In Our Own Voice: The Collective Wisdom of Shelter Workers

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DEDICATION

To my Baba, Mary Wasylenko who was forced to leave school at the age of nine. Her Dad promised her she could go back to school the next year if she spent the winter cutting cordwood. He never kept his promise. To my Baba, Katherine Smyrski who could not read or write. She received a Grade Two education from a small village in the Ukraine   To my Geda's, Harry Wasylenko and Paul Smyrski who came to this country with hopes and dreams and spent their life struggling to support their families in a series of physically demanding jobs that ended their lives too soon. To my Dad, aunt and uncle who have shared their memories of being physically disciplined in school for speaking Ukrainian. To my Mom and her siblings who left school early because they were poor and felt like they didn't belong. This is for each one of you. Dyakuyu.

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study sought to understand the current lived experiences of shelter workers in the Province of Manitoba. Eleven participants from four shelters took part in this research endeavour. Using Concept Mapping as the methodology, a map of their experiences was constructed. Territories were named and participants analyzed and interpreted the results. Four themes emerged: 1) Shelter worker's beliefs assist in navigating the territories; 2) Insufficient funding of shelters impacts shelter workers' personal and professional life; 3) Organizational culture and values present a vast array of challenges to shelter workers and lastly 4) External agencies and societal responses to domestic violence/women play a role in how shelter workers see themselves.

Pattern matching revealed that previous counseling experience rather than age, length of employment and childhood history of trauma had the lowest level of agreement among participants. Findings also suggest that workers with a history of childhood trauma may be more aware of safety issues than workers without a trauma history. Recommendations call for more research on shelters workers in Northern Manitoba as well as boards and management of shelters in all parts of the province. Safety issues of workers, organizational values and beliefs of shelters, worker's coping strategies, positive aspects of the profession, and the relationship between worker and client were other areas of study for future research.

IN OUR OWN VOICE: THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM OF SHELTER WORKERS

"We are volcanoes. When women offer our experience as truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains."
- Ursula K. LeGuin, 1990

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of General Research Problem

For over 11 years I was employed as a domestic violence worker at a rural women's shelter in Manitoba. When I began my work in the early 1990s, the shelter movement was struggling for recognition and its survival.   Surviving both personally and professionally in a chaotic, crisis-oriented environment was a constant challenge. My sense of self, both personally and professionally, was profoundly influenced by my experiences as a shelter worker. When I began searching for a research topic, I reflected back to my time at the shelter and began to be curious about what were the current issues facing workers in shelters. Additionally, I wanted to be able to create a venue for workers to articulate their own experiences of shelter work in a group setting in order for them to share their collective experience and wisdom with each other.

Inside the walls of shelters is a unique community of caring dedicated workers. Although substantial research has been conducted in the past 20 years on residents of battered women's shelters, little research, either theoretical or empirical, has been undertaken on workers' experiences in these organizations (Dekel & Peled, 2000). The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question, "What are the current lived experiences of shelter workers in the Province of Manitoba?" When I worked at the shelter the message given from both management and the academic community was that the nature of the work was the overwhelming source of workers' stress. Most of the literature pertaining to shelter work is focused on vicarious traumatization

and its impact on workers (Baird & Jenkins, 2003; Iliffe & Steed, 2000; Johnson & Hunter, 1997; Schauben & Frazier, 1995; Trippany & Wilcoxon & Satcher, 2003). This perspective in some ways contradicted my own experience as a shelter worker and I became curious as to what other shelter workers' perspectives would be. Unlike most studies, shelter workers themselves had a participatory part in this research process. Using concept mapping, as the methodology, provided shelter workers the opportunity to give voice to and discuss aspects of their profession that were of the most import to them.

The well-being of shelter workers directly affects their ability to engage both personally and professionally in their community. How they view themselves can play an integral part in understanding their experience. Concept mapping provides a collective forum and allows for the broadest range of experiences to be heard (Campbell & Salem, 1999; Linton, 1989; Riger, 1999). Identifying positive aspects of shelter work can assist in motivating, deepening or widening the understanding (Bell, 2003; Hindle & Morgan, 2006; Wasco & Campbell, 2002). Working with other women for a common cause, working at individual and community levels to effect change can be a source of strength and renewal (Hindle & Morgan, 2006). Broadening the lens can result in an understanding that anger and fear experienced in workers' lives is not always associated with negative connotations but can be resources for personal and professional growth (Wasco & Campbell, 2002).

Working with trauma survivors and also working in environments that inadequately support this work can be difficult and emotionally taxing for workers. When workers are negatively affected, service delivery to clients/external agencies can be affected as well. The values, purpose and knowledge intrinsic in social work are reflected in this study. Social responsibility to provide opportunities for the full potential of individuals through active

participation in society underpins social work practice (Mullaly, 1997). By understanding the intricacies and nuances of shelter work, this research will be a small step in identifying what types of prevention and intervention could be used to facilitate workers' well-being.

The importance of recruiting and retaining competent workers directly affects a shelter's ability to assist women and children. Knowing the areas in which to focus training/educational opportunities and support is vital to ensure the well-being of workers. This study provided an opportunity for shelter workers to identify what is most important for them in their own words and give a voice to their concerns. Shelters can now begin to develop plans to respond to workers' experience in areas identified and allocate resources to areas where there is most need. As Harriet Bartlett (2003) states "social work is not practiced in a vacuum…" (p.268). Focusing research on the worker that fails to address the impact of governmental policies and standards, the shelter itself, and the issue of professionalization, cannot adequately provide an accurate description of shelter workers' well-being. Information that adds to our collective understanding for the community at large and for shelter workers themselves can only benefit social work policy and practice.

Relevance to Extension of Theoretical Knowledge

Feminist research provides a context and a process that respects women's lived experiences and legitimizes their voices as sources of knowledge (Campbell & Salem, 1999). What makes feminist research distinct from other theoretical orientations is its attention to the significance of gender and the ways this is manifested in social relationships and the larger society. In addition, there is the recognition and commitment that research can and should be used for social advocacy and activism (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Feminist research is passionate scholarship (Dubois, 1983).

There is a reciprocal relation between social context and academic research. The values that shape the nature of the research are entwined with the dominant values of the society in which the research is conducted. Women's work has historically been viewed through a male lens. The gender-based characteristics of women's work have served to exacerbate the exploitation of female labour resulting in women's work being invisible and undervalued. For shelter workers there is the added complexity of working in an environment that is seen by many in society as "anti-family" (Hindle & Morgan, 2006). In the early days of the shelter movement, public perception of shelter workers was that they were lesbians, man-haters and home wreckers whose main work function was to destroy the family (Chatigny, Laperriere, Thibault & Messing, 2004; Hindle & Morgan, 2006; Janovicek, 2007; Schechter, 1982). In some cases, shelter workers were physically assaulted (Stout & Thomas, 1991). Thirty years later, thanks to the awareness and education on violence against women, public perceptions have slowly shifted to recognize that abused women have a right to leave relationships and seek safety. However, there is still a certain level of suspicion and hostility surrounding shelter work and workers (Chatigny et al., 2004; Hindle & Morgan, 2006). For example, in Chatigny et al.'s study (2004), shelter workers in Quebec stated they believed their work was hampered by an antifeminist backlash.

Because shelters have for a large part of their history existed outside of mainstream society, this has tended to create a work culture that is distinctive and unique. It is, therefore, important that research should be focused on this ignored and devalued population. Feminist research strives to challenge social and/ or personal privilege (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Marginalized and oppressed groups need to have their own voices heard. Using concept mapping as the methodology for this study is compatible with feminist research. This study enabled participants to give voice to their experiences, provide their own interpretations of what

it means to be a shelter worker and how it impacts their personal well-being. The collective voice of shelter worker's experiences in group settings aided in reducing isolation and strengthened solidarity between workers. The flexibility of concept mapping allowed for participants to be actively involved in the research process, thus minimizing the power imbalance between researcher and participant. In addition, using concept mapping that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies provided another avenue to expand feminist theory.

Extension of Empirical Knowledge

During the literature review only two studies have been discovered on Canadian shelter workers (Chatigny et al., 2004; Martin, 2006). Consequently, some studies on domestic violence workers in other work settings and sexual assault workers have been included in this report. Previous research on workers in these occupations focused heavily on vicarious trauma, burnout, stress, and secondary traumatic stress (compassion fatigue) looking at individual or organizational issues (Baird & Jenkins, 2003; Baker & O'Brien & Salahuddin, 2007; Brown & O'Brien, 1998; Dekel & Peled, 2000; Iliffe & Steed, 2000; Johnson & Hunter, 1997; Schauben & Frazier, 1995; Trippany et al., 2003). Few studies focus on the strengths or positive impact of working with domestic violence survivors (Bell, 2003; Hindle & Morgan, 2006; Wasco & Campbell, 2002). As a former shelter worker, focusing on individual (e.g., history of personal trauma, length of employment, coping strategies) or organizational factors (e.g., supervision, workload, work environment, funding) seemed to be a narrow lens in which to explore shelter worker's experiences. Thus, I framed the research question to be as broad and inclusive as possible.

This overwhelming emphasis in the literature on vicarious trauma, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress as an integral part of shelter work may restrict our understanding of

shelter work, and raises the questions: "Who defines what it means to be a shelter worker and what contributes or takes away from that experience?" This study explored, then, how this fits with the reality of shelter workers' experience. It may be individual factors or those larger structural factors, such as agency and community views, and not the nature of the work itself that impacts shelter workers. Or it may be that shelter workers have positive experiences, developing and growing both personally and professionally because of the work they do. Certainly, the lens researchers look through to a large degree determines what we see. This research allowed shelter workers themselves to define their work experience.

Using vicarious trauma, burnout and secondary traumatic stress as a blanket approach in describing shelter worker responses to their work, allows for the assumption that there is something inherent in the worker or the organization that contributes to being negatively impacted by the work. This is evident in the preponderance of material on the subject. There is no doubt that working in an emotionally intensive, often crowded closed space with limited resources are important issues that need to be examined more closely. Working with clients who are marginalized and oppressed and trying to access resources in systems that are shame-based are emotionally taxing tasks for workers. Often the very organizations designed to assist women, help to keep them oppressed. Receiving competent legal counsel and securing safe affordable housing are challenging tasks for low income women. Social assistance may force women to go to court in attempts to receive spousal or child support. These attempts may actually increase the danger these women are already facing from their partners. Yet, despite all this, workers continue to assist women and their children. This study adds to the literature on shelter work by providing an opportunity for shelter workers themselves to speak and interpret for themselves the meaning of their work and how they are affected by it.

In summary, this research on shelter workers in Manitoba, a participatory research endeavor, provided opportunities for shelter workers to meet and share their wisdom. They became the cartographers of their own territory and in this process allowed those outside the walls of shelters to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. It is hoped that through this knowledge, more awareness about the shelter work profession can be raised and thus increase the visibility of shelter work.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background on Manitoba Shelters

The first Canadian shelters for women experiencing domestic violence were opened in Toronto and Vancouver in 1972 (Janovicek, 2007). By the end of the 1970s there were 71 shelters in Canada, with over 60% of these shelters located in large urban areas in Ontario and Quebec (Mcleod, 1980). The early days of the shelter movement were largely spent on struggling to get shelters opened and keep them operational. Record keeping was not a priority and consequently, the early history of many shelters is unclear (Janovicek, 2007). Unfortunately, little or no written history of shelters in Manitoba could be found. Various groups like the Grey Nuns and the provincial YWCA began developing programs offering support to women victimized by their male partners. The YWCA was eventually able to secure funding to become a shelter specifically for abused women and opened in 1973.

The Manitoba Committee on Wife Abuse was instrumental in raising awareness throughout the province and organized the first provincial conference on wife abuse in 1982. Largely through the committee's efforts, by March of 1984, there were 22 safe homes in operation in Manitoba and roughly 24 others in various stages of development (Schmidt, 1989). Tremendous amounts of energy from women's groups went into getting these safe homes started and operating. Funding was unpredictable and varied from place to place (Schmidt, 1989). It is not known which safe homes evolved into shelters, stayed as safe homes, or disappeared. However, by 1992 the provincial government was providing funding for 11 shelters. Additionally, seven rural domestic violence community groups were receiving some funding to provide safe homes (Government of Manitoba, Family Dispute Services, 1992). Other safe homes may have been available. For example, during my time as a shelter worker (1991-2002),

we had clients come from a safe home not mentioned in the above reference. Certainly, this seems to indicate that this was a very dynamic and ever changing landscape. It may also be a reflection of uncertain and unstable funding issues for these safe homes.

Most shelters at this time relied on provincial/municipal support, short-term funding grants from various federal departments, and charitable or private donations. Government did not see itself responsible to support shelters. In 1982, the total provincial expenditure on domestic violence services was $52,000 which was allocated to the Osborne House and Thompson shelters (Ursel, 199-). Women's groups throughout this province worked tirelessly to get their voices heard. By 1996, the Manitoba government's budget on an array of domestic violence services including shelters was seven million dollars. The Manitoba government expenditure for the fiscal year ending in March 31, 2013 has allocated almost twelve and a half million dollars to external domestic violence agencies (Government of Manitoba, 2012). Currently, the federal and provincial governments provide funding to 14 shelters in this province.

Review of the Empirical Literature of Shelter Workers

Introduction

The shelter movement emerged from feminist organizing in the late 1960s as women across this country gave voice to their experiences of intimate violence and began to challenge and change the laws and social practices that oppressed them. Given this relatively recent history, research on the subject of shelter workers has slowly emerged. Only two articles were found focusing on the Canadian shelter workers' experience and three articles were discovered from the United States, New Zealand and Israel. Consequently, other studies included in this literature review focus on domestic violence workers from a variety of other work settings, including shelters or sexual assault counselors and crisis counselors. A small number of these

studies included male participants; however, researchers either chose not to include them in the analysis due to the small number of male participants compared to the female participants in their study, or included them because there was no significant difference in their responses from the female participants.

As research evolved in the areas of vicarious traumatization, (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995a), burnout (Maslach, 1986) and compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995) shelter workers, domestic violence counselors, crisis workers and sexual assault counselors came under the research lens. The demands of shelter work, such as exposure on a regular basis to traumatic stories, the possibility of physical and emotional abuse by survivors' angry partners, and structural aspects of the work environment (e.g., limited resources, low wages, crowded and closed spaces), provided researchers the opportunity to ask: "Is vicarious trauma, burnout or compassion fatigue evident in shelter work?" Consequently, the majority of research on shelter workers focused almost exclusively on the negative aspects of working with domestic violence survivors.

Stress Levels and Shelter Workers: The Canadian Context

Two Canadian studies reported that shelter workers are stressed. An exploratory study in Quebec (Chatigny et al., 2004) investigated shelter workers' stress levels. The study was comprised of a demographic questionnaire, the Ilfeld Distress Psychological Distress scale, an ergonomic body map, as well as observations and interviews. The overall sample included 242 participants. In addition, 17 workers from eight shelters were observed at work for over 50 hours. The majority of these observations took place at two shelters (an urban site with collective management and a rural site with a director). Lastly, 28 workers from eight shelters across the province were interviewed.

The findings indicated that shelter workers in Quebec were experiencing high levels of stress. In particular, workers in collectively managed sites reported the highest levels of stress. This study appeared to capture a realistic picture of the demands and nature of the work shelter workers experience given the time researchers spent in observing workers performing job tasks. It is important to note that when looking at job satisfaction, the authors noted that all workers interviewed reported "liking their jobs and found satisfaction in them" (p.141). The study pointed out the struggles of shelter work: the inherent tensions of working in a hierarchical or collective environment, the division of labour at sites (are tasks shared or do workers have designated tasks?), the balance between security and accessibility (the site needs to be safe but yet accessible to women), and finally, the financial reality of constricted budgets and their impact on workers' work and personal life such as low wages, crowded work spaces, multitasking demands, and high caseloads.

The authors did not see the need to recommend a change from collective to a more traditional style of management as an answer to address workers' stress; rather, understaffing and unstable financing were directly or indirectly seen as responsible for the majority of challenges faced by shelter workers. They called for further investigation into the professionalization of the workers, improving the physical layout of the sites, looking at different work organization and management models, as well as ways to minimize interruptions in a follow up study as a means to better understanding shelter workers. In light of the provincial government of Quebec increasing funding to shelters after this research was completed, it would be interesting to see if stress levels of shelter workers were decreased (Chatigny et al., 2004).

The second Canadian study to focus on shelter workers sought to identify coping strategies used to mitigate the impact of working with domestic violence survivors (Martin,

2006). Nineteen participants completed a demographic questionnaire, the Brief Symptom Inventory, and the Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Subscales-RIII, as well as a semi-structured interview. The results suggest a "higher than average degree of psychological distress, but comparatively normal levels of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue" (p.127). Workers identified education, self-awareness and self-responsibility, self-care, connection, balance, facilitative empowering approach, work place policy and practice and systemic issues as factors that either negate or contribute to work stress (Martin, 2006).

Stress Levels and Shelter Workers: The International Context

Studies heavily influenced by the existing literature on vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue seemed to find what they were looking for, namely that shelter workers experienced these symptoms (Iliffe & Steed, 2000; Johnson & Hunter, 1997). Other studies encouraged caution when suggesting that shelter workers experience high levels of burnout, vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, and that there are more complex and intricate layers to workers' experience (Baird & Jenkins, 2003; Baker et al, 2007; Brown & O'Brien, 1998; Dekel & Peled, 2000; Schauben & Frazier, 1995; Trippany et al., 2003). A number of studies were able to widen the lens on shelter workers' experiences by asking for positive aspects of the work (Bell, 2003; Hindle & Morgan, 2006; Wasco & Campbell, 2002).

Finding the Expected

Using semi-structured interviews, 18 domestic violence workers from a range of work settings in Australia participated in an exploratory study (Iliffe & Steed, 2000). Findings indicated "classical symptoms of vicarious trauma", aspects of countertransference, and evidence of burnout in the majority of participants (p.393). The authors identified coping strategies focusing on individual (e.g., physical activity, self-care, political involvement, focusing on

clients' strength and resiliency), and organizational (e.g., peer support, debriefing, lowering caseloads) components as mechanisms to mitigate vicarious trauma, countertransference, and burnout in workers.

Another Australian study (Johnson & Hunter, 1997) compared sexual assault counselors with counselors in other health related areas of expertise. The findings suggested that sexual assault counselors experience more stress than other counselors, especially when looking at emotional exhaustion. A Beliefs and Values Questionnaire examining how workers perceived issues of safety, trust, power, intimacy and esteem seemed to indicate support for vicarious trauma; however, it should be noted that this questionnaire was developed by the researchers and had not undergone psychometric testing. A component of the research focused on coping strategies and again, the sexual assault counselors were seen to use more escape/avoidance strategies (such as eating, smoking, using drugs or alcohol, isolating themselves, and denial) than the other counselors.

Untangling the Layers

In an earlier study, 148 psychologists and counselors working with sexual assault survivors were surveyed in a midwestern state (Schauben & Frazier, 1995). The majority of participants indicated relatively few adverse effects. Workers' own trauma history was not associated with vicarious trauma, although the authors reported that those workers with higher caseloads experienced more vicarious trauma than individuals with lower caseloads. Effective coping strategies and positive aspects of working with sexual assault survivors were seen to buffer workers from vicarious trauma.

A comparison study between paid and volunteer trauma counselors exploring the presence and relationship of vicarious trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout was

conducted with 101 participants from sexual assault and domestic violence agencies in Texas (Baird & Jenkins, 2003).   The findings indicated that a very small minority of participants experienced clinically meaningful levels of symptomatology overall. When factoring in age, younger participants reported slightly more burnout than older participants. Contrary to the authors' expectations there were no differences when experience was factored in. Interestingly, paid counselors who had higher caseloads reported fewer vicarious trauma symptoms. Higher education, adequate coping skills, and good staff support mechanisms were seen as mitigating elements. Volunteers, on the other hand, reported more burnout with lighter caseloads. Contributing factors were seen to be level of education and experience, idleness and/or variable caseloads, decreased personal accomplishment, and less access to work resources.

Similarly, in Brown and O'Brien's (1998) study of 91 shelter workers in the Midwestern United States, workers did not meet the criteria for burnout, although findings indicated they were moderately stressed. Again, workers' coping mechanisms were seen to be a factor in determining their level of stress or burnout. The authors suggested that coping techniques that aid personal accomplishment and negate emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would be beneficial to workers in minimizing stress/burnout. For example, workers who indicated they had high levels of support from their social network were more likely to report less stress or burnout. It was also suggested that educating workers about the relationship between the work stress of fast paced, heavy workloads, feelings of powerlessness, bureaucracy, perceived danger of the job, and burnout would be an important step in developing adaptive coping mechanisms. Brown and O'Brien (1998) called for the organization and the worker to use these strategies to minimize shelter worker stress/burnout.

Baker et al. (2007) replicated Brown and O'Brien's (1998) study and had comparable results with the exception of participants' experiences of depersonalization. Depersonalization refers to a state in which the normal sense of personal identity and reality is absent. In their study very low levels of depersonalization were evident in shelter workers. Workers perceived their work to be valuable and experienced empathy for their clients. The difference between findings the authors suggest can be found in the shared struggle for limited resources between the women and the workers. This argument is rather weak, given that limited resources are an issue for all women and workers. The time lag between studies may be a reason. Perhaps, more funding was given to shelters since 1998 which improved working conditions for workers, or shelters are better funded in Washington and Baltimore than the Mid-Western states. Also, Baker et al. (2007) included homeless shelters as well as women's shelters in the study, some of which may have been faith based. This may have resulted in more workers having altruistic beliefs than workers not employed in faith based organizations.

Baker et al. (2007) further point out that the majority of participants in Brown and O'Brien's (1998) study were shelter workers. Consequently, these workers witnessed the impact of domestic violence on clients, but did not have contact with clients who struggled with poverty, addiction or mental health issues. Accordingly, the authors attributed this to creating less empathy among domestic violence workers resulting in higher levels of depersonalization. In many ways, this type of logic speaks more to the researchers' lack of knowledge of domestic violence and a narrow lens than anything else. It is naïve to assume that women in domestic violence shelters do not experience poverty, addiction or mental health issues; in addition, self-reporting may have caused participants to answer questions based on how positively they wished to be perceived.

In Israel, 80% of its shelter workers participated in a study that examined the relationship between individual/organizational variables and burnout (Dekel & Peled, 2000).   These workers did not meet the criteria for burnout, although findings indicated they were moderately stressed. The authors urged caution in assuming that shelter work leads to burnout; rather, they suggested that further research be conducted to explore this issue. Like Baker et al.'s (2007) study, workers' social support was not related to burnout. The authors did suggest a possible link between workers' education, their status within the organization, length of employment and burnout. More educated workers, more experienced workers and workers in more powerful positions reported lower levels of burnout while those less experienced workers who worked more hours tended to report more burnout.

Contrast this to Trippany et al.'s (2003) comparison study of therapists working with either child or adult survivors of sexual abuse. The authors examined individual (e.g., personal trauma history, spirituality), and organizational (e.g., length of employment, case load and peer supervision) variables that may contribute to vicarious trauma. Counselors working with adult survivors (n=48) and counselors working with child survivors (n=66) from Southwestern United States were surveyed. Findings indicated no significant relationship between these variables and vicarious trauma, with the exception of counselors working with child survivors and who themselves had a personal trauma history. These findings appear to contradict Schauben and Frazer's (1995) study in two areas, specifically that workers with high caseloads did not report more vicarious trauma and that there was no relationship between workers' spirituality and vicarious trauma.

