a significant role in helping women and their children to thrive.

While the participant spoke favourably of co-op housing for post-transitional women, she also acknowledged that most single mothers and children move to public housing units after they leave. (Although post-transitional housing has not been formally tracked or recorded, the participant made this statement based on her work experiences and informal tracking.) A significant portion of the interview was spent discussing how public housing could better accommodate the needs of mothers and children who move there after leaving transitional facilities.

The participant stated that improving housing for this population in question will be realized by striking an appropriate balance between housing and supportive resources. One tangible way of providing more resources for public housing residents is to turn one suite in every public housing complex into a resident resource centre. This centre could offer a variety of social, medical, financial, educational and emotional services. On top of the formal programs and services offered, an informal, gathering space could reduce feelings of isolation that are commonly reported.

The participant believed that establishing resource centres would provide more than social benefits to its users and anticipated that there would also be a cost-saving benefit to public systems. Resource centres could schedule visits from a public health nurse a couple of times a week. During these visits the public health nurse could help residents with health care basics, like how to take someone's temperature. Not responding to health care needs in a timely manner frequently compounds problems, which often causes more stress and financial hardship. The participant described the following scenario to illustrate this point.

A single mother has three children. One of them has been complaining about a sore ear for quite some time. The mother cannot afford a babysitter to look after her other children while she takes the sick child to the doctor. Taking all three children to the doctor on the bus is expensive and difficult for her to manage. As such, she does not address her child's sore ear immediately. Eventually the child's ear ache gets to be unbearable - the situation is now exacerbated. The child is now in so much pain, and the family doctor is unavailable so they need to go to the hospital. The mother has to take time off work, because nobody is able to look after the other kids. She

loads all of her children into a taxicab, which is much more expensive than a bus trip. They need to wait several hours to see a doctor. All of the children are now in tears because they don't want to be there. Since the child did not receive medical attention when the problem first arose the earache has worsened to the point that the child now needs to be treated with more potent and more expensive medication.

The participant illustrated this scenario to highlight the importance of having easily accessible resources to address the residents' physical, social and emotional needs before they become exacerbated. If a public health nurse was on hand to deal with this child's ear ache when it first appeared it would have saved a lot of stress, time and expense for the whole family.

The participant talked about reducing the cycle of abuse for these women. Most often, women do not leave a relationship after one or two abusive incidents. A lot of emotional, financial, and familial stock is invested in relationships. These are the factors that often keep women in unhealthy situations. After women leave transitional facilities they need to maintain the same levels of support and safety that they received in the transitional facilities to continue to make healthy decisions. The participant stated that loneliness,

isolation, and limited housing options are post-transitional realities for several women. Oftentimes women will return to their abusive partners because their needs are not being met. By providing housing, with heightened opportunities for social interaction in a safe environment, women may be more inclined to stay on their own and break the cycle of abuse they were in.

5.1.4 Section Summary

The key informant interview yielded several findings. There is a lack of research about women and post-transitional housing. More research is needed to track the success and obstacles that post-transitional women face. Transitional facilities play an important role to help women escape domestic violence and make positive changes in their lives. The strong bonds formed between facility residents and the supports available to them are some features of transitional houses that benefit women. The noted challenge of post-transitional housing is that these important resources are often not available to them. The participant talked about co-op housing as a housing model that could have merit for post-transitional women. The participant also acknowledged the reality that a large proportion of women move to public housing units after they leave transitional facilities. Creating resource centres in social housing complexes could provide this population with social, emotional,

and physical supports. Escaping the cycle of abuse is difficult and often takes years to realize. Providing suitable housing and sufficient supports can bring about far-reaching benefits for women and children.

5.2 Focus Groups

The prominent themes that emerged from the focus groups apply equally to the participants from both facilities, for the most part. Any differences between participants from the facilities will be noted in the results section. One section in this chapter though is devoted exclusively to the thoughts and opinions of the residents from Facility A. All of the residents in this facility identified themselves as Aboriginal. They shared thoughts about how to honour and preserve their Aboriginal culture in post-transitional housing. These opinions were not expressed by residents from Facility B.

