**SERVING CHILDREN IN WOMEN'S SHELTERS:
AN OTTAWA CASE STUDY**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the needs and services available to children in emergency shelters for women who have been abused. A case study approach is used and includes interviews with workers with specific responsibilities for children. The negative effects of domestic violence on children emphasize the need for specific services. Shelters can provide a unique opportunity to assist children in their healing. However, in discussing the needs of these children, the complex environment in which shelters must work is revealed. The internal challenges of shelter living is compounded by the many external systems with which shelters interact. Offering services which are both respectful and understanding of children's circumstances is clearly a complex task. This study highlights the contradictions and struggles that Children's Workers must face when offering services to children escaping violence. In addition, taking into account these challenges, implications for services have been developed.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

“Children who witness their mothers being abused are victims of abuse. Advocating for and ensuring the development of appropriate services for these children is essential to meeting their needs and the needs of their mothers...Ending violence in the family is everybody’s responsibility.”

(Community Framework Committee of Ottawa-Carleton, 1993, p. 11)

1.1 Preface

Of the many factors that can place a child at risk, domestic violence is one of the most pervasive and complex, as it is not restricted to any particular class, ethnic, or social group (Drinane & Halpern, 2001). Professionals working in the area of child protection and those focusing on violence against women, typically deal with the same issues (e.g., lack of safe, affordable housing and daycare), and often with the same families (Spears, 1996). Domestic violence¹ and its relationship to child abuse has been documented repeatedly (Hamilton & Bourus, D.U.; National Clearinghouse, 2003; Humphreys et al., 2001). In fact, children living in violent homes exhibit some of the same warning signs as battered children. Thus, exposure to domestic violence places children at risk and special attention must be taken to address its deleterious effects².

¹ For the purpose of this paper, domestic violence includes the physical, sexual, or psychological assault of women, including “threats and intimidation, humiliating and controlling behaviors, withholding of finances, deprivation, isolation, belittling and constantly criticizing” (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000, p. 18) by their male partners. It is generally accepted that the vast majority of the victims of domestic violence are women (Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Service, 2000; Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

² Exposure to domestic violence places children at risk of being abused, observing violence and being neglected (McGuigan, Vuchinich, & Pratt, 2000).

Children who are most likely to have been exposed to domestic violence are those who are staying in shelters for abused women. Although their stay is relatively short (on average, about 12 weeks), shelters have a unique opportunity to help children heal from the trauma that they have experienced.

In view of the negative effects that exposure to domestic violence can have on children, coupled with the possible consequences of living in temporary shelters, it is reasonable to suggest that the needs of these children require special consideration to enable them to deal effectively with their situation. However, an initial review of the literature reveals that there is very little information on what services children who are living in battered women's shelters need, what services exist, or the most appropriate way to deliver services.

Children living in shelters for abused women are in need of a safer place to stay, are unsure of how and why the abuse happened, and many feel guilty or at times responsible (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001). Children fleeing abusive homes with their mother may be suffering severe emotional pain and loss. Often they are ashamed of their situations and become withdrawn, anxious, bored and depressed (Atwood Shelter, 2003). These children need to feel competent and in control of some areas of their lives. Shelters, therefore, can play an important role in helping children and their mothers confront the multitude of issues by considering the specific and unique needs of each child, as well as their individual experiences (Atwood Shelter, 2003; Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001).

This research used the case study approach to examine services and service delivery for children in first-stage shelters³ in Ottawa. One method in the case study involved interviews with staff with primary responsibility for children. The objective of the research was to identify the needs of, and the appropriate service responses to children living in temporary women's shelters. Informed by a child-centered developmental approach and a structural feminist analytic framework of analysis, it is anticipated that the findings of this study will assist in the development of more responsive and integrated services to this vulnerable population.

1.2 Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to:

- 1) identify the specific needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women;
- 2) identify and analyze the services that are presently available for children at first-stage women's shelters in Ottawa; and
- 3) develop concrete and feasible recommendations for providing services and Children's Programs in first-stage shelters that take into account not only immediate needs and issues with respect to

³ First-stage Shelter: This term refers to emergency, short-term shelters for women and children fleeing violence.

living in a temporary women's shelter, but also to recognize and incorporate knowledge regarding exposure to domestic violence.

1.3 Significance of Topic

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the issue of domestic violence started to become publicly recognized as a social problem. As knowledge and recognition of this problem grew, research and services for battered women followed. Over the next 10 years, one of the greatest changes in service delivery was the growing concern and program development for children of battered women (MacLeod, 1987). Unfortunately, although concern regarding the children had grown considerably in service and policy circles, it did not manifest itself in a wide range of service options (MacLeod, 1987). Funding specifically for Children's Programs was either low or nonexistent, with child-care workers generally being paid the lowest salaries of all shelter workers (MacLeod, 1987). Several years later, Rog and Huebner (1992) stated that, "it is fair to say that the knowledge base on...service interventions for homeless families and children is virtually nonexistent" (p. 130). Today, even though there is significant literature on the effects of domestic violence on children, and on the effects of residing in temporary shelters, there still appears to be very little literature that focuses on the service needs of children in shelters for abused women.

Given the limited literature currently available on the topic, further research in this area could be extremely beneficial to service providers in shelters working with

children who have experienced domestic violence. Since the lack of well-developed knowledge and understanding regarding the effectiveness of interventions may lessen the ability of workers to make reasoned choices when tackling the multiple dimensions of a problem (Rog & Huebner, 1992), this research may be helpful in assisting those working with these children.

The lives of many children are affected by domestic violence. In Ontario over 29,810 women and dependent children were admitted to battered women's shelters between April 1999 and March 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2003). Of the 2,826 women in 464 shelters across Canada on April 17, 2000, 80% were seeking shelter from an abusive spouse or ex-spouse (Statistics Canada, 2002). Fifty-three percent of the known women escaping abusive situations were admitted with their children and 75% of the children were under the age of 10 years (Statistics Canada, 2003).

In light of the serious consequences of domestic violence, and the number of children who are affected, it is important to focus on ways to improve services to children in shelters so that services can be as beneficial as possible and not cause further stress or trauma. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will provide information to Children's Workers in first-stage shelters to help improve and sensitize services to meet the needs of this vulnerable population.

1.4 Analytic Framework

This research is guided by three overlapping analytic frameworks: a child-centered approach, a feminist framework, and a structural approach to social work.

Considering that this study focuses on the Children's Programs and services for children in shelters, the primary focus is on the children and how their needs are being met while living in a women's shelter. However, because so much of a child's well-being is tied to his/her mother, the feminist framework is used to focus on how the shelters support women in their role as mothers. While a feminist framework is arguably a structural approach, the use of a broader structural approach assists in linking the status of women and children to the broader socio-economic structures of society. This is important, as children's services in shelters cannot be isolated from the way that society operates to support, or not support women and children who attempt to leave abusive situations with their children.

1.4.1 Child-Centered Approach

Traditionally, the response to women and children experiencing domestic violence was to support the women for their safety and well-being and to assume that the mothers, in turn, would meet their children's needs (Baker & Dillon, 2001; Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). However, it is increasingly recognized by child welfare advocates that children also have needs that must be addressed independently of their caregivers (Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). In addition, the vulnerability and dependency of children require a societal obligation to protect their needs. Exposure to domestic violence can differentially affect a child depending on, among other factors, age, cognitive ability or gender. Therefore, it is important to recognize and address a child's individual needs.

The presumption that exposure to woman abuse in parental relationships is problematic for their children's development is common across numerous theoretical perspectives. Research employing family systems theory, social learning theory, trauma theory, theories relating to consistencies in cognitive style, the transmission of affect or spillover, and developmental psychopathology have all provided empirical evidence to suggest that exposure to woman abuse is a risk factor associated with a variety of behavior problems (Margolin, Oliver, & Medina, 2001). This research used a child-centered approach to help understand how exposure to domestic violence can affect a child in numerous aspects of their lives (e.g. interactions at school, interactions with his/her mother, peers and other adults). This approach also recognizes that, despite the need for independent services for children, because so much of a child's well-being is tied to his/her caregiver, support to his/her mother is critical.

The child-centered approach to research starts from the child, and works outwards to the social and political systems around him/her. It is understood that the child develops within a complex system of relationships (Berk, 1997), and that the needs of the child are kept foremost. Although it is important for those who are working with children who have witnessed domestic violence to have a sound knowledge of child development, it is equally important to have a broad understanding of the many environments in which a child interacts, such as family, school, social and cultural (Baker & Dillon, 2001). Thus, the recommendations that develop from this research are guided by an understanding of how exposure to domestic violence affects children and the complex social environments in which

most children in Canada live. While the child-centered approach is useful in establishing a guide to practice, it does not look at the issue of power and control based on gender, which have formed the basis of understanding domestic violence (Baker & Dillon, 2001). A feminist framework is necessary to gain a greater understanding.

1.4.2 Feminist Framework

In Canada in 2000, women made up the vast majority of victims of all categories of spousal violence reported to the police (e.g. kidnapping 99%, sexual assault 98%, criminal harassment 88%, uttering threats 86%, common assault 86%, homicide and attempted murder 72%) (Statistics Canada, 2002). The pervasiveness of abuse perpetrated by men against women makes a gender-based analysis of this problem essential. This study uses a feminist framework to analyze how the issue of power is addressed by shelters. Moreover, because women are the principal care-providers in shelters, a feminist framework is helpful in analyzing not only how this work is done, but also how caring-work is generally not recognized and is undervalued.

Although feminist perspectives vary, they all reflect the belief that women suffer from systematic social injustices because of their sex (Whelehan, 1995). As Evans states, “any feminist is, at the very minimum, committed to some form or reappraisal of the position of women in society” (Evans, from Whelehan, 1995, p. 25). This research views woman abuse as rooted in the history of capitalist, patriarchal relations. Schechter cogently sums up this view when she writes:

“[woman abuse is a] historical expression of male domination manifested within the family and currently reinforced by the institutions, economic arrangements, and sexist division of labor within capitalist society” (Schechter, from hooks, 2000, p. 117-118).

Using a feminist perspective that centers the analyses on the significance of women’s unpaid labor, this study explores the connection of women’s labor to other forms of work. As pointed out by Baines, Evans, and Neysmith (1991), much of women’s caring-work is largely invisible and, thus, not considered part of our current definitions of labor. This lack of validation for women’s caring-work occurs in the public sphere where it remains invisible and undervalued.

Since shelters for battered women and children are predominantly staffed by women, a feminist analysis of this work recognizes and acknowledges much of the caring-work done in the shelters by the staff. It also highlights and uncovers the many dilemmas and complexities that exist in the relationship between the women residing at the shelter and the staff.

Feminists focus on power to understand, criticize, challenge, subvert, and ultimately overturn the multiple axes of stratification affecting women in contemporary Western societies (Allen, 1999). This research views power as a complex relationship that involves the ability to control, act, affect, produce, impact, or to influence oneself, others, events, or feelings (Velduis, 2001).

Shelter staff are often aware of power issues with respect to the act of violence between the mother and the abuser. But they must also be aware of the differential power relations between the shelter staff and mothers, and how this may affect the child(ren). This is important as lack of recognition of power may be

harmful (Velduis, 2001).

Much of a child's well-being is wrapped up in the well-being of his/her mother. By using a feminist framework of motherhood⁴, this research will examine how effectively shelters recognize the women's role as mothers. This is significant as there are numerous consequences associated with the invisibility of women as mothers in shelter settings, not only for the women but also for the children accompanying her (Krane & Davies, 2002). In addition, as long as society delegates the care of children to women, women will inevitably be held accountable for the welfare of their children.

This research focused on analyzing services and service delivery for children in women's shelters. However, this could not have been accomplished without insight and understanding of the woman's experience of domestic violence on her role as parent (Baker & Dillon, 2001). Therefore, the true nature of prevention of violence within the child's life aligns itself with the parallel support for his/her mother (Baker & Dillon, 2001; Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). Those working with children who have witnessed domestic violence need to understand the complex dynamics of domestic violence, and how this affects a woman, her relationship with her child(ren), and her role as a mother.

Just as a mother's well-being can affect her child's, so can the actions/well-being of the father/male caregiver. The issue of male caregivers is, therefore,

⁴ Although early feminist thinking has evolved from equating motherhood with frustration, oppression, and exclusion from public life, to romanticized portraits of mothers, contemporary feminists have continued to rethink motherhood with a focus on the divergent and specific experiences of women, mediated by race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and ability (Krane & Davies, 2002).

significant as children who have witnessed women abuse may not have been exposed to positive male role models. Furthermore, some feminist theorists have pointed to the problems that arise when parenting is done exclusively by women. For example, female parenting gives children few role models of male parenting and perpetuates the idea that parenting is a woman's vocation. This research also examined how shelters address the issue of exposing children to male caregivers/role models.

Since power and access to resources are not evenly distributed, it is also necessary to understand how inequalities are built into the social systems. The structural approach can take the feminist analysis one step further, and keeping in line with the child-centered approach, examine the structural context of not only personal, but also social problems.

1.4.3 Structural Social Work

Influenced by Marxist and feminist theories, structural social work strives to change the interactions between people and the structural contexts. The structural approach is a generalist model that does not prioritize the various forms of oppression, nor does it enter a false dichotomy between the personal and political (Mullaly, 1997). Instead, both the personal and political level is addressed simultaneously, and all forms of oppression are viewed as intersecting (Mullaly, 1997).

Violence against women is viewed as the result of the social economic and political oppressions built into the structure of society and reinforced through

ideologies and actions. The idea that most social problems serve to benefit some, while costing others, suggests that opportunities and resources are unequally distributed. This calls attention to the systematic discrimination that occurs (Goldberg Wood & Middleman, 1989), rather than to a model that emphasizes the personal deficits of individuals. Consequently, the objectives of intervention would be to empower⁵ women by aiding them in exercising their own power to obtain resources as well as to make political and structural changes. This is a particularly challenging task for those services directed towards women and children who have experienced domestic violence, as chronic under-funding and recent government cuts to women's shelters have had drastic consequences⁶.

An understanding of the state's role with respect to funding and regulating services is, thus, critical to this study. This research also examined how the lack of support to women and children fleeing abuse is built into the structure of society, and how shelters work within these structures to advocate for change.

The goal of structural social work is to transform the social structures that cause the negative effects on people (Mullaly, 1997). This study explored how shelters support children and their mothers in dealing with the effects of domestic violence (e.g. through counseling and other programs inside and outside of the shelter) as well as how shelter staff viewed their role in working within the many systems that influence a child's well-being. The term 'structural' is, therefore, both

⁵ Empower: Entails the ability to deal effectively with the forces that undermine and hinder coping and in achieving control over one's destiny (Pinderhughes, from Pryce, 1993).

⁶ In 1995, the 22% cut to social assistance, joined with cuts to child care, legal aid, housing, welfare and other social supports meant women faced increased barriers, leaving many abused women and their children trapped (Morrow, 2003a).

descriptive and prescriptive. It describes the problems that are built into the present social order, but it also prescribes the focus for change that is primarily on the structures of society and not solely on the individual (Mullaly, 1997). This is an important concept to keep in mind when working with women and children who have experienced domestic violence in order not to re-victimize or ‘blame’ them for their current situation.

The three analytic frameworks are used to gain a better understanding of the internal workings of the shelters as well as the influences of the external environment. This study examined how children’s needs are addressed within the shelter both independently and in conjunction with their mothers. The following chapter illustrates through the use of existing literature, the need for shelters and services for women and children fleeing violence.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

An initial review of the literature⁷ revealed that there was very little information on what services children who are living in battered women's shelters need, what services exist, or the most appropriate way to deliver services. Literature about the effects of domestic violence on children can assist in understanding the needs of this population in order to develop services; however, living in a shelter presents unique challenges that must also be addressed. Therefore, this literature review is organized around two broad topics: the effects of domestic violence on children and the effects/challenges of shelter living. The purpose of this literature review is to identify the issues that may be associated with exposure to domestic violence and shelter life, as well as to recognize the opportunities that shelters have when working with women and children.

2.1 Women and Domestic Violence

In the 1980s when domestic violence began to be recognized as a social problem, the expectation that women should stay with the violent man 'for the sake of the children' was particularly prevalent (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000). This

⁷ The literature reviewed in this chapter is primarily North American, and only English Canadian material has been examined. Although the issue of violence against women and children intersects numerous disciplines (e.g., law, medical, education), literature used in this review is primarily drawn from the fields of sociology, psychology, and social work.

emphasis on keeping families together was reflected both in the research that maintained that children are best cared for by both parents, and a shift away in policy emphasis from keeping children in care (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000).

The 1990s witnessed a shift where the onus was on women to protect their children and this increasingly translated into demands by child protection agencies that women leave violent men (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000). This was in part due to increasing research indicating the negative effects on children living with violence, and the recognition that women and their children may be better off leaving abusers. Although this change in attitude and practice clearly demonstrates a step forward, many women experienced it as punitive. Mothers who did not feel that they could leave their partners because of economic or cultural reasons, or because they feared for their safety may have found themselves involved with child protection agencies that interpreted their “decision” to stay with an abusive partner as “failing to protect” the child (Humphreys et al., 2001).

Although research demonstrates that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon that can affect a woman physically, emotionally, psychologically and/or economically, many systems, policies and practices fail to adequately recognize that the interests of the abused parent and the children are generally best served when considered together. Child protection policies and laws need to reflect the understanding that women’s primary responsibility for child care renders them uniquely vulnerable to domestic violence by not only constraining their ability to leave abusive relationships but also limiting their capacity to negotiate divorce settlements to their own and their children’s advantage (Bonhuys, 1999). Low-

paying, insecure work and a lack of good, safe, affordable child care and housing further limits a mother's options when in an abusive situation. Understanding how domestic violence affects a woman in her role as a mother is critical in order to help not only the mother, but also the child.

When a battered woman admits to being a victim, she risks, on the one hand, involvement in the child protective system which can remove her child(ren) and, on the other hand, a partner who can escalate the abuse (Magen, Conroy, & Del Tufo, 2000). Furthermore, as noted by Swift (1998), mothers are so heavily implicated in the causes of neglect, that the literature is generally focused on changing the behavior of mothers and improving their functioning in the mothering role. The reality beneath the surface for many of these mothers is a life of violence and abuse by their partners, a life of poverty and marginalization.

Upon examining how social work practices have changed and developed over time, it is clear that women have consistently, unfairly and unreasonably been blamed for "failing to protect their children." This is, in part, because the complex dynamics of domestic violence have not been adequately taken into account, and issues surrounding neglect are underdeveloped. For example, mothers who are abused by their partner are at an increased risk of being identified as neglecting their children. This may be because much of their time and energy is focused on the abuser and/or because of the many harms that they have sustained. Moreover, mothers who have themselves experienced violence may be less able to foster the healthy development of their children since so much of their time and attention is focused on safety and survival issues (Hamilton & Bourus, D.U.). Mothers who are victims of domestic

violence may give their full attention to the abuser in an attempt to appease and control the level of violence; conversely, they may be unresponsive to their children due to their own fears (National Clearinghouse, 2003).