Widening the Lens

Bell's study (2003) on domestic violence workers was one of the first to approach this topic without the underlying assumption that domestic violence work has necessarily negative consequences for the worker. Using a strengths perspective, 30 participants were interviewed and asked to share both positive and negative work experiences. They were interviewed on two separate occasions (the second approximately one year after the first interview). During the first interview 30% of the participants reported they were under stress, at the second interview only 17% reported being stressed. Participants' self-reports on their level of stress appeared to be based on the frequency and nature of negative experiences, as well as their own perception of self. Workers' strengths that appeared to support lower stress levels included a resilient creative outlook, a sense of competence about dealing with stressful situations, an objective motivation for doing the work, and an ability to resolve their own personal trauma. Previous positive role models and having positive and hopeful personal beliefs were additionally seen as buffers. The author noted the reason for these changes in counselors over time was due to developing better coping strategies and that possibly the stresses themselves had been reduced.

Hindle and Morgan's (2006) study sought to understand the psycho-social impact of domestic violence work. Taking a feminist position that these workers are experts of their own experience, nine domestic violence workers from New Zealand, were interviewed and asked to share their experiences. Because this study did not focus on whether or not these workers were experiencing vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue or burnout, it was able to widen the lens on shelter work. Intertwined in their narratives were both positive and negative aspects to their work. The authors maintained that the negative impacts of working with survivors of domestic violence are mitigated by positive experiences. In particular, the collective organization context

in which these workers perform their job was seen to be beneficial because of its focus on education, self-care, and group support.

An interesting study by Wasco and Campbell (2002), on the emotional reactions of eight sexual assault workers found that workers reported more experiences of anger than fear (62% compared with 38%) and that these reactions were "experienced in response to systemic, institutional, environmental and societal influences" (p.124). This was seen to be a reflection of workers being educated and trained to understand sexual violence not as an individual problem but rather as a social one. More experienced workers reported fewer fear responses than less experienced workers, but regardless of experience, anger remained a prominent fixture in worker reactions. When asked what impact fear and anger had on whether or not a worker would continue to advocate for sexual violence survivors, most participants saw these emotional reactions as having a positive influence. Self-care strategies assisted in reducing feelings of fear, and anger was perceived as being a motivation to work for social change. Correspondingly, in Iliffe and Steed's (2000) study a number of participants reported perceived anger as a positive reaction in that it could be channeled into a more active response than being sad.

To review, it is evident that shelter workers are an understudied population whether looking within Canada or internationally. Moreover, the underlying belief driving the bulk of this research is the premise that working with survivors of domestic violence in shelters leads to workers being negatively affected. Individual and organizational factors are seen to either aggravate or alleviate workers' symptoms. No research to date has involved workers as equal participants in the research process. As researchers focused on vicarious trauma, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress (compassion fatigue) a very narrow lens was turned on the workers. It is only in the last few years that a wider lens has begun to capture other facets of shelter

workers' experience bringing to the forefront a more comprehensive picture of shelter work. Perhaps, who is looking through the lens captures more of their expectations than what is being viewed.

Review of the Empirical Literature on Concept Mapping

Concept mapping was first introduced in 1974 as a way to organize and interpret data from clinical interviews (Novak & Musonda, 1991). In the following years, William Trochim further developed and defined the concept mapping process (Kane & Trochim 2007; Trochim, 1989a; Trochim, 1989b). Concept mapping allows the researcher to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single process. Traditionally, concept mapping has been used for program planning and evaluation in education, psychology, and organizational settings. It can also assist researchers in theory and measurement development (Kane & Trochim 2007; Kane & Trochim 2009). Although there was some hesitancy on the part of research to accept this methodology as a "hard science", increased research on concept mapping has proven its effectiveness. Additionally, feminist researchers acknowledge concept mapping as a valuable research method (Campbell & Salem, 1999; Linton, 1989; Riger, 1999). A brief overview of concept mapping is provided to give context to the literature review. This literature review contains articles on concept mapping based on their relevance to concept mapping's emergence as a strong methodology, and more specifically in its applications in feminist research.

Overview of Concept Mapping

Table 1 displays the six-steps involved in concept mapping (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The first three steps generate and sort participants' responses to a research question while the last three steps construct these responses into a conceptual map and provide an analysis. In step one, the research question and selection of participants are undertaken. In step two, participants

brainstorm responses to the research question. Each response is then recorded. Duplicate responses are removed and responses are checked for clarity and a final list is generated. Step three involves the structuring of these statements. A set of cards is constructed based on the statements given; each card contains one of these statements. Participants are given a set of cards to sort and instructed to sort the cards into different piles "in a way that makes sense to you". They are not to consult with other group members when doing this task and cannot sort all items into one pile. Each participant is then asked to rate each statement on a five-point scale in terms of its relevance to the research question. In step four, computer software using multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis is used to generate a map from participant data. Step five consists of participant discussion and interpretation of the map and in the final step, step six, the group discusses the ways the map can be utilized (Trochim, 1989b).

Table 1: Steps in Concept Mapping

Generation and Sorting of Participants Responses	Step 1	• Researcher develops Focus/Rating statement • Researcher selects participants • Subsample of participants check Focus/Rating statement for clarity, meaning, openness
	Step 2	• Group Brainstorming
	Step 3	• Each participant sorts responses into piles • Each response then rated for relevance to the focus statement
Constructing the Maps and Analysis	Step 4	• Construction of Maps using multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis
	Step 5	• Participant discussion and analysis of maps
	Step 6	• Group discussion on how the maps can utilized

Adapted from Kane and Trochim, 2007.

Building Credibility

There was considerable debate in the academic arena in the 1980s about whether or not concept mapping was considered a "soft science or hard art" (Trochim, 1989b, p.87). Trochim acknowledged the fact that reliability and validity of concept mapping had yet to be seriously undertaken and called for further study into this subject (Trochim, 1989a). In 1993, Trochim proposed several different strategies to assess reliability of concept mapping in step four of the process. Using split-half reliabilities on the sort data, reliability based on the individual sorter data and reliability of the sort data, Trochim maintained that concept mapping should be viewed as a "hard science."

As time has gone by and further studies using concept mapping as the methodology have been undertaken, there is continued support for this contention. In particular, Rosas and Kane's (2012) article assessed the reliability and validity of 69 previous concept mapping studies. Data was taken from each of the studies such as number of participants, completion rates by task, number of brainstormed statements as well as data for examining reliability and validity (Trochim's strategies). Analysis of pooled results indicated that concept mapping appears to yield valid and reliable results. Despite differences in participation and task completion percentages among the studies, validity and reliability were consistently high. Internal representational validity, "the extent to which a conceptualized model mirrors the reality it is purported to represent" (p. 237) was considered strong, as was sorting and rating reliability estimates.

Recent literature further expands on the versatility of concept mapping usefulness in research in the area of scale development and validation in evaluation. Rosas and Camphausen's study (2007), involved 14 workers from a number of family support programs in Delaware to

brainstorm using the focus statement, "Generate statements which describe the specific benefits that family members engaged in the family support program should experience" (p.127). They then were asked to sort the brainstormed statements. From this data, an eight-cluster concept map was created and statements from each cluster were examined based on representativeness and clarity. In this way, participants were actively engaged in developing the content domain for a scale in the brainstorming and sorting phrase of concept mapping. The final selection of statements was formatted in a 5-point Likert scale entitled, The Individual Parent Strengths and Capabilities Questionnaire (IPSCQ). This newly developed scale was tested in conjunction with The Family Functioning Style Scale, a scale with proven reliability estimates of .93 in the Dunst, Trivette, and Deal study (as cited in Rosas & Camphausen, 2007) by 248 participants who accessed the services of the family support programs in Delaware. When looking at the IPSCQ, findings indicated construct validity and internal consistency reliability measures fell within acceptable levels. The authors conclude that the use of concept mapping in scale development can aid in constructing a psychometrically rigorous scale in evaluation.

Feminism and Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is consistent with feminist approaches to research because of its ability to uncover shared understanding through group discussion and allows for the voices of the participants to be expressed, heard and documented in their own language. In feminist research there is the understanding that women's voices should guide the research process. Concept mapping allows participants to be active participants in all aspects of the research process which tends to create a sense of ownership for all involved. For feminist research, concept mapping can be an extremely good fit. Additionally, it is through the collective experience in nonhierarchical group settings where they are able to clarify for themselves their own individual

experiences and also realize that their experiences may be shared to some extent by others (Campbell & Salem, 1999; Linton, 1989; Riger, 1999). As Campbell and Salem (1999) state "Concept mapping is a single method that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies, provides an opportunity for women to work as a group to develop an understanding of a concept and places the participants in the driver's seat" (p.68). Riger's (1999) commentary on the Campbell and Salem (1999) study points out that concept mapping can be effective in measuring subjectivities and calls for " expanding our scope to include social structural factors associated with various conceptual maps" (p.29) to enable a better understanding of social change strategies.

Comparison of Concept Mapping to other Methodologies

Several studies have been found which compare concept mapping with other methodologies (Burke et al., 2005; Forbes, 1999; Mercier et al.,2000) Findings indicate there are a number of benefits to concept mapping over phenomenology, focus groups and in depth interviews. For example, concept mapping is less time consuming than phenomenology. In Forbes's study (1999), the entire process of concept mapping consisted of less than five hours including data analysis. When the author switched methodologies, he noted how highly labour intensive phenomenology was. Here participants were interviewed separately, interviews transcribed and checked for accuracy, and then each interview was analyzed. These procedures took days. Additionally, because concept mapping is a participatory approach, the researcher's role was limited to facilitating the brainstorming and sorting and entering the data. Phenomenology requires that the researcher be involved in each and every step including the analysis of the interviews.

The ability of concept mapping to capture complex ideas is also evident in Forbes's study (1999) which focused on the experience of hope in older adults with chronic illness. A close correspondence was found when he compared the themes elicited in the phenomenology study and the statements generated by concept mapping participants. However, the phenomenology study was not able to capture the experience of the process involved in 'hoping', a process which concept mapping provided. Similarly, in a study on qualitative health, Burke et al. (2005) states "concept mapping is a substantially stronger methodology approach for understanding a complex phenomenon than focus groups or in-depth interviews" (p.1408). Further to the issue of concept mapping and focus groups, Mercier et al. (2000) maintain that concept mapping's ability to explore multiple themes and the complex relationships between these themes was far superior to focus groups that highlight consensus building and discussion on one theme.

Limitations of Concept Mapping

Feminist critiques of concept mapping have raised concerns about concept mapping when implemented from a more global perspective. Nonwestern feminists have argued that concept mapping should be viewed as a form of imperialism because of its use of computerized software and rejected its use. Computerized software program can be highly expensive and requires trained individuals to input data. Forbes's (1999) as well pointed out the limitations of the software applications. He commented they could be perceived to limit the analysis by placing the researcher's ability to interpret the findings in a secondary position to that of the software used. However, they both fail to note that concept mapping can be manually computed.

Additionally, there has been some discussion on how to use concept mapping with non-literate women. This does appear to be problematic but could possibly be overcome by adapting some of the process. For instance, pictures instead of words could be used for this population.

A recent study (Carawan & Nalvany, 2010) may assist in bolstering concept mapping's inclusiveness in working with these types of populations. In the brainstorming stage in concept mapping the authors employed other devices to generate the brainstorm statements. Adult dyslexia participants were asked to describe their experiences about what it was like to be an adult with dyslexia in individual interviews using reflective photography or working on a collage in focus groups. Drawing on the strengths of the participants through the use of photography and art the authors maintained that "our research participants generated significantly more statements when compared with other concept mapping studies that utilized an opened statement format" (p.327). They, however, stress that brainstorming is just one of the steps involved in concept mapping and that they will continue to complete the rest of the steps before the overall effectiveness of photography and art can be better evaluated when working with adult dyslexia populations.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

Feminists contend that working between methodological approaches creates "a sense of double consciousness, interest in subjugated knowledge and silenced voices, and empowerment of researcher and participant" (Leckenby & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.273). This exploratory study on shelter workers in Manitoba was designed using concept mapping, an approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Concept mapping's strength lies in its flexibility, its inclusion of participant voice, and its visual representation of the data that enables this process to be a tremendous collective learning experience. A feminist perspective was applied that acknowledges the absence and invisibility surrounding shelter workers' experience.

When designing any research project, it is incumbent that issues of power needed to be addressed (Hesse-Biber, Nagy & Leckenby, 2004). Using a participatory method like concept mapping where participant voices can be heard is a way of balancing the power relationship between the participants and me/the researcher. Additionally, because I have not been employed as a shelter worker since 2001, I have been able to put an emotional distance between the work and my emotions that assisted in minimizing researcher bias. However, as researchers, we may be searching out and finding what we want or expect to find, or what is convenient. As a former shelter worker, I attempted to be extremely vigilant that my own opinions and views did not bias the study. This study sought to gain insight into the world of shelter workers. The research question underpinning this endeavour was "What are the current lived experiences of shelter workers in the province of Manitoba?" It was their collective knowledge and wisdom that shaped and gave voice to this research.

Laying the Groundwork

Sample Strategy and Rationale. Purposive (non-probability) sampling was utilized in this research project allowing the researcher to select the sample according to the nature of the research area under study. All participants were female. Given the nature of the work it is rare to have males working in shelters. Issues of power were addressed when looking at participant selection. As a result, careful attention was paid to participants' positions within their organization. No participant was recruited from the pool of available subjects whose main position was that of supervisor. Having a supervisor in the room might have impeded or altered what a participant would have discussed. Restricting the sample population to frontline workers helped ensure participants felt safe while disclosing or commenting in the group. Additionally, efforts were made to include both urban and rural shelters in the study. The shelter community in Manitoba is a small community and workers who have worked in the field for a period of time may have known each other both personally and professionally. Particularly in rural shelters, there are often close personal and professional relationships between workers. Including both rural and urban workers involved in counseling women and children minimized the possibility that one shelter's workers would dominate group discussions.

Recruitment. Several strategies were employed to recruit participants for the study. In February, 2011 a letter was sent to the Manitoba Association of Women' Shelters asking them for support for this endeavor (Appendix A) and I received an enthusiastic response (Appendix B). As a result, I was invited to their Annual General Meeting in September, 2011 where I was able to discuss with Executive Directors the possibility of going to individual shelters to recruit workers. I then mailed a letter to individual shelters describing the study as well as asking them to post a recruitment notice at their site (Appendix C and D) and encourage discussion about participating.

The Association volunteered to pay for any staff wishing to attend as a way to encourage as many participants to be engaged in the process as possible.

Determining the total number of shelter workers in the province has been a difficult task. Information from Family Violence Prevention Branch indicates that they provide funding to staff 102 positions in shelters (P. Fortier, personal communication, June 21, 2012). However, this includes management and non-counseling positions. Additionally, casual staff are not included in this figure and the number of workers employed at the four aboriginal shelters in Northern Manitoba is unknown. Based on this information, an approximate figure of 200 shelter workers are employed in the province. I was able to speak with over twenty workers at three separate sites (Appendix E). I received a number of emails and phone calls from other workers whose sites I was unable to attend, asking questions and expressing interest because of the recruitment notice they had seen. For those shelters not involved in the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelter, letters, emails, and phone calls were used in an effort to give workers the opportunity to participate. Lastly, because of my involvement in domestic violence for the last 20 years, I contacted a number of workers with whom I was personally acquainted. I spoke with approximately 35 workers.

Negotiating the Realities of Research versus the Ideal Sample. Originally, eligibility criteria for the study required that participants be working a minimum of 25 hours per week, and be employed at a women's shelter in Manitoba for two years. Generally speaking, there was acknowledgement of the importance of undertaking this study. However, issues such as the time of year sessions occurred, workers' heavy caseloads, site staff shortages, financial costs of sending workers and staff turnovers were cited as barriers to participation. For example, at one site, I was informed that only one worker had been in their employ for two years. Based on the

feedback from the sites and workers, the criteria changed in order to increase the probability that a sufficient sample could be possible. Consequently, the sessions were open to workers with one year of experience and 16 hours of work per week. Casual workers and workers with less than one year experience were not included in the study. Because the purpose of the study was to focus on worker experiences, it was thought that more seasoned workers would have a larger body of knowledge to inform this area. Given these realities, 11 workers participated in some aspect of the study.

Concept mapping allows for flexibility in participant participation. Depending on the study's goals and limitations in terms of time and money, there can be an unlimited number of participants, and they can be involved throughout the study, or drop out or be added during any of the study's phases. However, Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend using a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 40 participants in the overall concept mapping process stating "this range seems to provide a good framework, ensuring a variety of opinions while still enabling good group discussion and interpretation" (p.36). Consequently, eligibility criteria were changed in the hopes of attaining the minimum number of participants suggested.

<u>Informed Consent.</u> This research followed the standards set out by the University of Manitoba's Joint Faculties Research Ethics Board. As mentioned, consent forms were given to each participant (Appendix F). Prior to participating, participants were fully informed at the beginning of each session about the purpose of the study, who was conducting the study, and how the results of the discussion were going to be used. As well, a summary of this information will be mailed to them after the thesis has been defended. Consent forms were distributed to all members with a copy given to each participant when each session was concluded, if they wished. Confidentiality and ground rules were established. Participants were made fully aware of the

voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw or choose not to respond at any point in the process. An honorarium was not provided to participants.

 Use of Recording Devices and Storage of Data. All sessions were recorded with the exception of one, where I took notes immediately after the session. All of the participants were aware that the sessions were recorded.   Regarding the recording of sessions, efforts were made to reduce the possibility of practical problems arising. Recorders were pretested before each session to ensure proper functioning. Participants were informed that the audiotapes and transcripts would be stored at my residence in a secure and locked office and that this material would be destroyed upon completion of the project.

Session one occurred in a group room at the Elizabeth Dafoe Library University of Manitoba. The brainstorming and interpretation/analysis sessions took place at the United Way building in Winnipeg in December, 2011 and April, 2012 respectively. According to Krueger (1994), the site must balance the needs of the researcher and the needs of the participants. The physical environment where sessions occur can also be a limitation (Krueger, 1994). Consideration was based upon accessibility and privacy concerns.   By making participants as comfortable as possible in their surroundings, I attempted to minimize these influences from the surroundings. Attention was paid to seating participants in a circular fashion. In this way there was no hierarchical positioning. These arrangements assisted in facilitating participants' feelings of inclusion, reduced physical barriers and allowed all participants eye contact with each other. These efforts enhanced the credibility of the research project.

Issues of Validity and Reliability in Concept Mapping. Internal representational validity is the degree to which the concept map reflects participants' judgment in organizing information to produce the map: "…determining the overall match between the participant-structured input and

the mathematically generated output is central to assessing internal representational validity"
(Rosas & Kane, 2012, p.237).   There are three ways to do this: 1) using a Pearson's Product-
Moment correlation co-efficient which measures the degree of similarity between participant
data and the generated concept map, 2) a stress value which is conducted in multidimensional
scaling and 3) the examination of participant's sorting piles relative to the number of clusters
(Rosas & Kane, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the last two methods were employed.

The Journey: The Concept Mapping Experience

Session One

This study sought to gain insight into the experience of shelter workers by asking the
question: "What are the current lived experiences of shelter workers in the province of
Manitoba?" In this research, the overall focus concept has been decided by the researcher,
whereby the lived experiences of shelter workers were explored. The purpose of session one was
to develop the focus statements for brainstorming and rating. Because of the flexibility of
concept mapping, this can be done either by the researcher or by the participants. The statements
needed to make sense to participants, be something they can readily relate to and become
invested in. Because of the participatory nature of this research endeavour, how the
brainstorming and rating statements would be worded would be the task of the participants.
Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend using a subsample from the larger sample pool of
participants to complete this task. Originally, I had hoped to have at least three participants
engaged in this activity. However, only one participant was able to attend. I believe that the
time of year was the main factor for low participation. The session was held in the first week of
December, 2011 in a group room at the Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba. It was
approximately one hour in length.

The consent form was discussed and sign by the participant and a brief description of concept mapping was given, as well as and what would take place in the first session. The session began, with the participant discussing various issues that had been part of her experience as a shelter worker. Once some of these experiences were shared, I introduced the focus statement and prompt. The focus statement for the brainstorming statement was: "Generate statements which describe your experiences as a shelter worker". For the brainstorming statement, Kane and Trochim (2007) suggest using an incomplete rather than an instructional sentence as a prompt, maintaining that incomplete sentences are easier to work with and have the ability to generate more statements that are syntactically similar than instructional sentences. As a result, the focus prompt developed was: "One factor that influences my experience as a shelter worker is…" I then asked the participant to reflect back on some of the stories she had just shared and pull out the underlying issues and see how they fit into the focus prompt. Next, based on her experience the participant was asked for her opinion about whether or not the focus statement and prompt could be easily understood by her and other participants, and if it was going to be able to generate the appropriate quality and quantity of responses.

The last task was to pretest a rating focus statement. A rating focus statement was designed to elicit the participants' rating of the statements. The participant reviewed the factors she had given and then rated them using the rating focus statement. Given this experience she believed it would be easily understandable to others. The rating focus statement was: "Rate each statement on a 1 to 5 scale where: 1 Relatively Unimportant, 2 Somewhat Important, 3 Moderately Important, 4 Very Important, 5 Extremely Important" (Appendix G). Using a Likert scale where categories were easily recognizable and hierarchical allowed for comparative rating.

Pretesting in session one ensured it was easily understandable for the participants in future sessions.

Session Two

Session two involved two tasks: brainstorming and sorting, and occurred during the third week of December, 2011 at the United Way Building in Winnipeg. Four participants attended. It was approximately three and a half hours in duration. I facilitated the session and had the help of an assistant, a former work colleague of mine, Gwen Pederson, MSW. My role was to keep the group focused, manage conflict if it arose and provide the necessary instruction for the tasks at hand. Gwen helped with setting up for the session, putting participants' responses into a computer and preparing the sort cards. Again, as with the first session, I began by reviewing the consent form.

Brainstorming. In the brainstorming part of the session, the focus was on eliciting from the participants a range of responses relating to the lived experiences of shelter workers. At the beginning of the session, participants received a short orientation to the concept mapping process, followed by an explanation of brainstorming. Participants were informed that there were no right or wrong responses. All responses have equal value and would not be judged. Therefore, no comments should be made about the appropriateness of any response. At any time, participants were free to ask for clarification of a response.

In the event that any participant was uncomfortable openly sharing in the group, each participant was given some slips of paper and could choose to write down their responses if they wished. After the brainstorming session had ended, participants could then place their responses in a sealed envelope in a pre-designated safe and confidential area. This provided an opportunity

for all voices to be heard and for as many responses as possible to be included in a safe and respectful manner. However, no one took the opportunity to do this.

Participant responses were recorded on sheets of paper for all to see. Once saturation of responses had been accomplished, there was a break for participants to have lunch. During the break, Gwen and I reviewed the statements. Each response needed to be relevant to the concept and contain only one idea. Duplicate or redundant responses were removed and all of the responses were checked for clarity and comprehension. Kane and Trochim (2007) refer to this as idea synthesis. They suggest limiting the responses to 100 or fewer because concept mapping software has specific limits to the number of responses these programs can handle. The group developed 92 statements.

Sorting. Once the responses have been reduced and edited, Gwen and I prepared the statements for sorting. They were photocopied and then cut into slips of paper, with each slip of paper or sort card containing one statement, and the sorting deck consisting of 92 statements. Each participant received a deck of sort cards. Following Kane and Trochim's (2007) recommendation the statements were randomized before giving them to the participants, thus minimizing the chance that responses generated in the brainstorming would be near each other when given to the participants.