5.2.1 Living in Transitional Facilities

Participants from both facilities reported that safety was the most salient benefit of living in the transitional facility. Without exception all participants commented on how safe they feel living in the facility. The heightened feelings of safety are achieved several ways. First, the security provisions to enter the facility mean that participants are protected from

unexpected visitors, including abusive ex-partners. One participant stated, "it's good here. I can get a good night's sleep and not worry about where [partner] is at." Heightened feelings of safety are also achieved because of the close proximity between residents and staff. Participants watch out for one another and feel comforted knowing that their absence will be noticed if they don't show up for a meal or one of the programs. The suites in Facility B were also equipped with emergency buzzers. Residents can press them for immediate assistance and the police will be dispatched.

Residents from Facility A also discussed that the transitional facility makes them feel safe and protected from negative external influences. One participant said, "I like this place because it's clean. I don't have to worry about running into people that I do bad things with." Other participants agreed with this statement and emphasized that they were, "protected from people on the outside." For participants from Facility A, feeling safe means more than being protected from an abusive partner. It also means being shielded from influences of drugs, alcohol and other negative pressures they have been exposed to.

The ancillary benefits of living in a safe environment are that participants reported feeling calmer, less anxious and more stable. Over the course of both focus groups I observed that the participants appeared comfortable in their environments. Their body language was relaxed and they laughed a lot with one another.

The second most reported benefit of living in transitional facilities is the support that women receive from living with other women who have experienced similar circumstances. A lot of women talked about the benefits of "socializing, conversation and chit chatting", which help to reduce feelings of isolation. There is a sense of comfort and validation that women experience in the facilities. A few women said that when they are having a bad day, or are emotionally drained from a difficult counselling session, it is nice to not have to explain your feelings to other residents. The residents have a mutual understanding of their ups and downs, which is something they appreciate.

The participants in Facility B said that they liked the social interaction so much that they formed a Thursday morning breakfast club. Every week the mothers and their children would gather in one suite to socialize. This weekly club provided social benefits for the mothers and their children.

All of the focus group participants are mothers, and all of them had children living in the facility with them. Many women talked about the benefit of sharing child care responsibilities to give mothers some respite. For instance, one woman will watch another woman's children so that she can have some time to herself. I observed the collective child care aspect during the focus group session in Facility A. Two toddlers were walking and crawling around the room. As the women spoke and participated in the focus group, the women each took turns holding the children and keeping them entertained. No one spoke about this, there just seemed to be an implicit understanding that all of the women were responsible for the children's well being.

Transitional facilities offer daily programs that residents are required to attend. While the preferred programs varied between participants, they all spoke about their benefits. Some participants talked about the addiction program offered twice a week in Facility A. The addiction program has helped some of the residents to cope with their own addictions and the addictions of someone close to them. Other participants liked the skills courses, where cooking and cleaning skills are taught. One participant laughed and stated, "I leaned how to cook with bananas. Now I make banana bread and muffins all the time".

Facility B offers individual, group, and family counselling sessions on a daily basis. Participants stated that these sessions have quickly brought about positive changes in their life. One woman who has only lived in the transitional facility for 3 weeks said that her self-esteem has increased significantly. She now feels that she has the confidence and determination to handle any problems that come her way.

The participants talked about the skills and coping mechanisms they learned in the parenting classes. Children also benefit from the parenting classes as they have an opportunity to interact with one another. The overarching benefit of all of these programs is the daily structure that is created. For the most part, participants enjoy knowing what their daily roles and responsibilities include.

While the noted benefits of the transitional facilities far outweighed the drawbacks, participants did comment on the challenges of living in the transitional facility. Daily roles and responsibilities instill a sense of stability and purpose in the participant's lives, but some participants expressed frustration at having to "live by someone else's rules".

Participants experience negative consequences, such as less free time, if they do not abide by the rules of the facility.

Transitional facility A had restrictions on telephone use. Telephones are turned off at certain times during the day, and because of the number of facility residents phone calls are limited to five minutes. Phone restrictions mean that residents are less able to keep in touch with friends and family. This drawback is exacerbated for residents who have family that live out of town since they are not able to visit with them either.

Participants in Facility B said that the smell of smoke in the facility was a drawback. The walls in the facility are so thin that often smoke from other suites filters into their suites. Even smokers commented that this drawback could be alleviated by designating certain wings of the building as non-smoking.