Some victims of domestic violence are so afraid that their abusive partner will focus their anger on the children that they over-discipline them in an effort to control the children's behavior and to protect them from what they perceive as greater abuse (National Clearinghouse, 2003). As a result women may be viewed by the courts and child protection workers as neglecting their children when they are, in fact, attempting to protect them from the abusive parent; for example, a mother who sedates her child in order to keep it sleeping in an attempt to maintain the abusive partner's attention away from the child.

Child protection policies and Ontario legislation are beginning to take the presence of violence in the home as a determining factor when assessing a child's safety (Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, 2002a; Children's Aid Society of Ottawa 2002b; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2000). In fact, exposure to domestic violence is the major reason child protection investigations have increased in the last five years (Trocme, Fallon, MacLaurin, and Copp, 2002). However, this may make it more difficult for women to disclose violence, as they may fear losing their children. As pointed out by Drinane and Halpern (2001), "child protective agencies and the judiciary nationwide have held battered parents liable for either actual or derivative harm to their children due to exposure to domestic violence and, as a result, have penalized women when they are unsuccessful in shielding their children from violence" (p. 341).

In March 2000, amendments to the *Child and Family Service Act* made it a duty for certain professionals who work with children (e.g. teachers, daycare workers, shelter workers etc.) to report to the Children's Aid Society if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection. A professional person would be guilty of an offense if he or she does not report a suspicion when the information on which it was based was obtained in the course of his/her professional duties. Consequently, violence against women advocates fear that mandatory reporting may cause women to become even more reluctant to disclose information about the violence for fear of losing their children. Although shelter staff must report suspected incidents of child abuse, they can support mothers through that process. Shelter staff can help minimize the secondary victimization that many abused women experience when involved with child protection agencies⁸.

Understanding how domestic violence affects women's ability to parent is necessary in order to offer services to the women that do not re-victimize them. Knowing how domestic violence affects the children will not only improve services and service delivery to the children, but along with the knowledge of how domestic violence affects women, services can empower women in their role as mothers while at the same time effectively assisting children. It is clear that no one concerned with child protection and welfare can afford to ignore the reality of violence against women (Spears, 1996). It is equally important that the challenges of responding sensitively to these complex situations are not ignored.

⁸ Many have argued that the child welfare system ignores the poverty and powerlessness inherent in many battered women's lives.

2.2 Children and Domestic Violence

Exposure to domestic violence increases the risk of harm to children living in the home. Not only are children at risk of physical abuse, but the emotional trauma that they experience may have many long-term negative effects (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000; Bonthuys, 1999; Timm, 1997).

Domestic violence and its relationship to child abuse has been documented repeatedly (Hamilton & Bourus, D.U.; Humphreys et al., 2001; Copping, 1996). In fact, children living in violent homes who are not themselves abused, exhibit some of the same warning signs as do children who are physically abused. They may, for example, show preoccupation in play, artwork with themes of violence, interpersonal aggression, low self-esteem and poor school performance (Hamilton & Bourus, D.U.). Understanding the relation between domestic violence and child abuse is important for shelter staff in order for them to be able to work more effectively with the women and children they serve.

2.2.1 Link Between Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

The link between domestic violence and child abuse is supported by the growing body of research. Studies indicate that an overlap exists between violence against children and violence against women in the same families (National Clearinghouse, 2003; Smith Slep & O'Leary, 2001). Child abuse is more likely to exist in homes where women are abused and, similarly, where children are experiencing abuse, the likelihood that mothers are also being abused is significant.

In addition, studies have shown that mothers who had experienced domestic violence during the first year of their child's life developed a significantly more negative view of their child (McGuigan, Vuchinich, & Pratt, 2000). Therefore, children living in homes where domestic violence is present are at an increased risk of harm--of being physically or emotionally abused, of observing domestic violence between caregivers, and of being neglected.

Children whose mothers have been abused by their partners are more likely than other children to become victims of violence directed against them. They may be attacked when they try to intervene or the abuser may attack the children as part of the attack on their mother (Bonthuys, 1999; Humphreys et al., 2001). While most studies focus on the male as the perpetrator of violence against both the woman and the child, Straus and Gelles (1990) suggest that women who are victims of domestic violence are at least twice as likely to abuse their children physically than are women who are not abused.

Studies have shown that the majority of children living in situations of domestic violence also witness the incidents of violence (Humphreys et al., 2001). Children can 'witness' it in a number of different ways beyond direct observation (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000). They may hear the violence, or observe the injuries that have resulted (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000). This is particularly significant as various negative effects have been documented for children who have witnessed domestic violence (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998; Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000; Bonthuys, 1999; National Clearinghouse, 2003; Timm, 1997).

2.2.2 Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Children who observe domestic violence display symptoms and behaviors similar to children who are physically abused. In fact, the majority of child witnesses of abuse can also be said to be at a high risk for developing more serious problems (Coping, 1996). Children exposed to domestic violence, on average, have greater behavioral, emotional, social and academic problems than non-exposed children (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998). Exposure to domestic violence has been linked to sleep disturbances, bed-wetting, separation anxiety, depression, failure to thrive, eating disorders, seductive or manipulative behavior, fear of abandonment or loss of control, the tendency to run away, becoming pregnant early, experiencing suicidal or homicidal thoughts, or engaging in drug or alcohol abuse (Bonthuys, 1999; National Clearinghouse, 2003; Rossman, 1997; Timm, 1997).

These children are often fearful of their own safety, the safety of loved ones, and are confused, angry or sad in witnessing the injury of their caregiver (Rossman, 1997; Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). Guilt and shame often accompany constant fear, making children more vulnerable to problems because they are chronically stressed. They become more reactive to conflict, and may learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve arguments (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998; Gully, Koller, & Ainsworth, 2001).

Research has found that growing up in violent homes increases the likelihood that as adults, boys will become physically abusive to their partners, while girls are more likely to accept abuse in their later relationships (Timm, 1997; Coping, 1996; Paymar, 1993). Boys who witness domestic violence are consistently described as

being more aggressive to their mothers (Coping, 1996), and have been found to exhibit violent behavior three times as frequently as girls; they also exhibit higher degrees of externalized, internalized and impaired interpersonal relations (Coping, 1996). Finally, exposure to physical abuse and the negative behaviors that children may demonstrate are behaviors which also have been found to be characteristic of abusive adult relationships (Dutton, 2000; Coping, 1996). The effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence not only affect children as they are growing up, but also influence their adult relationships. Although exposure to domestic violence needs to be regarded as a form of psychological/emotional maltreatment that must be recognized and addressed by all the systems servicing mothers (i.e. legal and child protection systems), this needs to be done in a way that does not re-victimize the women.

In Canada, a number of institutions, including the courts and child welfare services have begun to acknowledge the negative effects of domestic violence (Bala, 2000). However, many domestic violence advocates are concerned that child protection agencies tend to focus on problems such as drug and alcohol abuse (Humphreys et al., 2001), and fail to comprehend or ignore the multiple and complex dynamics of domestic violence. Thus, there is a role for shelter staff who help women and children who have experienced domestic violence in working with child protection agencies.

2.2.3 Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

Despite the growing recognition of the overlap between child maltreatment and domestic violence, the delivery of coordinated services to children and women who have experienced abuse continues to be fragmented and insufficient. This reality may be due to the fact that domestic violence and child protective services are at different points in their development. These services have differing philosophies and mandates; they use different professional terminology; and they generally see themselves as having different missions (National Clearinghouse, 2003). Unfortunately, what tends to occur is that shelter workers regard child welfare workers as blaming the victims of violence and punishing them for failing to protect themselves and their children. Conversely, child welfare workers tend to regard women's advocates as protecting mothers without regard to child safety (Spears, 1996). The separation of such services and perspectives, in turn, has detrimental effects on mothers and children. Children's Workers in shelters for abused women can make an important contribution by acting as intermediaries, keeping the children's needs and safety foremost, while at the same time working with, and understanding the mother's situation.

Interventions in shelters have typically focused on finding safe, adequate, affordable housing for the abused woman, counseling for herself and her children, and the development of emergency safety plans. Although these are beneficial and essential steps, the escalation of violence when a woman attempts to leave an abusive relationship may be severe enough to discourage her. The escalation of violence, the threat of losing custody to the abusive parent, along with the tremendous economic

responsibilities are primary reasons a woman may not leave. In fact, for many women, primary responsibility of childcare frequently translates into economic dependency on the batterer. These women may not have the economic resources to provide for themselves and their children after leaving the batterer (Bonthuys, 1999) because of low-paying and/or insecure jobs.

Although many women and children fleeing violent homes stay with friends, relatives or find new accommodations, there are a large number of women who turn to shelters specifically developed to meet their needs. Leaving their homes and having to adjust to living in a shelter, even for a short period, can be very traumatic for a young child (Epps, 1998), as it typically occurs at a time of severe crisis in the family (Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). Even if children view the move as a safe transition, many will still feel a sense of loss for their family unit and/or feel scared about the uncertainty of what is to come. It needs to be recognized that removing a child from his or her home can be, in itself, a traumatic experience, and that this may be compounded by the child's fear for the battered parent's safety (Drinane & Halpern, 2001).

2.3 Shelters for Abused Women and Children

Today in Canada, shelters for abused women and children exist in every province and territory (Statistics Canada, 2002). In 2000, there were 508 shelters, of which, only 18 existed prior to 1975, with the largest period of growth in the 1980s as

the issues of violence against women and family violence gained attention at all levels of government (Statistics Canada, 2002). Although early shelter operators had very little experience to guide them in their planning and management (Shostack, 2001), today many women's shelters consist of outreach activities, counseling for residents and non-residents, telephone crisis counseling, community education, advocacy, specialized services for older women, along with collaboration with law enforcements, schools and welfare professionals (Statistics Canada, 2003; Shostack, 2001). However, despite the growth in the number, size, and complexity of domestic violence programs, there are few sources of detailed information on how to plan and operate effective shelters for battered women (Shostack, 2001).

2.3.1 Effects of Shelter Life on Children

Literature on the effects of living in shelters for abused women is very limited. Although it is the belief of this writer that shelters can act as a temporary safe-haven and present a unique opportunity to offer services for women and children, most research focuses on the negative effects of general shelter living. However, understanding the negative consequences that may be associated with residing in an emergency shelter is critical to this research in order to develop recommendations for programs and intervention. The effects of homelessness and living in a shelter are also discussed in this section since many homeless children reside in shelters for domestic violence and have been exposed to domestic violence (Gully, Koller, & Ainsworth, 2001). It is important to recognize that the needs of children residing in emergency shelters for abused women may be unique.

A permanent, secure home has been identified as one of the key requirements for the positive development of self-confidence in children (Epps, 1998). Research has suggested that the experience of living in a shelter can have long-term negative effects on children's emotional development (e.g. anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and low perceived efficacy) (Huang & Mebke, 2001). Also, shelter life itself may be stressful for children. Some of the stresses that have been identified include the environment of shelters, the transient residents, lack of privacy, noise level, structured routines, and limited autonomy (Huang & Mebke, 2001; Koblinsky, Gordon, & Anderson, 2000).

The experience of living closely with other families in crisis along with changes with respect to daily routines, can be very stressful for children. In addition, given the multiple stressors that children living in shelters may have been exposed to prior to their arrival (e.g. abuse, war, torture, domestic violence), it is not surprising that these children have been found to have more developmental delays, physical and mental health problems, behavior problems, and learning difficulties than other children (Huang & Mebke, 2001; Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999; Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998; Menke, & Wagner, 1997). Problems most often identified in children who are living in shelters include: short attention span, anxiety, withdrawal, aggressiveness, destructive or disobedient behaviors, sleep disorders, poor social interactions and delays in gross motor, speech, and language (Strawser, Markos, Yamaguchi, & Higgins, 2000).

Significant academic and behavioral problems in school have been noted among children who live in a temporary shelter (Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999;

Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). Problems include lower rates of school attendance, higher levels of behavior problems, and higher rates of grade failure (Reganick, 1997; Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999). Thus, close-working relationships between schools and shelters may be an area to target services for children.

Living in close proximity to other families and a rapid change in residents, increase the risk of health problems for children (Reganick, 1997). Although the physical health problems of children in shelters are basically the same as those of children living in their own homes (e.g., upper respiratory and ear infections, skin ailments, gastrointestinal problems, lice infestation, fever, coughs and colds, dehydration, and diarrhea), they occur up to twice as often (Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998), thereby posing an additional problem for shelter residents.

A study by Reganick (1997) suggests that the loss of personal possessions may lead to destructive and aggressive behaviors. It has also been found that over time, many homeless children and adolescents either consciously or unconsciously decide they cannot trust anyone (Reganick, 1997). As well, abrupt moves into shelters can foster feelings of confusion and helplessness. Children in shelters may fear that their mothers will leave them behind which can cause chronic anxiety, aggressiveness or withdrawn behavior. Inadequate social skills such as difficulty in sharing; over-protectiveness of their limited belongings; insecurity regarding clothing that is, or is perceived to be, substandard; an inability to practice good hygiene; and a tendency to develop inappropriate, overly-friendly relationships with adults have been identified as risks to children in shelters (Reganick, 1997).

Given the negative effects that exposure to domestic violence has on children, along with the potentially negative effects that are associated with shelter living, children residing in battered women's shelters are likely to be under considerable stress and vulnerable to experiencing long-term negative consequences. Understandably, shelter staff working with children who have experienced domestic violence have a unique and complex job.

As noted earlier, many women who leave violent relationships stay with family or friends, in hotels, or find their own living accommodations. As a result, it may be that women who are coming to shelters are especially vulnerable as they may be more socially isolated and financially dependent than other women in abusive relationships.

2.3.2 Working with Children

Despite the many negative effects of exposure to domestic violence and homelessness, child witnesses of domestic violence show a remarkable capacity to adapt and survive (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998). Understanding resilience in children at risk can help improve strategies of education and intervention. This is significant "not only because it informs policy, education, and intervention, but also because it adds to our knowledge of human development under diverse circumstances" (Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999, p. 113).

Understanding that stress varies among children because of differences in their levels of understanding and available coping behaviors (Huang & Mebke, 2001) can be helpful to shelter staff. Other variables mentioned in the literature that may be

linked to resilience in children include: the degree to which a child feels he/she has control, good social support network, and higher levels of self-esteem (Gully, Koller, & Ainsworth, 2001). Moreover, each child develops his/her own coping strategies, and all coping behaviors assist individuals in managing their stress (Huang & Mebke, 2001)⁹. Thus, there is a need to assess each child's stressors and coping behaviors when providing care or services in order to assist the child in decreasing negative coping strategies and strengthen functional coping behaviors. Shelter staff could then identify children as survivors, and applaud their strength for both enduring and escaping the situation (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998).

It is important for those working with children in shelters for abused women to understand the children's needs so that programs and services can be as beneficial as possible during their stay. Protection, appropriate cognitive stimulation and supportive relationships are the three basic components that have been identified in the literature as the basic needs of children while living in a shelter (Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998).

Many children in shelters experience delayed speech, language, cognition, social and motor development (Reganick, 1997). Children who come to shelters should not be expected to behave like other children their own age, as such expectations can cause further stress (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, from Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998).

⁹ Note: Although a coping behavior may be positive in that it assists in managing certain stressors, the actual behavior may not be functional in other aspects of their lives. For example, a child who becomes extremely withdrawn in order to avoid bringing the batterer's attention to him/herself and, consequently, does poorly in school and in other peer interactions.

A relatively large number of children in shelters do not experience a sense of permanence and connection to community, neighbors, services, friends and schools; consequently, they find it difficult to develop lasting and supportive relationships (Reganick, 1997). A structured, predictable environment is essential to counteract the effects of this instability (Molnar, 1998). It is, therefore, understandable that school attendance is emphasized in the literature as an important stabilizer for these children (Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). In light of the negative consequences associated with shelter living, it is particularly important that shelters actively work to counteract these negative effects.

Shelters need to provide services that encourage and support women in their role as mothers. It has been found that women's positive involvement is a critical indicator of whether a child who is living in a shelter will be enrolled in school (Strawser, Markos, Yamaguchi, & Higgins, 2000). Miliotis, Sesma Jr., and Masten (1999) note that close parent-child relationships and high parental involvement in their child's education are associated with school success as measured by school records of achievement and behavior in school. Furthermore, a parent's intellectual functioning, education level, psychological distress or firm disciplinary practices were unrelated to the child's academic success. Shelter staff can help children academically and emotionally by fostering mother-child interactions. Positive working relationships between mothers and shelter staff are, therefore, paramount.

2.3.3 *Mother-Staff Relations*

Not only do shelter services have to be flexible in order to meet the multiple and diverse needs of the children, but they must also do so in a way that supports the mother in her role as a parent, as much of the children's health and safety are contingent on their mother (Harms, Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). Unfortunately, research suggests that the actual practice in shelter settings may not adequately address women in their mothering role and, thus, fail to adequately serve them (Krane & Davies, 2002).

In many shelters mothers may be subjected to considerable monitoring. They may, for example, have to check in and out, verify their baby-sitting arrangements, and adhere to a variety of rules while in the shelter (Krane & Davies, 2002; Molnar, 1998). As a result, the experience of parenting in shelters has been identified as a "double crisis" as explained by Molnar (1998).

An observational study of the relationship between mothers and their children staying in Atlanta shelters revealed what the researcher called the "unraveling" of the mother's role as a consequence of shelter living. Where once it was the mother's prerogative as to when and what to eat and where and how to secure food, clothing, housing, and health care, now it is everyone's responsibility and the resumption of childlike behaviors, as the role of "provider, family head, organizer, and standard setter" is taken over by others (Molnar, 1998, p. 16).

As shelters assume the responsibility for determining elements of the daily routine such as bedtimes, mealtimes, menus etc., an undermining of the parents' role may easily occur (Reganick, 1997). Mothers may feel powerless, and/or be perceived as such by their children, since a parent who is unable to provide for a child can lose

status in the child's eyes. (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998; Reganick, 1997).

Shelters should be aware of this and respond appropriately by having services that support women in their role as mothers, as this will benefit children, and also avoid further victimizing the women.

Secondary victimization¹⁰ is commonly experienced by victims of domestic violence. Frequently it is reported to be more painful and traumatic than the episodes of violence, as it is caused by those who function in a caregiver or protector role (Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997). For instance, a woman who turns to a shelter for help and discloses that the abuser also attacked the child, may be in danger of losing her child for 'failing to protect'. Minimization or denial of the trauma, or panic attacks may, in fact, be coping mechanism for women who have experienced abuse (Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997). Avoiding gender stereotypes, recognizing the traumatic event, and respecting privacy can reduce victimizing mothers for a second time (Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997).