Instructions for sorting and rating the statements were given verbally, as well as being posted and visible to all the participants. Participants were asked not to speak to each other during this task. They were instructed to sort the responses into different piles "in a way that makes sense to you." However, they could not put all responses into one pile and there could not be as many piles as responses; although participants may have chosen to place some responses by themselves. Additionally, each response could only be placed once in a pile. These

directives facilitated in providing an understanding of the relationships between the responses. Putting all responses into one pile or a pile for each statement would have provided no information about how these responses were related to each other (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Once the participants finished sorting and handing in their decks, they were given a rating sheet comprised of all the statements and asked to rate each statement in relation to other statements based on their own experience. This sequence, sorting first and then rating minimized the possibility participants would have sorted their responses according to the relationships they saw among the responses (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Kane and Trochim (2007) further suggest instructing participants with a statement such as "Before doing your ratings, quickly scan the entire list of statements to try to get an idea of which ones are of highest and lowest priority within the set. Then, when you rate the statements, try to use the full range of rating values (e.g., 1 to 5)" (p.76). This is done to reduce the likelihood of participants falling into a response set. When I provided them with this set of instructions the response from one of the participants was that it was not necessary because the statements that were generated were extremely important, so therefore, they should all be rated high. In response, I again attempted to encourage them to be reflective and be mindful of each statement and see where it should be rated in relation to other statements. I also emphasized that although all statements were put on the list, this was now the opportunity for each individual to rate the relative importance of that particular statement based on their own individual experience. This concluded session two.

As mentioned previously, I was concerned about the small sample size and with the approval of my academic committee; I was able to recruit seven more participants. Conducting the sessions in the workers' own communities was a factor in increasing the sample size. For this part of the research, the participants were given the task of sorting and rating the

brainstormed responses. The same protocol was followed as in session two. In addition, at the end of the task, they were asked what their reaction was to the statements and if there were any other factors that influenced shelter work that were not in the deck.

Scheduling and Location Issues

The time constraints of the project and participant availability were difficult areas to navigate. By late November, 2011 there was sufficient interest expressed by workers to begin data collection. Consideration was given to what would be the most appropriate time to conduct these sessions because they should not conflict with existing community or organizational activities or functions (Krueger, 1994). Unfortunately, because of research deadlines, session one and two occurred in December, 2011at a time when sites and staff indicated that they were extremely busy. For example, the Province of Manitoba declares November to be Domestic Violence Prevention month and shelters often will hold a number of events in November or early December. Organizing activities around the Montreal Massacre (December 6th), staff and client Christmas parties were other duties required of staff. Lastly, many of the potential participants were from the rural area and driving long distances in possibly uncertain weather may have been seen to be stressful. I believe that these factors contributed to low participant turnout. In a session one, I had one individual participate. Session two consisted of only four participants.

Regrouping in January, 2012 and in consultation with my academic advising committee, the decision was made to try to include additional workers in the study. Concept mapping's flexibility allowed for additional participants to be included in rating the brainstorming statement (an activity which was part of session two). Consequently, I was able to recruit seven more participants. On three separate occasions, I met with workers either individually or in groups in

their community for this purpose. One-hour sessions were conducted either at the workers' site or a senior citizens' organization in the workers' local community.

Ideally, I would have preferred not conducting sessions on site.   Conducting a session at a shelter might have inhibited the participants from disclosing their experiences because they may not feel safe doing so where they work. One of these sessions involved a single participant and we were able to conduct the session in a very private room. The participant had had several phone or email contacts with me and appeared highly enthusiastic about the study. As well, the executive directive had also expressed her interest and support. This was an example of a positive outcome doing an interview where a participant worked.

On the other occasion, difficulties were encountered. I had checked with the site to see if I could find an alternate location in the community but was told that space was limited and staff may not want to travel. Consequently, the decision was made to have me come during a staff meeting. I had been there on two other separate occasions to discuss the project with staff. When the executive director left the room, two of the staff indicated that they were busy and wanted to know how long this would take. I stated that I was told I could have between one to one and a half hours. I stressed that participating was voluntary and if anyone wished they could leave. Both of these individuals decided to participate in the study. I worried that at least two of the workers were concerned about the ramifications for them if they left. Either they may not have been paid for their time by the site, or management would be aware of them leaving. However, they appeared to take the time and effort to rate and sort the brainstormed statements and provided some feedback about the experience.

Analysis of Session Two

This analysis phase required no participant involvement. The Concept System software was used to manage the entry and analysis provides results and display of the concept mapping process. The completed sort and rating data was entered into the computer for the eleven participants. It should be noted there was some missing data occurring in the rating of the statements. One participant did not rate one statement and another participant missed one page of rating statements. Additionally, during the cluster analysis it became evident that there was some incongruence within clusters. In order to ensure the internal representational validity of the concept maps being produced, the following steps were taken when it became clear that one participant's sort data was affecting the homogeneity of the clusters. Upon reviewing the participant's sort data, it was discovered that the participant had labeled her 92 statements into three piles as "agree'', "do not agree" and "normally". Although, it followed the rules that were set out for sorting, it did not show relationships between the statements other than her personal opinions about agree/disagree that was the task of the rating, not the sorting. In consultation with Michael Huffman, Associate Manager of Operations at Concept Systems Inc., this participant's sort data was not included in the analysis, but her rating data was. This assisted in the clusters having greater homogeneity. From this data the software program was able to construct a similarity matrix, a multidimensional scaling of the similarity matrix and a hierarchical cluster analysis of the multidimensional scaling. A more detailed account of constructing a similarity matrix, multidimensional scaling of the similarity matrix and a hierarchical cluster can be found in Appendix H. However, a discussion of stress values in multidimensional scaling is presented here in order to further demonstrate the reliability of concept mapping.

 Stress Values in Multidimensional Scaling. A stress index is regarded as a way of investigating the reliability of a measurement; for example, to what degree does the map represent the

participants' rating of the brainstormed responses? "Stress measures the degree to which the distances on the map are discrepant from the values in the similarity matrix" (Kane & Trochim 2007, p.97). The higher the stress value the less likely the map is representative of the data. Kane and Trochim argue that a stress value of 0.285 with a standard deviation of 0.04 should be considered reliable and that "approximately 95% of concept mapping projects are likely to yield stress values that range between about 0.205 and 0.365" (p.98). This stress value is slightly higher than suggested by traditional proponents of multidimensional scaling who call for a stress value of 0.10 or lower. Kane and Trochim (2007) maintain that this lower value "was developed in controlled psychometric testing environments where the phenomena are generally more stable and better behaved than in conceptualization… [As well] stress calculations are sensitive to slight movements in statements on a map that are not likely to have any meaningful interpretive value in concept mapping" (p.97). For these reasons, they reject the stress value of 0.10 or lower when applied to concept mapping. Sturrock and Rocha's (2000) study supports Trochim's claim. This study examined half a million randomly created scaled matrices and findings indicated that there was a 1% probability the distribution of objects in a matrix is random if the stress value is less than .39. For my study a 0.30415 stress value was attained in creating the concept map. This stress value indicates that the concept map is representative of the participants' sort data. Additionally, Trochim (1989a) recommends using between 10 to 15 sorters to ensure the reliability of the concept map produced; the more sorters, the higher degree of reliability. Ten participants sorted in this study, thus meeting Trochim's requirements.

Hierarchical Cluster Analysis. Once multidimensional scaling has been applied to the similarity matrix, a point map was created. The point map provided a two-dimensional visual representation of the relationship between the brainstormed statements. It was the foundation

from which all of the other maps were constructed (Figure 1). In the point map, each response is

displayed as a numbered dot on the map. How far apart or closer together the dots are implies

the relationship between statements. At this point in the process, a hierarchical cluster analysis

was conducted. It was now time to look for patterns. In many ways, this is identical to what

happens in qualitative research when the researcher searches for categories allowing information

to be organized into themes. In concept mapping, the computer application performed a

hierarchical cluster analysis. This procedure configured all the dots in the point map into non-

overlapping clusters in two-dimensional space formats. Here, the brainstormed responses

(represented as dots on the point map) that were seen to be similar were formed into clusters

(Figure 2 is an example of a 12 cluster configuration).
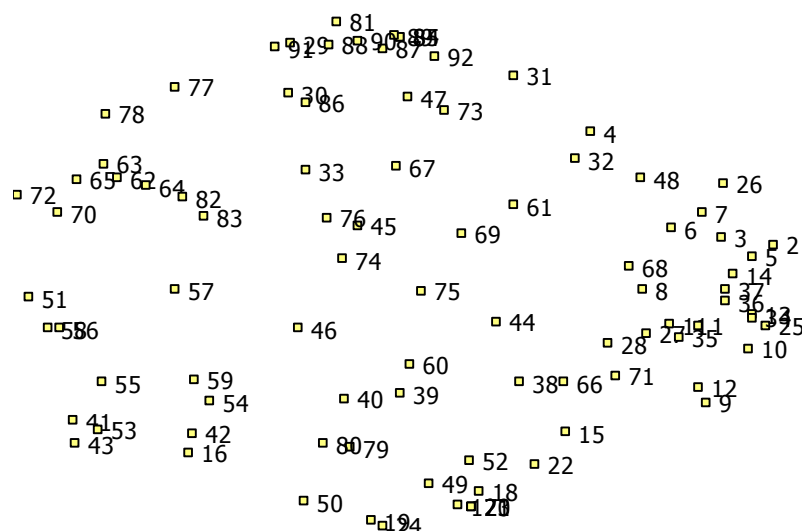
Figure 1 Point Map: Indicates how each statement is related to other statements. The greater
the distance between points, the less the relationships between statements.

The question of the number of clusters in the cluster map was the next task. This part of

the process speaks to the qualitative aspect of concept mapping. Unfortunately, there was no

participant participation for this step of the project because of the time constraints involved and

the possibility of participant burden. I followed Kane and Trochim's (2007) strategy in deciding

the final number of clusters; first to begin by broadly selecting a minimum and maximum

number of clusters that might be used. They maintain that the higher number of clusters, the easier it will be to get agreement on whether or not to merge two clusters together. The researcher examines two clusters at a time deciding on whether or not there is enough similarity of concepts within the clusters to merge. It is at the point when the researcher concludes that merging clusters together does not make sense that the final number of clusters has been reached. It is important to note, "that regardless of the number of clusters selected, the underlying point map remains constant" (Kane & Trochim 2007, p. 104).
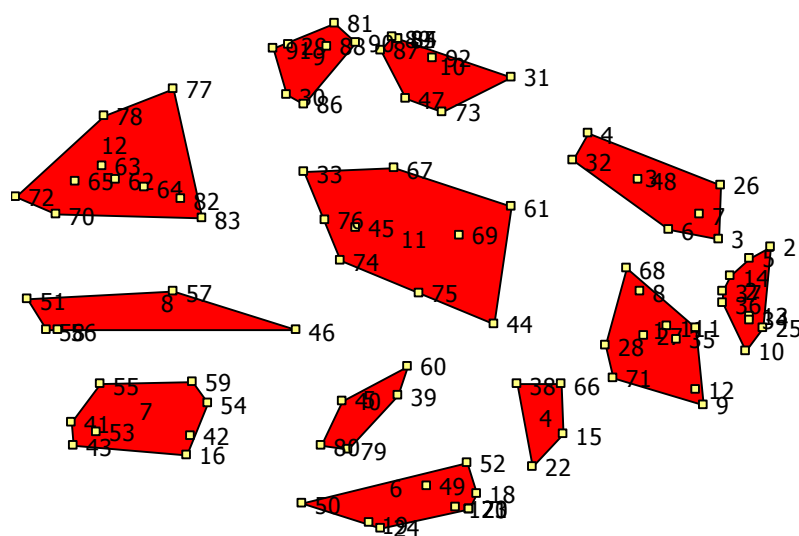
Figure 2 Cluster Map (12 Clusters): Clusters are configured according to similarity of statements.

The Concept System software allows for a maximum of 20 clusters to be created. As the clusters were reduced from 20 to a lower number, it did become more difficult to decide the final cluster number. In addition, the software did not allow me to have control over the sequence of clusters merging. The program automatically reduced the clusters based on a set mathematical formula from the sorting data. For example, if I was looking at a cluster map with 11 clusters, I could not arbitrarily merge two clusters together of my choosing. Examination of cluster maps with 11 and seven clusters was where I deliberated the most. A suggestion that the Associate

Manager of Operations at Concept Systems Inc. offered was to look not only at the content of the statement but the underlying emotional context. This was extremely helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the cluster. In the end, a 7-cluster map was decided upon (Figure 3).
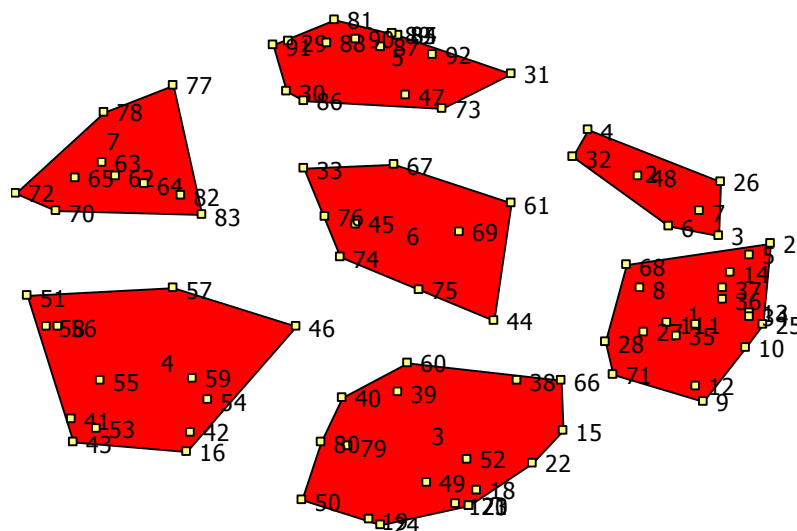
Figure 3 Final Cluster Map (7 Clusters)

All of these tasks produced a series of concept maps (the point map, the cluster map, the point rating map and the cluster rating map). These visual representations of the lived experiences of shelter workers were then used in the interpretation phase. Each of these maps highlighted a particular aspect of the concept information gathered. Additionally, pattern-matching and go-zones were then generated by the software program to compare the rating results across different variables. Go-zones are bivariate graphs that display the average ratings for two variables on each response within one cluster (Kane & Trochim, 2007). For more information of go-zones and pattern-matching see Appendix I. Other statistical calculations determined a bridging or anchoring value for a response. An anchor response is located in close proximity to other responses and mirrors the surrounding content. A bridging response links two or more distant areas of the map (Kane & Trochim, 2007). This provided a deeper understanding of each area of the map and the relationship dynamics across these areas.

Session Three: Interpretation and Analysis of the Maps

Session three was held in the last week of April, 2012 at the United Way building in Winnipeg. The same four participants who attended session two attended this last session. Participants in session three had the opportunity to see and discuss the maps that had been generated by their brainstorming and sorting activities. It was their collective wisdom that had enabled the maps to be constructed and their voices that had been heard. The session followed the same format of the other sessions, review of the consent form, brief overview of concept mapping and the task at hand for this session.

The session was recorded to ensure that no information was lost. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and then reviewed to see if the comments are an accurate account of the group's analysis. Additionally, participants in session three were given the opportunity to give their feedback in writing if they wished. Pens, paper, and self-enclosed envelopes were given to each participant. They were asked to place their written feedback in a safe location at the end of the session. No participant provided feedback in writing. It appeared there was a high degree of trust established in the session, as all participants were familiar with each other from session two.

Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend presenting the maps in a structured sequence of steps that enables participants to fully understand the maps. It now became the task of the participants as a group to interpret these maps in ways that fit their collective lived experiences. A computer projector/overhead projector was used to display the maps to the group; paper copies were also given to the participants. After a summary of the brainstorming responses, the point map was introduced and examined. Once there was general agreement about the point map's meaning, a cluster list was presented and explored. Here participants named the clusters. Depending on the number of participants, Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend either

individuals or small groups review the responses contained in the clusters. The participants individually completed this task, providing a word or short phrase that best described that particular cluster. By using the cluster listing and the point cluster map as a reference guide, group dynamics such as peer pressure were minimized. The larger group then considered the options for naming each cluster and through a consensus agreed on an acceptable name for that cluster. At this point in the discussion a question was asked by one of the participants concerning the naming of the clusters. "Was there a right or wrong way to name the clusters?" I stated that as long as the name made sense to them they could name it whatever they chose; they did not need my approval. It was their map, their territory. Once this was done the cluster map was presented to the group and the names were formally placed on each cluster. If applicable, participants were asked if there were any similarities between clusters. Participants were encouraged to discuss what the map has revealed to them about their lived experiences as shelter workers.

The next step was to present the point rating map. Again, the point rating map was identical to the point map with the exception that beside a point there was now a numerical value representing the average rating value the participants had given to that particular response (Figure 4). Participants identified any significant patterns and what meanings they make of these patterns. There were, at times, a range of views and all were valid comments: "the concept map by itself won't necessarily lead to consensus but it does provide general agreement framework for viewing the variety of opinions within a group" (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p.124). This same process was repeated when the cluster-rating map was presented to the group. Participants examined these ratings and discussed why clusters varied in importance. For example, what cluster responses had the most impact on your experience as shelter workers and what are the

reasons for this? During the analysis of the data and preparing the maps for presentation to the group, the researcher decided which variables and which participants' ratings would be introduced to the group for discussion. Due to the time constraints of session three, a limited number of the most noticeable comparisons from the pattern matching and go zone results were presented for discussion. For example, length of employment was fully examined by the group.
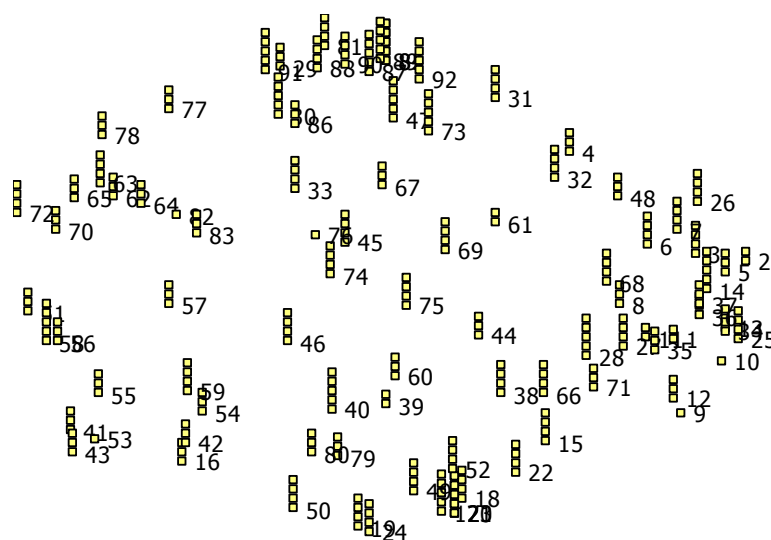
Figure 4 Point Rating Map: Indicates the importance of each statement to the workers based on their ratings of each statement.

Summary

To review, several strategies were employed to recruit participants using purposive sampling. The eligibility criterion for participants was adjusted from two years of employment and 25 hours per week to one year and 16 hours of work per week in order to increase sample size. Approximately 35 shelter workers were personally informed about the project and of these, 11 participated. The study followed the standards set out by the University of Manitoba Joint Faculties Research Board.

Session one and two were both conducted in December 2011. In session one, only one participant was available to pretest the focus and rating statement. Participants in session two

were able to brainstorm and generate 92 statements using the focus statement "One factor that influences my experience as a shelter worker…" They were then asked to rate these statements. Four participants were involved in this task. Regrouping in January, 2012 the decision was made to continue to recruit more participants. As a result, seven more participants were asked to rate and sort the brainstormed statements from session two.

Once these tasks were completed, the analysis of the data began. The Concept System software program was used to input data to create a similarity matrix, a multidimensional scaling of the similarity matrix and a hierarchical cluster analysis of the multidimensional scaling. A point map was produced, once multidimensional scaling was applied to the similarity matrix affording a two dimensional visual representation of the relationship between the brainstormed statements. Next, the cluster map was created. Brainstormed responses that were seen to be similar (represented as dots on the point map) were analyzed and formed into clusters. The clusters were reduced from 20 to seven which assisted in maintaining similarity within the clusters yet at the same time highlighting the differences between each individual cluster. When participants' rating data was entered into the software program, the point rating map and cluster rating map was constructed. Additionally, pattern matching and go-zones were generated.

In April, 2012 the interpretation and the analysis (session three) was undertaken by the same four participants from session two. Efforts had been made to recruit other participants but unfortunately, they were unable to attend. The maps were presented in a structured sequence of steps: point map, cluster map, point rating map and lastly the cluster rating map. Participants engaged in naming the clusters. Additionally, they were asked to identify patterns and provide

feedback from all of the maps presented. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, a limited number of go-zones and pattern matchers were discussed by the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS - SURVEYING THE TERRITORY

Introduction

Giving voice to experience is powerful. When experience is named, said aloud in a safe place with other women, we begin to own our territory, understand its uniqueness and claim our space within its domain. We know we are not alone, that there are other residents in these lands, with similar shared understandings. Concept mapping allows for the surveying of this territory in a way that creates meaning, reduces isolation, and gives a visual snapshot so we know where we have been and what the journey has been like. We become visible. In the last group session, four participants came together to interpret and share their collective wisdom about the maps that had been created from the brainstorming and rating sessions. The examination and discussion of these maps contain the lived experiences of these and the other seven shelter workers.

The Power in Naming

As mentioned previously, the final cluster configuration was seven. The participants were given a list of the clusters with the brainstormed statements included in each cluster (Appendix J) shows the newly named clusters with the brainstormed statements). They were then asked to spend some time individually reviewing the statements in each cluster and develop an appropriate name for each cluster. Once this was completed discussion occurred in the larger group. There were two clusters that the group quickly named: Cluster Two and Four. Cluster Two contained seven statements (7.6% of total brainstormed statements) and was thought to relate directly to the human factor as one participant said: "to the workers, their feelings, their experiences. It's like ground zero". Isolation; conflict, whether towards each other, or witnessing conflict between clients; and the feelings of no one seeming to care resonated with this cluster. As a result, Ground Zero was chosen as the appropriate name for Cluster Two. The

13 brainstormed statements (14.1% of total brainstormed statements) in Cluster Four related to feelings of not being respected and safety issues. The participants thought the name 'Devaluation of Safety and Work' was an appropriate name for this cluster.

Cluster One/The Land of Oz

Cluster One contained 19 of the brainstormed statements (20.6% of the total brainstormed statements). The participants suggested various names for this cluster which included: "running of the shelter", "politics", "out of control", and "poor communication." Statements in this cluster reflected factors as expectations of standards, mismanagement, workers' experience with their board, and shelter politics. A participant stated "running of the shelter is very political. There is poor communication which leads to us feeling out of control, living in the Land of Oz." When asked to explain further she went on to say, "Nothing is the way it seems" and which point another participant replied "I would completely agree, I love that [referring to the Land of Oz]." Another participant stated "The communication, the politics are not what you would expect. You expect us to be a healthy workplace and we are trying to make each other strong, but what we are doing, putting each other down. From one abusive relationship to another".

The following exchange of thoughts between the participants demonstrates the inherent contradictions between what the image of working in a shelter is thought to be and the actual reality of the work. Additionally, there is the sense of powerlessness.

> "We aren't management so we have no control over any of the decisions."
> "You think of the shelter and you just assume that because they are helping women, that they are all working together and helping each other out."
> "There is an almighty power out there."

For the group, Cluster One was the territory where workers have little or no control in decision-making and have to carefully navigate troubled political waters. The figure of a powerful wizard, clothed in mystery, accessible to the chosen few was an appropriate way for them to make meaning of these cluster statements. As one participant stated, "What about the name 'Power of Oz', then you got him granting wishes to certain people or denying. No one else would get that". For another participant, however, a broader perspective was needed, "and it's not just the shelter, it's the board, the government, the community. They are all involved." As a result, the group chose 'The Land of Oz' as a fitting name for this cluster.

Cluster Three/Almighty Dollar

Cluster three represented 19 (20.6 % of the total brainstormed) statements and for the group these statements reflected funding and financial constraint, issues or as one participant said it's "the money maze, you know the game they play with the resources." Another participant identified more closely with the Wizard of Oz metaphor from the previous discussion. "I put the almighty dollar or lack thereof and then I decided the Emerald City to go with the Oz theme, because Emerald City, it's the place that had everything that everybody wanted." Another participant agreed, "I like Emerald City because it implies the whole fantasy thing, the perception, where the money comes from. Who has the power?" However, because not everyone in the group was familiar with the narrative of the Wizard of Oz, they continued to discuss other alternative names. The following dialogue shows how the group finally decided on the name 'Almighty Dollar' for this cluster.