5.2.2. Discussing Post-Transitional Living

The most resounding comments on where women and their children will live after they leave transitional facilities pertained to the affordability of housing. With the exception of one person, all focus group participants said that finding a place to live within their budget was a challenge. One woman has

been looking for a house for her and her children for three months, but she cannot find anything within in her price range. Another woman said that the only housing she can afford is in a "very bad area". Other participants noted that the same "bad area" isn't such a bad place to live as long as you don't socialize with others in the neighbourhood, allow children to play outside, or walk outside after dark. For the most part, participants expressed that their housing options were limited because of their financial constraints. Within those limited options most are not satisfied with the kind of housing that is available to them.

Participants had very clear ideas on the location and kind of housing they would like to live in once they leave the transitional facility. Most focus group participants did not have automobiles. As such, the proximity to transit is a prime consideration. One woman even talked about the challenges of living *close* to a bus stop. "Walking to a bus stop, even if it's only a block away can take over an hour in the wintertime when you have three children [with you]." Some women said they need to live close to a main bus route because they do not have cars.

Several participants talked about the value they place on finding housing in close proximity to a good school. This would

bring about financial, social and emotional benefits. Women noted that living near a school means that they would feel more comfortable letting their older children walk to and from school by themselves. It would also accommodate women who work 9-5 jobs since they wouldn't have to leave work to pick up their children. Some participants also noted that they are still fearful of their ex-partners and that it brings them some peace of mind to have their children schooled near their home.

By listening to their stories I gathered that there was a notable difference between the residents from both facilities. Most of the residents from Facility A said that they lived in the North End of Winnipeg before entering the transitional facility, which is also located in the North End. None of the residents from Facility B lived in the area where their transitional facility is located (in a residential area in the South end of the city). When talking about where they would like to live post-transitionally, the residents from Facility A said that they did not want to live in the North End. Contrarily, Facility B residents said that they liked living in the South end of the city and wanted to live in that area once they left the facility.

The underlying message behind these differing views though relates to feelings of safety for women and their children. For the most part, residents in Facility A felt that the North End was not a good and safe area to raise children. They said that drugs, alcohol, gangs, and violence are all-too-common in the neighbourhood. Facility B residents felt that their neighbourhood was safe. One woman said that prior to living in the transitional facility she had never before let her child walk to the store by himself.

One woman from Facility A had already lived in the facility, set out to live on her own, and then recently returned to the transitional facility. Her story provides some valuable insights on post-transitional housing considerations that help and hinder women's success. The participant said that after she left the transitional facility the last time, she had difficulty finding a home for her family within her budget. She hoped to find a place to live in the south end of the city, far away from her ex-partner and the negative influences that she succumbed to, but could not afford a large enough place. She ended up moving back to the North End. The participant said that she returned to negative pressures and relationships that she tried to leave behind, when she moved to the transitional facility in the first place.

Arising from the key informant interview, I described the interviewee's suggestion of turning one suite from every public housing unit into a gathering place and resource centre for women and children. I asked the participants about the desirability of having a space like this in their post-transitional housing. All of the participants emphatically stated that this would be a great asset to their living space. During the focus groups, participants talked a lot about the social benefits that the facilities provide. Not surprisingly, they were very receptive to the idea of having a supportive and communal aspect to their living arrangement after they left the facility. Participants shared several opinions about the purpose and uses of this proposed space. They said that it should have a residential feel, like an extension of their home. Women would use this space to socialize and drink coffee in an informal setting. They mentioned that their children would also benefit from this space by playing and watching movies together.

5.2.3 Culture and Housing

The participants from Facility A are all aboriginal. Most of the participants talked about the importance of honouring their culture and passing on traditions to their children. They believed that it was important to expose their children to

positive aspects of their culture. To do this, they talked about attending Pow Wow clubs where children could learn how to sing, dance and make outfits. As well, they mentioned the importance of attending sweat lodges.