Women's shelters must support mothers in their parenting roles by affirming their ability to nurture, protect, and teach their children. Since research has shown that a mother's level of psychological distress is strongly correlated to her child's emotional and behavioral adjustment (Kelly, Buehlman, & Caldwell, 2000), increasingly, supporting non-abusive mothers is considered the most positive approach in child protection where domestic violence is an issue (Hester, Pearson, &

¹⁰ Secondary victimization: This refers to the victimization which occurs, not as a direct result of the criminal act (i.e. domestic violence), but through the response of institutions and individuals to the victim (United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, 1999).

Harwin, 2000; Kelly, Buehlman, & Caldwell, 2000). Shelter services must be sensitive to the many factors that influence a woman's choice, and be flexible to her various needs by offering support in a number of different ways.

Children's Programs need to assist children while at the same time foster an atmosphere of respect for the mothers. Although the research supporting this concept is extensive, the application of this knowledge in intervention practice is minimal. In fact, the most common practices in early intervention are not directed at improving the quality of parent-child interactions (Kelly, Buehlman, & Caldwell, 2000).

2.4 Implications for Service

It is now recognized that collaborations between child welfare, domestic violence advocates, and members of the community can make families safer (National Clearinghouse, 2003). The importance of developing policies within and between agencies in order to address the extensive intervention needed in the area of domestic violence cannot be overstated. Research reports an increase in the incidents of violence after the use of a shelter irrespective of whether the woman returns to live with her partner or establishes a new living situation (Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997).

While women and children are residing in the shelter, shelter staff should not only discuss and acknowledge domestic violence with the women, but also with the children that accompany them. Shelter workers ought to address the trauma that many of the children are experiencing. Moreover, it is essential that social services cross-train staff and volunteers so that they all possess a comprehensive knowledge of

the issues for both children and protective parents (Hamilton & Bourus, D.U.).

This is significant as a supportive environment with trained staff may help to reduce externalized, negative behaviors by children (Coping, 1996).

Research emphasizes that supportive, individual counseling, along with interventions including ongoing assessments, empowerment and practice in recognizing and selecting productive life options are necessary for the resolution of trauma induced by domestic violence (Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997). However, there are numerous obstacles to service that must be acknowledged for services and programs to be successful.

2.5 Obstacles to Service

Apart from the negative effects that exposure to domestic violence and living in an emergency shelter can have, there are many added issues that shelter staff face when developing programs for these children. These issues include recognizing and reducing barriers such as lack of knowledge of the dominant language, economic issues, immigration concerns, custody concerns, or cultural ideals of gender roles and the acceptance of divorce. In addition, as noted by Rog and Huebner (1992) “although the sequential development of a knowledge base is desirable, a linear approach is not always practical or possible for emerging, complex, and relatively ill-defined social problems. In many cases, social and political pressures push for action and intervention to address the problem, often before a full understanding of the phenomenon can be realized” (p. 131). Consequently, what may result are programs

replicating services and practices that have little evidence of effectiveness, in general, let alone for the specific problem and the targeted population (Rog & Huebner, 1992). Thus, knowledge of the barriers or difficulties in servicing these children is necessary in order to provide feasible recommendations for change.

The majority of shelters are run on a “shoestring budget” and typically staff are underpaid and overworked (Choi & Snyder, 1999, MacLeod, 1987). Because programs for adults usually take priority, Children’s Programs must accommodate this situation when space and other resources are scarce (Richardson Ray, 1998). Furthermore, even though shelters offer as much support to the children as possible, the amount of support may not be sufficient enough to enable children to sustain their positive behaviors (Gully, Koller & Ainsworth, 2001). Generally, there is a lack of support and funding available to shelters and programs that support women fleeing violence. In 1995 emergency shelters experienced a 2.5 per cent provincial funding cut; and in April 1996 another cut of 2.5 per cent (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 1998).

As mentioned earlier, the shelter environment with its lack of privacy, the structured routines, and limited autonomy do not provide the ideal conditions for the development and well-being of children (Strawser, Markos, Yamaguchi, & Higgins, 2000; Choi & Snyder, 1999). Shelter staff have a very difficult and complex job, not only due to the issues that bring children to the shelter, but also because of the nature of the shelter environment and resources available.

2.6 Conclusion

In spite of the fact that many children are reasonably resilient, they need emotional and educational support to cope with the trauma of domestic violence (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998). As discussed earlier, the need to develop a service delivery plan that does not penalize or revictimize the battered parent is necessary as violence against a mother cannot be conceptually separated from the interests of her children (Bonthuys, 1999; Drinane & Halpern, 2001; Kelly, Buehlman, & Caldwell, 2000). Recent findings suggest a relationship between parents' level of depression and children's problem behaviors. This emphasizes the importance of addressing the needs of parents to support the welfare of the children (Klein & Foster, 1998). Although children require separate services specifically to address their needs, program developers must also address these needs in conjunction with their mothers.

The separate historical development and delivery of services in child welfare and services to battered woman have been compounded by numerous factors--different philosophies, various professional terminologies, and even the value placed on different outcomes (Magen, Conroy, & Del Tufo, 2000). Unfortunately, these differences have led to a failure to recognize that much of the efforts were often focused on the same family. Including and educating other professions about the detrimental effects of domestic violence is necessary. Moreover, Children's Workers in women's shelters can act as advocates to inform the numerous agencies and systems with which a child interacts.

According to residents, shelters save lives. Since the shelter experience offers far more than simply putting a roof over the heads of women and children fleeing violence, clearly, additional knowledge is needed to inform practice when working with children (Tutty, Weaver, & Rothery, 1999). Transformation in services to families living with domestic violence “ultimately must encompass not only the entire child welfare system but every other system that serves vulnerable families and children” (Usher, Gib, & Wildfire, 1995 from Savoury & Kufeldt, 1997). Education should highlight the critical link between domestic violence and child maltreatment (McGuigan, Vuchinich, & Pratt, 2000); thereby, emphasizing the need for specialized programs for children in women’s shelters.

As evident from the literature reviewed, very little has been written about the specific program needs of children living in shelters for abused women. This research is an attempt to fill a gap in the current literature and to assist those currently working with children in shelters to improve services and service delivery to children in first-stage shelters. This includes offering separate services for children while at the same time supporting the mothering role.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method: The Case Study

This study employed the case study method to accomplish the research objectives that include: 1) identifying the needs of children living in shelters for abused women; 2) identifying and analyzing the services available in Ottawa; and 3) developing feasible recommendations for programs and service delivery for children in first-stage shelters.

The case study can be viewed as one type of interpretive research. It involves an intensive, in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using several data sources which can reflect either qualitative or quantitative research methods (Ruben & Babbie, 1997). The case study enables the researcher to acknowledge the realities and contradictions of social life. This is a significant aspect of this study, as the complexities and challenges that shelters face cannot be viewed in isolation. The major sources of data came from interviews with Children's Workers in the shelters as well as representatives from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and one board member of a shelter. However, these data were supplemented by the analysis of primary documents and existing literature. These different data sources each made their own contribution to the research. Interviews with shelter staff provided important insights into the needs of children living in shelters. In many cases the existing literature that was drawn upon supported interview findings, but it

also provided additional insight. Similarly, shelter staff identified needs that were not recognized in the current literature. The primary document analysis revealed the level of funding that was actually being put into Children's Programs, and whether job descriptions explicitly stated the expectations of staff with respect to the children. Thus, the case study allowed for a much richer examination of the research questions than could be achieved through a single methodological approach (Mertens, 1998; Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Yin, 1994).

Understanding the effects of living in temporary emergency shelters and the obstacles in providing service to children in this environment was critical to the study in order to understand the problems and to develop practical recommendations. The case study enables the researcher to "capture" a complex case situation, and allowed for a considerable degree of detail and richness of understanding (Thyer, 2001). Yin (1994) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). This is a significant aspect of this research as shelters work within a complex environment. In fact, much of the services that women and children need when staying at a shelter are directly related to the other systems outside of the shelter of which they are a part (e.g. housing, schooling, child protection, legal).

A defining characteristic of the case study in social work is its focus on the environmental context. Although an in-depth review of the literature could have provided recommendations to providing services to children in shelters, the specific economic environment must also be taken into account in order for such

recommendations to be useful. Interviews with the Ministry and the Children's Workers made final suggestions more applicable to this unique situation.

On the other hand, one goal of the case study is to expand and generalize existing theories (Yin, 1994), or to make useful generalizations (Thyer, 2001). Although this research is based on the experiences of those in the Ottawa area, it is anticipated that the analysis may also be relevant beyond the Ottawa area. Child welfare legislation, under-funding and cut-backs to those services for women and children fleeing violence extend across the province. In addition, it is suspected that the internal working of shelters (rules, policies and structure) are similar across Ontario, and other provinces.

It is hoped that the analysis developed enables those who currently service children in emergency women's shelters in Ottawa to improve their program development, services and/or service delivery. The case study assumes that in social research the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). The process of developing this study has not only emphasized this, but the use of the case study allowed this to be revealed.

3.2 Participants and Selection Method

The five first-stage shelters in Ottawa (Interval House, Nelson House, Mason d'amitie, La Presence, and Oshki Kizis Lodge) were contacted regarding their willingness to participate in this research. The Executive Director of each shelter was asked permission for the researcher to contact the Children's Worker. She was also

asked to identify a member of their Board of Directors for an interview, as well as a person who could discuss the issue of funding. In addition, representatives from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services were contacted to participate in an interview.

Four of the five Ottawa shelters participated in this study. A representative from the fifth shelter declined to participate, indicating that they primarily provide services to young women and that very few children reside in their shelter. This shelter did not have consistent Children's Programs or specific Children's Workers.

The Executive Director of each first-stage shelter in Ottawa was sent a letter describing the research (see Appendix 1), and for permission to contact the Children's Worker. Permission was granted by the Executive Director of four of the shelters to contact the primary Children's Worker. Each Children's Worker was provided with a Letter of Introduction (see Appendix 2) outlining the purpose of the study and emphasizing the voluntary nature of her participation; and interview times and dates were then arranged. All agreed to participate and interview took place between May and September 2003. An in-depth interview with the Children's Workers was conducted in order to explore their views surrounding the issues of children's needs, Children's Programs within the shelter and their role with respect to the mothers. Program strengths and limitations from the perspectives of these professionals were discussed. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure that important issues were covered, but which also allowed for flexibility in responses (see Appendix 3).

With the assistance of the Executive Director, a Letter of Introduction was sent to a member of their Board of Directors (see Appendix 4) with a brief description

of the research and requesting their participation in a telephone interview. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included for participants to provide their phone numbers and to return the letter of consent (see Appendix 5). In this phone interview, a guide outlined issues to be covered, although exact questions or wording was not pre-determined. The purpose of this interview was to get their views of what opportunities and constraints that they saw in providing children's services, and to get a sense of the priority that they attached to them. Only one board member took part in this study. A board member from another shelter did not wish to participate because she did not think she could offer any useful information. It is unclear why the other two chose not to participate¹¹. The fact that one board member stated that she did not think she could offer any insight may be an indication that the children's services in the shelter are not at the forefront of their concerns.

One of the participants provided the names of two persons from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services who worked closely with the Ottawa shelters. Both were contacted by phone and a letter of introduction (see Appendix 6) was e-mailed. Initially only one person from the Ministry was able to meet with me. The second potential participant was unable to participate at the time, although she agreed to participate in an interview if her participation was still needed at a later date. The interview guide approach was again used, but issues specific to funding were addressed. As the research progressed and additional questions relating to funding arose, the second potential participant from the Ministry was again asked if

¹¹ Note: There was no response from the other two shelters. The Letter of Introduction was left with a shelter staff to be given to a member of their Board of Directors as I did not have any contact information.

she would participate. At this point she was able to meet, so that two persons from the Ministry took part in this study.

As noted above, the issue of funding became increasingly significant as the research progressed. As a result, approximately four weeks after the initial introduction to this research, the Executive Directors of each of the four participating shelters were asked to provide the researcher's name and number to any staff member that would be able to answer questions relating to the funding of the shelter. One participant contacted the researcher¹². The purpose of this interview was to determine their understanding about how the Ministry allocates funding to the shelters in Ottawa, and how this money is allocated in the shelter.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In total, five sets of questions/outlines were used: one for the shelter staff relating to children's services (see Appendix 3), one for a member of the Board (see Appendix 7), two for the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services (see Appendix 8 & 9), and an additional one for the shelter staff which related to funding (see Appendix 10). In total five shelter staff, one board member, and two persons from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services participated in one-on-one interviews. All interviews were coded, and key words or

¹² Note: It is not clear whether the persons who were contacted by the Executive Directors chose not to participate or if the Executive Directors had not passed on the researcher's name and number.

common themes found in the literature, primary documents, and interviews were examined in order to answer the following questions:

1) What are the needs that confront children living in shelters for abused women?

This was accomplished through an analysis of the literature and interviews. Although the literature review summarized the effects of domestic violence and the effects that shelter living may have on children, it was also used in the final analysis to help determine the needs of these children. Interviews were analyzed to discover if the needs that had been identified in the literature were also identified by the participants, and whether the participants had identified needs that were not reflected in the literature. Information from the interviews were then compared to each other and linked where feasible in order to further identify some of the children's needs. This was to be done by looking for key words, reoccurring themes or comments. For example, although health concerns were a re-occurring theme found in the literature, this did not emerge as a primary concern of the shelter staff.

2) What is currently available for children in first-stage shelters in Ottawa?

Primary documents and interviews were analyzed in order to answer this question. Current program descriptions, job descriptions, mission and vision statements of the shelters were analyzed in order to better understand the shelters' views of their role with respect to children. For example, were the needs of children specifically addressed in the mission statement; was there a specific Children's Worker; and what responsibilities do the Children's Workers have (e.g., to provide

programs, counseling, advocacy, etc.)? The child-centered approach was helpful in analyzing how extensively the shelters viewed their role in supporting children (e.g. through the programs and services within the shelter and in the staff interactions with the mothers). The structural approach was also helpful in the analysis in determining how the societal structures are either supportive or detrimental to women and children fleeing violence. The feminist analysis was used in determining how shelters support the women in their role as mothers.

3) How can services and service delivery to children in first-stage shelters be improved?

The final analysis incorporates all of the data gathered in order to provide some practical suggestions to those who work in first-stage shelters. Literature that outlined how to service children who have been exposed to domestic violence, or who are residing in a shelter was important in answering this question. Furthermore, interviews with shelter staff were also significant.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

As previously mentioned, each first-stage shelter in Ottawa was approached by letter and telephone requesting co-operation in this project and permission to contact a Children's Worker. A letter of introduction was provided that described who I am, what the research was about, how the results would be used, and stated that participation was completely voluntary.

Participants were asked to sign a letter of consent (see Appendices 5, 11, & 12), and informed that they were able to contact my thesis advisor. The letter of consent detailed the interview process, explained the steps to be taken to protect confidentiality and explained the rights of the participants to refuse to answer a question, stop the interview, or to have the tape turned off at any time. In addition, the consent forms asked participants whether or not they would agree to the use of an audio recorder throughout the interview¹³. It was also explained that words and phrases may be taken from the interview but that all names would be changed in any of the quotes used in the final results sections. If a participant wished to terminate the interview, a separate letter of consent was available. This letter of consent stated whether the participant would allow information provided up to that point to be included in the final draft (see Appendix 13). No participant wanted an early termination of the interview.

Participants were also informed that interview records, tapes, and other raw data would be stored in a locked box, and destroyed upon completion of the analysis, no later than August, 2003. Participants were assured that only the researcher and the supervisor had access to the raw data; were informed that a copy of the final report may be placed in the Carleton University Library and in the Carleton University Social Work Resource Room; that the supervisor would be given a copy of the final report; and that it may be published.

Due to the small number of first-stage shelters in Ottawa, it is possible that participants may be identified despite the use of pseudonyms. The consent form

¹³ Note: One shelter worker did not wish to have the interview recorded.

indicated this might occur if someone who read the completed thesis knew the workers or programs in the Ottawa shelters.

3.5 Limitations

One significant gap in this study is the absence of the voices of the service users (i.e., the women and children). Using a feminist approach, the exclusion of mothers and children is not only a major limitation, but also poses a contradiction. As pointed out in Mertens (1998), feminist research considers women's lived experiences as central to the research process. However, the women currently living in shelters are typically in a state of crisis and, therefore, I was reluctant to solicit their participation. In addition, the amount of time and energy that would be required from shelter staff to include past shelter residents made this option impractical¹⁴. Children, who are even more vulnerable because of their age were also not included in the interview process¹⁵. The use of available literature which outlines what children need for healthy development and how they may best be served contributed to the final recommendations. It is hoped that the literature helps to address some of the issues from the perspectives of the children. Likewise, existing literature, although limited, along with interview questions that addressed mother-shelter relations were used in the final analysis.

¹⁴ A recent research study attempting to recruit past shelter residents proved unsuccessful (Almquist, Macvarish, Roposo, & Uchida, 2003).

¹⁵ Due to ethical reasons, participation by children would also require their mother's consent. As noted above, I did not feel comfortable requesting the women's participation due to their current situation.

Although there were only a total of four interviews completed with Children's Workers, because these shelters service hundreds of women and children every year, the results have the potential to influence the services of numerous children.

Despite the limitations to this study, important perspectives and information emerged from the interviews. It is believed that the final results and discussion will provide insight into the complexities of the shelter programming, and that the final recommendations will be beneficial to those servicing children in first-stage shelters.

3.6 Personal Values

As outlined in the theoretical context, this research drew upon three theoretical frameworks: a child-centered developmental approach, feminist approach and structural social work approach. Furthermore, this research is also influenced by personal values of the author. The values and beliefs I hold that are particularly relevant to this study include:

- 1) Society has an obligation to all children and cannot ignore their needs. Children who have experienced domestic violence and are currently living in a shelter are in need of specialized support to successfully deal with the negative effects associated with this experience.

- 2) Children have rights of their own apart from their mothers. Children are not simply extensions of their mothers and have a right to autonomy and services specific and appropriate to their needs.
- 3) Power differentials exist between mothers and shelter staff. Thus, services for children must be provided with the utmost respect for, and in collaboration with, the mothers.
- 4) Recommendations need to be realistic and feasible for shelter staff. Final suggestions must take into consideration structural barriers and economic realities.

4.0 SHELTERS AND THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

The following two chapters (4.0 and 5.0) report the findings of this research. This chapter presents an overview of the shelters in Ottawa, and drawing upon the interviews, examines the role of the Children's Worker, what shelters staff identified as the needs of children living in shelters, as well as the programs available for the children.

4.1 Ottawa Shelters and Their Residents

The first battered women's shelter was founded in England by Erin Pizzey in 1971, and the shelter movement rapidly spread. In Canada the first shelter for women fleeing violence was opened in 1975¹⁶ (Morrow, 2003). Currently there are five shelters in Ottawa for women and children fleeing abuse. The four that participated in this study were opened between 1976 and 2001. There are also two more shelters scheduled to open in Ottawa in the near future, demonstrating the continuing efforts to respond to the needs of women and children fleeing abuse.