> "I like almighty dollar... the human factor doesn't matter. They're not thinking about the people that come in there, that work there.
> "Follow the yellow brick road, because you're always trying to chase the money, or navigate the funding"

"I like Almighty Dollar. It just says it. It includes wages."

Cluster Five/Warrior Woman

This cluster contained 15 (16.3% of the total) of the brainstormed statements. The group spent time discussing the contradictions found in this cluster because it contained both positive and negative aspects of their experiences as shelter workers. As one participant stated "I wrote clash between positives and stressors on staff and clients…" Another participant interpreted the cluster by dividing the statements between workers' and clients' issues. "But if you look at the statements about us, everything about us is positive ... personal connection with clients, I appreciate my life, success stories make you stay. A lot of the negatives have to do with the clients." I then asked them to look at the underlying tone of any contradictory statements in the cluster and what these statements said about them as workers. For example, I asked, "What if a worker brought up the brainstormed statements, 'clients are affected by management conflict', and 'clients are affected by worker to worker stress at a staff meeting? What would you think about that worker?" Participants commented that these workers would be seen as caring and passionate about their work.

There was also discussion centering on where the statements were arranged in the cluster: for the participants there seemed to be contradictory statements side by side and they questioned why this had occurred. In the sorting phase of this research endeavour, these statements were seen to be related and many of the participants had put them in one pile which resulted in these statements being located close to one another. I discussed this with the group by looking at the analogy of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Although these countries share the same land - mass, they have different histories, beliefs and cultures. They then seemed to be able to identify more closely with these negative comments. The group went on to say:

"It's like desperation to stop from drowning, because you feel so out of control and
the revolving door and you see children coming in of women who were coming in 5
or 6 years ago."

"Fighting the feelings of despair."

"Yeah, I like that. Justifying, why I would stay. Yeah, fighting the feelings of
despair."

"You know, you're fighting and you claim your place."

"Despite the conflict, you keep on going."

Based on this discussion the participants named this cluster 'Warrior Woman'.

Cluster Six/Burnout is on the Herizon

This cluster contained 9 (9.7% of the total) brainstormed statements. Overall, as one
participant stated "yeah, just when you read it, the safety issues, the working alone, exhaustion,
and nobody gives a care. Issues surrounding isolation and stress were discussed. There
appeared to be a consensus, that because in some public arenas, domestic violence is seen solely
as a women's issue. Resources are not as plentiful as they would be for a male issue. As one
participant said "I've always said if this shelter was for men, they would be in the Fairmont."
For the group, 'Burnout is on the Herizon' seemed to be a good fit for the statements contained
in this cluster. During the discussion on this cluster, the group made it clear that they wanted the
spelling of the word Horizon to be changed to Herizon in order to more adequately reflect their
lived experiences about these statements contained in the cluster. In many ways this naming
change reflected the growing level of ownership for their territories.

Cluster Seven/Burnt Offerings

Again, there appeared to be substantial agreement between the participants concerning
the ten statements in this cluster (18.5% of the total brainstormed). They were able to share in
some way what effect working in this occupation had on them. One participant stated: "It's a

high price to pay, doing this job... you lost a lot and once it's gone it isn't coming back. Another

participant shared the cost to her as a parent: "Half of my kid's life from 8-15, I wasn't there,

because half the time I'm working evenings."   Given these reflections, the participants believed

"Burnt Offerings" was a good fit for this cluster.

Owning Our Territory

Once, all of the clusters were named, the participants were shown the point map. (Figure

1).
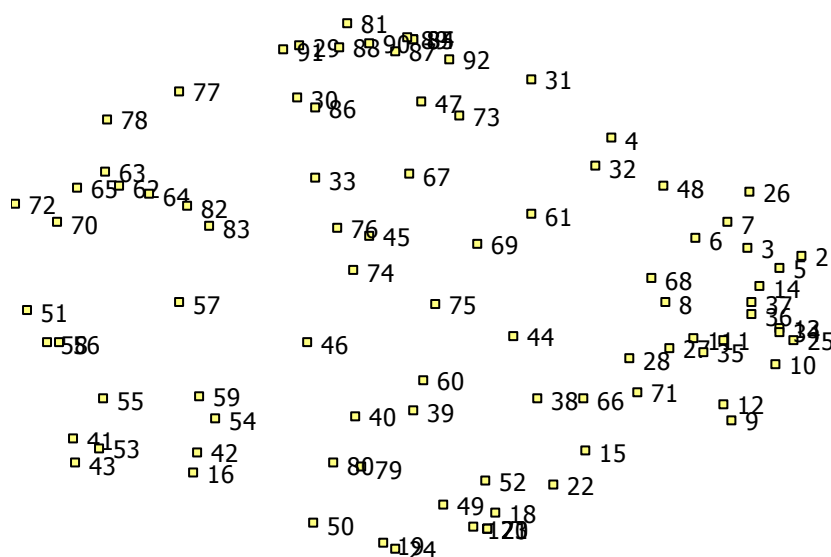
Figure 1 Point Map: Indicates how each statement is related to other statements. The greater
the distance between points, the less the relationships between statements.

They were then asked to look at the named cluster map in general for feedback (Figure 5). All of

the participants thought that the map was a good reflection of the factors that influence their

experience as a worker. One participant stated "I think it's perfect. I think it landed the way it's

supposed to. I'm pretty amazed." Another participant referring to the relationships between the

clusters, said "and I think too, that the fact that they do cross over, it shows that it's all inter-

related. Even though there are separate things, you can't have one area without affecting the

other." A third participant responded by saying, "I think it validates more than anything else that

although we are thinking that we are isolated and by ourselves, really, if we are in the shelter

system, there are very similar experiences from shelter to shelter."
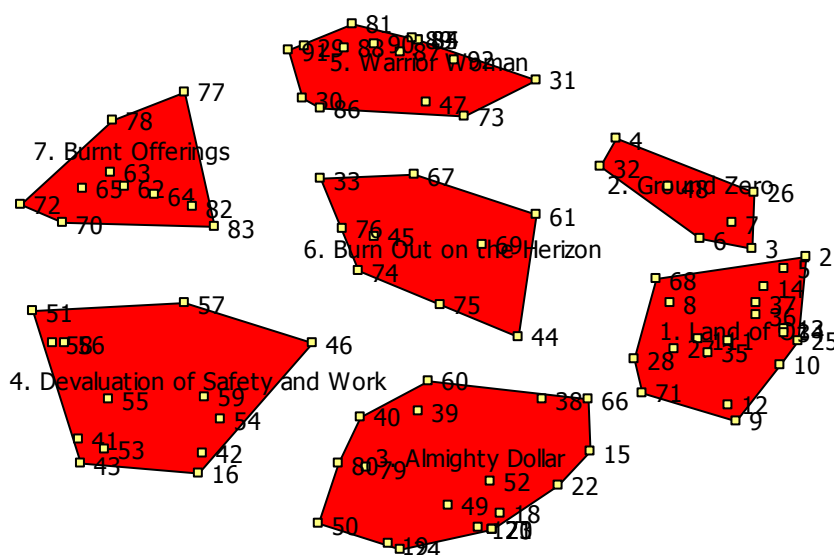
Figure 5 Named Cluster Map

There was a discussion on the subject of males either as positive role models or the fact

that there are no male workers in shelters and why both these statements would be located in the

Land of Burnt Offerings. For one participant, "I think sometimes, I'll hear at work, we should

have a male/female dynamic because it changes the energy, and not always in a good way. We

are all women, catty, but if you throw a man in, sometimes it lightens it up." One participant

who had experience working with a male in a shelter, agreed with this statement saying,

"….you're so right. When he is in the room you don't hear any gossiping or talking about other

women." This issue was also discussed in the brainstorming session where not all participants

agreed that there is a place for men to work in shelters.

When the participants focused their attention to the point-rating map (Figure 6), they

were able to see how each of the 92 statements were rated in importance. The following six

statements rated the lowest of all the brainstormed statements:

"Staff representatives are at times restricted from board meetings"

"No one knows who the board members are; there is separation between board and workers"

"Sexism in the workplace… by outside agencies"

"Accused of being a racist"

"Being at board meetings is helpful to workers"

"It's the worker's fault if clients go past their stay"
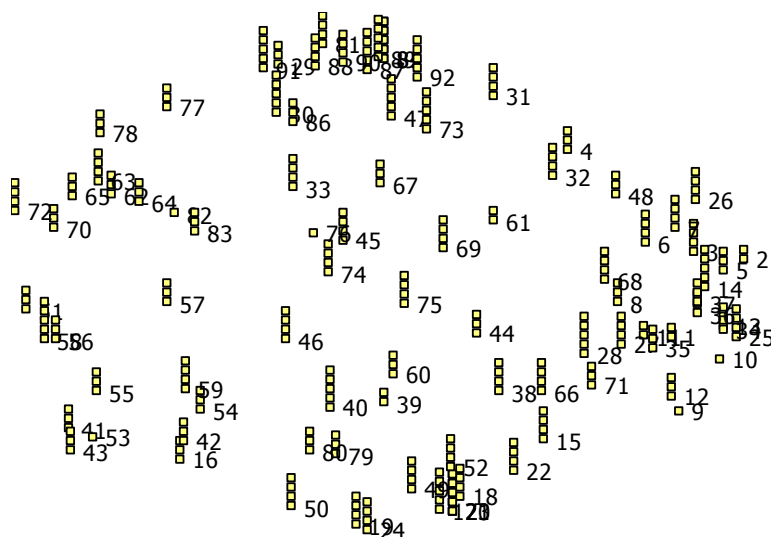
Figure 6 Point Rating Map: Indicates how workers have rated each statement.

When asked why they thought these statements would rate the lowest, the consensus

seemed to indicate that direct work with clients is more important and takes up most of their

time. Although organizational issues or what outside agencies think about them are important to

workers, they just do not have the time and energy to participate in changing some of these

issues if they even are presented with the opportunity. For one participant, when discussing

other agencies' attitudes said: "yes that's right, and that comes up every day when we have to

deal with EIA or the lawyers, even hospital people. We do deal with them but we don't get into

anything with them, because all we have time for is the client."

The group then discussed the cluster-rating map (Figure 7). They appeared to be surprised by how the clusters were rated. As the cluster rating map shows, Warrior Woman was the highest rated cluster followed by Almighty Dollar, Ground Zero, and the Burn Out is on the Herizon. Burnt Offerings, Devaluation of Safety and Work and Land of Oz were all rated as the least important of the clusters.

> "Wow, that warrior woman is pretty important."
>
> "And, the almighty dollar."
>
> "I can't believe burnt offering hasn't got more layers."
>
> "Yeah, or devaluation of safety."
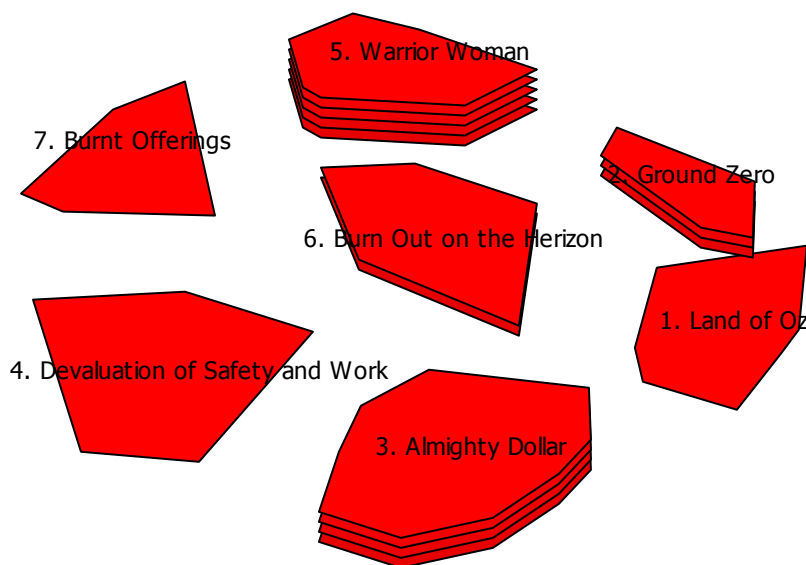
Figure 7 Cluster Rating Map (the numbering of clusters is arbitrary): Layers of clusters is based on individual ratings of each statement within the cluster.

When asked to look only at the cluster rating map combined with the point rating map (Figure 8), and observe where their attention went to on the map, the group agreed with one participant who said: "along the bottom... the Warrior Woman, the Land of Oz and the Almighty Dollar, that's the big." There was recognition that these clusters contained the most highly rated statements and that these statements played a large role in influencing their experience as a

shelter worker. They also pointed out that there seemed to be a consistency with how the statements were rated. The following exchanged demonstrates this:

> "There are a lot of things that are important to us."
>
> "And consistency too, there are not many ones where there is just one little square."
>
> "But I think maybe when we were brainstorming, we were bringing up the points that we felt were important, that we placed a high priority on."
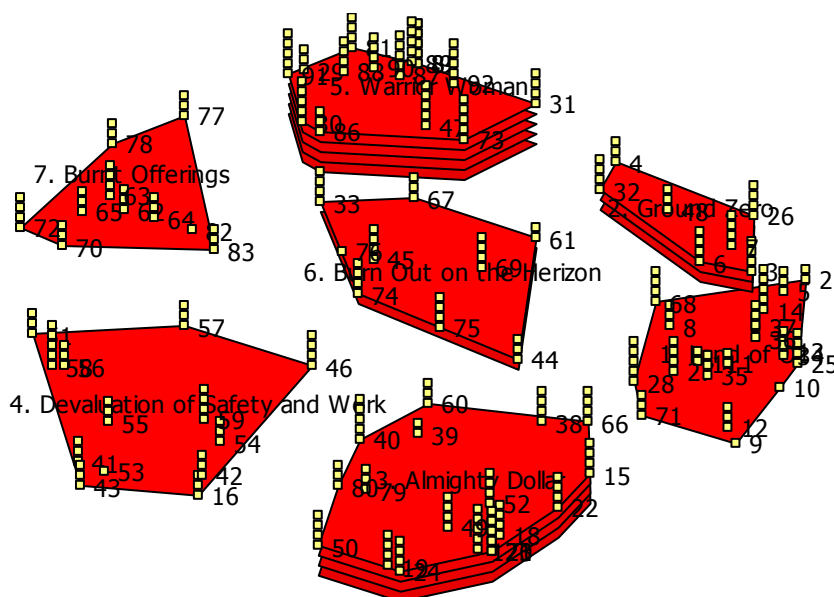
Figure 8 Cluster Rating Map with Point Rating Map: Indicates how workers have rated both the clusters and individual statements.

Because the point-rating map was being superimposed on the cluster-rating map, the participants were then able to make connections as to why this occurred. They were able to see in the Warrior Woman and Almighty Dollar clusters a large proportion of the brainstormed statements (approximately 33.33% were contained in these clusters), and there was little diversity in how they were rated. As one participant said "I mean how can you compete with that [referring to the Burnt Offering cluster], when you're comparing those things and there is a lot of statements tucked into these things."

Another discussion occurred about the Almighty Dollar cluster. I shared with them a dilemma I had encountered when deciding on the final number of clusters for the map. I was at the stage of deciding on whether or not to have an eight or seven cluster map that would have resulted in splitting up of this cluster. Because all the statements seemed to have a relationship with each other I decided not to split up the Almighty Dollar cluster. However, when looking at point ratings for this cluster one can see that there is diversity within this cluster. I asked for some feedback from the participants as to why this would occur. One participant stated "to me, it pops out as we are not a priority, us workers are not a priority and that really bugs us.'' I commented that these brainstormed statements seemed more personal to them. Referring to two of the brainstormed statements (24) 'Quiet times put pressure on staff to find/bring in clients or funding will be affected and threats of cuts' and (66) 'When we are busy, we don't call in extra help', they agreed saying:

> "Yes, like the quiet times, that pisses me off, because you work your butt off when it's really busy and then it gets quiet for two days, and everyone is in a panic mode because it's quiet. There is not time to come down and reload. We need that."
> "If they don't fit the mandate, there is pressure to get them out. We have an elder in for elder abuse and they are like "three days, she's out." And we have pressure to get them out and if we suddenly get busy and we have someone who doesn't fit we are stuck with them and Income Security has a problem."

Travelling Further into the Territory

Pattern matching and go-zones assist in gaining a deeper understanding of shelter workers and how different socio-demographic factors influence the way these workers have rated and sorted the brainstormed statements. Consequently, questions can be asked of the participants as to how they make meaning of these results. To review, in session two, each participant filled out a short socio-demographic form containing information such as: urban/rural shelter, length

of employment, education, etc. It is now at this juncture that this information is used to develop go-zones and pattern-matches. As mentioned in chapter two, only some of the variables will be discussed because of the small sample size, certain variables with only one or two participants would not be statistically relevant, and no variable that could readily identify any one participant will be used. Pattern matches and go-zones were constructed using the rating data of the participants to elicit comparisons from these variables gathered in the socio-demographic form. Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend using pattern matching for cluster level analysis and go-zones for within cluster analysis.

Cluster Level Analysis

According to Kane and Trochim (2007), "pattern matching is both a statistical [using a Pearson Product Moment correlation], and a graphic analysis" (p.455). Pattern matching can be best described as a "ladder graph." It is used to visually examine the degree to which two variables (groups) are in agreement in their cluster ratings. A pattern match has two vertical axes, one for each variable being evaluated. Alongside each of these vertical axis are displayed the responses contained in that cluster which are listed according to their average rating from highest to lowest value. Lines are then drawn in between the vertical lines connecting the two identical clusters. How much consensus between the two groups there is for that response can then be assessed. A straight line would indicate in that both groups have rated that response identically.

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient represents the degree of statistical correspondence between the data from the two variables. The r coefficient can range in value from 1 to -1. An r of ±1 represents a perfect correlation. Variables that will now be discussed are: length of employment at the shelter, previous work experience in counselling before

working at the shelter, educational background, and a personal history of physical or sexual childhood trauma. It should be noted that due to time constraints, participants were able to give feedback on a limited number of pattern matches and go-zones.

Shelter workers displayed a high level of agreement when looking at length of employment and educational level of workers. The first pattern match discussed by participants compared length of employment (shelter workers with less than ten years employment and those with more than ten years of employment). This pattern match had the highest degree of correlation (r =.88) of all the pattern matches (see Figure 9). In this pattern match both groups rated the Warrior Woman, Almighty Dollar and Ground Zero in the same order. Differences showed in how these groups rated the last three clusters (Devaluation of Safety and Work, Burnt Offerings and Land of Oz). When looking at the level of education, groups were divided into those with a high school diploma/other and those workers having a Bachelor or Master's Degree (see Figure 10). Again, the results indicate a high level of correlation (r =.8). Only the first two clusters were rated as being of highest importance by the two groups, Warrior Woman and Almighty Dollar. The last five clusters show the lack of agreement between workers with a university degree and those who have high school/other. The cluster with the most disparity was Burn Out is on the Herizon.

The pattern matches indicating the lowest level of agreement were those examining shelter worker's history of physical or sexual childhood trauma and whether shelter workers had previous work experience in counselling before engaging in their current employment. Figure 11a with a correlation of r =.62 demonstrates the lack of agreement between those shelter workers who have been abused in childhood (n=6) and those workers without this experience (n=5). Warrior Woman and the Almighty Dollar were clusters where both groups placed the

highest ratings. When participants were asked for feedback as to why there was a considerable difference in how shelter workers with a childhood history of abuse rated the Devaluation of Safety and Work compared to shelter workers with no childhood history of abuse, one participant commented, "I think people who have experienced trauma have a high alert to safety and they are more aware and in tune with safety issues." Another participant added, "They are also more susceptible to feeling devalued..."
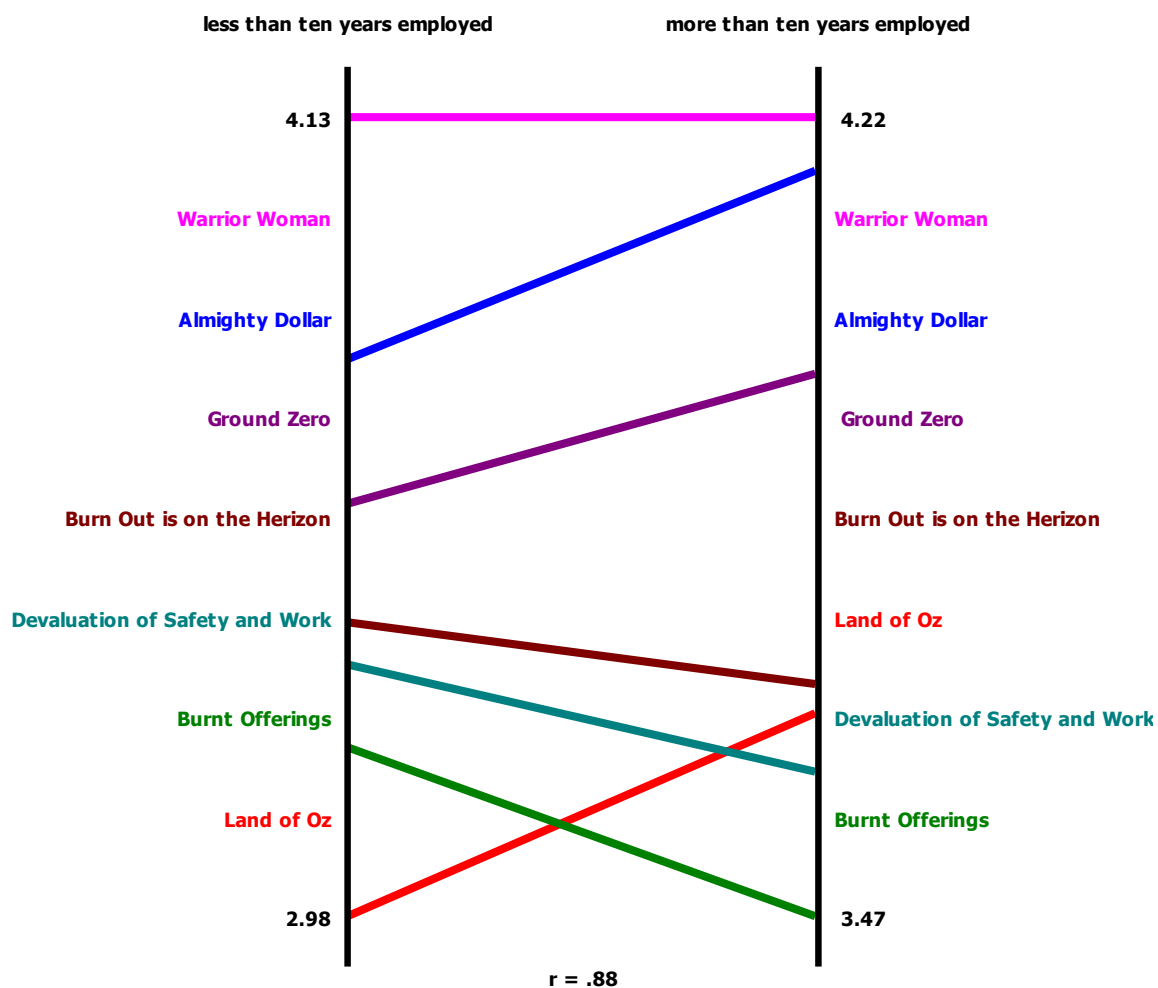
Figure 9 Pattern Match: Relative importance ratings of shelter workers with less than ten years of employment (n=5) and those with more than ten years (n=6). *Absolute values for ratings range from 1.0 to 5.0.

high school and other		university education
3.98		4.33
Warrior Woman		Warrior Woman
Almighty Dollar		Almighty Dollar
Ground Zero		Burn Out is on the Herizon
Devaluation of Safety and Work		Ground Zero
Burn Out is on the Herizon		Burnt Offerings
Land of Oz		Devaluation of Safety and Work
Burnt Offerings		Land of Oz
2.68		3.8

r = .8
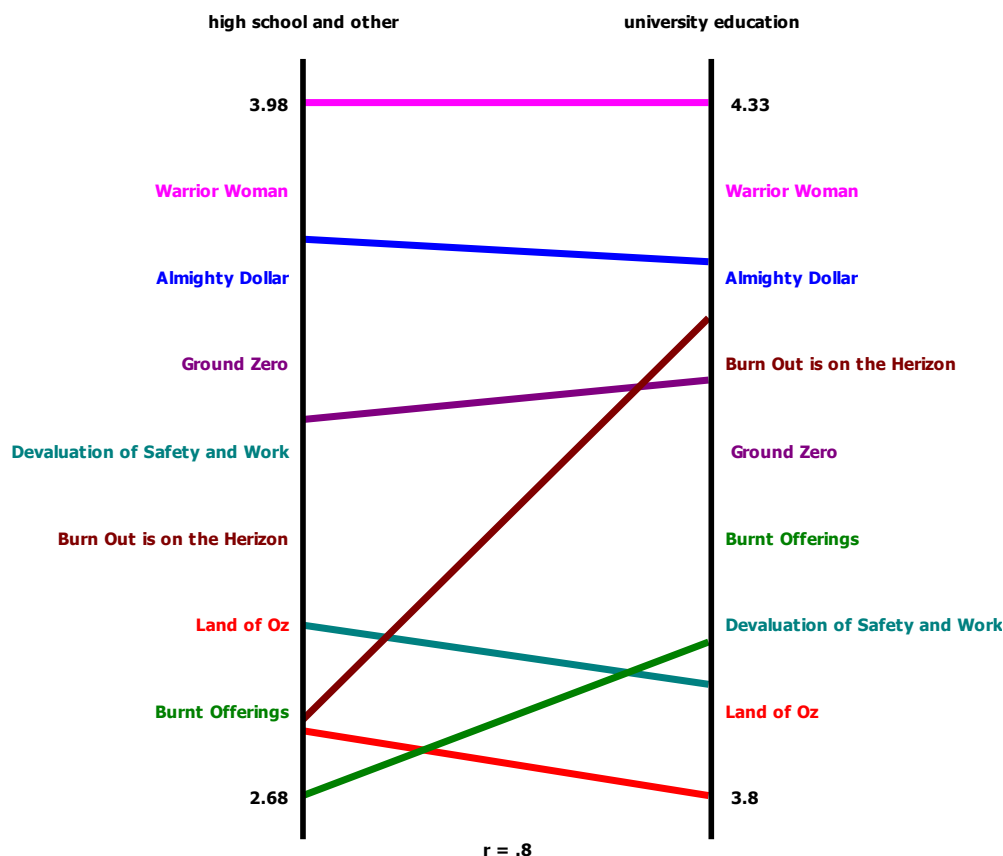
Figure 10 Pattern Match: Relative importance ratings of shelter workers with high school/other (n=5) and those with a Bachelor/Master's Degree (n=6). *Absolute values for ratings range from 1.0 to 5.0.