5.3   Chapter Summary

The results from the key informant interview and the focus groups provide a lot if information about the benefits of transitional housing and considerations for post-transitional housing. The benefits of transitional housing are abundant. These facilities provide heightened feelings of safety, increased opportunities for social interaction, and valuable programs and services. The reality of post-transitional housing is not as favourable. With reduced incomes and mobility, women and children have limited choices in post-transitional housing and often end up living in sub-standard housing. When asked though, mothers unanimously agreed that experiencing the benefits of transitional housing in a post-transitional environment would help them and their children.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between single mothers, transitional facilities and post-transitional housing. The key conclusions drawn are that transitional facilities play a valuable role in helping women to overcome the effects of domestic violence and equip them with social and emotional tools to succeed after they leave facilities. This research supports hypotheses discussed in the literature review about the limited knowledge of where women and their children move after they leave transitional facilities. This research also supports the notion that there are features of transitional housing that could be used post-transitionally to meet the wants and needs of this population.

6.1 Relating the Research Findings to Recent Studies

After my literature review was completed and research was conducted, I came across two studies that relate to this project. While these studies did not shape the intent of my project, I felt it was nonetheless important to include some of their key findings.

In 2003 and then in 2006, the YWCA of Canada completed two research studies in the area of violence against women and shelter use. The first study, *Turning Points: An Analysis of*

YWCA Violence Against Women Shelters and Family Violence

Programs: Phase 1 Report (Goard & Tutty, 2003), set out to:

explore the history and development of the shelter movement; and

understand the financial, staffing, and program strengths and

weaknesses of YWCA shelters in Canada.

The second report, *Effective Practices in Sheltering Women:*

Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationships: Phase 2 Report

(Tutty, 2006) builds on the findings from the phase 1 report.

The phase 2 report painted a more intimate portrait of women who

have experienced domestic violence and explored: the nature of

domestic violence; the benefits and tools residents gained in

shelter residence; and the realities and considerations that

shelter residents face after they move out. The phase 2 report

devoted a chapter in the report to women's lives after the

shelter. This chapter is of particular relevance to this topic

and will be the focus of this section.

Before I relate some of the findings from the YWCA reports

to this project, it is important to point out that the YWCA

studies focused on short term shelter life. This practicum

involved women who live in longer-term transitional facilities.

While both emergency shelters and transitional facilities

provide a refuge for women and children from domestic violence,

it is worth re-stating that emergency shelters provide a short-term residence (an average of 30 days). The length of stay in transitional facilities usually ranges from 1-3 years. The YWCA studies differ in scope from this practicum. The YWCA studies were nationwide in scope and attempted to gather the general themes of women's shelter use across the country. This practicum focused on two transitional facilities in Winnipeg. As well, rather than focusing primarily on life inside the facilities, I attempted to understand housing wants and needs after women and children leave. Most importantly though, the current study and the YWCA studies share the common and important goal of listening to the opinions, hopes, fears and challenges of women who have experienced domestic violence.

Findings from the YWCA phase 1 report echo what has already been stated in the literature review of this practicum and in the results as well. There is a lack of safe and affordable housing in Canada. This shortage affects a vast number of Canadians, but is often more pronounced for single mothers. Moreover, the lack of adequate housing and nearby supports compromises women's ability to leave abusive relationships and continue to make positive changes.

The most notable, and perhaps the least expected finding,
from the key informant interview I conducted is that inadequate
housing is the biggest reason women and children enter
transitional facilities, not the escape from domestic violence
per se. This finding was similarly highlighted in the phase 1
report. As Goard and Tutty (2003) state, "most importantly,
women and girls affected by violence often do not identify
themselves as having experienced abuse, or they are much more
focused on meeting basic needs such as food, shelter and
employment" (p.vii). These findings reveal that housing is one
of the most fundamental human needs and often transcends another
basic human need - safety.

The YWCA phase 2 report surveyed shelter residents upon
entering and exiting shelters with open-ended questions. In-
depth interviews were also conducted with 20 residents, two to
five months after leaving the shelter, to gather some additional
perspective on post-shelter living. Residents were asked about
where they are going to go after they leave the shelters. About
half the participants said that they were going to move to a new
home with their children and without the person who was abusive.
The second most reported response was to return back home, with
the proviso that the person who was abusive will not be present.
Ninety percent of the respondents said that they would not be

returning to live with their abusive partner. The responses highlight how important post-shelter housing is for a majority of shelter users.