All four shelters that participated in this study include children in their mission/vision statements, and acknowledge that children are affected by the violence that they have experienced. As illustrated in the following excerpts, the needs of children are addressed independently from their mothers.

¹⁶ Currently there is a debate about whether Interval House in Toronto or a transition house in Vancouver opened first (Morrow, 2003).

We believe that children who witness abuse, or are themselves abused, experience trauma and that their needs differ from those of their parents. Maison d'amitie must therefore provide distinct services to the children as well as to the mother.

(Maison d'amitie, D.U.)

Children see, hear and feel the violence done to their mothers and have a right to live free of that violence. The effects on children can only be ameliorated with sensitivity, understanding and support to themselves and their mothers.

(Nelson House, 1997)

The number of beds available in each shelter can accommodate approximately 15-20 women at one time. However, shelters often go over their maximum by an additional one or two more people (often children) in an attempt to provide refuge to as many women and children as possible. Unfortunately, three of the four shelters must turn away many women and children due to lack of space. At Maison d'amitie alone, in 2001, 690 emergency shelter requests had to be turned down for this reason (Maison d'amitie, 2002), and at Interval House in 2002 over 800 women could not be accommodated. If the shelter is unable to provide housing or a needed service to a woman and her child(ren), there are efforts made to help her to access other community resources in order to find alternative supports or refuge.

Three of the four shelters are intended to house women and children fleeing violence. The fourth shelter, for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis women and children, also accommodate women who are homeless (Oshki Kizis Lodge, D.U.). Because Oshki Kizis Lodge is the only Aboriginal shelter for women in Ottawa, unlike the other shelters, they also accommodate women who are homeless but who may not

have been abused by their partner. The majority of the women staying at Oshki Kizis Lodge do not have children with them, whereas in the other three shelters women are generally accompanied by their children. Children residing in the shelters vary in ages from infants to 18 years, and each shelter reported that they accommodate over 100 women and children every year. The typical length of stay is about two months; however, women often stay longer due to the lack of affordable housing (Helena, Shelter Staff).

There is little available information that profiles the women and children who come to shelters. One shelter reported that their residents come from diverse backgrounds, and that they are often New Canadians who not only lack access to the support of extended family and friends, but are also often disadvantaged economically (Nelson House, 2003). One recent survey found that the average age of women residing at one Ottawa shelter in 2002 was 34 years. Of the 171 residents who filled out an exit evaluation at this shelter, 96 came with children who had an average age of 7.5 years (Almquist, Macvarish, Raposo, & Uchida, 2003). It is important to note that women who did not have children with them may have had adult children, or young children in the care of a spouse, relative, or in foster care.

4.1.1 Shelter Description

Three of the shelters were visited in the course of the research¹⁷. From the outside, they look like any other house in a relatively quiet, residential neighborhood. Upon closer examination, however, one discovers security cameras surrounding the

¹⁷ The fourth interview took place at a community center.

homes and windows that are either covered with one-way mirrors or curtains concealing the bustle of activity inside. Once inside the large houses, the presence of children is apparent by the strollers, toys, clothing and the frequent outbursts of laughing, crying and chattering throughout.

At one shelter, colorful murals gave the appearance of a day care or nursery school welcoming and announcing the presence of children in the House. While waiting to meet with one Children's Worker, cartoons from the television filled the living room, and at another shelter, toys filled the children's room. The home-like settings were busy and clearly filled with activity. One shelter had plans to renovate and expand the current living space (not the number of bedrooms) to include offices and meeting rooms; however, all of the shelters appeared to need more space. Papers stacked the undersized offices where the interviews took place, and a buzz of activity filled the air.

4.1.2 Shelter Organization

Three of the four shelters that took part in this study are non-profit organizations governed by a voluntary Board of Directors and funded by the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services. The fourth shelter does not receive core funding by the Ministry, but it does receive funding for one position, and receives financial support from the affiliated community center. In keeping with their tradition, this shelter is guided by a Women's Council, rather than a Board of Directors, although the role and make-up of this committee is essentially the same as a Board of Directors. The members of the Women's Council are all volunteers who

are community members and staff of the Aboriginal Women's Support Centre, as well as other Aboriginal agencies (Minwaashin Lodge, D.U.).

Shelters are funded for emergency accommodations which cover the residential aspects in terms of rent, the cost for food, and the cost for staffing to ensure that women and their children have access to a safe place. Between 2001-2003, two of the shelters had an annual budget of approximately \$775,000.00, of which approximately 10% was raised through fundraising and donations (Ouseley Hanvey Clipsham Deep, 2002; Marcil, Lavallee, Loyer & Associates/Partners, 2002). The shelters are expected to make their services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week¹⁸, and are encouraged to provide culturally-sensitive services. Although only one of the shelters is mandated to provide services in both official languages, all of them use interpreters if a woman's language of comfort is not English.

Actively advocating on behalf of women and children who have been victims of family violence, the shelters work with other agencies to increase public awareness about violence against women. The shelters are expected to work in partnership with other community organizations and provide women with information and referrals to various community resources.

¹⁸ One shelter that did not participate in this study has an agreement with the Ministry to close for several weeks each year in order for staff to go on a retreat and to cut down on some of the expenses of running the shelter.

4.2 Children's Workers in the Shelters

Three of the four shelters that participated in the study have a staff member who is designated as a Children's Worker¹⁹ at the shelter. This position is funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, and comes out of a different block of funding than salaries for other residential staff. Although the specific job titles, descriptions and responsibilities are left up to the individual shelters, there are minor differences and the essential roles are very similar.

One title for the Children's Worker is the Child Support and Advocacy Worker (Nelson House, D.U.). She is responsible for providing services to children, support to mothers, and is a representative in the community. She is to meet with mothers and their children, assess their needs, run group activities for children on site and off site (e.g. about stress and self-esteem), support children and explain the shelter rules, provide references to the visiting nurse and help mothers register children in schools. Responsibilities also include showing children non-violent ways to resolve conflict and express their feelings, educating the children about issues of abuse and facilitating in-house group parenting work regarding children who witness violence. Furthermore, she is responsible for discussing with the mothers issues of custody, the effects of experiencing violence on women's parenting skills, the effects of violence on children, and to support mothers in their dealings with the Children's Aid Society (CAS).

¹⁹ Children's Worker: This is the term used throughout this study to refer to the specific person in the shelter that is responsible for the Children's Programs and services to children in the shelter, although the actual job title varies at each shelter.

At Interval House, the role of the Children's Worker is divided up among three different positions. There is a Children's Counselor who is responsible for program development, budget management, community representation, counseling, referrals, advocacy, outreach and support to women and children (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001, p. 3). There is also a Children's Shift Worker whose responsibilities include formal and informal counseling, referrals, advocacy, outreach, as well as community committee work (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001). The Children's Worker is another position with responsibilities that "include program relief, program facilitation, support to women and children as well as other administrative program support" (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001, p. 3).

Oshki Kizis Lodge does not receive core funding from the Ministry and, therefore, does not have designated funding for a Children's Worker position. However, there is a specific person in charge of Children's Programming at the closely-affiliated community center. Her responsibilities include co-ordinating the Sacred Child Program, which is a program for Aboriginal children up to the ages of six who have witnessed or may have experienced domestic violence. This program is open to children in the community as well as to the children residing at the shelter.

Children's Workers also advocate and work on behalf of children who, for a variety of reasons, may not be at the shelter with their mothers. Children may be in the care of the Children's Aid; they may be staying with friends or relatives, including their fathers; or they may now be adults. As one worker described her role:

If the children are placed in the care of Children's Aid, we're still doing advocacy and support on the children's issues despite the fact that they're not living here. And we're recognizing that as an

increase right now, so we're keeping some stats, just to look at the fact that we're not just working with the kids who live here, or on behalf of them. We're actually working with other young people, too.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Not only were the Children's Workers responsible for programming at the shelter, and advocating on behalf of children who were not at the shelter, but they were also helping to inform the other staff, along with people in the community that work with children, of the effects of exposure to domestic violence.

The following section describes some of the issues that shelter staff identified that need to be addressed in order to overcome some of the negative effects that exposure to domestic violence can have on children.

4.3 Understanding the Needs of Children in Shelters

One goal of this research was to identify the needs of children who are living in first-stage shelters. As recognized in the literature review, providing services in shelters presents unique and complex challenges. In an attempt to understand the particular needs of children living in battered women's shelters, a review of the literature was undertaken, along with an examination of primary documents and interviews. A specific question asked shelter staff to identify the needs of children living in shelters. Data from the individual interviews were compared to further identify some of the children's needs. As previously mentioned, interviews were analyzed to determine if the needs of children that were identified in the literature

were also acknowledged by the participants, and whether the participants identified additional needs that were not reflected in the literature. In this way, it was hoped that as full a picture as possible of the needs of children living in shelters would emerge from the research.

One issue that dominated the literature was the health needs of children living in shelters (Reganick, 1997; Richardson Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998), but this was not an issue identified by shelter staff. In contrast, a safe place to live and the need for counseling were the two needs that each of the staff identified in response to the question asked about children's needs. An analysis of the interview transcripts also revealed two other needs that all the staff identified: the need for stability in school and the provisions of opportunities to play.

4.3.1 Making a Place Safe to Live

Making an environment as safe, stable, and non-threatening as possible is essential for children who are living in a shelter (Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). Reassuring children that they are in a safe place was also echoed by shelter staff as a primary need for children arriving at the shelter.

I think that some of the basic needs is that they [the children] need a safe place to be. I think some of their other needs is for consistency and stability.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

I think the big one, the one that counts for children that have witnessed violence is that already they have been uprooted from their stable environment. They're in a strange surrounding with strange people... I think they need to be reassured-- reassurance, that they're in a safe place.

(Olivia, Shelter Staff)

Providing children and their mothers with a safe place is not a simple task for the Children's Worker. An important part of this challenge involves safety planning with mothers and children. This includes teaching children about issues of confidentiality with respect to their location, knowledge of the legal system regarding custody issues, as well as supporting mothers while the children are adjusting to the new environment.

In order to make the shelters as safe as possible for all the women and children, it is necessary to plan for their safety and part of that plan is that the location be kept confidential. This policy is a particularly difficult process to explain to many children, and poses a further issue for women and shelter staff.

One of the other things we do a lot of, is safety planning and helping the kids understand the need [for] confidentiality...For the location, for instance, if they are visiting dad, if they have visitation. We have some children that don't understand why they can't tell dad where they are, and especially if they have not been abused, they might say, 'Well he just yells at her sometimes. You know it's not really that bad so why can't I tell him where we are?' So that's difficult, and that's another thing where moms need a lot of support.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Another issue is safety planning for kids--for mom it is clear to her that the abuser is an unsafe person. For a kid we are asking them to look at the context of their dad or their mom's partner as unsafe--and kids don't often see those people as unsafe. So how do you safety plan with them and keep it safe for mom as well. So we have to do a lot of work on what they see as safe, and what they see as some of the problem areas.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Mothers not only need support when explaining the importance of confidentiality to children, but often require support with respect to legal issues surrounding custody to further ensure their children's safety. As demonstrated below, keeping children safe also entails that the Children's Worker understands, explains and supports mothers in dealing with custody issues and the legal system.

I think the other really important [need] is around custody issues, and helping moms to understand the system. I find that a lot of women will come in and their first thought is that their husband is not going to go for custody, or he is going to be fair, or that he would never think about taking the children away. We have had police come to the door to get the children because they've got a custody order from the dad. So we try to explain to them [the mothers] without frightening them, that this could happen, and it's best to get to a lawyer and get advice and then make a decision.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Unlike the literature that focused more generally on the physical accommodations (e.g. size, wheelchair accessibility, safety issues such as gates or locks) the Children's Workers spoke about their responsibility in providing the mothers and children a safe place to live. The excerpts from the interviews reveal that providing women and children with a safer place to stay is certainly a complex task. It requires staff to not only be sensitive to the issues that confront children with respect to confidentiality and their fathers, but also with respect to mothers and the legal system. Thus, the seemingly simple task of providing a safe place to stay is clearly a multi-dimensional undertaking that only just begins to help women and their children live safely.

4.3.2 *Recognizing Different Types of Counseling*

All of the Children's Workers, in line with the existing literature, identified the importance of both short-term and long-term counseling, and individual as well as group counseling for children who have witnessed abuse. As noted by Shostack (2001), apart from providing a safe place to stay, counseling is a shelter's major contribution to the welfare of residents.

Counseling for shelter residents includes: providing information (e.g. regarding legal procedures, sources of financial assistance, or how to find a job); helping women to develop self-esteem, to become more assertive and to understand the dynamics of their abusive relationship; and assisting them plan for post-shelter life (Shostack, 2001). Children living in shelters have been found to be almost twenty times more likely to have symptoms of depression (Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997) and may require professional attention. The literature suggests that individual as well as group counseling sessions should be made available to all children in the shelters as these sessions provide an opportunity for children to openly acknowledge and discuss the violence in their lives (Choi & Snyder, 1999; Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998).

Three shelters report that the primary vehicle of counseling is group meetings. Given the limited resources that most shelters work with, and the relatively short stay of the residents, group work is the most effective counseling tool available (Shostack, 2001). Group counseling uses the interaction of group members. With the guidance of a counselor, participants evaluate their behaviors, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants can address their issues and concerns and consider ways to

improve the quality of their lives (Shostack, 2001). Whether or not these groups take place depends upon the number and ages of the children who are at the shelter at any one time.

Counseling is available to the women and children at all of the shelters, and can include individual one-on-one counseling, group counseling, crisis counseling, formal counseling or informal counseling. Although at one shelter a counselor from the affiliated community center provides individual counseling to the residents approximately once a week, a preference was expressed for further specialized individual counseling to be available at the shelter. The following interview excerpt conveys not only the desire for specialized counseling in the shelter, but also the difficulty in implementing this service.

Ideally I'd like to see more programs from outside, more community programs willing to come into shelters...for individual counseling and things like that. To come and work with the kids, specialist, people who do play therapy, art therapy, who are more specialized...Maybe [it's] because we have children of all different ages, maybe it does not seem worthwhile to come in because they can't offer a group. Maybe [it's] because they only have a couple of kids [that they don't come].

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Shelters recognize and attempt to address the need for short-term counseling while children are at the shelter. Although the lack of specialized services available in the shelters makes it difficult to offer individual counseling for children with additional issues, children's groups and other group meetings are useful in addressing short-term needs. For example, the children's meetings are a chance for children to come together as a group once a week, and as one shelter staff describes, provide children

the opportunity to discuss their feelings.

[The kids meetings'], that's just for kids so that they begin a process for their own healing, their own path. So some weeks it's about feelings or moving and about some of the harder things; and some

weeks it's about spring, or summer, or school, Halloween or whatever is going on in the world.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Unfortunately, shelter staff felt that there was generally a lack of long-term counseling available in the community once the residents had left. One worker noted that there is currently a long waiting list for long-term counseling and that brief counseling is not sufficient for some children (Maria, Shelter Staff). Thus, although shelter staff recognized the need for children to receive counseling, the resources do not appear to be available.

Despite the emphasis in the literature on the importance of counseling, many shelters do not have the resources to employ professionally-trained counselors. The lack of formal counseling available in the community means that this is an important gap in the services children need. In addition, although shelter staff appear to provide much informal counseling while working with the women and children in the shelters, this counseling did not appear to be recognized by either the literature or by the Children's Workers.

The different types of counseling available to mothers is described in the following quote, and illustrates how counseling for women can support them in their role as mothers.

[Counseling] can have many faces. Formal counseling support... crisis kind of counseling. Here we can do informal kinds of

counseling, what they used to refer to as kitchen counseling. Where you are supporting mom in her role as mother as you see her interacting with a child or trying to discipline or consequence the child, or try to engage with a child and there is resistance.

To provide support and to do that really informally so it is really seen as a support to moms.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

The above quote not only highlights the different types of counseling that are available, but also brings to attention the significance of informal counseling. If counseling is defined as advice or guidance given by a knowledgeable person, then much of their work that the Children's Worker described can be recognized as informal counseling. This is as illustrated by the following quotes:

We do a lot of supporting around moms. And other kinds of parenting support... We help the moms; we help them figure out things if the kids are biting or swearing or something they really don't like, we'll help them.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

When a kid is aggressive in the house we can talk about inside hurting or outside hurting words or actions, and that it's not o.k. here. And then we talk about what other things you can do-- so looking at how kids can look at what their choices are.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

The need for formal counseling (i.e. individual or groups at a specific time for a specific purpose) was expressed by both the Children's Workers and the current literature. Although group meetings/counseling is available for the children, depending on the number and age of the children, this was not always a feasible possibility. The lack of people willing to offer services in the shelters, along with the lack of on-going counseling in the community results in an important gap in services.

However, as described above, counseling can also be informal and Children's Workers, therefore, have an opportunity to address this need for counseling in a way that has not been recognized in the literature.

4.3.3 *Decisions to Attend School*

The literature recognizes the difficulties that many children who have experienced domestic violence and are living in shelters have with respect to school. These documented difficulties include behavior problems, failing to pass into the next grade, and increased difficulty with academic achievements (i.e. demonstrated by assignments into special education classes at rates higher than children who are not living in a shelter) (Reganick, 1997; Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999). The Children's Workers also identified that issues dealing with schooling were an important aspect in their role. However, unlike the literature, the Children's Workers underlined the fact that simply getting a child to school involves considerable deliberation and planning, and that there can also be important decisions that have to be made as to whether or not the child even goes to school.

Moving into a shelter during the school year requires major adjustments and changes for the child. At one shelter, a worker noted that in many cases women will decide to leave an abusive relationship when the transition is less likely to affect the child's schooling.

The summer seems to be a time when women can make the decision to leave because school is over. The school year is over and they have the summer to plan and do some of that healing and get some

safety stuff in place and move on, before the [next] school year. So a lot of times, that's the time that it gets quite busy.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

However, when children arrive at the shelter during the school year, providing it is safe to do so, staff will advocate on their behalf to have them remain at their own school if the shelter is outside the schools' boundaries. This can be an important part of a child's stability, and it may be one less change that the child has to experience. School attendance is especially important for children because it may provide the only stability at a time that is characterized by change and uncertainty (Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). If this is the preferred option, then the worker contacts the school board to advocate for transportation to and from the shelter (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001). Thus, there is also a need to create connections with local school boards to encourage awareness among teachers, students and parents about the realities of domestic violence. As noted in one of the shelter publications, the importance of connections with school boards is also to "share expertise [about] the impacts of abuse on children and how that may affect a child's school performance and behaviors" (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001, p. 31).

Recognizing the many issues facing school-aged children, one shelter in Alberta appointed a full-time teacher to assist the children on-site with their school work and with the various transitions that children must go through. Speaking about her previous employment at that shelter, Olivia commented:

We had classrooms downstairs; we had a full-time teacher... [But] here if they come and it's a violent situation, and they're at the shelter, it wouldn't really be safe to send kids to school...so then

they're at another school, but only temporarily because it has to be close to the shelter. And then the mother gets permanent housing in another area ...and then they have to switch schools again. All those changes are not good for children who need stability. So I think in an ideal world, shelters should have teachers for school, set up to make that transition easier.