There was also a discussion concerning the Burnout is on the Herizon cluster, the directionality of the line indicates that shelter workers with childhood abuse history rated this cluster lower than the other group of shelter workers. The statements in this cluster refer to exhaustion, staff pressures and working alone. The following dialogue between participants occurred when they were asked what meaning this had for them:

> "I wonder, if people who have dealt with trauma, have a built a resilience or more armour. They don't look at the world as being wonderful. They see the world as a different kind of world and aren't surprised when you come into a shelter and see how screwed up it is."
> "I would agree, people who have had trauma would probably be saying to themselves, "been there, done that." It's not normal but that little piece is normal to me."

"Living with chaos, and maybe in their healing process they have come up with ways to deal with chaos."

history of childhood trauma no history of childhood trauma
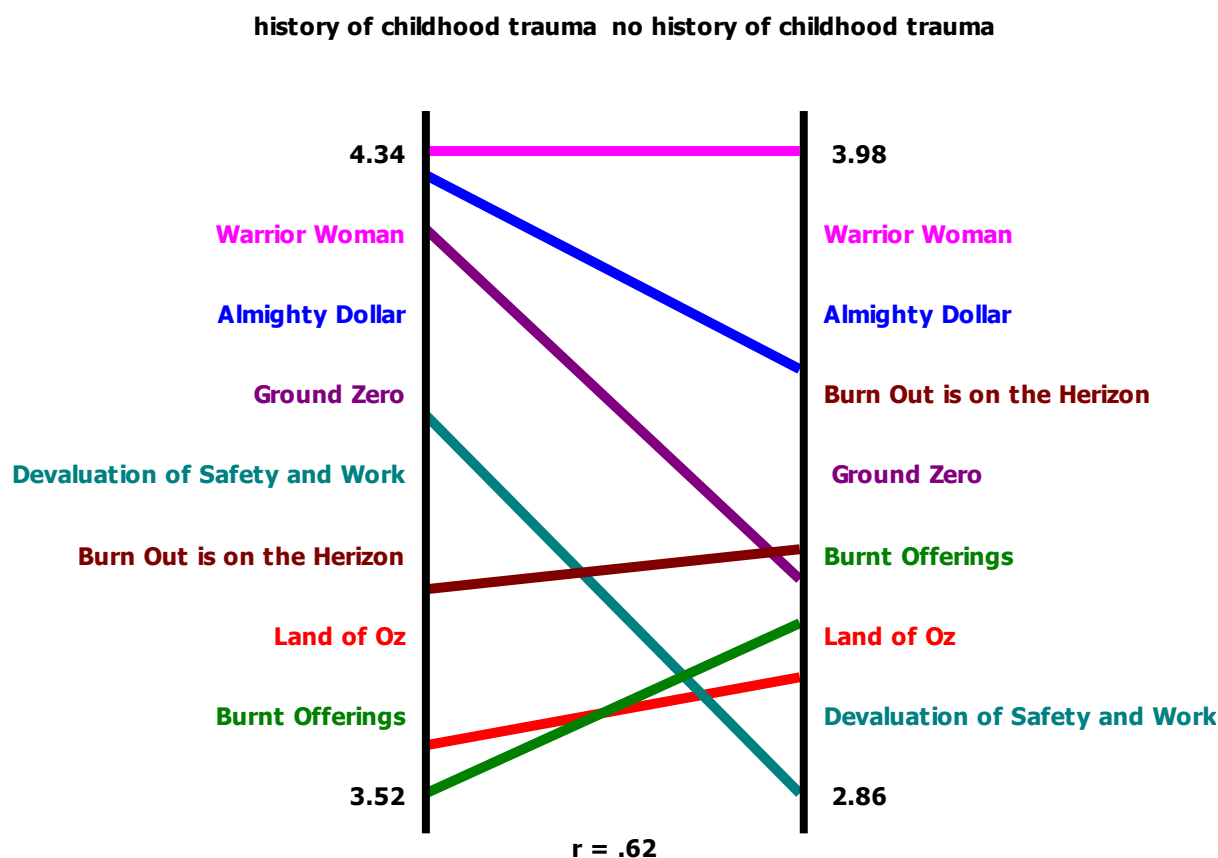
Figure 11a Pattern Match: Relative importance ratings of shelter workers with a history of physical or sexual childhood trauma (n=6) and those who shelter workers who have no history (n=5). *Absolute values for ratings range from 1.0 to 5.0.

The pattern match with the lowest level of agreement (r = .51) concerned prior work experience in counselling (see Figure 12). It is interesting to note that this was the only pattern-match where both groups of shelter workers did not indicate that the Warrior Woman cluster was the highest rated. Only shelter workers with no prior counselling work experience rated this cluster in the number one position. For the other group, Ground Zero was the highest rated and Warrior Woman was located fourth highest among the clusters. Another difference can be found when looking at the Devaluation of Work and Safety cluster. It is last of the seven clusters for

shelter workers who have no prior counselling experience and is in third position for the other

group of workers.
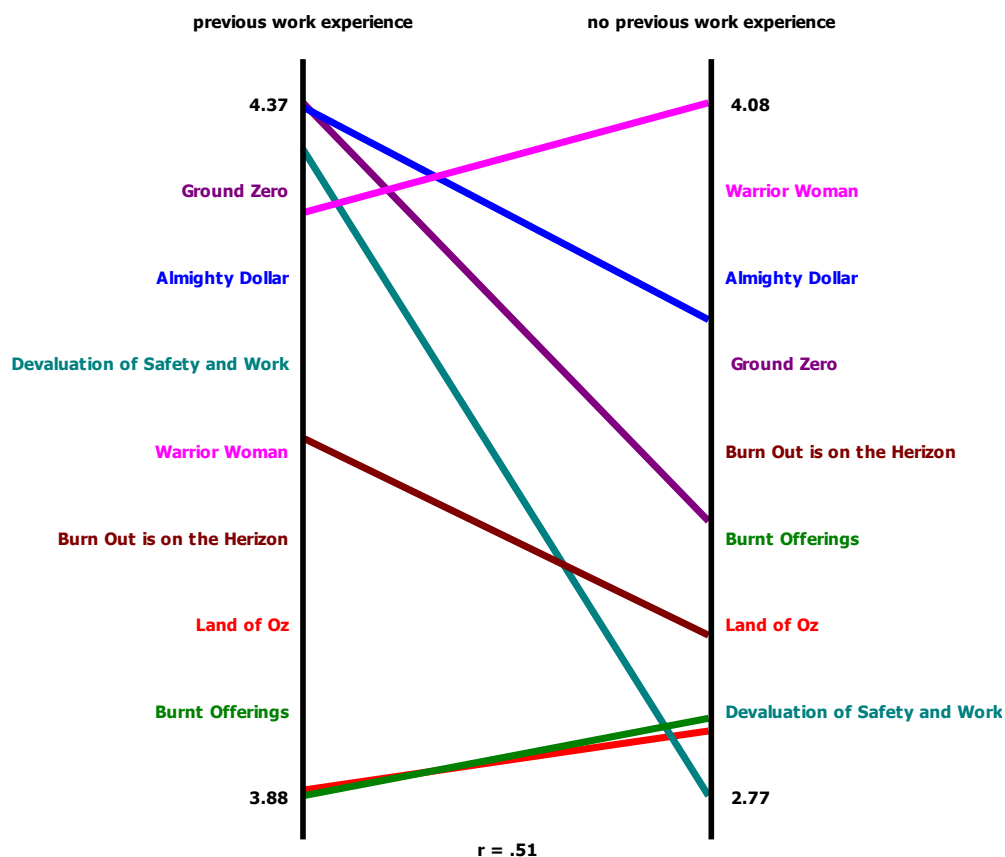
Figure 12 Pattern Match: Relative importance of shelter workers with previous work experience in counselling and those shelter workers with no previous counselling experience. *absolute values for ratings range from 1.0 to 5.0.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints the group was only able to briefly discuss one go-zone. To briefly review, go-zones are bivariate graphs that display the average ratings for two variables on each response within one cluster (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The graph is represented as a quadrant containing the mean rating values of each variable. Here the upper right hand quadrant contains the statements that have the highest average ratings. Shelter workers with histories of childhood abuse were compared to those shelter workers who were not abused as

children. The group focused on examining go-zone from the cluster Burn Out on the Herizon (see Figure 11b).

As Figure 11b demonstrates, the upper right hand quadrant contains the statements (74) (75) (45) (69) which both groups (shelter workers with/without abuse histories) rated above average in importance. The lower left hand quadrant represents statements (76) (67) (61) rated below average in importance by both groups. The statements (44) located in the lower right hand quadrant were rated above average by workers with childhood abuse but rated below average by shelter workers without histories of abuse. Similarly, the statement (33) in upper left hand quadrant were rated above average by workers with no childhood histories and rated below average for those with childhood histories of abuse.

Statements in the upper right hand quadrant are the statements which could be the most acted on since both groups highly agree as to their importance. So, for example, when a client's length of stay is up they may become homeless (74), the length of stay at shelter puts pressure on staff (75), working alone, no ability to debrief after critical incident (45) and decisions made on night shift are made alone (69) are factors that if addressed and acted upon can potentially improve the work environment. The participants were asked why shelter workers with histories of childhood abuse would rate the statements: should never have to work alone, safety issues (44) higher in importance than those workers without a history of childhood abuse. The participants agreed, "Yeah, people with childhood trauma might be more in tune with something that is not as safe, that's what I am thinking."
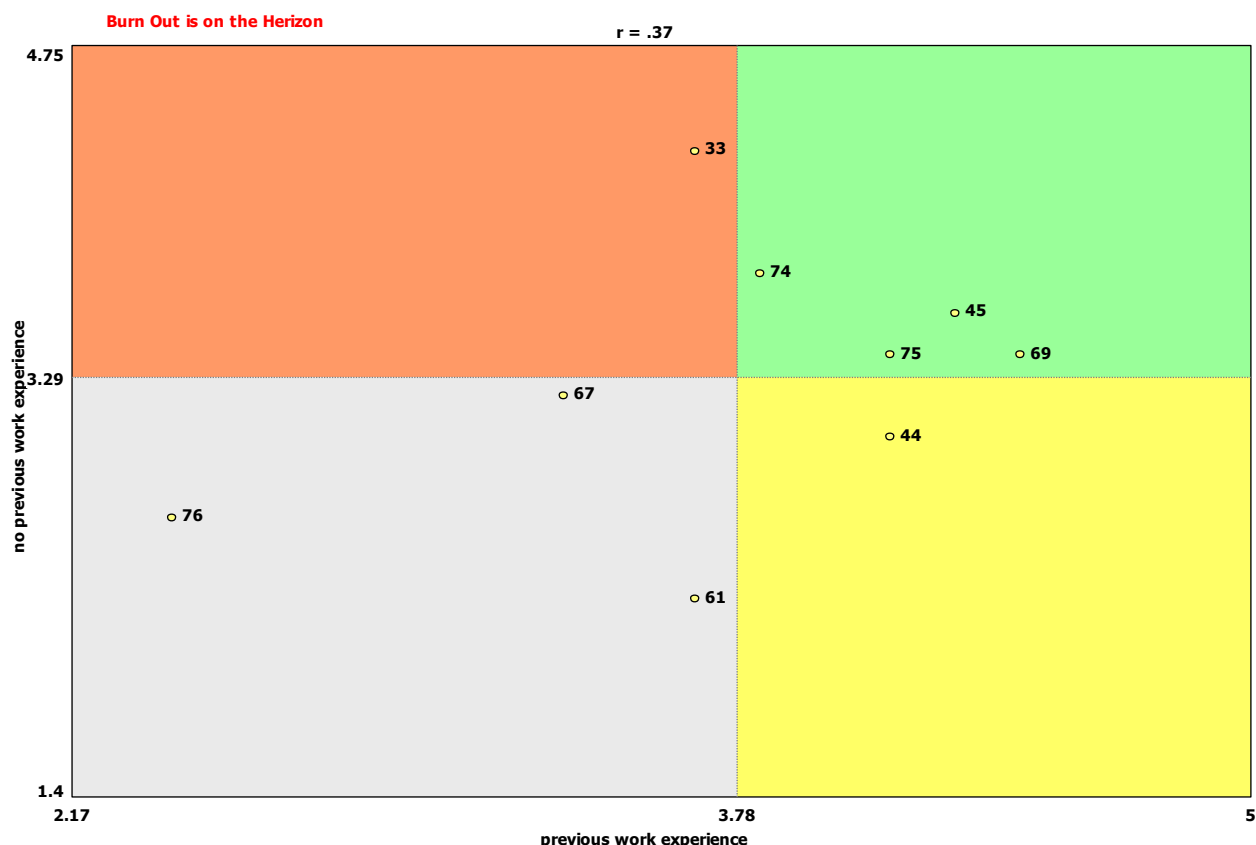
Figure 11b. Go-Zone for cluster Burn Out on the Herizon comparing ratings between shelter workers with no childhood abuse and those shelter workers without childhood abuse histories.

Reflections from Other Sister Citizens

Opportunity was given to the other seven participants who missed session two to provide feedback about the brainstormed statements once they had completed rating and sorting these statements.   All participants acknowledged they could identify in some way with the statements; either these issues were currently or had been part of their past experience as a shelter worker. One participant responded by saying, "I have heard most of it. Most of those were either on-going issues, or past issues. Maybe not everything I have encountered but other people have heard." Another participant stated, "Some of them I agreed with wholeheartedly, others I thought this must be someone from another shelter." A third participant said, "It's difficult to do [referring to the sorting and rating] because these are not my statements, but I can see where they

are in the cycle." When asked what factors resonated the most for the participants, responses ranged from working alone, contradictions between government agencies and the challenges of working with clients with co-occurring disorders (mental health and addictions issues). The following are participant's comments:

"When I was sorting there was a pile that was feeling isolated and poor communication. I think working shifts alone is a big problem. I don't care how small of a shelter you are. People who work by themselves have very different experiences than the ones who work with co-workers. It's just not a safety issue; it would increase service to the clients and boost morale."

"Something that resonated with me was some of the system stuff, because I do think that in Manitoba we probably have a very good funding model. It's still not enough though, like I have seen it be really, really, residual; like women have ten days to get their life in order and now that has increased to thirty and then the comments that the thirty days are not enough. Then it's the workers fault, if the client is still there longer than thirty days and then EIA is saying there are no safety issues, if she is there longer than thirty days. I feel like the two different systems, the ones that fund us and the domestic violence system have got to get together. There has to be some sort of workshop where we both learn about domestic violence. It's kind of sad that the funding model has improved but it's still not enough. It hasn't kept up with the rate of inflation. The EIA rental allowances are unreal!"

"Another thing that resonated with me was the co-occurring [mental health and addiction] things. There is a gap in service in service in a sense that we feel responsible to connect clients because there are so many other things going on, you know, not just the abuse."

Territories yet to be Explored

These seven other participants were also asked if there were any factors that influence their experience as shelter workers that were not in the brainstormed statements. Participants identified worker's religious beliefs, education and training of shelter workers, systemic issues, positive factors, and the relationship between the client and the shelter worker as areas not yet explored. Here are some of their comments.

"I know one of the things I thought was really interesting, when sorting is that there was not anything on there regarding people's religious experiences, workers' religious experience. I know for me personally, if I didn't have the faith experience that I have, there is NO way I would be able to do my job. Because I do have the faith I do, I am able to leave work and leave my stress to a higher power. That is the only way I can do this."

"One thing I didn't see was EIA, which is a large part of our client's lives, thus our work with them. Another piece that wasn't there is the legal system. This is just largely for everybody in Manitoba. Legal Aid is largely overwhelmed. Just the way the family courts are set up. There is a lot of re-victimization of the mothers in the name of making sure the dad gets visits and the family court assessments. The system has set up a lot of obstacles which re-victimizes."

"Mental Health isn't on there. Health care system. Lots of it is disruptive to the workers or the other clients."

"In funding…. We have an amazing amount of money for education across the board. Not like for a personal degree, but any kind of training, like a five or six day course, if it's related to the job, it is a possibility. They [courses] help me tremendously. The more I learn about say, FASD, the more compassion I have towards it and then I can help them [clients]."

"I would like to see more positive statements about being a shelter worker. It is my choice to be a worker. I am not a victim."

"When I have had a similar experience as the client, there is more of a connection with the client. I understand what she is going through."

Summary

The results from the discussion and analysis of the maps in session three are contained in this chapter. Participants were first given the task of naming the clusters.   The Land of Oz, Ground Zero, Almighty Dollar, Devaluation of Safety and Work, Warrior Woman, Burnout is on the Herizon and Burnt Offerings were chosen as names for the clusters. The participants believed that these names reflected the brainstormed statements contained in each cluster. Once all the clusters were named, the maps were presented in a structured order for discussion.

When presented with all the maps, the participants indicated that the maps were accurate descriptions and consistent with their experiences as shelter workers. When they focused their attention on the cluster map, opinions were mixed concerning the issue of male workers in shelter. Some participants thought that this could potentially be a positive step; others disagreed. The point rating map emphasized to the group that working directly with clients is of primary importance to them. This is where their time and energy is spent. The cluster rating map indicated the Warrior Woman cluster as rated the highest, followed by the Almighty Dollar, Ground Zero, Burn Out is on the Herizon and tied for last place were Burnt Offerings, Devaluation of Safety and Work and Land of Oz.

Pattern matching was used to examine the degree to which two variables are in agreement in their cluster rating (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Participants were shown pattern matches concerning length of employment, educational levels, childhood trauma, and previous counseling experience. Shelter workers displayed the highest level of agreement when looking at length of employment ($r = .88$) and educational levels ($r = .8$). Variables concerning childhood trauma and previous work experience in counseling before commencing their current employment had the lowest level of agreement ($r = .62$ and $r = .51$ respectively).

When discussing the results from the pattern match with the variable childhood trauma, the group consensus was that shelter workers who have been personally affected by violence in childhood may be more observant concerning safety issues in the workplace. Participants expressed the belief that these workers may have developed coping strategies to deal with exhaustion and working alone. This was further evident to the group when looking at the go-zone for this variable in the Burn Out is on the Herizon cluster which indicated that shelter workers with childhood trauma rated the statement "should never have to work alone, safety issues"

higher in importance than those workers without childhood trauma. Go-zones are bivariate graphs that display the average ratings for two variables on each response within one cluster (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

The last section in this chapter included the voices of those participants who were not part of the group experience of session two and three. These participants were involved in rating and sorting the brainstormed statements. Feedback from this group shows they identified in some way with the statements as either past or current work experiences. Working alone, contradictions between government agencies, and clients with co-occurring disorders were factors of most import to this group. When asked what was missing from the map, worker's religious beliefs, education and training of shelter workers, systemic issues, positive factors and the relationship between the client and the worker were seen as territories needing further exploration.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION - THROUGH OTHER EYES

Introduction

Throughout our civilization's history, the constructing of maps has been part of our narrative. We seem to need to know where we have been and what other places, just beyond our reach, have yet to be discovered. This journey of discovery has been charted by men, and often by the conquerors of foreign lands; the landscape viewed as territory to be claimed, resources to be exported and opportunities to be gained. The maps, themselves, often contain information that is valued by the map-makers rather than the inhabitants of the land. When discussing the findings of this research, it is important to point out that these maps were constructed by the women who work within these territories. They have collaborated and explored the factors that influence their experience as shelter workers. They have interpreted the results and found meaning for themselves.

Comparison to Current Literature

As mentioned previously, the relatively recent history of shelters has resulted in research on the subject being slow to emerge. Only five studies were discovered that directly involved shelter workers; of those only two studies were Canadian. As a result, other studies were included focusing on similar occupations such as therapists, sexual assault counsellors, and crisis counsellors in a variety of work settings. The majority of this research on domestic violence workers has focused on the negative impact of working in this occupation and has been heavily influenced by the work of researchers in the fields of vicarious traumatization (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995a), burnout (Maslach, 1986) and compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995). Few studies sought out the positive aspects of working with domestic violence survivors (Bell, 2003, Hindle

& Morgan, 2006). Other studies findings (Wasco & Campbell, 2002, Iliffe & Steed's, 2000) challenged traditional thinking by suggesting anger can be a positive influence in worker's lives.

However, it is very difficult to make comparisons because of a number of factors. Although the client population is the same/similar, the demands on the worker differ based on the nature of the site (i.e., the immediacy of shelter work compared to counselling women once a week at a resource centre). Second, the purpose of this study was to provide a description of the lived experiences of shelter workers in this province as well as develop a visual representation of this experience. Consequently, a wide array of factors influencing shelter work was explored. There was no intent to target any one issue unlike some of the other studies that focus specifically on vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, and stress. Third, this study was experiential in that concept mapping provided an opportunity for participants to be creators, explorers of their own collective experience. I wanted to provide an opportunity for shelter workers to come together, share experiences and participate in the act of creating a visual representation of their profession. The task of creation resulted in participants becoming invested in their work and developing a sense of ownership in the research. It is their map, their creation.