Women were asked to cite reasons they would be inclined to return to their abusive partners. Having hope for the relationship was the most frequently cited reason women would consider, or are considering, returning to their partner. The second and third most commonly reported reasons to return are due to a lack of money and a lack of housing. These findings are consistent with the thesis of the current research. The negative consequences of returning to an abusive partner are often outweighed by the need for financial stability or suitable housing.

The results from this survey point to a discrepancy between what women *intend* to do after they leave shelters and what women *wind up* doing. Of the 238 shelter residents who completed the feedback survey, over half of the women (56%) had previously resided in a shelter. Of those, 60% had returned to their abusive partner. Their situations provide some useful insight about what will help women to succeed after they leave shelters. While hope for the relationship was the most commonly cited

reason for returning, "lack of money and housing were significant reasons for reconciling" (Tutty, 2006, 72).

The findings from the YWCA studies complement the current research. When women leave short-term shelters or longer-term transitional facilities, they are hopeful for the future and want to make positive decisions for themselves and their children. The glaring reality of this plan though is that the basic need for affordable, adequate, and suitable housing is often (and understandably) sought at the expense of other positive decisions. Returning to abusive partners to achieve better housing frequently perpetuates the cycle of abuse and brings about a flood of other social, emotional and physical consequences.

6.2 Discussion

The theoretical section of this practicum underscored the importance of recognizing the plurality within our cities. For too long, the built environment was conceived of and responded to as being objective and value free. The rise of the feminist movement and postmodern planning brought gender analyses to the forefront of planning and other social disciplines, and highlighted the importance of accounting for the unique experiences from multiple publics. The diversity within our

cities means that disenfranchised, oppressed, and minority groups need to be heard. The participants in this study are one of those groups. The emotional and physical effects of the violence they experienced are far-reaching. By listening to their stories and honouring their experiences, insights have been gained that can help to better accommodate single mothers and their children after they leave transitional facilities.

This project set out to fill gaps in the literature to better understand: what residents like best about living in transitional facilities; the thoughts, hopes, and fears they have for post-transitional living; and whether elements of transitional living could help them to succeed after they leave.

The participants noted that the most salient benefit of living in the transitional facility was the feeling of safety they experience. Feelings of safety were evoked by having security measures at the facility. As well, the close networks between the residents, and natural surveillance within the facility, provided an important source of comfort. The importance of safety points to several post-transitional housing considerations. First, the adequacy of public housing units is worth discussing since we anecdotally know that a large proportion of post-transitional women and children wind up

there. Ensuring that doors and windows lock properly, that buzz codes are working, and that areas are well lit are some of the qualities that enhance safety in housing complexes. Landlords must also be responsive to tenant service requests. For this population, having a light bulb changed may be more than just a nicety; it could evoke a deeper sense of comfort.

To uncover more information about how public housing units could meet women's safety needs, post-transitional women could conduct a safety audit of their housing unit and surrounding areas. Their history with domestic violence and experiences living in transitional facilities would give them an encompassing perspective on how their physical environments could be improved. The information gathered during this exercise would seemingly benefit other residents in the facility as well.

Enhancing feelings of safety by increasing social interaction and natural surveillance is less tangible than installing proper lighting or dead bolts. While less quantifiable, the human side of promoting safety is equally important. The findings from this study show that increased social interaction between residents has palpable effects on feelings of safety. Designating areas for shared accommodation post-transitionally could achieve this objective. All of the

participants noted that the heightened interaction between transitional facility residents was ultimately beneficial, if frustrating at times. Participants took comfort in the knowledge that facility residents look out for one another.

Enhancing natural surveillance can be achieved by designing higher density housing around play structures and public spaces where people can gather. Within homes, open spaces with open sightlines and situating kitchens in the front area of the home can promote surveillance. Intuitively, people will be more inclined to look out for one another if they know one another. Designating shared accommodations within facilities can be one way to increase familiarity and interaction among residents.

Participants had a lot to say about the programs offered within the transitional facilities. The individual and group counselling sessions were highly regarded. These sessions played an important role in helping the residents to cope with domestic abuse, increase their self esteem, and equip them to make positive changes in their lives. Skills classes, parenting classes and job search assistance are some of the programs offered in the facilities. During the interview, participants shared positive statements about their situation saying they have "never been happier", "feel safe for the first time in

years", and have "high self esteem." To continue these beliefs of self actualization it is important that post-transitional housing does not dampen these feelings.