(Olivia, Shelter Staff)

As the above quote demonstrates, in order to keep children safe it may be necessary to keep them out of school for a while, or to transfer them to a school near the shelter. Shelter staff indicated that for safety reasons, typically, children will have to leave their home school and move to one closer to the shelter. When permanent housing is established, the child is likely to have to transfer schools again. In order to help children adjust to a new school, or to keep up with school work, the Children's Worker may accompany the family to the new school. Children's Workers also work with mothers to help them with school issues as illustrated below.

We help the kids change schools; we do a lot of safety planning to see if it's safe for the kids to go to school....We might suggest to the mom that if there is a custody issue that she see a lawyer before sending the kids off to school, just to make sure that the dad can't come and take them away.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Although the literature and the Children's Workers both acknowledge the need for special attention around schooling for children living in shelters, the issues were portrayed very differently. The literature, primarily from education journals, focuses on the performance difficulties that children living in shelters have; including maintaining attention and keeping up grades (Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999; Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). In contrast, the Children's Workers

discussed the difficulties and the safety issues in simply getting a child to school.

It has been found that high-parental involvement in a child's education is associated with school success (Miliotis, Sesmar Jr., & Masten, 1999). Shelters can assist mothers and children to spend time together working on homework by giving them a quiet room for that purpose. Providing the opportunity for mothers and children to spend time together can be beneficial for the child's schooling, but may also offer positive experiences which may previously have been limited.

4.3.4 Allowing Children to Play

The importance of providing children with the opportunity and space to play while they are living in a shelter cannot be overstated. Children in shelters require both indoor and outdoor play spaces that are safe, well organized, and offer a variety of age-appropriate play possibilities. They need safe and challenging outdoor play areas that they can use daily to counteract the confinements of living in shared, often crowded, conditions (Harms, 1998; Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998).

Restricting children's activities and limiting such behavior can lead to diminished physical co-ordination, lack of self-confidence, and cognitive delays (Harms, 1998). Regardless of its content, play permits children to become completely absorbed in their own activities or fantasies. At a minimum, some clean, safe, indoor and outdoor space for play is essential for every shelter that houses children (Harms, 1998). The need for safe outdoor play areas was also identified by the Children's Workers. One worker made particular mention of the need for additional outdoor activities/equipment such as an enclosed trampoline, bikes,

rollerblades and swings. Unfortunately, the lack of funding and space combine to make it difficult to provide adequate outdoor play equipment.

Supporting children in re-establishing their role as children, allowing them to play, as well as encouraging mothers and children to interact positively were needs that shelter staff identified in their interviews. Although this is supported by the literature that also emphasizes the need for children to be given the opportunity to play, again, the issues that the Children's Workers describe illustrate that this, too, is not a simple task.

Allowing children to play and act as children is more than simply providing appropriate equipment. As exemplified by the interviews, for a variety of reasons, mothers may turn to their children for support and place inappropriate expectations on the child. For example, a mother may want her 8 year old child to look after younger sibling(s) (Nadia, Shelter Staff), or the mother may require her young child to act as an interpreter. As the following quote demonstrates, allowing children to re-establish their roles as children is another need that the Children's Workers address.

We really work strongly at kids re-establishing their role as kids. There are a lot of parentified²⁰ kids, so we really try to look at how, how can we help mom and child look at some alternative choices so that they can work better together and how do we get mom to acknowledge that, oh yeah, she is just a kid.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

In addition to helping children re-establish their role as the child, shelters offer opportunities and activities for mothers and children to enjoy time with each other.

²⁰ Parentified: Children who take on the behaviors and responsibilities of adults.

This is important as women and children who have been traumatized by domestic violence may not have learned how to play together.

One of the roles that we have and the recreation workers have is to try to help families to learn to play together again. And that's a big thing. We find here that a lot of moms have not known how to play with the kids because the dads don't let them, and so we try to have a lot of fun celebrations. We play bingo; we have movie nights and stuff just so that the moms and the kids can work together--maybe do crafts, do some family crafts and hopefully things that they can take with them.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Shelters also support women as mothers by offering reading materials, by providing opportunities for informal discussions with staff and other mothers, and through activities held in the shelter. In summary, in addition to overcoming problems of available space and funding for outdoor play equipment, interviews with Children's Workers revealed that simply providing play equipment is not a sufficient way for shelters to address the need for children to play.

4.4 Children's Programs

Current research suggests a need for programs that are designed to address the many negative outcomes associated with exposure to domestic violence and living in emergency shelters. "Children of all ages need opportunities to understand the nature of domestic violence; to understand that it is not their fault; to be able to talk about or play out their feelings; and to be able to express their worries, fears, and hopes" (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998, p. 35). Often it is thought that if a child does not

act out behaviorally then there are no residual effects from the violence; however, there may be other symptoms that are not apparent (Nelson House, D.U.). “Regardless if they witness it, or they hear it, or they see it, they’re impacted because they have had to leave what they know” (Ingrid, Shelter Staff). Therefore, it is important that children have the opportunity to express themselves in a safe environment with supportive staff. Regardless of age, children in shelters have common needs that should be considered when developing activity programs. The following describes how shelters address the needs of the children in shelters through their programs and through their everyday interactions.

All of the shelters have Children’s Programs that specifically address the violence that the children may have experienced. At the shelters in Ottawa, children are given the opportunity to discuss their feelings, learn alternatives to violence, and access community resources. The most extensive Children’s Program is currently being offered at Interval House. The Children’s Program was designed to complement mothers’ parenting while at the same time to offer children opportunities to confront their own issues and experiences (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001). Interval House has created a booklet BASICS (2001), that not only outlines how their Children’s Program came to be, but it has also been used to assist and support other shelters in the development of Children’s Programs. The manual outlines the target groups according to age as well as the objectives of the program and it was recently sold at an international conference held in London, Ontario in 2001 (Ingrid, Shelter Staff).

The programs described in BASICS (2001) are not all necessarily running at one time, but vary according to the needs of the residents and the available resources. Likewise at the other shelters, programs will differ and change according to the children who are living there at any given time. One reason for the lack of continuity across shelters is to allow each shelter to develop and implement programs that meet the specific needs of the residents. However, an analysis of the interviews and literature finds that common goals of the programs exist. For example, reducing feelings of isolation; increasing self-esteem, self-worth, positive self image, and positive peer relationships were common goals across the different programs. Some of the programs available at the shelters include:

Sacred Child Program	Drama Project
Youth Group (Spirit Movers)	Multi-Cultural Program
Moms and Tots	Cooking with Kids
Kids Meeting	Pet Therapy
Family Cooking Program	Movie Night
School Support	Hands On
ABC Reading Program	Music and Movement
Art Therapy	

Through these programs, it is hoped that children also gain an increased sense of accomplishment; a better sense of appreciation of diversity; routines and structure; increased self-esteem, self-worth, positive self image, and positive peer relationships; and reduce feelings of isolation (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001; Maria, Shelter Staff). However, because of the shifting nature of shelter residents, it is difficult to consistently provide programs that are both relevant and appropriate. One way that shelters can overcome this is to be aware of tensions in the shelter and

develop discussions and programs accordingly. This is illustrated in the following quote.

Our programs in the shelter are not very formalized... because it's almost like we're living in their home. So if we see something that needs addressing, then we will address it... We had a bunch of...maybe 6-10 years old last summer and we sat down with them a few times and we talked a bit and we got them to talk about sharing because they were having problems with each other-- name calling and stuff, and a little bit of racism going on. That wasn't really named, but we felt it was. We brought it out in the open, and we asked how kids felt when people called you names because of what you looked like.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Shelters also had other programs that were designed, more generally, to help children build their self-esteem, learn new skills, and to have a good time. It is clear from the current literature that special attention ought to be paid to children who have been victims of, or witnesses of domestic violence (Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000; Bonthuys, 1999; Timm, 1997). As pointed out in the literature review, an understanding of child development is necessary in order to provide services and programs that are responsive to the needs of the individual child, taking into account his/her age and developmental stage. Age, gender, length and severity of the abuse, together with issues such as the individual's development, culture and language all contribute to how well a child adjusts and what services are required.

The following two interview excerpts illustrate the ways in which the particular needs and individual development of a child are taken into account in the shelters when offering programs and services to children:

If a woman is worried about her child's speech, we'll contact the speech therapist and they'll do speech testing. Or sometimes we'll

notice and usually once we say... 'Is there something going on there, or is he learning more than one language?' And mom will say, 'Well, no, but his speech is really slow, and my other son was speaking, you know, like four years before.' So we'll say it might be a good idea, and we have the brochure that actually has what to expect at certain ages, so we'll go over that with her, and say it wouldn't hurt maybe. And sometimes mom will be worried and we'll say, 'Well, this is what's to be expected. It sounds like that's what they're doing.'

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

I think that all of the staff that work here, regardless of whether they work with Children's Services or not, that all the staff have some training, and all of our volunteers do, around the impact of witnessing on children. We talk about it in the sense that is very age appropriate for kids to do and it falls within the norm of healthy development. So kids are going to have temper tantrums or they wouldn't call it the terrible two's. Kids will have some trouble bed wetting and toilet training can be a struggle for kids. Even their cognitive abilities, certainly they come here and it doesn't necessarily mean their cognitive abilities have been impacted because of the violence. There could be some other things going on that are hereditary, that have happened since birth, whatever, that has been a difficulty for this child. So we have a look at what falls within the norm, and then look at what we can expect.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Shelters not only use their time with the children to teach them new skills and techniques, but through their programming children can feel supported and accepted as part of a group.

Within the shelter, activities and daily routines can help children to practice new skills. Since conflicts inevitably arise in all groups (whether over activities, discussion topics, or general disagreements), such situations can be used effectively to help children learn new skills and adaptive behavior for decision making and problem solving that emphasize respect for different opinions (Williams, Weil, &

Mauney, 1998). Staff are sensitive to aggressive behaviors displayed by children (e.g. physical fighting, name calling) and use such opportunities to promote positive conflict resolution skills. As noted above, this can be done formally (at designated children's meeting) and informally (on the spot), and include alternatives such as compromising, walking away, asking for assistance, or agreeing to disagree (Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton, 2001). Intervention on the spot by staff, by naming the abuse (e.g. "This is verbal abuse".) (Maria, Shelter Staff) can also help children understand the violence they have experienced. One method of managing difficult emotions on an everyday basis is described by Ingrid below:

We'll talk with kids about the fact that sometimes when people aren't able to manage things they have to rely on big people like us to help them. And so we are going to use our words-- there is a program SNAP, and that's Stop Now and Plan. So sometimes with older kids when we see that they are trying to manage, but internally they are not getting there, then we'll do some individual work with them about their choices, and then we will build in a strategy like a SNAP--Stop Now and Plan, so when we see it happening [we can say] 'Ohh maybe it's time to SNAP.' Or beam me away is when you take a deep breath and count to ten and that kind of stuff where you are trying to beam yourself out of that zone. How to be able to take time-outs on your own before someone asks you to take a time out. How to walk away safely from situations.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

This study views violence against women as linked to all acts of violence in society. Many children at the shelters have come from countries where they have witnessed war and torture (Maria, Shelter Staff). Shelters can, therefore, use their opportunity with the children to not only talk about the violence that they have experienced in their immediate family, but also to link it to the broader context and discuss the violence in the world. For example, one shelter worker explained:

We deal with what's going on and what's relevant, and certainly violence in the world impacts violence within the shelter. Because usually more than 50% of the families here are from diverse cultural backgrounds where they may have experienced war and trauma. And so for them the idea of bombs landing are within the norm of what they have known. And so, for families and for women to know that there's war going on and they're experiencing violence, it can trigger so many other things, and it can trigger things for kids...For us it's about domestic violence, but it is also about looking at where we see violence in the community; where we see violence in the school; where we see violence coming from our country or culture of origin; where we see violence on t.v., and in music videos. What are some of the messages that we get? So we also try to look at it within the context of the bigger picture as well, so that kids don't just see that domestic violence is something that only happens in their family, and that's the only issue, is that it happens in our house--that there are other issues around violence that can contribute.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Thus, the shelters address the needs of the children not only through their formal programs, but just as importantly through their everyday interactions with special attention and sensitivity around this issue of violence.

Through their awareness and sensitivity, the Children's Workers develop and implement programs that are not only relevant to the children's current situation and with what is going on in the world, but also address the common needs that they may have. This is no doubt a difficult task that is further complicated by the many other challenges that shelters face when offering services to children and their mothers.

The following chapter discusses some of the challenges associated with offering services to women and children fleeing violence. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that shelter staff have a very comprehensive understanding of the needs of children in the shelters.

5.0 THE SHELTERS' CHALLENGES

As identified in the literature review, a number of challenges exist that raise particular issues in providing programs and services to children in shelters. In addition, the preceding chapter demonstrated that although common needs were identified by the Children's Workers and the existing literature, addressing those needs was a complex and formidable task. An understanding of the environment in which shelters provide services is, therefore, essential. An analysis of the interviews revealed that not only were there challenges to manage within the shelters, but they also had to deal with several important external realities. The following discussion identifies and illustrates the many challenges that they must wrestle with when trying to offer optimal services to children and their mothers. It should be noted that although the discussion is divided into internal and external challenges, they of course reciprocally interact and influence each other.

5.1 Internal Challenges of Shelter Living

The internal challenges that emerged from the interviews illustrate the complexities that shelters face within their own working environments when providing programs and services. The four themes that emerged from the interviews from this research exemplify the difficulties and challenges with which shelters have to struggle.

5.1.1 *Shelter Living*

The nature of shelter living was a theme that emerged in the literature as well as in all of the interviews with shelter staff. Living communally in a shelter environment with many other families of different cultures, values, beliefs and languages presents unique and interesting challenges. From the literature review, it is obvious that despite the fact that shelters may be viewed as temporary safe havens, there are numerous stressors associated with shelter living. These include rules to make communal living manageable and safe, and the unavailability of much private family space. The following two quotes illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in communal living:

I think that the rules can present challenges because it is not like home; it's communal living; it's different cultures; it's different ways of parenting; different ways of cooking; its different ways of playing and interacting with your children; so those are not rules, but being here means that you are living communally. You are doing chores; you are cooking for other people; the whole shelter environment, it's a culture within itself. The culture of the shelter is communal, so it's difficult because people don't choose that. So I think that it does present some barriers just the environment and the rules that come with that around safety.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

The overcrowding definitely, within the shelter itself. We don't have a lot of space for the older children to have time on their own. It's very stressful for the moms because the kids are [everywhere] when there is no child care; the kids are in the living room, in the dining room; moms have to cook. There is always action going on; a lot of noise early in the morning so it makes it pretty stressful for the families.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

In addition, issues of safety and the need to find safe, affordable, housing and employment are further stressors to communal living. Because of the violence that

the children have experienced and the reason for their stay, the issue of safety is always present as the following quote illustrates:

Kids are coming in at all different ages, different stages, at different experiences. They are all at different levels in terms of what they are able to talk about, what they feel not comfortable talking about. I think there are issues for kids around privacy. You know there are rules, and that is difficult for the kids, and for us, for safety, there are lots of things that we have in place that you might not have at home. So you can't go into someone else's room to play without there being an adult to supervise that. Because kids are at different phases in terms of their experience and in terms of the impact that it's having, so we don't want kids to be alone. So if they're older kids and they're 15, and have permission then that's okay but they don't go in there with the door shut. Or if the kids want to go outside to a movie with their friend, there is some planning that has to happen with that in terms of safety.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Thus, women and children living in a shelter are subject to very unique stresses in addition to the considerable stress created by the situation that forced them to leave in the first place. Shelters must not only be sensitive to the stressors of communal living, but further challenges exist when offering services and programs at the shelter.

Children's Programs in shelters have the added challenge of trying to meet the needs of children with a wide range of ages, abilities, interests, and temperaments in atmospheres of frequent stress and constant turnover (Richardson Ray, 1998). As identified in the literature review, the environment of shelters, characterized by the lack of privacy, noise level, and limited autonomy (Huang & Mebke, 2001; Koblinsky, Gordon, & Anderson, 2000), along with increased physical and mental health problems, behavior problems, and learning difficulties (Huang & Mebke, 2001; Miliotis, Sesma Jr., & Masten, 1999; Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998; Menke, & Wagner, 1997) make offering valuable services to children in shelters difficult.

5.1.2 *Being a Boy*

The circumstances that have brought many of the women and children to the shelters mean that the presence of older boys may not only be uncomfortable to the other residents, but may also be inappropriate. Consequently, providing services to older boys is another complex matter that shelters have to face. Decisions have to be made regarding the extent to which they can provide services to male children who may physically look like adults or behave in ways that are similar to abusive partners. As they make these decisions, staff must take into account, not only the wishes of the mother to have her son with her, but the concerns that other women in the shelter may have about his presence. As illustrated below, this can be a very difficult decision.

It really depends, because a 13 year old can be 6 foot 4 and weigh 200 lbs in which case the 13 year old to the woman may look like her baby, but to other women he may look like a man, and the changes in voice and all that kind of stuff because it may have an effect on the other residents.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

All of the shelter staff stated that decisions about whether or not to accept older male children were based on individual needs and circumstances. The following quotes describe some of the factors that influence their decision to accommodate boys:

We've had kids who were 17--a young man who was 17 and that was an exception based on the cultural implications of the family. It was most appropriate for him to be here. He had only been in the country for a year; he had no support from the outside, so he came and stayed here and there are always exceptions.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Because our shelter is the only Aboriginal shelter in Ottawa, we really [make decisions] on an individual basis. Normally I don't think that we would have children, I would think, over 14 or 16. But we've made

exceptions for other teenagers who have been abused and have had no place to go.

(Olivia, Shelter Staff)

Clearly, there is no single desirable way to determine how to provide services to male children. For boys who are physically aggressive or if it is inappropriate for them to stay, staff support the woman and her child(ren) to find alternative accommodations.

Sometimes we have to involve other agencies and do referrals to get some support for the child. Extreme cases would be kids who are physically aggressive and are pushing their moms. And especially kids who are 14, 13, 12 then we do have to look at the involvement of police. We don't like to go that route. The other avenue that we have to consider when things are very unsafe are child protection issues, so sometimes CAS needs to be involved because it's not manageable. But most times we'll look at other avenues like Robert Smart, Cross Roads, or the ROH for some support if that is deemed appropriate.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Not only are some boys unable to stay in the shelters because of size, age or behavior, but none of the shelters had male employees working there. As men are generally excluded from the shelters, it is very difficult for the shelter environment to provide male role models. This is an issue because the children who stay in first-stage shelters may have had little or no exposure to positive male role models. Positive male role models are important because children who have experienced domestic violence may otherwise grow up believing that abuse is an effective and acceptable method of getting what they want (American Domestic Violence Crisis Line, 2003). Although one Children's Worker stated that they try to provide male support through programs such as Big Brothers or Family Services, the absence of

positive male role models did not appear to be an issue that the shelter staff believed was a need for all of the children.