Revisiting Former Territories

The focus of this research was to gain an understanding of "What are the lived experiences of shelter workers in the Province of Manitoba?" The hope was that a broad landscape could be developed displaying various landmarks important to the workers. Similar to other explorers in new lands, limited resources and time constraints did influence the construction of the map. This was the first time that shelter workers from four different shelters were able to meet and discuss in a safe environment the factors that influence their experience as

shelter workers. The 92 brainstormed statements provide a rich description of their lived experiences. The rating of these statements, allowed for an examination of how shelter workers perceive the relative importance of these factors in their lives.

Of the 92 brainstormed statements, the overwhelming majority was viewed as problematic and/or negatively impacted their experience as shelter workers. Like a tourist asking a resident of a country where they should visit, and receiving information about the landmark sites in the area, these brainstormed statements represent the factors that resonated most strongly with the participants. Given that this was the first occasion to openly discuss their work, it is not surprising that this is the case. Organizational issues were at the forefront of the discussion. Lack of funding and tensions with management, boards and other workers were identified as being challenging. Many of these statements have been mentioned in the literature as part of shelter workers' experience with discussion about how these factors contribute to or mitigate vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, and stress (Baird & Jenkins, 2003; Baker et al., 2007; Bell, Kulkarni & Dalton, 2003, Brown & O'Brien, 1998; Chatigny et al.,2004; Dekel & Peled, 2000; Iliffe & Steed, 2000; Johnson & Hunter, 1997; Martin, 2006; Schauben & Frazier, 1995; Trippany et al., 2003). Consequently, it may be reasonable to assume that these statements accurately reflect the lived experiences of shelter workers in the province.

Chatigny et al.'s (2004) and Hindle and Morgan's (2006) research on shelter workers in Quebec and New Zealand, respectively, appear to have the strongest parallels to this study. This should not be surprising since both studies focus solely on shelter workers. The factors that influence the lived experiences of shelter workers in both locations speak directly to the inherent nature of the profession. Despite being separate geographically, and having evolved through

different governmental and cultural influences, the demands and rewards of the work remain remarkably the same.

In Chatigny et al.'s study (2004), similar problematic factors were described by shelter workers or observed by the researchers. For the past 40 years in Canada as shelters have evolved there has been a focus on standardization of service delivery in each province, and professionalization of the occupation for shelter workers. Shelter workers both in Manitoba and Quebec work with the same population. Both are in comparable environments; a 24 hour, seven days a week secured site. Both share the same territory. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that they should share similar experiences.

In the Land of Oz tensions are at times evident, between all stakeholders (staff, management and board). Ground Zero is the place where conflicts become more personal. Navigating the swamp of underfunding in Almighty Dollar and being impacted both personally and professionally is a daily reality for shelter workers. The Devaluation of Safety and Work landscape speaks to the high-risk occupation and the perceived lack of respect by those agencies shelter workers come into contact with. Chatigny et al. (2004) refer to these experiences as "conditions", be they employment conditions, physical working conditions, mental and emotional working conditions or organizational conditions.

Owning versus Visiting Territory

It is important here to acknowledge the use of language. The power of naming provides ownership and a depth of understanding for what is being named. There is a difference in participants' perception of their experiences when compared to that of researchers' interpretation of that experience and how they perceive themselves situated in their territory. When participants first began naming the clusters, they asked several times what was wanted/expected.

When they were reassured that there was no expectation from the facilitator, they became more invested in the task and also began to claim their territory. There are underlying differences and assumptions when we look at how factors that influence shelter workers are named. For example, compare the name Land of Oz to naming these statements as organizational conditions. Naming a cluster 'the Land of Oz' assists not only in gaining an understanding of what that territory looks like but also how the participants see themselves situated. The Land of Oz related to the participants' familiarity with the story of the Wizard of Oz. In the Wizard of Oz appearances were deceptive. There was a disconnect between what was publicly presented and what was behind the curtain. For the participants, this was similar to their experience. Funders, board members and management personnel of shelters have power to affect the working conditions of staff. Shelter workers may see themselves as not having the same power, and by naming this cluster 'Land of Oz' may help to mitigate these feelings of being powerless.

Another example can be found with the Almighty Dollar cluster when compared with Chagnity et al.'s (2004) working conditions. There is an inherent sense of importance in the name giving the impression that financial concerns are paramount. Acknowledging low pay and short staffing as problematic working conditions does not carry the same emotional impact as naming these as 'Almighty Dollar' issues. Likewise as with all the clusters, there is a feeling of being more personally connected to the issues, a sense of living and working in these territories that cannot be accurately defined as "conditions". This is reflected in the time the participants took to name their territories and tease out the layered meanings for themselves.

When discussing the name for Cluster Six in session two, there was discussion about the gendered nature of the work. For the group it was important to acknowledge this in the cluster and instead of using the word "Horizon" they chose the word "Herizon". Additionally, the group

debated whether to name the cluster "Burn Out on the Herizon" or "Burn Out **is** on the Herizon". They chose the second name as being more fitting to their experience. As one participant stated, "**is** on the Herizon, makes a difference". This may demonstrate not only a description of this particular territory but also for the group the reality of shelter work that there are personal ramifications in being employed in this profession. Like any map, knowing where certain landmarks are gives us a sense of direction and we can then prepare for what lies ahead. Again, this speaks to the sense of ownership and knowledge that shelter workers have about their profession.

Familiar Territory but 10,000 Kilometers Away

Hindle and Morgan's (2006) study on refuge (shelter) workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand sought to identify any negative impacts of engaging in this profession as well as looking at how workers cope with these factors. Women in this current study spoke about the negative impact of doing this work on their emotional well-being and relationships with family, friends, and the community. Relationships with family, friends, and the community were also discussed in the concept mapping sessions. Workers spoke about the impact this profession had on their relationships:

> "There is also a cost to the family. Huge. When you chose to work a particular shift and the rotations. Here is a personal cost to the family because it is not normal. Two weeks of days and two weeks of evenings when you do that for six years of my kid's life, only being available two weeks out of the month, because they are at school during the day, that's huge. It affects your family, your kids. You just make it work. You rationalize it. When you sit down and think about it, it's a light bulb moment".
> "It's not just family. I chose nights when my kids left home but I've lost a lot of friends because I chose to say "No I can't make it for coffee because I have to sleep" and that's just the way it is. So the friends are impacted too".

"When it says 'not seen as professionals' [referring to a brainstormed statement], that triggers me to think of what we are seen as. That we break up homes, we are man-haters."

Refuge workers in New Zealand additionally discussed organizational factors such as poor funding and low wages as having a detrimental impact (Hindle & Morgan, 2006). Again, this parallels the brainstormed statements from the concept mapping session such as 'funding, pension plans are insufficient poor', 'No statutory holidays or pensions for part time staff', 'Rotations, short staffing a problem, but related to funding'. In some of the sessions workers spoke about the pressure to bring in clients during quiet times because of how government funding is tied to bed nights.

"So we just went through a busy time, so we're exhausted. And then there's a quiet time. Like, maybe one or two days where there's maybe one client. And everybody panics, 'Oh my god, we gotta get clients in!' Well, what are you supposed to do? Haul them in off the street?"
Yeah, so it's not fair. We should be able to take a breath and catch up on our paperwork, and do stuff. But yet it's like, only when we're running then we're a shelter that's active and helpful. We're also run out of energy. There's only so many staff and, we're always short staffed.

Although, refuge workers shared personal stories of difficulties encountered in being engaged in this type of employment, Hindle and Morgan (2006) conclude that the negative experiences of the work were alleviated by positive experiences. These workers "all felt that being a refuge worker was not just about doing the job, but choosing a life path, one that is based around a political struggle to end violence against women" (p.45). They go on to say, "More personally, the opportunities that refuge work provides for self-care, training and transforming their identities made the work 'more than job' and something closer to a life changing commitment"(p.45). Additionally, as mentioned earlier, despite the problematic aspects of

shelter work discussed in Chatigny et al.'s study (2004), all of the interviewed participants reported "liking their jobs and found satisfaction in them" (p.141).

When looking at the Cluster Rating Map with the Point Rating Map (see Figure 8) similar parallels can be found. Amid all the clusters, Warrior Woman stands out as the highest rated cluster and contains more of the highest rated statements than any of the other clusters with an average statement rating of 4.18 out of 5.00. Some of the comments from the participants during the concept mapping sessions, speaks to the positive impact that shelter work has had on them personally.

"I have emotional intelligence and maturity because of this job. I am a way better parent because of this job…."

"It changes you. It makes you a better person if you are into it. You eat and breathe and sleep it."

"I think it takes a special kind of person to go into shelter work, and that is the kind of people I like to work with. You don't stay unless you have the drive to rise above the negative."

Both Chatigny et. al (2004) and Hindle and Morgan (2006) maintain funding of shelters impacts shelter workers professional and personal lives. Chatigny et al. (2004) further state "almost all the challenges [shelter workers faced] had a component that resulted directly or indirectly from understaffing and unstable financing" (p.143). When looking at the 92 brainstormed statements in the concept mapping session, approximately one third of these statements fall within this area. In all the clusters, with the exception of Warrior Woman, statements relating to understaffing and insufficient funding could be found. In the Almighty Dollar cluster of the 19 statements, sixteen were related to these issues. At one of the sessions, shelter workers exchanged these comments with each other:

"Yes, casual staff, that a huge problem. They can't do midnight during the week, cause they all have jobs."

"There's a line there, instead of increasing the part time, the part time has been decreased and the casual has been increased cause then you don't have to give benefits to casual."

"Even the part time, we don't get benefits. I don't get stats [statutory holidays]. I don't get a pension."

"And, what kills you, because it's a women's shelter, it just reflects the whole society, how women are viewed."

In another session, a worker had this to say:

"Well, we are still struggling, we are still fundraising. We are still in a deficit. The shelter is falling apart in terms of repairs; we just can't keep up. We went a whole month without a washer and dryer because Manitoba Housing back and forth, back and forth. We had a full house. So I was taking laundry home and I was doing laundry at home, because I would not tolerate not having clean towels. So yeah it was really rough. One woman had six kids. So, you know you come with the shirt on your back and you want to wash those clothes. And, it was like, well, you have to go to the Laundromat. We would take them there and give them laundry detergent, but we wouldn't pay them [for cost of using the washer and dryer], they had to pay themselves. So, they didn't end up going, they just hand washed things and hung things all over the shelter. Like I say, we've been really busy over the last month, a full house understaffed, and not enough money. Grocery bills are huge, so it's like, always talking about 'we should be cutting back' but how do you cut back? Kids need to eat."

The Power in Creation

This exploratory study not only provides a rich description of the lived experiences of shelter workers in this province; it attempts to provide an understanding of how these experiences are related to each other and how important they are to workers. By presenting a visual representation of their experiences as shelter workers, there is an opportunity to understand how they situate themselves in these territories in a new way. When the participants

in session two began the process of naming the cluster and they were shown the series of maps, their tone of voice, and body language changed; they became more animated.

Having their experiences shift from the spoken word to a series of maps appeared to help them shift their ways of knowing and understanding of their work. For example, on the cluster rating map, the highest rated cluster was Warrior Woman. Despite engaging in two sessions and discussing challenging/problematic issues related to their work experiences, it is interesting to note that what was clearly evident to the participants in this map was why they were engaged in this work. Some participants leaned forward, pointing out the statements in this cluster and expressed pride and satisfaction in their job. As one participant stated, "I'm amazed how much passion there is, considering all the negatives, like how can people keep going with all that other stuff?" Another participant responded by saying "People either love it and stay long, or leave fast". This speaks to the value and importance of why shelter workers are engaged and continue to be committed to working with survivors of domestic violence despite the challenging and problematic issues surrounding shelter work. After session two, I received a thank-you note from one of the participants, who shared "What an amazing process 'the mapping' experience was, and to see a visual end result sure proved to be an eye opener for me".

Who is Warrior Woman?

Only when the socio-demographic forms were analyzed did it become apparent that there was a high degree of homogeneity within the sample. Their ages ranged from 34 to 55 years of age with a mean age of 43.9 years. Average length of employment ranged from 2.5 years to 14.5 years with a mean length of employment of 10.27 years. The mean length of employment may be slightly higher given that at least two of the 11 participants had either work experience from another shelter or had worked at their shelter, ended their employment but started working again

after a number of years away from the site. It is uncertain whether these participants included their cumulative work experience. Ethnic representation was predominately Caucasian (81.8%; N=9).

Of the approximately 35 workers who were personally approached, workers who were over the age of 35 and with a history of working at their shelter of more than five years appear to have been more invested in participating in this project. This may be because they feel more secure in their employment, have enough experience in their position at their site to feel confident to share their wisdom, or have a desire to meet with other shelter workers from different sites despite heavy workloads. When asked why they had agreed to participate in this endeavor, the overwhelming comment was that shelter workers' voices needed to be heard. Some of these participants travelled long distances, came after a night shift, were not paid by their sites to participate, or took a huge risk and participated without their site's knowledge. The sacrifices that these women made to be involved in this project speak to their commitment to the work. They are indeed Warrior Women.

Travelling Further into the Territories

When examining the data from the pattern match (comparison analysis of the clusters), the overall high level of agreement when looking at length of employment and education levels of shelter workers (r =.88 and r =.8) appears to speak to the degree of homogeneity within the sample (Figures 9, 10). Regardless of length of employment and educational levels, Warrior Woman was ranked first by all of the variable groupings. Again, this supports studies that indicate that aspects of shelter work can be positive and rewarding (Bell, 2003; Chatigny et al., 2004; Hindle & Morgan 2006). Looking at other variables such as previous work experience and history of childhood trauma, the level of agreement decreases to r = .62 and r = .51 respectively.

However, Warrior Woman is still ranked first by both groups with regards to childhood trauma and by those workers with no previous work experience in the second instance. Workers with previous counselling experience ranked Warrior Woman fourth.

Because the literature on shelter workers is largely focused on vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, stress, and burnout, there was no empirical study found that dealt with shelter workers' trauma history and how this impacted their perception of shelter work. The level of agreement in the pattern match using this variable of $r = .62$ does suggest that are differences between participants with childhood trauma history and those without. As mentioned earlier, when looking at this ladder graph, there were two observations made. First, workers with a childhood history of trauma ranked Devaluation of Safety and Work higher than workers with no history of trauma. Second, the Burnout is on the Herizon cluster was rated lower by workers with a childhood history of trauma. Participants suggested in the first example that perhaps these types of childhood experiences assist workers in being more aware of safety concerns as well as being more sensitive to how they are perceived by other workers, management and outside agencies. This awareness of safety issues is further supported when looking at the go-zone for Burn out is on the Herizon. Here shelter workers with histories of childhood trauma rated the statement "should never have to work alone, safety issues" higher in importance than workers without this history. In the second instance, the participants proposed that workers with childhood histories of trauma may be more conditioned to this type of environment and, therefore, have developed successful coping strategies. These insights participants provided clearly demonstrates the need for future research to be undertaken.

When comparing shelter workers with or without previous counselling experience, the lowest level of agreement was found ($r = .51$). It appears that workers with previous counselling

experience rank conflictual relationships and feeling isolated (Ground Zero cluster) highest, whereas Warrior Woman is ranked the highest by those workers with no previous counselling experience. The largest difference in cluster ranking was in Devaluation of Safety and Work. This cluster was ranked third highest by workers with previous work experience and was the lowest ranking cluster for workers without previous counselling experience. These differences may speak to workers' reasons for going into shelter work and that these reasons may affect how they perceive their occupation. Alternatively, former counselling work experience may shape expectations of what the job entails, compared to just not knowing what to expect. A participant shared a story about a colleague's session with a client where during the session the client was holding a knife. This worker stated she had no safety concerns which surprised the other workers. This worker was described as young and new to the job.

<div align="center">Emerging Themes</div>

Shelter work places tremendous demands on workers and at the same time provides workers with many positive opportunities for personal and professional growth. This interplay of conflicting experiences is the arena that workers encounter daily. Several themes emerged from the discussions with these workers in sessions two and three that give texture to the landscape of shelter work. The main themes are:

- Shelter workers' beliefs assist in navigating the territories
- Insufficient funding of shelters impacts shelter workers' personal and professional life.
- Organizational culture and values present a vast array of challenges to shelter workers.

- External agencies and societal responses to domestic violence/women play a role in how shelter workers see themselves

Shelter Workers' Beliefs. Looking at the map, it becomes clear that shelter workers are passionate, dedicated and committed to ending violence against women. The Warrior Woman cluster bears testimony to this assertion. It also demonstrates that these workers are willing to wade through territories full of tensions and frustrations because they believe in what they do. In some of the sessions workers spoke about their longevity in their job. They cited their faith, commitment to ending violence against women, and the changing intensity of shelter work from day to day as reasons why they are still in the profession despite all the struggles. Here is just one example of an exchange between workers on navigating shelter work with regards to faith and having a belief that "things will get better" approach to the job:

> …And for me, personally, if I didn't have the kind of faith experience that I have, there is no way I would be able to do this job. I just wouldn't be able to. But because I do have the kind of faith experience that I do have, my own personal faith experiences, I'm able to leave work and the stress and I can leave it to a higher power. And that is the only way I can do this.
> Sometime it's the experience of being there for so many years, and there's even someone who hasn't been there for as long, but had the wisdom to say sometimes it's just a philosophical way of sorting your experiences, but I found this to be true. Sometimes it gets really, really bad before it gets better. So sometimes if you have the detachment to say, okay, maybe it's about to get better because it's really, really bad now (laughs). No matter how bad it feels rights now, it will get better.

These beliefs support Bell's study (2003) on strengths and secondary trauma among domestic violence workers where buffering personal beliefs, and a sense of competence about their coping were identified as some of the strengths found in domestic violence workers. As

mentioned previously a number of workers in the sessions echoed the belief that shelter work was fluid and dynamic. They often spoke of shelter work being cyclical. It appears that long-term workers have a belief system that assists them in navigating the ups and downs of shelter work. This is further echoed in some of their brainstormed statements about the clients. For example, "I am able to plant seeds". This sentiment was found in Bell's study (2003) as well, and was seen to allow workers to feel optimistic and competent.

Insufficient funding. Insufficient funding of shelters impacts many facets of a worker's experience. The large majority of brainstormed statements directly or indirectly can be traced back to lack of funding. Low wages, lack of pensions, staff shortages, deteriorating buildings, all impact staff. There was a belief expressed on a number of occasions that because there is a stigma around domestic violence, and that because shelter work is seen as "women's work'', these working conditions are not questioned by the larger society. There was some interest expressed in how the men's shelter was funded and whether or not the workers involved had a similar pay scale. Additionally, some of the workers spoke about similar positions in mental health and addictions. It was their belief that these occupations had better pay and benefits, yet shelter workers are asked to perform these same tasks, often without other staff present during a night or weekend shift. One participant described what occurred on one of her shifts:

> "I had one time, this woman come in just before my shift, and she was mentally, seriously somewhere else. Woke up the whole house screaming. I went there to try to calm her down, finally I convinced her to call the police. They came; they couldn't get her out of the room. They finally got her out of the room, took her to the hospital. Half an hour later she was back. I phoned the hospital; I said 'What is going on? It's not safe here. The clients are going to leave in the middle of the night because they're terrified.' The doctor says to me, "There's nothing wrong with her.' I said, 'She's in a wizard costume. Didn't you notice?' So then finally, it's morning and the director

comes in and she phones. And again, the police come, same officers, to pick her up and take her to the doctor, and she ends up going to a … [Mental Health Facility]".

Although the socio-demographic form did not contain data that pertained to shelter workers' household incomes, some of the participants in the sessions identified themselves as single parents. Some participants indicated that they had not received a raise in a number of years. Workers spoke about the pressure of increasing shelter revenue by getting more clients into shelter, or engaging in funding raising events. They may be asked to bank their time or volunteer for some of these fundraising events, even though they may not been part of the decision-making process about holding the event. Ironically, they then may have no say in how those monies are distributed.

Insufficient funding may also contribute to a shelter worker's sense of safety on the job. A number of workers expressed concern for their personal safety as well as their clients when working alone. When asked why they had to work alone on some shifts, the majority of participants stated there was no money available to call in extra staff. In the above example about the worker's experience with a client with co-occurring disorders, the worker goes on to say:

> "But those poor clients, children terrified. And you know what kind of locks we got on the doors [referring to the bedroom]. There's only so much I can do. Because I mean, you're answering the crisis line, you gotta do your daily duties or whatever, and then you're responding to this stuff, and it sounds like no one is listening. ….she had a knife. I found out she had a knife in her room later. I found it. When I went there in the dark to calm her down, because the first thing-she woke up screaming with a nightmare. So I thought okay, I'll just calm her down, tell her she's in a safe place, maybe she doesn't remember where she is. Then later I'm carbonizing the room and I find the knife. I thought 'Holy shit, she's got a knife.' She could've picked the knife up and hurt herself or somebody else. You're juggling all these balls…

Organizational issues.   A number of the statements and clusters (Land of Oz, Ground Zero) reflected the influence organizational factors had on the lived experiences of shelter workers. Shelter workers have expectations placed on them that reflect the organizational culture and values of shelter work. Concerns raised about expectations of standards at all levels, from the board, to management, to workers resonated throughout the sessions. Workers often spoke of the lack of communication and the disconnect between what is in the sites' policy manuals and how things are actually done. They expressed feelings of powerless, frustration, and isolation. Although, all shelters in the province are unionized, with the exception of one rural shelter, workers spoke about the difficulty of getting their voices heard. There appeared to be a number of barriers that impede this process. Workers' ability to find the time to attend board meetings, given their other personal and professional duties, was one reason cited. Often, they may not be paid for their time. Workers may be given a few minutes to share any concerns and then asked to leave. Strategic planning meetings are held infrequently. Workers may not even be informed that there is a board meeting. At some sites, the response to worker's requesting labour management meetings are "No, there's nothing to meet about". When asked what kinds of actions they take to counterbalance these issues, they responded with the following comments:

> I could grieve that, but do you want the hassle and everything else? Because that's also stressful.
> I find there's so much crap going on behind the scenes that if you're supposed to meet with women, and…that in itself is hard work. And having to deal with the other stuff, is like trying to dodge bullets.
> It wears you out
> It takes the focus off the clients.

However, communication at all levels within the shelters, not just with the Board was an issue of concern to the participants in this study.   Certain information may not be passed along to workers during shift change. This can be due to a variety of factors.   There may be no time to debrief. In Chatigny et al.'s (2004) study there was recognition that often there is no time to adequately write things down and as a result information is lost. Casual staff tend to work evenings and weekends and as a result, they may not be informed of recent changes in client care or site issues that occur at staff meetings during the week day. There was concern expressed about who has access to information and how that information is shared. The majority of participants expressed the belief that there were at times deliberate attempts made to control information. For example, a participant spoke about a situation in which a worker found a weapon hidden in the shelter by a client. This incident was not written in the logbook. The participant then went on to say, "It was minimized by the administration, everybody was hush-hush, staff wasn't supposed to know".

Working in an all-woman environment was seen to be problematic. Two issues of great concern were gossiping, and inability of management and staff to deal with conflict appropriately. There was discussion about workplace bullying. A participant stated "I personally don't find the work stressful; it's all the politics within the office and everything else and not being there when certain things are said, or not knowing that policies have changed, that piece is very stressful". In further sessions, participants had this to say, "One thing I will say, we have had people on stress leave lots and it is 99% because of staff relations" or "No one would believe how women treat each other" [referring to how workers behave towards each other].

The lack of transparency in shelter work further contributes to worker frustration and isolation. In many ways there are numerous messages given to workers not to discuss what goes

on in shelter. All of the shelter workers understood the need for confidentiality surrounding clients. However, organizational issues often were treated the same way, not to be discussed outside of the shelter or at times even within the shelter itself. Throughout my discussions with workers, they often would use the word 'cycles' to describe where their site was situated. For example, when asking participants who were not involved in the brainstormed session to rate and sort the brainstormed statements, a number of participants responded by stating they could relate to certain statements because "they were in that cycle" or "had been in that cycle." Participants' frustration and isolation shifted depending on where the organization was viewed in the 'cycle'.