The participants reported that post-transitional housing that provides some level of service and opportunities for interaction would be extremely beneficial. The participants spoke very favourably about the idea of converting a suite in every public housing complex into a resource centre. Participants said that the opportunity to interact within the transitional facilities was one of its most advantageous features. Participants said that continuing this heightened support after they leave the facility would be beneficial.

The reality of post-transitional housing is that the affordability of housing is the factor that trumps all other post-transitional housing considerations. Nearly all focus group participants were on limited incomes and were worried they would not be able to find affordable and adequate housing within their price range.

Sub-standard housing has negative effects on anybody who lives there. For this population though, the results may be more adverse and may perpetuate the cycle of violence and a series of

negative consequences that are often linked to violence.
Escaping the cycle of abuse is a daunting task. The emotional,
financial and familial history partners have with each other is
often so entrenched that abusive situations often do not end
these relationships. If and when women do leave these
situations, supports and resources need to be in place to help
her succeed. Transitional facilities are one of these supports.
However if such resources are not in place after they leave the
facilities they may be more inclined to return to an abusive
partner due to financial, social and emotional reasons.

6.3 Recommendations

Four recommendations have arisen from this research
project. These recommendations can be categorized as process and
engagement recommendations, and policy and program development
recommendations.

1) This study reinforces that women have several ideas
about what sort of housing makes sense for them. Whenever
possible, women should continue to be involved in housing
decisions that impact them directly. From the conceptual and
design stages of housing rehabilitation and construction, to
priority setting for new housing developments, to governance

models, women tend to have a different lens from men in the way space is conceived and planned. Their voices need to be heard.

2) Too often, women who leave abusive relationships are in core housing need. Since housing is so central to instilling stability in their lives, women and their children need access to affordable and adequate housing. This recommendation relates to *choice* in housing. This means that public housing units need to be doing more to meet the needs of its tenants (a lot of whom participated in this research). This means that co-op models, social housing projects and private market places need to be available as well. This recommendation is not limited to the women in this research. We all need adequate and affordable housing, but for this population its effects are arguably more pronounced. Choice in adequate and affordable housing could help to prompt women to leave abusive relationships earlier. Choice in adequate and affordable housing could help to end the cycle of violence altogether.

3) The concept of housing needs to evolve. As families are diversifying and single parent families (predominantly female-headed) are on the rise, housing needs to include social elements to better accommodate single parent lifestyles. Too often women may deny their own needs for supportive networks and

interactions with peers to fulfill their roles as mothers. As

Birdsall et al, note, "In order to assure continued dweller

satisfaction, housing planning must account for women's stated

and under-stated physical design and socio-psychological needs.

Most single-parent mothers pursue multiple roles and thus

housing which facilitates their full empowerment must address

and nurture all these needs" (1992, 149). While these

recommendations may also apply to single-parent fathers we know

of general differences between men and women that may explain

why these recommendations apply more to single-parent mothers

than fathers. First, single-parent mothers have lower average

incomes than single-parent fathers. When affordability

increases, so does the range in housing options. This is

generally the case for males. Women's lower income means that

the challenge of securing adequate and affordable housing

becomes more pronounced. Second, research shows that gender

differences in the relationship between housing and self-

reported health exist. The strain of housework and conditions of

adequate housing are much more closely linked to women's self-

reported health than men's (Dunn, Walker, Graham, & Weiss,

2004). Lastly, men and women tend to cope with stressful

situations and emotional hardships differently. More often,

women turn to friends, family and partners (when applicable)

than men. The absence of a partner for single mothers means that

socially supportive living environments are more essential for
females than males. Shared living spaces can reduce feelings of
isolation, facilitate shared child care and can heighten
feelings of safety.

4) This topic reinforces the connection between housing,
safety, health and other social and economic factors. Sub-
standard housing often contributes to a series of collateral
drains on other public systems. Government departments
(primarily at the provincial level, since this order of
government oversees these services) need to adopt a more
coordinated approach to improving the quality of life of its
residents.