As noted in the literature review, research has found that growing up in violent homes increases the likelihood that boys will become physically abusive in their adult relationships and that girls will become more likely to accept abuse in their later relationships (Timm, 1997; Copping, 1996; Paymar, 1993). Consequently, there may be a need for a positive male role model for both boys and girls who have been exposed to domestic violence.

The issue of older males is, therefore, another area with which shelters have to struggle. First, they must decide whether or not to provide services to older boys. Secondly, there may be a lack of positive male role models (adults or children) for the children in the shelter.

5.1.3 Cultural Diversity: Respecting Other Cultures In Canada

An expectation from the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services is that shelters provide services that are culturally sensitive (Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services, 2003a). All the staff stated that their shelter is very open and accepting of diverse cultures and religions. Celebrations, prayer space, prayer mats, faith books, spirituality books, and eagle feathers were available at the various shelters. As an example of actions that shelters take to respond to cultural diversity, some did not allow pork in order to respect that some religious beliefs prohibit certain foods. Some shelters also make available different cooking pots and silverware to those members of specific faiths. The following

interview excerpt illustrates some of the ways in which a shelter will accommodate residents with respect to their food:

And as far as food, if women need a specific kind of food, we have a grocer that provides it and we go out and get the food. So they'll put it on the grocery list and we'll go out and get it, and we keep it separate, so it doesn't get contaminated by the other food. And depending on what form of Islam the person is following, they may want to keep all the utensils separate too, so we have a box of utensils that are only used specifically.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

At some shelters, house meetings were used as vehicles for discussion and education for women and staff about the various cultures and celebrations taking place and also to discuss how celebrations would be acknowledged in the House. In addition, the meetings could also be used to discuss the ways to recognize cultural celebrations. At other shelters, celebrations and the education of diversity were built into their programming.

Once a year with our staff, we have a diversity committee, so once a year as staff we get together and see what are the celebrations, and we'll pick two a month. It is not based on who is living here. It's based on what we feel are the demographics, what we feel are important to the House, and then, in addition to that, we have to look at the women and kids who are living here.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Education about diversity and the importance of respecting women's religious beliefs are central issues identified by the shelters. Though shelters made an effort not to disturb a woman while she was praying, or to inform women if a male was in the House (e.g. so that Muslim women could cover themselves), at times, the shelter rules and cultural differences caused tensions. The following quote from one shelter

worker gives an example of the dilemmas that arise when the shelter's view of safety may be at odds with cultural aspects of child-rearing:

Because we have to make this place as safe as possible for everybody. That presents a challenge for all women, but especially in the cultural context of things. For example, in Somalia once your child is 2 ½ - 3 yrs old they often can go outside and play on their own, and the community is the family because it takes a community to raise a child. And we believe that it takes a community to raise a child...but we still have supervision issues, so that kids can't be outside alone. If they are under 9, they need to be outside with an adult.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

This next shelter worker describes the tensions that can arise; one that may be exacerbated by cultural differences. This relates to rules that constrain women in the shelter from 'parenting' other people's children.

One of our rules for instance, is that you are not allowed to parent other people's children. A lot of women come in from cultures where the community raises the child, and they don't understand [this rule]. They'll say to me 'Why not? If the child is there, why shouldn't I discipline them.' Basically we just explain that we are going by Canadian rules, and I know it's not fair and I understand where you are coming from, but we had to set some parameters around it. And we give some examples of feeding someone else's child. If you don't know the child, they might be allergic to something, so always check with their moms first. At times if we have a bunch of moms in who all have the same kind of philosophy, we'd say, if you are amongst yourselves and if you all agree, then you can do it your own way.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Rules that are in place for the safety of the residents or that are reflective of Canadian culture can, therefore, be a possible source of conflict. Unlike communal living among same-faith persons, different cultures, religion and practices add a particular dimension to the complex task of offering services to the women and children.

The challenge of trying to accommodate women and children with respect to their culture and tradition is compounded by the fact that there may be some beliefs and values that may be in sharp opposition to the values that are viewed as consistent with mainstream Canadian culture. One staff member noted the difficulties in balancing this tension, as well as helping mothers to adapt to the expectations of living in Canada.

We are very much challenging cultural norms when we are saying kids have a right to be heard, kids have a right to their voice. In some cultures kids don't speak until they're asked to. So we are really trying to be respectful, while at the same time help families look at [what] some of the other realities are for kids growing up in Canada, and how you don't need to let go of, and release all of the things that make you who you are in terms of tradition and culture. But there may be some things that need to be altered to a certain extent.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Without a doubt, shelters walk a fine line as they attempt to offer services that are culturally sensitive and at the same time attempt to maintain policies that seem essential for the shelters, but are quite problematic for the women.

Providing culturally sensitive services also requires that services are offered in a language that the women and children are both comfortable using. Cultural interpretation services are often used in the shelters to help those who are not comfortable using either English or French. This was not a major barrier that the shelters identified for children (who often learn the language at school); however, children would often translate for their mothers, which shelters viewed as inappropriate. Two shelter workers spoke about the challenges of interpretation.

Here, we don't support kids working as interpreters. So if it is something like, can you tell your mom that the laundry soap is here, then that might be something basic that we can ask the child to do that, but in terms of talking about anything to do with the situation--the housing, the abuse, any of the outstanding issues, we will not use a child to do that.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

We try to not let them [the children] translate, and if we notice, and we have recently, that some children tend to be speaking a lot for their moms, we will book more interpreters.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

The different languages and diverse cultures together in a shelter can make services to women and children difficult, especially when cultural expectations concerning child rearing are in conflict. How shelters view their roles with respect to the mothers is, therefore, another aspect that not only affects the children, but poses additional complications.

5.1.4 Educating vs. Supporting the 'Boss'

Although children have rights and needs that should be addressed independently of their mothers, at the same time, it is recognized that to a large extent, the child's well-being is tied to his/her mother. The ways the shelters negotiate their role with respect to mothers and mothering is, therefore, a fundamental part of this study. The mother-staff relationship is unique and subject to tensions. On the one hand, shelter staff work to support mothers in their parenting role; however, they often try to educate and impose rules that can diminish a woman's autonomy.

All of the Children's Workers stated that they work to support women in their role as mothers. For example, one worker when asked how she viewed her role with respect to the mothers replied,

Support for, basically a lot of support around parenting, Children's Aid issues, helping them to understand what their kids are going through. I think moms who lived with abuse worry a lot about their children, about what has happened to them and blame themselves. They worry about their kids' futures because of being exposed to the abuse. A lot of time is spent reassuring moms and helping them to realize that, you know, they have done the right thing now, and the best thing they can do is to look forward and try not to feel guilty, because they were not the ones who were abusing the partner, and helping them to see why they didn't leave before. Basically, what we do with the women, generally, is helping them to realize that they did the best they could under the circumstances, and trying to make them feel that they are good parents and not to be hard on themselves.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

The literature suggests that the message to battered women should consistently convey respect for their role as a mother (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998). This can be done informally as one worker commented,

What we always try to encourage kids to do is to go back to their moms to ask those questions in terms of building the role of moms. Often mothers were not in the role as a person in the family with any kind of power so we always try to build mom's persona because she is now the boss; so we often refer to her as 'the boss'.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

The way that a worker can support women in her role as mother is to help children view their mother as a person who can take care of and protect them. By having children go to their mothers when appropriate and fitting, children can see that she is a person with authority and is held in respect by the staff.

Although shelters work to support mothers in their parenting roles, some aspects of daily life that may previously have been at a mothers' discretion are now controlled by the shelter. Typical shelter rules include, for example, pre-determined bed times, mandatory house chores (e.g. cleaning bathrooms, vacuuming, etc.), mandatory house meetings, and that any medications be given to shelter staff and locked up. Shelter rules can diminish a mother's authority as a parent, and make her job more difficult, as the following illustrates:

We have bedtime rules, and while they're set up really, to make the women's life easier, and I think it does in one way because women have that couple of hours at night when the kids are in bed when they can have that peace and quiet. On the other hand, it makes it hard if a mom if she is used to putting her child to bed at 9:00 p.m. and our rule says 8:00 p.m. for that age of child. Then she has a fight on her hands.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Thus, even though shelter rules are generally in place to make it as comfortable as possible for the residents, these policies can diminish a woman's authority in the eyes of her child(ren).

Although shelter rules presented challenges to mothers, several staff commented on the positive benefits of having structure and routine—something which many women and children may not have had while living at home (Maria, Shelter Staff). The rules also assisted in the running of the shelter and could help avoid possible disagreements between residents.

[Sometimes residents] will come to us and say, 'I think this person isn't doing what they're supposed to do.' And by having rules we can go to that person and we can say this is the rule. We don't have to say, well 'so-and-so' is mad because you are not doing your job. We can say this

is the rule and you really need to do your share; so it helps in a way.
But it's hard to live [with a] bunch of rules.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Hence, shelter rules may be helpful in establishing structure and routine, but they also assist in the smooth-running of the shelter by helping to 'iron out' difficulties that occur between residents.

On the other hand, rules can also work to impose the shelters' expectations and control mothering behavior that is deemed inappropriate. Two workers discuss their approaches to problematic forms of discipline.

Oh, I think it certainly presents a challenge. It presents a challenge in the sense that it may challenge their consequences or disciplinary intervention. It would definitely challenge some of the limits and boundaries, or it may establish some of the limits and boundaries that are needed... I think that discipline, in the sense that if what moms used as a choice in the past, like to be physical with their kids or to yell at their kids or to make those kinds of choices, or anything that may be perceived perhaps as more of a violent interaction, then we will talk to mothers about that. So that is really difficult if you have learned for 15 years as a parent that what has come to work for you is yelling and hitting...And women will say, I don't beat my child, but for us, we are going to be challenging you to look for alternatives because that is not acceptable here.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

So we help the moms; we help them figure out things if the kids are biting or swearing or something they really don't like, we'll help them. Or if the mom comes in and she is being abusive or verging on it, sometimes moms will slap their kids and say, 'Well that's what I've always done; that's what my mother did.' So we tell them that when you are here, you can't slap your children, and we try to help them find other ways [to deal with it].

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Mothering or parenting behavior that the shelters consider unsuitable can be controlled by shelter rules and altered by offering new alternatives in parenting. Education regarding the parenting role was also mentioned as part of the Children's Workers responsibilities by three of the four staff. In the shelter where the staff did not specifically mention that educating women around parenting issues was part of her job, there were parenting programs available at that shelter (e.g. Positive Indian Parenting). Thus, although shelter staff work to support mothers, it is apparent that the rules, policies and the assumption that these women need educating can diminish a woman's autonomy and authority as a parent. The above quotes reveal the contradictions and tensions that exist within the mother-staff relationship, which of course also intersects the internal challenges previously mentioned.

5.2 External Challenges: Beyond the Shelter

Another role of shelters is to advocate on behalf of women and children in relation to the other systems with which they are involved. In addition to the numerous challenges that arise within the shelters, shelters also confront some important complexities that exist in their external environment.

A major challenge that shelters face when trying to support their residents to live a life free of violence is the lack of services available in the community. Despite the recognition in the literature and from the shelter staff of the need for counseling and support to children who have witnessed domestic violence, there appears to be a significant lack in the availability of counseling services for the women and children

staying at Ottawa shelters. In fact, as a result of the funding cuts that began in 1995, there has been a decline in community-based services, making it more difficult for women and children to escape the abuse (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 2003). One worker commented on this.

Another one of the big barriers that we find about providing services to children is the other services out there. There's not a lot of counseling... The courts and the legal system are not always understanding of woman abuse, and quite often children end up having visitation with dad that they're afraid of and don't really want to be around ... Quite often [when] the mom leaves, she is more afraid than when she was with him because now she has to send her kids back into that situation without her to protect them... That's where we find it really hard to provide services for the kids, but we are trying to make them safe and we are not really getting the support of the legal system... I'd like to see a lot of ... continuing services so that people have support in the community once they have moved out of here because most of them move to public housing, and that's where they need [it].

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

The preceding quote illustrates not only the problem of the unavailability of services, but also that the services that are available appear to lack sensitivity to issues of safety that many of these women and children face.

The child protection system, Ottawa Housing and the justice system were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as areas that were problematic for shelters due to their current structure and the lack of understanding about issues of domestic violence.

5.2.1 *The Children's Aid Society (CAS)*

In the last five years, the most dramatic increase in investigations of maltreatment²¹ has been the category “emotional abuse” (Trocme, Fallon, MacLaurin, and Copp, 2002). The addition of the category titled ‘exposure to domestic violence’, which was not included in the 1993 study, resulted in a nearly nine-fold increase of substantiated investigations in 1998 (Trocme, Fallon, MacLaurin, and Copp, 2002). Currently, the Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton is notified whenever children are present during a domestic violence incident involving police (Ottawa-Carleton Regional Police Services, 2000) and, consequently, there is an increased likelihood that mothers of children who have witnessed domestic violence will be involved with the CAS²². As one worker commented,

A lot of families are involved with Children’s Aid. Now, police will call Children’s Aid immediately when they are involved in a family dispute; so they do get involved quite often.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

In fact, involvement with the CAS was a frequent subject that emerged from the interviews and primary documents. Shelter staff are obligated to report situations of abuse according to the *Child and Family Services Act* (2000) and as pointed out in the literature review, the different philosophies and mandates between domestic violence advocates and child protection agencies can present several challenges and struggles.

²¹The four major categories for the investigation of maltreatment include: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

²² In fact, it has been suggested that the 5% decline in the number of children residing in shelters, since the changes in child welfare legislation in Ontario, was a result of fewer women and children seeking shelter for fear of child apprehension.

A woman who arrives at a shelter may already be involved with the Children's Aid Society. She may disclose previous abuse, or she may be acting in an abusive manner towards her child while at the shelter. Whether or not the mother is currently receiving services from the Children's Aid Society, it is important for staff to explain their responsibilities.

When we sit down and talk with the moms, we always say to her, 'If you are going to share information with us, we have to let you know right at the beginning that if you tell us that someone has abused your children, that we will have to call Children's Aid'; so that they know right away up front. And if the father has abused the child and if the mom tells us, then we really strongly encourage her to report it.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Should a report need to be made, mothers may be given several options. The mother, herself, may call to report the incident with staff present to support her; the staff could call with the mother present; the mother could call alone, and staff would follow-up; or staff, on their own, could make the report herself. When shelter staff are required to make a report, they can do so in a supportive manner as one worker described below.

We always try to put it in a perspective when we talk to a worker at CAS. We always try [to] help them to realize that this is a woman under really bad, heavy stress right now—and she's slapping the child, or she's yelling, or you know, being abusive towards the child, but is doing the best she can, and so can you give her some support... I would say that we are more advocates for the women with the Children's Aid. There are times when we work closely; when we are on the same side of the fence. And there are other times when we are supporting the woman to, you know, to help her maneuver through the red tape... It's a difficult situation because they're there to help, and so are we, but I think we are looking at it from a totally different perspective at times, and of course for the women themselves, and especially for a lot of the women who are immigrant women and have heard stories... And especially if you are someone who is here in the country for maybe a year, you don't

...speak English, so everything is done through interpreters and you don't really quite know what they are about. You heard rumors from neighbors,...so I think that is one of our big things, supporting them around that.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Supporting mothers and acting as advocates in the child protection system is another responsibility that shelter staff have. As illustrated above this is made more difficult by the child welfare policies and procedures that may not be very sensitive to issues of domestic violence. This is an issue that is increasing in importance as mothers who are victims of domestic violence are now more likely to be involved with the CAS.

5.2.2 *Housing in Ottawa*

Housing was an issue that all of the shelter staff identified. Currently “the City of Ottawa is facing a crisis due to the lack of transition house beds and appropriate and affordable housing for women and children fleeing abuse” (Maison d’amitie, 2002). Abused women can remain on waiting lists for subsidized housing anywhere from three to four weeks to one to five years despite a special priority for placement for reasons of abuse. The average time on the housing waiting lists is four to five months (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 2003). However, Bill 128, the *Social Housing Reform Act* implemented in April 2002, places strict regulations on social housing tenants and, consequently, poses a challenge for women and children leaving abusive situations. Women who are already living in social housing have only 30 days to submit in writing any changes in income, family composition or citizenship to their housing provider. Failure to comply results in a

loss of subsidy and women must then reapply to the Social Housing Registry under the regular list, which has a wait list of up to 10 years (Nelson House, 2003). For women who are fleeing abusive relationships and are living in fear of their lives and the lives of their children, a letter to their housing provider may not realistically be accomplished within the allotted time. However, the consequences are tremendous.

A woman who does not find suitable housing may return to the abuser, move in with family or friends, accept substandard and/or unsuitable apartment, use food and clothing resources to pay for their rent, or move from shelter to shelter. Because of the 22 percent cut to social assistance benefits imposed in 1995 and with no increase since that time, abused women on social assistance across the province cannot afford to take market rental housing without cutting down on food, clothing, transportation and other basic needs. Also, some abused women and their children are forced to use food banks because so much of their resources go to housing. (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 1998, 2003). The difficulties mothers have in finding safe, adequate, and affordable housing is illustrated graphically in three excerpts from the interview with shelter staff.

Housing [authorities] don't look at how they [mothers] are going to protect and support children. Because, otherwise, there would be some acknowledgement that some areas are not safe for families. I know there are limits everywhere...but really some of the needs of kids are really underserved... We had one family here with five kids and they had been in and out of shelters for two years and never found safe and affordable housing.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

And I guess the other thing is safe housing for children, because sometimes when you see children moving out of here and you see the issues they are bringing with them because of the abuse, and you see

where they are moving to...I feel very sad. That is another thing we advocate around, is safe housing. Don't put a woman with two children under 3 in a four-story walk up, for instance, because she can't do that. You can't bring two little toddlers up four flights of stairs with all the diaper bags and grocery bags, or in areas where there are known drug dealers. It's just not a good place for kids. We can see a lot of stuff, that really, it puts them on a road to failure, and no matter how good a mom she is, she is going to run into a lot of problems, and quite often it is the housing...It's difficult because we have certain values and things that we think are unsafe, but sometimes moms are put into positions where they have no other choice.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

The other thing is housing. Women get here and they can't get affordable housing because there isn't any. Women are usually here, and two months is usually good for them to get all the things and the legal process and everything, are now staying longer because they don't have safe housing.

(Helena, Shelter Staff)

Thus, women and children are experiencing extreme hardships because of the lack of affordable housing and, it is often the case that the housing that they eventually do obtain may be either unsafe or unsuitable. This situation makes it even more difficult for the women and children leaving the shelters as well as for the Children's Workers who have the double duty of trying to find not only affordable housing, but one that is considered both safe and appropriate.