The issue of safety was often discussed in the sessions. Shelter work is about providing safe emergency housing to women and their children. There is an inherent sense of danger in the job itself. Workers are very aware of the potential danger clients' partners pose, but they also spoke of the emotional and physical aggression of clients. For example one participant stated: "A client had a staff person against the table and another staff person did something to take the attention away so that other staff could get away. They had pressed the distress button, but it took a long time before any one came". Working at sites that have been in the same location for years is a safety concern regardless of being in a rural or urban environment. Having functioning security equipment and staff trained in safety measures are vital. Participants described several situations where security equipment was not functioning:

"We've had incidents where those distress buttons you push, they didn't come for an hour and a half".

"And our security and fire alarm system. We didn't have one for a month. …We were going through the same procedures: the panel, the security system, we did everything every shift, same old thing, but it didn't matter because it wasn't working properly"!

"And that our monitor on the back just went out, and now there's a whole problem of getting it replaced or repaired or whatever".

"Our monitor has been out for three years".

Working alone was a prominent focus of discussion among participants. Weapons in shelter, clients' emotional and physical aggression towards other clients or staff were identified as issues staff encountered when working alone. Participants also spoke about the demands of working with clients with co-occurring disorders or gang affiliations. With the advent of new technology, workers' identities can be discovered. For rural participants, there were challenges of being anonymous. They described coming into contact with past clients (and at times with the clients' partners) in a variety of settings. Workers' safety issues were found in the literature (Kanno & Newhill, 2008; Stout & Thomas, 1991). In the Stout and Thomas (1991) study, 44 shelter workers responded to a questionnaire about safety and findings indicated that the majority of shelter workers are sometimes fearful of physical and emotional harm from clients, the clients' partner and others in the community because of their professional roles. Kanno and Newhill's (2008) article stressed the need for more research on client violence towards workers in domestic violence as being "critically important."

External Agencies and Societal Responses to Domestic Violence/Women. Throughout the sessions the participants spoke about the treatment they received by external agencies and the larger community. There were a variety of opinions expressed. Some participants with lengthy employment at a site spoke of the changing responses from other agencies and the larger community. They spoke of more awareness of domestic violence issues and better communication between agencies. One participant stated, "The shelter, I think is very respected in the community and we have worked hard on networking and that networking has really paid off; not only with other agencies, but also with the religious community". They also spoke of how things could change. A worker shared about organizing a public awareness event at a local

government building for a number of years. Recently, she was informed that the event was disruptive to workers in the building, and as a result they could no longer have the space.

Participants expressed the belief that shelter work is devalued and is not seen as a profession. They cited numerous examples of conflict with income security, law enforcement, lawyers, the medical community, and Manitoba Housing. Being pressured to take clients referred from other agencies, being talked down to, and sexist comments directed towards them were examples given by the participants. One participant gave some examples of the attitude of Manitoba Housing.

> "And then I get this man on the phone. He's madder than hell cause he had to wake up and I finally said to him, 'Look, if I could fix this problem [basement was flooded], I'd fix it but I can't and I'm up to my ankles in water here.'… I was exhausted, cause here I had a full house, all my responsibilities to the crisis line, and I'm mopping up water. And I'm moving stuff, I'm exhausted…It's the attitude. It's unforgivable how they talk. It's like we don't know anything, 'You're women, you're always complaining'….Get rid of this shit. We don't need that. We need people to cooperate. Like, we're supposed to work, all these agencies together as a group. And it's like, sometimes those attitudes just wear you out. You don't wanna phone anymore. I'll pay for it myself. And it's a big deal because the place is falling apart".

Summary

Creating these maps with the participants' insights and wisdom has added to our knowledge of the lived experiences of shelter workers in this province. They have been the cartographers and explorers of their own territory. New territories have been discovered and a richness and texturing of the landscape has been brought into focus because of their participation in this research. The ability for participants to name the clusters was a powerful experience and provided an increased sense of participant ownership. Given the scarcity of literature on shelter

workers, this study has made a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of a unique work environment and culture. These voices are no longer invisible.

Two studies (Chatigny et al., 2004; Hindle & Morgan, 2006) highlight the importance of organizational issues on shelter workers and they maintain that despite negative aspects of the profession, shelter workers enjoyed their job. In this research endeavour, the majority of brainstormed statements were seen to be difficult and challenging areas to navigate especially those statements relating to organizational issues. With the exception of the Warrior Woman cluster, all of the other clusters had significant elements of organizational dynamics. As well, the Warrior Woman cluster was rated the highest of all the seven clusters. Thus, this research supports the previous findings of other researchers.

In the pattern matches, the data shows that the lowest level of agreement (r = .51) between demographic variables was when comparing previous work experience to no counseling experience before working at a shelter. This suggests that previous counseling work experience shapes one's perspective of shelter work differently than workers who are inexperienced in counselling. Strong positive correlations for other variables (education, length of employment r = .88 and r = .8 respectively) may be indicative of the high degree of homogeneity in the population sample. However, when looking at the variable childhood trauma a correlation of r = .62 was made. Workers with a history of childhood trauma rated the cluster Devaluation of Safety and Work higher than those workers who did not have a trauma history. Additionally, analysis of this cluster using a go-zone revealed that this group also rated the statement "should never have to work alone, safety issue" higher. This implies that workers with histories of childhood trauma may have heightened awareness of safety issues.

The flexibility inherent in concept mapping allows for a broader lens to be applied and as a result broader regions can be seen. Four themes emerged from the maps. First, shelter workers' beliefs assist in navigating the territories as evidenced by the Warrior Woman cluster. Being an experienced worker, focusing on the clients and viewing shelter work as "cyclical" allowed these workers not to get stuck in the moment on issues they had little or no control over such as lack of funding. They believe that they made a difference and were hopeful of positive change for clients and the organization. Bell's study (2003) identified similar positive beliefs.

The second theme evident was that insufficient funding of shelters impacts workers' personal and professional lives. The Almighty Dollar and Burn Out is on the Herizon clusters resonated with statements concerning funding issues. In particular, they expressed safety concerns because of having to work alone. They compared themselves to other counseling positions in the addictions and mental health field and see themselves as underpaid.

Third, organizational culture and values present an array of challenges to shelter workers. Brainstormed statements in the Land of Oz and Ground Zero clusters relate to these issues. Communication difficulties, expectation of standards, working in an all woman environment were seen as contentious issues. The lack of transparency within the organization was an indication to workers what "cycle" the site was in. Additionally, safety issues and the site's ability to respond appropriately continued to be a source of concern to workers. Previous research (Kanno & Newhill, 2008: Stout & Thomas, 1991) demonstrates the need for further research in this area.

Last, external agencies and societal responses to domestic violence/ women play a role in how shelter workers see themselves. As the name implies Devaluation of Safety and Work as well as the Burnt Offering cluster reflect how shelter workers see themselves perceived by the

larger community. Generally speaking, participants believe that shelter work is devalued and not seen as a profession. Sexist attitudes, being challenged as to their expertise, and being seen as breaking up families were situations described by the participants.

CHAPTER SIX: FINAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The current lived experience of shelter workers in the Province of Manitoba is a challenging one. This exploratory study has only been able to touch on some of the factors that influence shelter workers' experience. It is by no means complete, there are territories yet to be explored and named. The landscape of shelter work is constantly changing and workers are adapting to new conditions. The participants in this study who offered their experiences as truth have indeed changed the map on shelter work. By turning the lens on shelter work and providing an opportunity for shelter workers themselves to be active participants in describing and naming their territories, a wider perspective has been gained. This unique perspective has created a different lens by which to view shelter work and in the words of Ursula K. LeGuin "There are new mountains." This next section will focus on a summary of the findings, the relevance to social work knowledge, a personal perspective, merits, and limitations of the study. Lastly, the need for future research will be addressed.

Summary of Findings

Despite the inherent tensions of working with survivors of domestic violence in shelters, shelter workers are heavily invested in engaging in this profession. The positive factors that influence their experience are reflected in the Warrior Woman cluster. They believe that the work they do is needed, is valued, and has ripple effects not just for the women and children that enter the shelter, but for themselves and the community at large. Similar findings about shelter workers' positive motivation and satisfaction with their work can be found in the literature (Bell, 2003; Chatigny & al., 2006; Hindle & Morgan, 2004).

An ability of the participants to view the organization/work as being cyclical appears to assist in them navigating the difficulties associated with shelter work. Having worked for a certain period of time at their site, they are able to recognize that shifts and changes occur in all aspects of the work. There are busy times in shelters; there will be quiet times. There will be instances where board/management issues are a source of tension for workers. There will be conflict between all levels of the organization (board/management, management/workers, worker/worker, worker/client, client/client), and outside of the agency (funders/site, agencies/site, community/site). This conflict will change. It could get better; it could get worse. They are able to pause, accept what they have control over/energy for, and continue to do the work. What resonated in this study, is how workers constantly surveyed the territory and then conducted themselves accordingly with great flexibility. Problems acquiring a washing machine: take the laundry home. Management ignoring workers' concerns: let that go this time because there is no energy to grieve. Haven't had a raise/evaluation in years: continue to focus on the women and children who come into shelter. These types of negotiations are constantly being played out across this province.

Like other studies, this research has highlighted the impact of insufficient funding on shelter workers (Chatigny et al., 2004, Hindle & Morgan, 2006). Directly or indirectly, the issue of insufficient funding can be found in the majority of clusters. The participants spoke about the impact this had on themselves as well as on the clients. Safety concerns were expressed for themselves and their clients when workers have to work alone. Low wages/pensions, job security, run-down facilities were common issues. Participants spoke about how the professionalization of shelter work has not resulted in comparable increases in their wages. They compared their wages to crisis response/addiction/mental health workers and see discrepancies.

This may be due to a variety of factors. The grass roots history of shelters may have set the stage for the belief that shelters can make do with limited resources. It is seen as woman's work, and traditionally, women have been underpaid. The stigma still associated with domestic violence may play a role. Lastly, a certain complacency by both government and private funders may exist. It is apparent in this research that the lack of sufficient funding is an issue and will continue to be a significant source of tension for shelter workers both personally and professionally.

Organizational culture and values are factors that resonated throughout the clusters. Expectations of funders, boards, management and workers are difficult territories to navigate. Workers identified communication between different levels of the organization, and lack of transparency within the sites as being issues of concern, although, they recognized that these varied depending on the "cycle" the organization was in. Workers acknowledged the need for confidentiality concerning clients, but expressed feelings of frustration and isolation about the lack of safe spaces to discuss workers' concerns. Clients' and workers' physical and emotional safety were important issues for the participants. When these situations were ignored, minimized or veiled in secrecy, workers expressed being negatively affected by these organizational coping strategies.

Workers expressed concerns about how external agencies and the larger society views about their profession impacted them. Part of their experience with external agencies may be the lack of resources at all levels and growing frustrations from all parties involved about how best to provide service to clients. There may be territorial issues at play. There may also be a total lack of awareness about what shelter work actually entails. With the professionalization of shelter work, experienced highly educated individuals are working in shelters and they are

comparing their working conditions to other similar professions. They not only expressed feelings of dissatisfaction but also of not being valued.

The information from pattern matching spoke to the high degree of homogeneity within the sample. Variables concerning age, education and length also displayed a high degree of congruence. When the variables concerning childhood trauma and previous counseling experience were explored, the lack of agreement within these variables became apparent ($r = 62$) and ($r = 51$) respectively. However, it appears that shelter workers having previous counseling experience compared to those workers without previous counseling experience perceive shelter work in different ways. For example, the Ground Zero cluster was rated the highest of all the clusters by workers with previous counseling work experience, it was only ranked third by the other group of workers. This indicates that for workers with previous counseling experience, lack of communication and workplace conflict are issues of the highest concern. Workers without previous counseling experience ranked the more positive aspects of shelter work as contained in the Warrior Woman cluster first.   These differences in ratings of the clusters may provide helpful information to the sites in recruiting, training and retaining workers.

Relevance to Social Work: Practice and Policy Issues

<u>Practice Issues.</u> This study assists in casting light on a sparsely researched area of women's work. Throughout the research process, a better understanding of the current lived experiences of shelter workers was gained. In recruiting participants and in sessions, the message provided by workers was that they were busy, hardworking and tired. Organizations at times appear to be in a 'catch-22' position. In sufficient funding of shelters necessitates cost cutting strategies. It seems that one of these strategies has resulted in increasing numbers of casual and part-time workers. And although, there is a core group of highly skilled workers in shelters who are

permanent full time staff, there does not appear to be much movement for staff who are casual/part-time to permanent full time. When these permanent workers leave, there may be shifts in service delivery to clients. The move to professionalize shelter work has not translated into increased wages for shelter workers. Six of the 11 participants had a university education including degrees in social work. The crisis nature of the work, the challenges of working at times with highly emotionally activated clients, and clients with co-occurring disorders requires a highly skilled workforce.

Workers acknowledge the cyclical nature of their organizations' landscape; this appears to assist in them in navigating the territory. Many of the participants expressed the need to have safe, non-judgmental spaces to openly discussion their experiences. These types of opportunities may reduce isolation and feelings of invisibility, thus enhancing workers' well-being. Additionally, by having a venue to openly discuss their work, new voices can be heard within the shelter movement. Increased concerns for workers' safety echoed throughout the sessions. No shelter in this province should have only one worker on shift. Working alone is a safety issue. Worker's safety should never be compromised for the "almighty dollar." Yes, shelters have quiet times but how many clients are in shelter does not necessarily indicate how busy a shelter is. Activated clients and children require significant worker attention.

By further exploring the brainstorming statements that identify the factors that influence shelter workers experience, steps can be taken to enhance the well-being of workers. The well-being of shelter workers directly impacts their work performance and personal life. More insight into the positive coping strategies workers engage in to deal with the stresses of the job would be valuable information for new as well as struggling workers to be informed about. A healthy organization provides a positive safe environment for shelter workers to engage in their

profession. Shelters need adequate funding. Ongoing education and training of workers builds confidence and expertise among personnel and strengthens service delivery. Strong, highly-skilled boards and management providing support, transparency and inclusiveness can assist in reducing worker frustrations and isolation. And lastly, ongoing education and training for board, management and staff in the areas already mentioned would promote and enhance individual and organization well-being.

Policy Issues. The recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce is essential to organizational health and vital in providing high standards of service delivery. Low wages, poor pensions and sporadic hours may make it difficult to recruit and retain workers. Sites in rural communities may face even more challenges in this area. In addition, shelter work has been considered women's work and this factor may assist in accounting for low wages and inadequate pensions despite the increased professionalization of the occupation.

Problems with security features within the site, physical/ emotional safety concerns by not only clients but by other staff and management were issues raised. Changing technology whereby clients could possibly access personal information about workers on the internet was disturbing to participants. The need for increased awareness and action regarding worker safety is essential to workers' well-being. Policies concerning these issues need to be reviewed, and updated on a regular basis. Apparently, some of these issues are being addressed. The Manitoba government in consultation with interested stakeholders has recently published a Multi Year Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy (Manitoba Government, 2012). According to this report, Manitoba is the only province in Canada that owns and maintains shelters. The government asserts that they have dealt with all maintenance issues relating to health and safety that were brought to their attention during discussions this past year. They also commit to spending one

million dollars in capital improvements to shelters and other family violence facilities.

Additionally, educating external agencies and the larger society about shelter work would raise

public awareness about the vital services this profession offers. Throughout the sessions,

workers spoke about the difficulties and challenges they encountered when dealing with external

agencies and the community.

A Personal Perspective

As a former shelter worker, I was at times surprised at how the territory has changed and

shifted over twenty years. Workers appear to be more highly educated. Six of the 11

participants had university degrees. In 1991, I was the only worker who had a university degree

at my site. During my time at the shelter, there were government initiatives to renovate and

improve the physical building of shelters throughout the province. Many of the participants

spoke about the deterioration of buildings and how this affected the clients and themselves. But

perhaps the most significant change that I heard was the number of occasions when participants

spoke about finding weapons in shelter. During my time at the shelter, no weapons were ever

discovered. The major concern at that time would have been that a client may not have handed

in her medication and may overdose, or her medication might be used by other clients.

Limitations

As in any research endeavour, there are limitations in this study. This study was

unfunded and was conducted in order to fulfill the requirements for a Masters in Social Work.

Consequently, time constraints and financial issues did not allow for as many shelters/shelter

workers as was hoped to participate in the study. Shelters more than three hours distant from

Winnipeg were not included in this study. As well, staff from several of the closer shelters were

not available to participate. In many ways this appeared to correspond to the "cycles" the

organization was in. The more open transparent organizations seemed to have the ability to assist in recruitment and support of their workers participating in this study.

Concept mapping is a very structured methodology, and individuals unfamiliar with the process can find it difficult to easily understand. During recruiting, there may have been individuals who chose not to participate because they perceived concept mapping to be complicated and time consuming. Shift work, geographical distance and timing of sessions may all have contributed to reduced response rates. In session two, only four participants developed the 92 brainstormed statements. Although, seven other participates were recruited to rate and sort the brainstormed statements at a later date, these workers' statements about factors that influenced their own experience as a shelter worker could not be included in the 92 statements that made up the maps. Factors such as religious beliefs, external agency issues, for example have been named but remain outside the territory. Where these statements would be located and how they would have been rated are not available. There was also no participant participation in the hierarchical cluster analysis section because of time constraints and the possibility of participant burden. During session three, more time was given to the naming of the clusters resulting in limited discussion on the interpretation and analysis of the maps. A larger sample size and the ability to include all participants in every aspect of the research process may have possibly resulted in the maps being configured, interpreted and analyzed differently. Lastly, it cannot be assumed that what the participants said during the concept mapping process was a predictor of what they may say in another situation. Participants may have felt the need to be politically correct due to the nature of the group setting surrounded by their peers.

Researcher Bias

Regardless of methodology, the researcher's agenda is not completely absent. I am a former shelter worker and in some way this may have had an influence. Participants did not choose the research question. I wanted to look at the broad landscape of shelter work and not focus on any one particular issue. I determined the final number of clusters in the hierarchical cluster analysis and because of time constraints; the participants had limited opportunities in interpreting and analyzing the maps in session three. Consequently, I was one of the main research instruments.

Merits of the Study

This research provided an opportunity for shelter workers to gather and openly discuss their experiences in a safe environment. Participants gave positive feedback about the benefits of participating in this research endeavor. Reducing isolation, increasing the visibility of shelter work, and networking opportunities were some of the comments made by participants. With the exception of session one (pretesting instruments) and one sorting and rating session, all the other four sessions were group experiences. In particular, the brainstorming and naming aspects of the concept mapping process allowed for a powerful collective experience. The maps provided an opportunity for participants to gain an externalized understanding of their work experiences. There was a power for participants in the creation of these maps. I received feedback from my assistant in session two and three to minimize any possible researcher bias. At various times during these sessions, I remained silent about my own opinions. For example, there were several discussions about men's involvement in shelters in brainstorming and during the interpretation of the maps. I did not personally comment on this issue, although, I do have strong opinions on this matter.

This research has taken a small step in understanding the lived experiences of shelter workers. It is only the third study undertaken on shelter workers in Canada. Increasing awareness about the profession can assist the larger community to gain a better understanding of the valuable work that these workers provide and assist in reducing the shelter workers' isolation. Lastly, this study has highlighted the richness of using concept mapping as a methodology and has added to feminist research practice. One of the primary goals of feminist research is to capture and understand women's voices. Concept mapping allowed for shelter workers' voices to be heard with minimal interpretation by the researcher. It was their territory, their journey that gave voice and insight into their unique lived experience. Hopefully, this endeavor may encourage other researchers to use this mix methods approach.

Future Research Directions

This exploratory study has raised a number of issues to be addressed in future research endeavours. Other voices need to be heard. For example, how would the map or findings have shifted if the seven women who only rated and sorted the brainstormed statements had their ideas included in the brainstormed statements? Additionally, more research focusing on shelter workers from the North, as well as other stakeholders including board members and management of shelters would add to the depth of understanding about shelter work. The need to explore the safety issues of workers in shelters is vital. Any research on the organizational values and beliefs of shelters may aid in understanding the "cycles" described by participants in this study. Strategies to enhance organizational health benefits not only shelter workers but service delivery. Studies focusing on worker's coping strategies or positive aspects of the profession may assist in continuing to widen the landscape of shelter work. Lastly, the relationship between worker and client can be researched in order to better identify positive outcomes in counseling relationships.

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APPENDIX A

February 1, 2011

Dear Ms. Braun:

I am writing this letter to ask for support from the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters for a research project on shelter workers. I am currently a student at the University of Manitoba working towards completion of my Masters in Social Work. As part of my degree, I am working on a thesis that focuses on gaining an understanding of the experiences of shelter workers. My thesis advisory committee, comprised of Dr. Brenda Bacon, Dr. Janice Ristock and Maureen Flaherty, will supervise this research process. I have previous research experience and have extensive practical experience as a worker with domestic violence survivors. As you may be aware little empirical research has been conducted in this area. My literature review has found only two studies on the subject based in Canada. Consequently, this research would be able to provide a Manitoba perspective on what it is like to be a shelter worker in this province.

I am hoping to start in early spring of this year. Participants need to be employed for at least two years at the shelter and work a minimum of 25 hours a week. They will be asked to be involved in a concept mapping experience. This approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Its strength lies in its flexibility, its inclusion of participant voice and its visual representation of the data. As a group, participants will be asked to brainstorm about their experiences. These responses will be recorded and then participants will be asked individually to rate each response as to how relevant it is in their own experience. From this information, a map will be made and participants will be asked to analyze and interpret the map. I am anticipating that there will be two to three separate session, approximately two hours in length. It is not necessary for participants to be involved in all of the three sessions.

I believe this experience can be a positive one for participants. It can be a tremendous collective learning experience for all involved. If necessary, I can make myself available to individual shelter's to discuss with their workers in more detail what this research entails. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Kim Smyrski
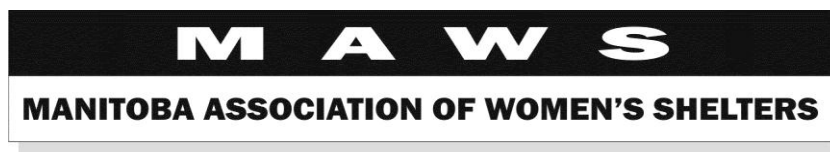
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VOICES
SYSTEM

March 11, 2011

The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters (MAWS) was excited to receive the letter from Kim Smyrski regarding her thesis which will focus on gaining some understanding of the experiences of women working in shelters. We strongly agree with Kim that is an area that really has not been explored. In my conversation with Kim I also mentioned that I believe the shelters are very distinct from each other and the feedback would show that the workers from the northern shelters experience is very different then the workers from the southern shelters. I believe she will also see a unique difference in the urban versus rural workers experiences.

Another area that I noted with Kim included the politics of working in all female environments and what role that may play in the employees experience. I also believe that the leadership within the organization, such as the skill level of the executive director, the roles of the board within the organization etc. have a direct impact on the experience of the employees.

MAWS is exploring some possible grant options to ensure the success of the thesis as well as ensuring that Kim would have the access to the largest possible numbers of employees to get the most comprehensive feedback. I understand that there may be some time constraints and we are hoping to be able to work together within those. We recognize the value of the research that Kim is planning on doing.

I look forward to working with Kim and am excited by what the thesis may teach us.