6.4 Suggested Future Research

Understanding post-transitional housing wants and needs for
women and their children is in the founding stages. As further
investigation continues, the topic can hopefully make strides
from the theoretical and conceptual stages to outcomes as
tangible as bricks and mortar. The following directions for
future research are recommended.

There has yet to be any formal tracking mechanism or
published research in Canada on where women end up after they

leave transitional facilities. The conclusions in this study are based on anecdotal evidence, observations, and projected wants and needs. By carrying out a longitudinal post-transitional study, policy makers and housing providers will gain a better understanding of what kind of post-transitional housing is helping women to succeed and what realities are challenging their success. The key informant interviewee said that a similar study is currently underway in the Prairie Provinces. Once completed, the results can be incorporated with the findings from this project to illuminate future research directions.

A large number of women who leave transitional facilities move to public housing units. Pursuant to a recommendation from the key informant interviewee and subsequent interest from focus group participants it is worthwhile to explore converting one unit from every public housing complex into a shared living space and resource centre. To move this recommendation forward, the provincial government could conduct a cost benefit analysis on the viability of this conversion. This would require collaboration from various government departments, including Family Services and Housing and Health. The key informant interviewee spoke anecdotally about the collateral drain on public systems when preventative measures are not employed. By understanding the social, educational, health, emotional and

potential cost-saving benefits of this concept, tax payers would be more inclined to support this concept and the public sector may be more inclined to pursue it.

An in-depth investigation of establishing a female-only housing complex should be carried out. Focus group participants spoke favourably of moving into female only housing complexes, and so further investigation is warranted. Research on this topic could first be gathered from other Canadian and American precedents and then applied to the Winnipeg context. There are a few precedents of female-only housing across Canada and the United States. Amandla Crossing in New Jersey and Hope Street in Mississippi are two housing developments geared to mothers and children. Like transitional facilities, they provide communal areas, both indoors and outdoors, where women and children can socialize and play. Special attention should be given to how female housing developments are governed. Attention should also be given to the effects of the internal and external perception of female only housing. This housing concept will fall short if it is stigmatized. Further research on this topic should involve future or potential residents. Actively involving this population would serve the double advantage of empowering residents, while ensuring that their needs are met and their voices are heard.

6.5 Conclusion

Housing is a core element of our quality of life. This research has attempted to shed some light onto housing considerations for a unique population whose needs are not being met after they take the big step of leaving an abusive partner and venture to make positive changes for them and their children. By asking, engaging, and responding to the wants and needs of mothers and their children we can stabilize lives and improve their quality of life.

"Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice"(Lewin, 1948, 202-203).

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Appendix A: Key Informant Interview Guide

Introductory / Warm Up Question

1) How long have you been involved in the area of domestic violence and housing?

Questions About Transitional Facilities

2) What role do transitional facilities play to help improve the lives of mothers and their children who have experienced domestic violence?

    Probes: programs offered, safety considerations, role of facility directors and staff.

3) Do you believe that the physical design of the facilities assist women in their efforts to improve their situation? If so how?

4) Do programs and services offered within the facility help women to make positive changes in their lives?

Questions About Post-Transitional Living

5) I am curious about what happens after women leave transitional facilities. Do you know where most women move to?

    Probes: rates of return to transitional facilities, rates of return to abusive partners

6) Do you think that housing can help to stabilize the lives of women and children after they leave transitional facilities? If yes, what features (physical, emotional, social) should be put in place?

7) In your opinion, which features are most important to help women succeed?

Wrap Up Question

8) Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Introductory / Warm Up Questions

    1) How long have you lived at (name of facility)?

    2) Do you have children? How many? How old are they?

Questions About the Transitional Facility

    3) I want to talk about (name of facility). Can you tell me
       about the things that you like about living in (name of
       facility)?
       Probes: feelings of safety, shared experiences among
       residents, programs and services offered, child care
       services.

    4) Can you tell me about some of the drawbacks of living in
       (name of transitional facility)?

    5) What are the advantages of living with people who share
       similar backgrounds? What are the disadvantages?

Questions About Post-Transitional Living

    6) Do you know where you are going to move to after you leave
       (name of facility)? What factors influence your decision?
       Probes: proximity to services and public transportation,
       proximity to friends and family, affordability, feeling

safe in home, safe neighbourhood, distance to work, school, child care facilities, cleanliness and maintenance level.