5.2.3 The Justice System

Related to the need for services outside of the shelter, staff spoke about the current justice system. In the area of family law, women continue to be denied legal aid or are given so little aid that lawyers cannot spend the time necessary to complete their cases. Many legal matters that women need to resolve in order to leave abusive

situations are not covered by legal aid assistance (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 1998). This structure is not only detrimental for the women and children trying to escape the abuse, but it also means that the shelter staff have additional responsibilities. This situation is expressed in the quote below.

The other thing with the Ministry with the funding issue is the cutback on legal aid for women. So before they used to get something like twenty hours, they only get four hours now, so the staff have to get a lot of the paper work ready so that the women can spend the time talking to the lawyer, and we don't get 'diddly squat' for that.

(Helena, Shelter Staff)

Frustrations about the cutbacks to the services that should support women are exacerbated by the lack of support that women and children receive from the justice system.

At times courts may grant visiting rights to an abusive father, or to a father who tells the children that their current situation is their mother's fault, which makes it difficult for the mother when the children come back from visits (Maria, Shelter Staff). The lack of understanding and support by the justice system was a common theme across the majority of the interviews as illustrated below.

The justice system doesn't work for kids. It doesn't work to protect kids adequately. Like in terms of custody and access, in terms of consequences for abusers. It doesn't serve children very well.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

That's where we find it really hard to provide services for the kids. We are trying to make them safe and we are not really getting the support of the legal system. Sometimes we have moms come in who don't have the children with them, and the father has gotten the kids through,

maybe, going to court and getting an order, or lying and saying she is mentally ill or something.

(Nadia, Shelter Staff)

Courts make custody decisions and, therefore, have the power to remove children from situations where they have witnessed abuse. Unfortunately as illustrated above, the courts are viewed by shelter workers as failing to adequately protect children who witness domestic violence. Mothers who want to free themselves from spousal abuse are often forced to maintain contact with the abuser through child visitations which can place both the mother and child in danger. Abusive fathers who are allowed visitation may manipulate children, making it difficult for children to adjust to their situations. Supporting mothers around child-father relationships is another role that shelter staff must carry out aside from advocacy and accompanying women to legal appointments and court appearances. For those reasons, shelter staff expressed the need for the legal system to be more alert to issues of domestic violence, as they found that working with the justice system can be a very difficult and trying task.

5.2.4 Funding

As the preceding discussion documents, the shelter workers identified a number of important challenges in the external environment. Highest on the list that was identified by all the workers was the lack of adequate and stable funding to shelters. However, before discussing the nature of the current funding issues, some background on shelter funding is appropriate.

Three of the four shelters interviewed are funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services²³. Historically, shelters were funded an average cost per bed per night; however, presently funding is allocated by block funding. A service contract between the shelters and the Ministry outlines eligibility for funding and the criteria for shelters. Each shelter is funded differently depending on its history, the size, and the services available. For example, one shelter is mandated to provide services in both French and English.

Prior to 1995, shelters were funded by the Ministry for 20% of their costs, and the City covered 80%²⁴. However, when the Ministry assumed the direct funding of the shelters from the municipal government, the only funds transferred were the actual amount of funding that the shelters had previously been receiving from the City. Therefore, even though the Ministry assumed 100% of the cost, this represented only 80% of the actual operational expenditures and because shelters had always been historically under-funded, this 20% decrease in funding was a major setback for shelters. In addition, in 1995, all women's shelter budgets were cut by 5% (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 2003).

Since the late 1990s the operational base/basic funding amount from the government to the shelters has not changed. This fact combined with the increasing cost for staffing, hydro, transportation and food, up to 25% in some areas (Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, 2003), has resulted in a decrease of

²³ The one shelter that did not receive core funding by the Ministry has been operational for two years and has been trying to negotiate this issue but to no avail. When asked why she thought that they did not receive funding like the other shelters, the shelter staff did not know.

²⁴ Although this represents 100% of the shelter costs, shelters still had to do considerable fundraising in order to provide the level of services that they felt were necessary.

available services for women and children. Currently, approximately seventy percent of Ministry funding is dedicated to staffing. The other 30% goes to operating costs that include either the rent or a lease on the House, the utilities, the food, as well as a transportation allowance to pay for the women to access the shelter (Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Service, 2003b). Consequently, with the increased costs of living, coupled with the cuts in community services, shelters have had to rely more heavily than ever on fundraising and donations.

In the year 2002 the shelters received between 6% and 14% of their total revenue from donations and fundraising (Maison d'amitie, 2002, Ouseley Hanvey Clipsham Deep, 2002; Marcil, Lavallee, Loyer & Associates/Partners, 2002). Although the Ministry reported that it does not have a funding formula that requires the shelters to fundraise, the expectation is implied as explained below.

What has happened is that our funding is not sufficient for them to operate. So all of our shelters have had to fundraise to be able to sustain viability. Knowing that we have not given an increase in a number of years, the costs have gone up, whether it's salary, rent or food, so all of our shelters have had to fundraise...so it has become by default, an expectation, because what happens is they submit a budget to us for \$700,000.00 and we fund them at \$600,000, so we know they are going to have to fundraise... Most of our shelters fundraise between \$40,000.00 - \$60,000.00 per year.

(Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Service, 2003a)

If it were not for fundraising, services to women and children would have to be cut even further. "They wouldn't cut the accommodation. They can't cut the food, so what they would cut is services within the shelter setting" (Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Service, 2003a). In fact, Maison d'amitie stated in its newsletter that, "a growing number of our services and program survival depends on

donations and revenues raised through fundraising and community support”

(Maison d’amitié, 2002).

The Ministry acknowledges that shelters do not receive enough funding to provide the level of services that the shelters feel is necessary. However, the rationale is that it does fund other community services for women and children fleeing violence.

The shelter funding is part of the continuum of funding. So shelters are one option for women and they are not the only option--they are an important option. So when you look at our funding allocation, what we fund in addition to shelters are twofold. One is our community-based outreach program which deals with crisis intervention type services. And then we have our counseling programs which are ... for women...[in need of] more ... ongoing supports, either groups or individual so shelters are part of that. And the only two newest initiatives that [were] added to that continuum is the Transitional Support which is a link between shelters and the community, and the other one is the initiative for Children Who Witness.

(Ministry of Community Family and Children’s Services, 2003a)

Although shelters are part of a continuum of services for women and children fleeing abuse, those accessing services in shelters may be a particular population that does not access the other supports available. This concern is expressed by one Children’s Worker.

You don’t get access to women and children who will not choose to contact police because it’s not safe. You don’t get access to immigrant and refugee women who are worried about threats to deportation or threats that their children who were born in Canada will stay here and they will be gone. You don’t get access to those women until they are at high a crisis. And then we get access; so then we should have adequate funding to be able to provide intervention.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

Project funding is available from the Ministry and is one way that shelters can attempt to support a new program. However, project funding is typically a one-time, short-term grant used to initiate a new program. The drawbacks of planning, developing and implementing a beneficial program only to have it terminate due to lack of continued funding is expressed in the following quote:

The only thing is that project funding doesn't continue. So you build up a clientele and then you have to drop them. As well, we are so short staffed it's just not worth it to do a project because you really can't hire anybody because they leave at the end of it, and someone else here is going to have to do it.

(Helena, Shelter Staff)

Funding is the most encompassing and overwhelming challenge of all, as it not only affects everything about the shelters and what the children experience, but it also affects the other systems and community resources with which women and children interact.

As exemplified in Chapter 4, children arriving at the shelters require much more than just a safe place to stay. The lack of funding to support programs within the shelter means that women and children must access services outside of the shelter in the community. This presents a challenge for them as well as for shelter staff who work closely with the many other systems that are also under-funded and may not be sufficiently aware and sensitive to the issues surrounding domestic violence. In addition, shelters must also find a way to work co-operatively with women who may not speak their language or hold the same cultural beliefs. Undoubtedly, shelters have a tremendous task. The following chapter provides some recommendations that developed out of the dilemmas facing shelters. It is hoped that these

recommendations may be helpful to those working with children in first-stage shelters.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES

One of the objectives of this research was to provide concrete and feasible recommendations to shelters for creating and providing Children's Programs. Recommendations needed to take into account not only the immediate needs and issues with respect to living in a temporary women's shelter, but also to recognize and incorporate knowledge regarding exposure to domestic violence. Upon further investigation, it became quite clear that the shelters do, in fact, have a remarkable understanding of the issues confronting children and the women residing at the shelter. In addition, it was found that the complex environment in which shelters work makes servicing and programming for children a formidable task. Thus, taking into account the complex job that Children's Workers face, the following recommendations stem from the research and will hopefully be not only helpful, but also sensitive to the many challenges that shelters face.

6.1 Areas of Focus

The shelter staff who participated in this study had an exceptional understanding of the needs facing children in women's shelters, and also provided valuable insight into the difficulty of addressing seemingly simple tasks. As this research developed, it became clear that concrete recommendation would not be practical or beneficial to those servicing children in women's shelters. Thus, the following sections outline the implications for service that have arisen out of this

research. It is believed that supporting mothers, recognizing informal counseling, increasing male role models, and educating the community, are four areas that require further attention and which can also realistically be accomplished.

6.1.1 Supporting Mothers

Williams, Weil, and Mauney (1998) have identified several principles when servicing children in shelters for abused women. A primary principle identified is respecting the role of mothers with their children--designing services that strengthen, support, and enhance mothers' relationships with their children. As noted previously, all of the Children's Workers interviewed in this study stated that supporting women in their role as mothers was one of their primary roles. However, as identified in Chapter 5 they must often at times impose rules that can diminish a woman's autonomy and status in the eyes of her children. Thus, one implication for service is the need for shelters to be conscious of how their rules and policies can affect a woman in her role as a mother.

In order for shelter staff to be able to fulfill their role in supporting mothers, shelter policies must also be developed with this goal in mind. Many of the rules are in place for the safety of the residents and to assist in the smooth-running of the shelter. For example, one common rule is that all medications must be given to staff and be locked up for the safety of residents and the children, in particular. However, this policy can inadvertently make the women feel as if they are being treated like a child or are incompetent. Providing women with their own individual lockers can not only accomplish the original goal of keeping potentially dangerous drugs out of the

reach of children, but can also help maintain some of the women's previous responsibilities.

Keeping the focus on support to women in their role as mothers not only at the individual level, but also at the policy level can help to facilitate in the working relationship between the shelter staff and the women. Originally, battered women helped one another individually by setting up informal safe homes (Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2003). A non-hierarchical authority structure, a cooperative basis for decision-making, and personal and humanistic relationships between service users and service workers were characteristics of earlier feminist organizations (Kravetz and Jones from Miles, 2002). Today, much like earlier feminist organizations, staff include volunteers, semi-professional and professional women. Service users are encouraged to become a part of the service, and services are generally involved in activities that contribute to broad social change (Kravetz and Jones from Miles, 2002).

However, unlike the earlier shelters, over time as more formalized homes were set up, they have become increasingly hierarchal, and accountability has shifted primarily from the women who use and are a part of the service, to the Ministry which dictates funding. Due to government regulations, money has become a mixed blessing. In short, funding has influenced the organization and structure of the shelters (Refugee House, 2003).

However, by ensuring that policies and rules within the shelter are supportive and respectful of women in their role as mothers, some of the hierarchal structure that

have been imposed onto shelters can be reduced. In addition, by re-evaluating some of the current policies, more accountability to the women and children can be given.

6.1.2 Recognizing Informal Counseling

From the preceding chapters, it is obvious that shelters are more than just a safe house for victims escaping violence. In the relatively short time that women and their children reside in a shelter, staff try to help them understand the violence, address underlying problems, and make plans for a more satisfying life. Thus, education surrounding the violence they have experienced is a primary focus of the shelters. Educating women and children about domestic violence can reduce feelings of responsibility for the violence by both the mother and the child. As noted in the previous chapters, a great deal of counseling does in fact take place despite the fact that it may not be recognized as such.

House meetings, which are common procedures at shelters, offer the opportunity for the women to come together and express their concerns, fears and feelings about their current living situations. Although these meetings typically deal with the day-to-day mechanics of group living, a great deal of informal counseling occurs (Shostack, 2001). As residents discuss disciplining children, co-operating in house chores, resolutions of conflict among residents, sharing the telephone, and other routine matters, the meetings help to improve parenting skills and also build social skills. Thus, the value and significance of informal counseling should not be disregarded.

Central to almost two centuries of feminist work, is the dichotomy between the private and the public (Patemen, from Kelly, 2003). Counseling is yet another example of how work done privately (i.e. informally within the shelter) is not recognized as such. Reflective of the many different feminist theories, there is no single critique that encompasses the feminist position on why the public/private split is problematic to women. However, there is significant consensus that the split exists and is harmful to women (Kelly, 2003). By not recognizing the guidance and support that staff provide the women and children at the shelter as legitimate, much of the shelter staffs' experiences are not being acknowledged or valued.

Forgetting the violent episodes or minimizing the severity of the violence has been identified as attributing to battered women's belief that their children are not greatly affected (Williams, Weil, & Mauney, 1998). One shelter staff noted that most kids witness the violence even if the mothers think they were sleeping. Some kids are very traumatized by it (Maria, Shelter Staff) and, thus, there may also be the need to help mothers respond to the need for counseling for their children (Choi & Snyder, 1999). The Children's Worker's experience and expertise can not only assist mothers in recognizing the need for counseling for their children, but can also help begin the process of healing.

Williams, Weil, and Mauney (1998) have noted that when staff spend time with children (even just reading or talking), that this time is valuable for many children of domestic violence. By recognizing the therapeutic significance of staff interaction with residents, much of the informal counseling that is already being done within the shelters can begin to be acknowledged and accepted. In addition,

combining counseling and casework functions has its advantages in that a worker can better evaluate the child's needs and nurture a trusting relationship (Shostack, 2001).

6.1.3 Increasing Male Role Models

It is important to note that not all children who live in households without a father require special consideration/attention. Uncles, grandfathers, teachers, and other adult friends can all offer support and guidance to children whose fathers are not involved in their lives. However, children living in shelters for abused women, in particular, may need positive male role model as they may have been exposed to a poor male role model and may not have other male family members or community supports in their lives²⁵. Thus, special care in providing children in women's shelters with positive male role models may be beneficial.

It has been found that males without a positive father-figure tend to be more aggressive, less co-operative and are more likely than males with a consistent father-figure to associate with gangs (Dunlap, 2002). Furthermore, although females without a father-figure typically adjust better than males, children with father-figures generally perform better academically and socially in school (Dunlap, 2002). Although having a male child care provider in the shelter may not be ideal, Children's

²⁵ It is important to note that not all children in shelters have been exposed to poor male role models. For example, a woman may come to a shelter to flee from an over-protective partner who monitors and/or continually "checks-up" on her in an attempt to isolate her from family, friends or the community.

Workers can work with nearby community centers to target males for activities such as drop-ins or child care.

It is estimated that only between 2%-5% of the child care workforce is male (Reynolds, 2002). Currently, nurturing and teaching children is considered “women’s work” and the number of men entering the child care field remains small (Reynolds, 2002). Increasing attention to the benefits of positive male role models for children who have been exposed to domestic violence can be beneficial to the child’s development and can also begin to challenge current stereotypes.

6.1.4 Educating the Community: Focusing on Resilience

One of the goals of the Community Framework Committee of Ottawa-Carleton, with which all shelters are supposed to work, is to “involve all members of the community in the process of social change through education” (Community Framework Committee of Ottawa-Carleton, 1993, p. 29). By involving the community, increased partnerships and collaborations can benefit the women and children in need of various services. Collaboration is also beneficial with respect to funding. As made clear earlier, the inadequacy and instability of funding is also a primary issue when dealing with social services involving women and children fleeing abuse.

As made evident by this research, part of knowing what factors influence a child’s adjustment is knowledge of the other systems with which the child interacts. Although an understanding of the numerous environmental relations that a child interacts with is essential, in order for change to occur, it is necessary to address the

issue of violence against women at both the individual and the structural levels (Nelson House, 1997). The structural social work approach is, therefore, helpful in addressing this issue.

By educating the community of the structural issues and the lack of resources surrounding women and children fleeing abusive relationships, the process of social change can begin. One way shelters can help educate the community is to focus education and awareness of domestic violence on the strengths that these women and children have displayed.

Focusing education to the community, on not only the negative impacts that witnessing abuse can have on children, but also on the resilience and strengths that children have displayed can help to reduce negative assumptions in the community. For example, this can be done by simply changing the name and slightly changing the focus of some of the programs in the community. Although a children's group or meeting may have a focus on witnessing domestic violence, by giving it a name that focuses on the strengths and courage that the children have shown can give children a sense of bravery, and not shame them for what they have experienced. These programs can also bring awareness into the community.

The desire for increased public education surrounding issues of domestic violence and focusing on the strengths of the children is illustrated in the following quote:

I think that there should be some work done in public education and that would speak to awareness issues...I think there should be more public education done within our school system around violence in the family and violence in the community and media and all those other things. But I think that we need to be able to

do that work and see that we aren't going to label kids as a result of that. See and recognize that it is an impact that we need to work with, but that it doesn't mean that ...once you are a kid that [is] labeled as a witness of woman abuse or it's impacting your ability to do well at school, that doesn't mean that you all of a sudden get diagnosed with ADHD and get on medication and that there won't be changes, because there will be changes. Kids are resilient.

(Ingrid, Shelter Staff)

All of the shelters stated that the lack of public education regarding issues surrounding women and children fleeing violence was keeping them at risk. As identified previously, part of the Children's Workers job is to advocate and educate the schools, justice system, housing system, and the child protections systems. By focusing not only on the negative effects of exposure to domestic violence, but also on the strengths that these women and children have displayed, this new focus can be used to inform policy, education, and intervention.

Although co-ordination with various social services may not be easily achieved or maintained, it "is essential to producing a neighborhood service network that engages residents in joint action, fosters co-operation among competing service providers, and develops new programs that meet more community needs than one agency can [provide] alone" (Mulroy, 1997 from Hendricks & Rudich, 2000, p. 23). Any successful program must be aware of the structural, political, and economic issues facing the many people of their community. Children's Workers can, therefore, continue their effort to educate the community. However, with an additional focus on the resilience of children, this may also gain the support of institutions not typically involved with the domestic violence/ shelter movement.

6.2 Final Thoughts And Closing

Although providing services to women and children will never be enough to stop the violence, Children's Programs have a unique opportunity to offer supportive services that are based on respect and the desire to break the cycle of violence. Services for women and children that help them live free of violence need to be done through direct services and through social action. It is hoped that the above-mentioned implications can be used to improve current services, and/or provide helpful ideas to those working with children in shelters.

In the course of this research it became obvious that program development and services to children in first-stage shelters are both an extremely significant and difficult task. Not only is the shelter environment a considerable obstacle in and of itself, but the lack of financial support and community resources adds to the complexity of this undertaking.