Sincerely,

Angela Braun

APPENDIX C

October 14, 2011

Dear Executive Director and Shelter Workers:

I am writing this letter to ask for your support for a research project on shelter workers. I am currently a student at the University of Manitoba working towards completion of my Masters in Social Work. As part of my degree I am currently working on a thesis that focuses on gaining an understanding of the experiences of shelter workers. My thesis advisory committee, comprised of Dr. Brenda Bacon, Dr. Janice Ristock and Maureen Flaherty, will supervise this research process. I have previous research experience and have extensive practical experience as a worker with domestic violence survivors. For over eleven years I was the Community Outreach and Follow up Worker for the Eastman Crisis Centre. As you may be aware little empirical research has been conducted on shelter workers. My literature review has found only two studies on the subject based in Canada. Consequently, this research would be able to provide a Manitoba perspective on what it is like to be a shelter worker in this province.

I am hoping to start this fall. Participants need to be employed for at least two years at the shelter and work a minimum of 25 hours a week. They will be asked to be involved in a concept mapping experience. This approach incorporates both people's words and "voices", and the use of numbers (averages). Its strength lies in its flexibility, inclusion of participant voices and its visual representation of the data. As a group, participants will be asked to brainstorm about their experiences. These responses will be recorded and then participants will be asked individually to rate each response as to how relevant it is to their own experience. From this information, a map will be made and participants will be asked to analyze and interpret the map. I am anticipating that there will be two to three separate sessions, approximately two hours in length. It is not necessary for participants to be involved in all of the three sessions. At this time, a specific site for the sessions has not been determined; however, once participants have been selected, a central site will be chosen (likely Winnipeg, Steinbach or Selkirk). It is anticipated that sessions will either be in the evening or weekends in order for this to not be in conflict with their work.

I believe this experience can be a positive one for participants. It can be a tremendous collective learning experience for all involved. If necessary, I can make myself available to individual shelters to discuss with their workers in more detail what this research entails. In order to maintain confidentiality of potential participants I respectfully would ask that any supervisors and the executive director leave during the presentation so that they remain unaware of who might volunteer for the study. Potential participants will be asked to contact me via phone or email so that their confidentiality about participation is further ensured.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kim Smyrski

APPENDIX D

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT EXPERIENCES OF SHELTER WORKERS IN THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA?
"How does being a shelter work affect your life?"

Help map the wisdom of shelter workers. Participants need to be employed for at least two years at the shelter and work a minimum of 25 hours a week. There will be three sessions approximately two hours in length. Participate in one, two or all sessions.

INTERESTED POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO CALL KIM SMYRSKI (PRINCIPLE RESEARCHER) AT XXX-XXXX EMAIL umsmyrs2@cc.umanitoba.ca

ALL COMMUNICATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX E

Recruitment Script

This will be used in presentations at individual shelters, or if potential participants contact me via phone.

My name is Kim Smyrski.   I am a student at the University of Manitoba and am undertaking this research project to fulfill the requirements for a Masters of Social Work. I also am a former shelter worker with 11 and half years of experience at the Eastman Crisis Center**.**

Manitoba has approximately over thirty years of history providing shelter services. As a shelter worker you have a wealth of information about what it is like to provide services to survivors of domestic violence. Few opportunities exist for shelter workers to meet outside their own separate organizations and share their wisdom with other colleagues. This research project provides an opportunity for your voice and others' voices to be heard. The larger community would also be better able to understand what it is like to be a shelter worker and may help in changing community attitudes and beliefs about shelter work and workers.

You will be invited to participate in one, two, or three group sessions as your time permits. Times will vary for the group but will range from 1.5 to 4 hours. You are free to participate in one, two or all of the sessions. Participation is voluntary and that declining to participate in the process will have no negative consequences. At this time, a specific site for the sessions has not been determined; however, once participants have been selected, a central site will be chosen (likely Winnipeg, Steinbach or Selkirk). The sessions will be audio-taped and then transcribed. Questions to be asked include: "What are the effects of being a shelter worker on your personal and professional life?" Possible statements that you will be asked to rate might include: "How strongly do you agree that shift work affects your personal life? How strongly do you agree that lack of supervision affects you ability to do your job? How strongly do you agree that shelter work affects your relationship with your male partner?"

Your employers will not be informed as to who is participating. Sessions will be conducted in a private room in order to maintain the confidentiality of the group. It may be possible that you have prior history with some other participants. You will be asked to respect the confidentiality of others in the group, so that what is said in the group stays in the group. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym code for the socio-demographic form that will also be used on your rating form in order to protect your privacy. This will enable your personal information to be kept confidential. The student researcher (Kim Smyrski) and her academic advisor (Dr. Brenda Bacon) will have access to the tapes and transcripts. All tapes of group sessions and any written transcriptions will be kept in a locked office at the student researcher's residence. These tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the project, by the end of 2012.

APPENDIX F

Sample Consent Form Sessions 1 to be on Institutional Letterhead
(Please contact your faculty/department for a digital or hard-copy of letterhead).

Research Project Title: Mapping the Collective Experience of Shelter Workers

Principal Investigator and contact information: Kim Smyrski 1-XXX-XXXX **Email address: umsmyrs2@cc.umanitoba.ca**

Research Supervisor (if applicable) and contact information: Dr. Brenda Bacon 1-204-474-8454 Email **address: baconbl@cc.umanitoba.ca**

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.

1. Purpose of the research. The purpose of this research project is to explore the lived experience of shelter workers in the province of Manitoba. Shelters in Manitoba have been in operation for approximately thirty years. Few, if any, opportunities have been available for shelter workers to share their experiences with each other and with the public. This collective experience can be an empowering one as you share the positive and negative aspects of shelter work with each other. It will help in educating the community in understanding the work that you do. **Additionally, this research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for a Masters of Social Work for the Principal Investigator Kim Smyrski.**

2. **Procedures involving the subject, including their nature, frequency and duration.** You will be asked to participate in session one which will take approximately one and a half hours. In this session, the group will pretest the focus statements that will be used in brainstorming and rating. In this research, the focus concept has been decided by the researcher, whereby the lived experiences of shelter workers will be explored. How the brainstorming and rating statements will be worded will your task.   You will be asked to consider various wording for each statement and reach a group consensus. The statements need to make sense to you, be something you can readily relate to and become invested in.

3. Description of recording devices. During the sessions an audio recorder will be used for the purpose of making a transcript of each session to ensure all voices will be heard.

4. Description of the Benefits. Few opportunities exist for shelter workers from different shelters to have conversations about the nature of their work. These sessions may assist in

breaking down the isolationist aspects of the work. You may find that what you are sharing has been experienced by others or that other experiences are different and may have some personal or professional value to you.

5. Description of risk. There is minimal risk involved in this research. Participants may possibly experience a range of feelings. Should you become distressed at any time during the interview, time will be set aside after the group finishes to meet with the student researcher to process your feelings. I have over 20 years counseling experience and was myself a shelter worker for more than ten of those years. Additionally a list of resources will be made available to you should you feel the need to seek out additional support.

6. Confidentiality. Group sessions will be conducted in a private room in order to maintain the confidentiality of the group. It may be possible that you have prior history with some other participants. You will be asked to respect the confidentiality of others in the group, so that what is said in the group stays in the group. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym code for the socio-demographic form that will also be used on your rating form in order to protect your privacy. Pseudonym coding protects your identity and responses. Not even the researcher will be able to identify your responses to you. You will be asked to think of another name you would like to be known by in addition to a random two digit number. You will place this information on a sociodemographic form, brainstormed sorting pile and their rating statement sheet. During each session, instructions and rationale for pseudonym coding will be given you. Again, this will enable your personal information to be kept confidential. The student researcher (Kim Smyrski) and her academic advisor (Dr. Brenda Bacon) will have access to the tapes and transcripts. All tapes of group sessions and any written transcriptions will be kept in a locked office at the student researcher's residence. These tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the project, by the end of 2012.

7. Remuneration. No remuneration will be given.

8. Withdrawal from Project. You are can voluntary withdraw from the project by informing the student researcher at anytime during the process without any negative consequences to yourself.

9. Description of the Debriefing. Time will be set aside after the sessions have ended should participants wish to debrief about their experience.

10. Dissemination of Results. As part of completing a thesis an oral defense is required of all aspects of the project including the results. The student researcher, her academic advising committee will be present as well as any participants should they wish or members of the general public. Once approved by the committee, the thesis will be available at the University of Manitoba Library.

11. **Summary of Project Findings.** You will be given a map of your collective experiences and a summary of the discussion and analysis upon your request by email or mail.

12. Confidential Data. Tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the project, by the end of 2012.

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.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Ethic Review Board at the University of Manitoba. **If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature _____   Date _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature _____   Date _____

For any participant wanting a summary of results please indicate whether surface mail or email would be most convenient. It is not necessary to fill out this portion of the consent form if you do not wish to have a summary. Summary results will be made available to participants no later than August, 2012

Please circle the whether you prefer receiving the results by: surface mail
                                                                      email

Mailing address_____

Email address_____

Sample Consent Form Sessions 2 and 3 to be on Institutional Letterhead
(Please contact your faculty/department for a digital or hard-copy of letterhead).

Research Project Title: Mapping the Collective Experience of Shelter Workers

Principal Investigator and contact information: Kim Smyrski 1-XXX-XXXX Email **address: umsmyrs2@cc.umanitoba.ca**

Research Supervisor (if applicable) and contact information: Dr. Brenda Bacon 1-204-474-8454 Email **address: baconbl@cc.umanitoba.ca**

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.

1. Purpose of the research. The purpose of this research project is to explore the lived experience of shelter workers in the province of Manitoba. Shelters in Manitoba have been in operation for approximately thirty years. Few, if any, opportunities have been available for shelter workers to share their experiences with each other and with the public. This collective experience can be an empowering one as you share the positive and negative aspects of shelter work with each other. It will help in educating the community in understanding the work that you do. **Additionally, this research is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for a Masters of Social Work for the Principal Investigator Kim Smyrski.**

2. **Procedures involving the subject, including their nature, frequency and duration.**
You will be asked to participate in one or two group sessions, as your time permits. Each session will be approximately 3 to 4 hours in length. During session two, participants will be asked to brainstorm the effects of shelter work on their professional and personal lives. You will then be asked to rate and sort the brainstormed responses into piles reflecting how responses are related to each other. The next step is that you will be asked to rate the brainstorm statements as to how important you think each response is. In Session 3, participants will review pictures of the relationships among the brainstormed statements that have been constructed from Session 2, and asked to provide an interpretation of what the maps of relationships mean to them.

3. Description of recording devices. During the sessions an audio recorder will be used for the purpose of making a transcript of each session to ensure all voices will be heard.

4. Description of the Benefits. Few opportunities exist for shelter workers from different shelters to have conversations about the nature of their work. These sessions may assist in breaking down the isolationist aspects of the work. You may find that what you are sharing has

been experienced by others or that other experiences are different and may have some personal or professional value to you.

5. Description of risk. There is minimal risk involved in this research. Participants may possibly experience a range of feelings. Should you become distressed at any time during the interview, time will be set aside after the group finishes to meet with the student researcher to process your feelings. I have over 20 years counseling experience and was myself a shelter worker for more than ten of those years. Additionally a list of resources will be made available to you should you feel the need to seek out additional support.

6. Confidentiality. Group sessions will be conducted in a private room in order to maintain the confidentiality of the group. It may be possible that you have prior history with some other participants. You will be asked to respect the confidentiality of others in the group, so that what is said in the group stays in the group. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym code for the socio-demographic form that will also be used on your rating form in order to protect your privacy. Pseudonym coding protects your identity and responses. Not even the researcher will be able to identify your responses to you. You will be asked to think of another name you would like to be known by in addition to a random two digit number. You will place this information on a sociodemographic form, brainstormed sorting pile and their rating statement sheet. During session, instructions and rationale for pseudonym coding will be given you. Again, this will enable your personal information to be kept confidential. The student researcher (Kim Smyrski) and her academic advisor (Dr. Brenda Bacon) will have access to the tapes and transcripts. All tapes of group sessions and any written transcriptions will be kept in a locked office at the student researcher's residence. These tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the project, by the end of 2012.

7. Remuneration. No remuneration will be given.

8. Withdrawal from Project. You are can voluntary withdraw from the project by informing the student researcher at anytime during the process without any negative consequences to yourself.

9. Description of the Debriefing. Time will be set aside after the sessions have ended should participants wish to debrief about their experience.

10. Dissemination of Results. As part of completing a thesis an oral defense is required of all aspects of the project including the results. The student researcher, her academic advising committee will be present as well as any participants should they wish or members of the general public. Once approved by the committee, the thesis will be available at the University of Manitoba Library.

11. **Summary of Project Findings.** You will be given a map of your collective experiences and a summary of the discussion and analysis upon your request by email or mail.

12. Confidential Data. Tapes and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the project, by the end of 2012.

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.

The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Ethic Review Board at the University of Manitoba. **If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature _____   Date _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature _____   Date _____

For any participant wanting a summary of results please indicate whether surface mail or email would be most convenient. It is not necessary to fill out this portion of the consent form if you do not wish to have a summary. Summary results will be made available to participants no later than August, 2012

Please circle the whether you prefer receiving the results by: surface mail
                                                                                            email

Mailing address_____

Email address_____

Pseudonym (Alias) Name: _____

Please take a few moments to fill out this form. You have the right to decline to answer any of the questions with no negative consequences. Thank you for your time.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FORM

How long have you been working at the shelter?   _____ years

Are you working in: _____urban   _____rural shelter.

Did you have previous work experience in counseling before taking on your current employment?

_____ yes   _____no

What is your educational background?
High school diploma _____
Bachelor Degree   _____
Master Degree   _____
Other   _____

Do you have a personal history of physical or sexual childhood trauma?
___yes   ____no

Have you been abused in an intimate partner relationship before working at a shelter?
___yes   ___no

What is your age?   ____ years

What is your ethnicity?

___ Caucasian

___ Indigenous or Metis

___ Franco-Manitoban

___ Visible Minority

APPENDIX G

Rating Statement Example

Each brainstorm response will be put in this type of format and provided to the participants for their ratings.

On a scale of 1 – 5, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following statements, remembering that there is no right or wrong answer

.

How strongly do you agree that shift work affects your personal life?

_____1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5

How strongly do you agree that lack of supervision affects your ability to do your job?

_____1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5

APPENDIX H

Creating a Similarity Matrix

A similarity matrix takes participants' sort data and quantitatively configures the information for analysis. Each of the brainstormed responses has been given a sequential number starting at 1. Then each participant's sort data is placed in a square matrix where there are as many rows as columns. A binary table consists of 0's and 1's. If two responses are placed in a pile by a participant, it would be represented on the matrix by a 1 in the corresponding row and column. If the participant did not place two responses in a pile it would contain a zero in the appropriate row and column. For example, participant A has sorted the responses in the following manner: pile 1 (response 2, 3, 8), pile 2 (response 1, 4), pile 3 (response 5) and pile 4 (response 6, 7). A similarity matrix for this participant would look like this:

Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1

When this has been done for each participant's sort data, an aggregated similarity matrix is prepared. An aggregated similarity matrix contains all participants' sort data. Each cell of the aggregated sort matrix will contain the number of participants that have placed the same

numbered responses in a pile. The total number of participants who have sorted is the maximum

number a cell can contain. A cell containing the number zero indicates that no participant placed

those two specific responses in a pile.

Constructing The Point Map: Multidimensional Scaling

In this step, the point map is constructed which provides a two dimensional visual

representation of the relationship between the brainstormed responses. The point map forms the

foundation from which all of the other maps are constructed. Multidimensional scaling is

applied to visually display each response and its relationship to other responses as points on a

map. In the point map, each response is displayed as a numbered dot on the map.   How far

apart or closer together the dots are implies the relationship between responses.   The more often

participants have sorted responses together in a pile (i.e., the higher the number contained in a

cell in the aggregated similarity matrix) the closer these dots will be located to each other.

Again, there are a variety of statistical packages that can be used to perform this function (Kane

& Trochim).

Nonmetric multidimensional scaling (Kane & Trochim (2007) "is a general technique

that represents any similarity or dissimilarity matrix in any number of dimensions as distances

between the original items in the matrix" (p.93). A two dimensional scaling is recommended

because of its ease of use and because of the purpose of the point map (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

It is important to note that the direction of the map is purely random. However, this in no way

changes the distance among the points. No matter which way the map is positioned the distance

remains the same (Kane & Trochim, 2007). As mentioned previously, concept mapping's focus

is strictly concerned about the relationship between the responses translated into a visual

representation in terms of each response being located closer or farther away from another

response. Consequently, the positioning of the map does not change how the responses are related to each other.

Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

A number of algorithms can be used to perform cluster analysis. However, Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend using Ward's algorithm to construct the hierarchical cluster analysis citing the appropriateness of fit with the type of data distance contained in multidimensional scaling analysis. They use the metaphor of a tree to describe this process: "The hierarchical cluster analysis uses the point map data to construct a "tree" that at one extreme represents all points as together (in the trunk of the tree), and at another represents all points as individual end points of the "branches" (p.452). However, for research purposes putting all the points into one cluster (trunk of the tree) would summarize too broadly the brainstormed responses.

APPENDIX I

Pattern Matches and Go-Zones

According to Kane and Trochim (2007), "pattern matching is both a statistical [which uses a Pearson Product Moment correlation] and a graphic analysis." (p.455). Pattern matching can be best described as a "ladder graph." For example, if comparing the importance of how urban and rural workers rate responses within a cluster, a pattern match would consist of two vertical lines representing either urban or rural shelter workers. Alongside each of these vertical lines are displayed the responses contained in that cluster which are listed according to their average rating from highest to lowest value. Lines are then drawn in between the vertical lines connecting two identical responses, one from the urban workers, and one from the rural workers. How much consensus between the two groups there is for that response can then be assessed. For example, a straight line would indicate that both rural and urban workers have rated that response identically.

Go-zones are bivariate graphs that display the average ratings for two variables on each response within one cluster (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The graph is represented as a quadrant containing the mean rating values of each variable. Here the upper right hand quadrant contains the responses that have the highest average ratings. So, again using urban and rural workers as the variables in our example, the upper right hand quadrant will provide information on what responses both groups saw as highly important.

APPENDIX J

In Our Own Voice

Statements By Cluster with Average Ratings

Cluster One: Land of Oz

28. Give staff more input into staffing changes with regards to shifts/hours worked	4.40
14. Don't find the work stressful, office politics, unknown policy changes stressful	4.27
68. Night shifts are less political	4.09
27. No statutory holidays or pensions for part time staff	3.80
25. Reliable casual staff is difficult to find	3.80
35. Different values for different positions	3.45
36. Chosen staff are favoured	3.45
71. Working in an all women environment is problematic	3.36
8. Expectations of standards are different between boards/Ed and workers	3.36
5. Expectations of standards are different between casual, part time, full time permanent positions	3.27
37. Penalties to staff who are direct and speak their mind	3.27
13. No meetings, everything slides…minimizes the importance of the task, job, feelings when management/board ignores/delays	3.27
12. Labour-management issues are put on the back burner as not important	3.09
34. Administration is more important	3.00
1. Mismanagement within the administrative part of the shelter system staff	3.00
2. Lack of communication between board, management and workers	3.00
11. Being at board meetings is helpful to workers	3.00
9. No one knows who the board members are, there is a separation between board and workers	2.45
10. Staff representatives are at times restricted from board meetings	2.27
Average	**3.35**

Cluster Two: Ground Zero

7. Conflict is not addressed directly between workers; conflict resolution skills for Workers	4.00
6. Individual personalities leads to back biting and checking up on others	4.00
3. Lack of communication between workers affects morale and performance as a worker. Feels like who cares, energy depleted, "didn't you know?"	4.00
26. Casual staff have two or three other jobs	3.80
32. Workers are affected by client/client conflict	3.73
48. Area of expertise has to broaden with self training	3.55
4. Feeling isolated	3.45
Average	**3.79**

Cluster Three: Almighty Dollar

17. Government funding for shelter work is lacking, not a priority	4.82
21. Bed nights determine funding	4.73

40. Rural workers have limited resources, no legal aid, housing, public transportation	4.73
20. Bed nights per diem is not an actual reflection of current needs, has not changed with the cost of inflation	4.73
23. The way funding is dispensed is not reflected in real time shelter costs	4.55
18. Per diems have not changed in over ten years	4.09
50. Wages not reflective of skills necessary	4.00
24. Quiet times put pressure on staff to find/bring in clients or funding will be affected and threats of cuts	4.00
49. Pay does not increase with increase of education demands	4.00
19. Resources mandated to provide to shelters is minimal	4.00
15. Funding, pension plans are insufficient or poor	3.91
22. Short staffing a problem	3.82
52. Rotations, short staffing is a problem, but is related to funding	3.82
38. Shelter workers are not seen as professional	3.82
66. When we are busy, we don't call in extra help	3.70
80. EIA often states no safety issues, if client stays longer than 30 days	3.64
79. Family Prevention can play a bigger role in alleviating client stays	3.64
60. When we have resources they are not shared	3.18
39. Public perceptions of shelter workers are as man haters, lesbians, homewreckers, feminists	2.73
Average	**3.99**

Cluster Four: Devaluation of Safety and Work

58. High risk occupation although not acknowledged as such by public and within Shelter	4.55
59. No networking between shelter workers	4.09
46. Serious incidents minimized, dismissed. Safety of workers minimized. Weapons (knives) have been found on site at shelters	4.00
55. Delays in safety measures impact staff	3.64
42. Worker's need to work around agency attitudes	3.55
16. Shelter work is devalued, not seen as professional	3.55
41. Attitude of other agencies, minimize importance of needs at times, or strong armed into taking clients	3.36
56. Personal and client issues because of technology, cell phones, GPS technology, facebook, etc.	3.36
54. Poor communication and inconsistent communication between outside agencies	3.27
51. Rural workers have personal contact with clients outside of work. Difficult to be anonymous, are seen in the community and sometimes even contacted at home on personal time	3.18
57. Shelter residences are safety issues as they have been in the same location long term	3.18
43. Appears a lack of respect towards worker's knowledge and expertise by outside agencies	3.09
53. Sexism in the workplace…by outside agencies	2.45
Average	**3.48**

Cluster Five: Warrior Woman

73. Mental health of workers is important	4.82

92. Knowing the work we do is needed and important	4.82
30. Clients are affected by worker to worker stress	4.55
47. Clients have co-occurring issues, not solely "domestic violence" issues	4.55
85. I am able to plant seeds	4.40
84. I know that in some small way I made it better, I made a difference	4.36
91. Giving then their power back	4.36
87. I love my job it is varied, I learn a lot from my clients	4.27
89. I get a sense of gratitude from my job	4.27
88. Makes me appreciate my life	4.18
31. Clients are affected by management conflict	4.00
90. I like the personal connection I get with clients	3.82
81. Success stories make you stay	3.73
86. The overwhelming feelings of hopelessness when you see the revolving door as intergenerational transference	3.36
29. I love my clients	3.20
Average	**4.18**

Cluster Six: Burn Out is on the Herizon

45. Working alone, no ability to debrief after critical incident	4.00
69. Decisions made on night shift are made alone	4.00
33. 24/7 always open…it's exhausting, 365 days a year	4.00
74. When clients length of stay is up, they may become homeless	3.82
75. The length of stay at shelter puts pressure on staff	3.82
44. Should never have to work alone, safety issues	3.64
67. Exhaustion, physical, mental, emotionally	3.27
61. No ability to debrief—limited confidentiality, secrecy contributes to isolation	3.00
76. It's the workers fault if clients go past their stay	2.45
Average	**3.56**

Cluster Seven: Burnt Offerings

63. Personal cost to family unit, working shifts work/rotation as a shelter worker	4.18
72. There is a lack of positive male role models in shelter	4.09
65. Impacts relationships with friends, changes relationship or ends it	3.64
77. Revolving door of clients	3.36
78. Hard to change client's behavior or situation during her stay	3.36
62. Family members, personal supports are not included in your work life	3.36
83. Language barriers	3.27
64. Family members worry about my job	3.27
70. No male workers in shelter except in follow up or outreach	3.09
82. Accused of being racist	1.91
Average	**3.35**