7) When you think about living in (name of facility), do you think that there are things about living here that you would like to have in your next home? Do you think that you are going to find those things?

Wrap up Question

8) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Post-Transitional Housing for Single Mothers and their Children: Uncovering the Realities and Exploring the Prospects of Housing in Winnipeg

Researcher: Sara Wells MacArthur, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to uncover information about how housing in Winnipeg can better suit the lives of single mothers and their children who have lived in transitional facilities and are venturing to live on their own. The purpose of this key informant interview though is to gain a better understanding of transitional facilities in Winnipeg. Learning about the programs and services in transitional facilities, as well as the social, physical and emotional benefits they provide will help to establish some 'best practices' that might be transferable to housing mothers and children after leave transitional facilities. Focus groups with single mothers who currently reside in transitional facilities will then be carried out to explore their opinions on how housing, and programs and services offered within them can help them to thrive after they leave transitional facilities.

Your involvement in this research entails participating in an interview with the principal researcher. This interview should take less than one hour. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time. It is not anticipated that this study will present any medical or social risks to you.

With your approval, the interview will be recorded on an audio cassette to be transcribed at a later date for research purposes. Such audio-recordings will be kept in a secure place, in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office. At the conclusion of this study, all records that identify individual participants will be destroyed. As the primary researcher in this project, I will be the only person who has access to the information gathered during the interview.

Although your name will not be used in any publicly disseminated materials arising from the study, readers may be able to attribute comments to you because your job title will be included in the dissemination of findings, pending your approval.

It will be possible for you to obtain verbal or written feedback about the results of the study when it is completed. If you wish to receive feedback, please contact Sara MacArthur by phone at

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and / or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation by contacting:

Sara Wells MacArthur   ph:

Dr. Sheri Blake   ph: e-mail:

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculties Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at ph: 474.7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I, _____ (name of participant) , consent to the dissemination of material provided to Sara MacArthur. I understand that all information will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed once the project is completed and disseminated.

Please check one, some or all of the following:

____   I agree to being audio-taped (I may request the taping devise to be turned off for all or any part of the interview).

____   I agree to allow my job title to be used in the text. However, I would like the right to review the text in advance of it being publicly disseminated.

____   I would like to be notified when research findings are available (please add contact information in space below).

_____

_____

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix D: Focus Group Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Post-Transitional Housing for Single Mothers and their Children: Uncovering the Realities and Exploring the Prospects of Housing in Winnipeg

Researcher: Sara Wells MacArthur, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to uncover information about how housing in Winnipeg can better suit the lives of single mothers and their children who have lived in transitional facilities and are venturing to live on their own. Your involvement in this research entails participating in a focus group with other women who currently live in the transitional facility with you. To facilitate an informal discussion, the researcher will ask several open-ended questions about living in the transitional facility and what programs, services and housing type you feel will help you to thrive after you leave the transitional facility.

The focus group will take place in the transitional facility in which you currently reside. The focus group should last about one hour. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time. It is not anticipated that this study will present any medical or social risks to you.

With your approval, the focus group will be recorded on an audio cassette to be transcribed at a later date for research purposes. Such audio-recordings will be kept in a secure place, in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office. At the conclusion of this study, all records that identify individual participants will be destroyed. As the primary researcher in this project, I will be the only person who has access to the information gathered during the interview.

Your name or other personal information, or the name of the transitional facility or detailed information about the facility will not be used in any publicly disseminated materials arising from the study.

It will be possible for you to obtain verbal or written feedback about the results of the study when it is completed. If you wish to receive feedback, please contact Sara MacArthur by phone at   ·   , or by e-mail at

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and / or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation by contacting:

Sara Wells MacArthur   ph:

Dr. Sheri Blake   ph: e-mail:

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculties Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at ph: 474.7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I, _____ (name of participant) , consent to the dissemination of material provided to Sara MacArthur. I understand that all information will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed once the project is completed and disseminated.

Please check one or all of the following:

____   I agree to being audio-taped (I may request the taping devise to be turned off for all or any part of the interview).

____   I would like to be notified when research findings are available (please add contact information in space below).

_____

_____

_____   Date
Signature of Participant

_____   Date
Signature of Researcher