All the shelters that participated in this study have a specific Children's Worker and programs that address the issues of domestic violence. Providing children with a safe place to stay, and an opportunity to discuss their feelings about the violence they have experienced are primary needs that shelters have to address. Allowing children to play and reacquiring their role as children are objectives that shelters assume. Thus, programs and services for children in the shelters have multiple goals and intentions.

Developing policies and guidelines that are inclusive of the other systems that women and children are involved in, can not only strengthen existing programs, but

also fill some of the gaps in services that were identified in this study. The school system, child protection system, housing and justice system were structures that shelters often had to educate regarding the needs of these particular children.

Although the multi-cultural nature of residents could at times present some tensions within the shelter, this also offered an occasion to learn and appreciate the diverse cultures reflective of Canadian culture.

Shelters have an opportunity to educate children while at the same time helping them to heal. Supporting women in their role as mothers can not only contribute to their own healing and to their children's, but also plays a role in the child's overall health and safety. It is hoped that this study contributes to the literature dedicated to making the world a safer place for women and children.

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Appendix 1

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

Dear: _____,

My name is Christine Uchida and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University School of Social Work. As part of my degree requirements, I have chosen to complete a thesis. I am writing to ask for your permission to contact the primary children's worker at (name of shelter) to see if she would be interested in participating in my research on children's programs in shelters for women fleeing abuse.

I am interested in the nature and scope of the programs that are currently available in Ottawa, how services are offered, and the ways in which services can be improved. The purpose of this research is to develop concrete and feasible recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporate knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. Since there appears to be very little literature that focuses specifically on the issues that relate to the needs of children in women's shelters, I am hoping that the results of this study will be beneficial to your agency/shelter and to those who work with this vulnerable population.

If you are willing to give me the contact information for the primary children's worker at your shelter, I will then contact her and provide a brief explanation of my study (see the attached letter). The participation I am requesting of the front-line staff is completely voluntary and would involve an interview that would last approximately one hour. However, because the number of first-stage shelters in Ottawa is small, I cannot guarantee anonymity, and so participation may involve certain risks. The risk involves potential discomfort if she expresses views that are at variance with the organization. However, she can refuse to answer any questions, she can terminate the interview at any time, and she can refuse to allow any of her responses to be included as data. In addition, I will take the following steps to protect anonymity: only myself and my supervisor will have access to the transcripts and the names of participants and shelters will not appear in the interview transcripts or the final report.

The insights of your staff regarding the special needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women are important, and I ask that a member of your staff kindly participate in this study. I will telephone you in the next two weeks to ask for permission to contact the member of your staff whom you think would be most appropriate for this research. If you are agreeable, I will then contact the individual to discuss her possible participation in an interview that would be arranged at a time and place of her convenience. However, you will not be informed whether

or not your staff has agreed to participate in this study.

The President of the Board of Directors, and relevant staff from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services will also be asked to participate in this study.

A brief summary of this research will be made available to you upon completion of this study. In addition the completed thesis will be available at the Carleton University Library.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, e-mail: christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be addressed to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor, School of Social Work: (613) 520-2600 ext. 3662, or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

I appreciate your consideration in taking part in this research.

Sincerely,

Christine Uchida (Ms.)

Appendix 2

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: PRIMARY CHILDREN'S WORKER

Carleton University School of Social Work

Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

Dear: _____,

My name is Christine Uchida and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University School of Social Work. As part of my degree requirements, I have chosen to complete a thesis. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research on children's programs in shelters for women fleeing abuse. I have received your name from the Executive Director who is aware that this study is taking place, and I have enclosed a copy of the letter that she received. However, the Executive Director will not be told whether or not you choose to participate.

I am interested in the nature and scope of the programs that are currently available in Ottawa, how services are offered, and the ways in which services can be improved. The purpose of this research is to develop concrete and feasible recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporate knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. Since there appears to be very little literature that focuses specifically on the issues that relate to the needs of children in women's shelters, I am hoping that the results of this study will be beneficial to your agency/shelter and to those who work with this vulnerable population.

The participation I am requesting is completely voluntary and would involve an interview that would last approximately one hour. You will be required to sign a letter of consent and, if you agree, the interview will be audio-taped. However, because the number of first-stage shelters in Ottawa is small, I cannot guarantee anonymity and so participation may involve certain risks. The risk involves potential discomfort if you express views that are at variance with the organization or other participants. However, you may refuse to answer any questions, ask to have the audio recorder turned off, withdraw any information, or terminate the interview at any time. If you terminate the interview, you may choose to allow information provided up to that point to be included, or you may choose to withdraw it. In addition, I will take the following steps to protect anonymity: only myself and my supervisor will have access to the interview data, and the names of participants and shelters will not appear in the interview transcripts or the final report. All interview data will be destroyed upon completion of the study (paper will be shredded and tapes erased) no later than August 2003.

The President of the Board of Directors, and relevant staff from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services will also be asked to participate in this study.

Your insights regarding the special needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women are important, and I ask that you kindly participate in this study. I will telephone you in the next two weeks and if you are willing to participate, an interview will be arranged at a place and time of your convenience.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, e-mail: christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be addressed to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor, School of Social Work: (613) 520-2600 ext. 3662, or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

I appreciate your consideration in taking part in this research.

Sincerely,

Christine Uchida (Ms.)

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRIMARY CHILDREN'S WORKER
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

- 1) How many women and children do you service each year?
- 2) What is the maximum number of women and children that can stay in the shelter?
- 3) Are there some women with children who are turned away because of lack of space?
- 4) Do most of the women come with children?
- 5) About how many children are at the shelter at one time?
- 6) What is the most common age range of children in the shelter?
- 7) Up to what age are male children allowed in the shelter?
- 8) a) How would you describe your role in the shelter? (e.g. what are your responsibilities?)

b) How long have you worked at the shelter?
- 9) In your opinion, what are the primary needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women?
- 10) a) Is there a Children's Programs in the shelter that addresses the issue of domestic violence?

b) In what ways are staff sensitive to the domestic violence that children may have been exposed to? (e.g. special attention when children are fighting?)
- 11) What additional services/programs are available for children in the shelter?
- 12) What are the biggest barriers in providing services for children in the shelter (e.g., overcrowding, multiple/diverse needs of children, funding, etc.)?
- 13) In an ideal world, what, if anything, would you like to see changed with respect to the Children's Programs that are currently being offered?
- 14) What are the biggest barriers to providing these changes?

- 15) How are issues of language taken into account?
- 16) How are issues of culture (i.e. celebrations, religion, food) taken into account?
- 17) Are children who require special accommodations (e.g. physical or mental disabilities) permitted in the shelter?
- 18) How do you view your role with respect to the mothers of the children?
- 19) How do you think the shelter rules affect the mothers?
- 20) Have noticed any tensions with respect to shelter rules and issues surrounding mothering (e.g. pre-determined bed time for children, approved child care arrangements, etc.)?
- 21) Is there anything that I have not asked you that you would like to add?

Appendix 4

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MEMBER OF THE BOARD
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

Dear: _____,

My name is Christine Uchida and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University School of Social Work. As part of my degree requirements, I have chosen to complete a thesis. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research on children's programs in shelters for women fleeing abuse.

I am interested in the nature and scope of the programs that are currently available in Ottawa, how services are offered, and the ways in which services can be improved. The purpose of this research is to develop concrete and feasible recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporate knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. Since there appears to be very little literature that focuses specifically on the issues that relate to the needs of children in women's shelters, I am hoping that the results of this study will be beneficial to your agency/shelter and to those who work with this vulnerable population.

The perspective of the Board is an important one to include and, in addition, I plan to interview front-line first-stage shelter staff in Ottawa and relevant staff from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Since you are a public figure anonymity cannot be guaranteed; however, participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participation would involve a short 15-20 minute telephone interview, and you will be required to sign a letter of consent. You may refuse to answer any questions, ask to have the audio recorder turned off, withdraw any information, or terminate the interview at any time. If you terminate the interview, you may choose to allow information provided up to that point to be included, or you may choose to withdraw it.

The risk of participating is that you may experience potential discomfort if you express views that are at variance with the organization or other participants. However your insight from the perspective of the Board regarding the special needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women are important and I ask that you kindly participate in this study.

I will take the following steps to protect anonymity: Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the interview data, and the names of participants and shelters will not appear in the interview transcripts or the final report. All interview data will be destroyed upon completion of the study (paper will be shredded and tapes erased) no later than August 2003.

A brief summary of this research will be made available to you upon completion of this study and, in addition, the completed thesis will be available at the Carleton University Library.

I appreciate your consideration in taking part in this research. I have included a response notice, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope and ask that you please mail it back to me. If you are willing to participate, an interview will be arranged at a time of your convenience. However, if you are unable to participate in this study, or know of another member of the Board who may be interested in participating in this research, I would be grateful if you would pass this letter on.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, e-mail: christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be addressed to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor, School of Social Work: (613) 520-2600 ext. 3662, or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

Sincerely,

Christine Uchida (Ms.)

Dear Ms. Uchida,

I have recently received your letter in regard to participating in your study of the children's programs in first-stage shelters in Ottawa.

- ☐ Unfortunately, I am not able to participate in your study.
- ☐ Yes, I am interested in participating in your study. I have included my signed letter of consent, and can be contacted at:

(phone number)

Name: _____
(please print)

Agency/Shelter Affiliation: _____

Appendix 5

LETTER OF CONSENT: MEMBER OF THE BOARD
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Christine Uchida of The Carleton University School of Social Work as part of her degree requirements. I am aware that this study will examine the children's programs in first-stage shelters and, in addition, my views regarding service delivery and children's needs.

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze the services that are presently available for children at first-stage women shelters, and to develop recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporates knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. It is hoped that the findings will provide information to the shelter workers that will improve and sensitize services to the children.

My participation will involve a 15-20 minute phone interview. I understand that because I am a public figure that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, however, participation is completely voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. I may refuse to answer any question, or have the interview terminated at any point in time. If I choose to withdraw from the interview, any information that I have given will only be used if I provide written consent.

I understand that my comments from the interview may be used in the written report of the research, and that there is a risk that other people may not agree with my opinion. Although my name and agency affiliation will not be included in the final report, and only the researcher and the Thesis Supervisor will have access to the interview data, due to the small number of first-stage shelters in Ottawa there is a risk that I may be identifiable to someone who reads the completed thesis and knows the Board members or programs in the Ottawa shelters.

I understand that there is a risk that I may feel discomfort if I express views that are at variance with the organization or other participants. However, the researcher will take precautions with respect to coding the data, storing data in a locked box in her home separately from the signed consent forms, and that all data will be destroyed (papers shredded) no later than August 2003.

I understand that the results of the study may be published, and will be deposited in the Carleton University Library. A copy of the final report will also be provided to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be addressed to Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor: (613) 520-2600 ex. 3662 or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Researcher

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Participant

Appendix 6

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MINISTRY LIAISON
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

Dear: _____,

My name is Christine Uchida and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Carleton University School of Social Work. As part of my degree requirements, I have chosen to complete a thesis. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research on children's programs in shelters for women fleeing abuse.

I am interested in the nature and scope of the programs that are currently available in Ottawa, how services are offered, and the ways in which services can be improved. The purpose of this research is to develop concrete and feasible recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporates knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. Since there appears to be very little literature and information that focuses on the issues that relate to the needs of children in women's shelters, I am hoping that the results of this study will be beneficial to you and others who work with this vulnerable population

The perspective of the Ministry is an important one to include and, in addition, I plan to interview front-line first-stage shelter staff in Ottawa and the President of their Board of Directors.

Participation would involve an interview that would last approximately 30-45 minutes. You will be required to sign a letter of consent and, if you agree, interviews will be audio-taped. Since you are a public figure, anonymity cannot be guaranteed, however, participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions, ask to have the audio recorder turned off, withdraw any information, or terminate the interview at any time. If you terminate the interview, you may choose to allow information provided up to that point to be included, or you may choose to withdraw it.

There is a risk of potential discomfort if you express views that are at variance with the organizations or other participants. However your insight regarding the special needs and issues that confront children living in shelters for abused women are important and I ask that you kindly participate in this study.

I appreciate your consideration in taking part in this research. I will be contacting you in the next two weeks to discuss your participation. If you are willing to participate, an interview will be arranged at a time and place of your convenience. A

brief summary of this research will be made available to you upon completion of this study and, in addition, the completed thesis will be available at the Carleton University Library.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, e-mail: christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be addressed to Professor Patricia Evans, Academic Supervisor, School of Social Work: (613) 520-2600 ext. 3662, or Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

Sincerely,

Christine Uchida (Ms.)

Appendix 7

INTERVIEW GUIDE: MEMBER OF THE BOARD
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

- 1) What is the relationship between the children's programs and the Board?
- 2) What priority do children and children's programs have with respect other programs in the shelter?
- 3) How are the children's activities/programs determined?
- 4) What purpose do the children's activities serve? (e.g. provide mothers with child care, address issues relating to domestic violence etc.).
- 5) In an ideal world, what services would you like to be able to offer the children in the shelter?
- 6) What barriers in providing services for children in the shelter exist?
- 7) Additional comments/questions.

Appendix 8

INTERVIEW GUIDE: MINISTRY LIAISON
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

- 1) Describe the role of the Ministry with respect to the shelters in Ottawa.
- 2) Describe the role of the Ministry with respect to the City of Ottawa.
- 3) How is funding allocated to the various first-stage shelters? (e.g. what are the criteria?)
- 4) Is there funding specifically for children's programs in shelters?
- 5) How has funding to the shelters changed in the last 10 years?
- 6) What do you think of the quality of children's programs in shelters?
- 7) What obstacles are there in improving children's services in shelters?
- 8) Additional comments/questions.

Appendix 9

INTERVIEW GUIDE: MINISTRY LIAISON
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

- 1) What is your role in the Ministry?
- 2) a) How is funding allocated to the shelters? (e.g. what are the criteria, what is the breakdown?)
b) Does the amount of funding change from year-to-year?
- 3) What does the Ministry funding pay for?
- 4) Is there a specific job that the Ministry funds for a children's worker?
- 5) What requirements are attached to the funding of the children's programs at the shelters? (certain programs?)
- 6) a) Is external fundraising required by the Ministry?
b) How much are shelters expected to raise?
- 7) a) Are shelters required to fill a certain % or number of the Performance Management System forms?
b) What languages does it come in?
- 8) Any other questions?

Appendix 10

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SHELTER STAFF (FUNDING)
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

- 1) What is your understanding about the way the Ministry allocates funding to the shelters in Ottawa?
- 2) a) How is funding allocated to the shelters? What are the mechanisms-- block funding, contract for services, projects.
b) Is there other funding available through special projects etc?
- 3) What evaluation or reports are required by the ministry?
- 4) What does the Ministry funding pay for?
- 5) How much funding is allocated specifically to children's programs?
- 6) What are the Ministry requirements with respect to the children's programs?
- 7) a) What are your other sources for additional funding?
b) Is this required by the Ministry?
- 8) How has funding to the shelters changed in the last 10 years?
- 9) Additional comments/questions.

Appendix 11

LETTER OF CONSENT: SHELTER STAFF
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Christine Uchida of The Carleton University School of Social Work as part of her Master of Social Work degree requirements. I am aware that this study will examine the children's programs available in my agency and, in addition, my views regarding service delivery and children's needs.

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze the services that are presently available for children at first-stage women shelters, and to develop recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporates knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. It is hoped that the findings will provide information that will improve and sensitize services to children.

My participation will involve an interview of approximately one hour. Participation is completely voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. I may refuse to answer any questions, or have the interview terminated at any point in time. If I choose to withdraw from the interview, information that I have given will only be used if I provide written consent.

I understand that comments from the interview may be used in the written report of the research. Although my name and agency affiliation will not be included in the final report, and only the researcher and the Thesis Supervisor will have access to the interview data, due to the number of first-stage shelters in Ottawa there is a risk that I may be identifiable to someone who reads the completed thesis and knows the workers or programs in the Ottawa shelters.

I understand that anonymity cannot be guaranteed, but that the researcher will take every precaution to protect my identity. I understand that there is a risk that I may feel discomfort if I express views that are at variance with the organization or other participants. Also, other people may not agree with my opinion. I understand that the researcher will code the data, and store data in a locked box in her home separately from the signed consent forms, and that all data will be destroyed (papers shredded and, if used, tapes will be erased) no later than August 2003.

I understand that the results of the study may be published, and will be deposited in the Carleton University Library. A copy of the final report will also be provided to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be directed to Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor: (613) 520-2600 ex. 3662 or, Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

I, agree ☐ do not agree ☐ to be audio taped throughout the interview, and I understand that I may ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any point.

Participants Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Participant

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Researcher

Appendix 12

LETTER OF CONSENT: MINISTRY LIAISON
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Christine Uchida of The Carleton University School of Social Work as part of her Master of Social Work degree requirements. I am aware that this study will examine the role of the Ministry with respect to first-stage shelters in Ottawa.

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze the services that are presently available for children at first-stage women shelters, and to develop recommendations for creating and providing children's programs that incorporates knowledge regarding the effects of exposure to domestic violence. It is hoped that the findings will provide information to the shelter workers and will improve and sensitize services to the children.

My participation will involve an interview of approximately 30-45 minutes. I understand that because I am a public figure representing the Ministry of Community Family and Children's Services, I am not being offered anonymity. However, participation is completely voluntary. I understand that I may withdraw at any time. I may refuse to answer any question, or terminate the interview at any point in time. If I choose to withdraw from the interview, information that I have given will only be used if I provide written consent.

I understand that comments from the interview may be used in the written report of the research, and that other people may not agree with my opinion. There is a risk that I may feel discomfort if I express views that are at variance with the shelter organizations or other participants. I understand that the researcher will take precautions with respect to storing data in a locked box and that all data will be destroyed (papers shredded and, if used, tapes will be erased) no later than August 2003.

I understand that the results of the study may be published, and will be deposited in the Carleton University Library. A copy of the final report will also be provided to Professor Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to: Christine Uchida, Researcher: (613) 521-4965, christine_uchida@yahoo.ca. Questions or concerns may also be directed to Patricia Evans, Thesis Supervisor: (613) 520-2600 ex. 3662 or, Professor Klaus Pohle, Chair, Ethics Review Committee: (613) 520-7434.

I, agree ☐ do not agree ☐ to be audio taped throughout the interview,
and understand that I may ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any point.

Participants Name: _____
(please print)

Signed: _____	Dated: _____
Participant	

Signed: _____	Dated: _____
Researcher	

Appendix 13

LETTER OF CONSENT: TERMINATION OF INTERVIEW
Carleton University School of Social Work
Children's Services in Women's Shelters: An Ottawa Case Study

I, _____ have chosen to terminate my interview with
Christine Uchida.

I, give ☐ do not give ☐ my permission for the data that I have provided to be
used in the final report.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Researcher

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
Participant