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"Blame It on Intake" : A Critical Ethnography of the Negotiation of Access to Shelter Services in a Shelter for Homeless and Battered Women

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THESIS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Kathleen Marie Drew for Master of Arts in Speech Communication presented June 3, 1997.

Title: "Blame It on Intake": A Critical Ethnography of the Negotiation of Access to Shelter Services in a Shelter for Homeless and Battered Women.

Even though the number of homeless women has increased among a population viewed as typically male (Merves 1992), there is still little research focused on women. This study investigated the communicative practices in and through which gendered identity was constructed, negotiated and performed at a point of rupture when the norms for judging a "good woman:"--that is woman as wife, as mother, and as homemaker—appear to have been violated. The negotiation of access into an urban shelter for homeless and/or battered women provided a rich site for the study. The research was grounded in the assumptions of symbolic interaction which views the self as socially constructed. Guided by the ethnography of communication, the research engaged a critical feminist practice to understand underlying social and cultural practices by which gender power relations are constituted, reproduced and contested (Weedon, 1987). This study addressed the following questions: 1) What will an examination of the negotiation of access to a shelter as a process of

inclusion or exclusion reveal about the distribution of power and underlying processes of social control?, and 2) How is gendered identity symbolically developed, negotiated and performed by shelter staff, volunteers, and program participants?

Data were collected through participant observation and interviews with staff and clients to account for the differing perspectives that are influenced by location within the social system (Johnson, 1990). A fine grained analysis of the screen and intake as speech events brought to light the extent to which the shelter rules, the crystallization of the shelter's normative system, were implicated in and governed the process. Framing the screen as a "conversation" obscured the asymmetrical distribution of power within the speech event. An intake worker's competency was evaluated by her ability to select clients who could succeed in the program. The criteria of appropriateness reflected the values of the "good woman" and the "deserving poor" and served the interests of the shelter staff to maintain social control. The research provides a point of intervention in which more inclusive procedures can be developed in keeping with feminist principles of empowerment and equality.

"BLAME IT ON INTAKE": A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE NEGOTIATION OF ACCESS TO SHELTER SERVICES IN A SHELTER FOR HOMELESS AND BATTERED WOMEN

by

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When I enthusiastically decided to conduct an ethnography of communication for my thesis five years ago, I had no idea that it would involve so much energy and hard work or that it would lead to personal, professional and spiritual growth. I would not have been able to complete the project if my family and friends had not been willing to leave me to my computer and my grumbling even if it looked like I was just playing computer games. I am also indebted to Dr. Susan Poulsen for introducing me to ethnography of communication and for her tactful recommendations and gentle reminders that done is better than perfect. Dr. Peter Ehrenhaus encouraged me to challenge the prevailing norms and structures of power within systems and provided me with the resources needed to accomplish the task. Amazonas Olivella reminded me of the importance of the work I was doing even when I was ready to give up. I am equally grateful for the insights and the support I received from my peer review group including late night emails when I panicked including Doreen Gilliam, Franki Trujillo-Dalbey, Lyn Tan, Ruby Chen, Nobuko Higashi and Debbie Gabbert. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Kathryn Farr for her suggestions and careful editing that helped to clarify my thinking and my writing as I completed my final draft.

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CHAPTER 1

"BLAME IT ON INTAKE": A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Purpose

Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) points out that female identity is socially constructed along two axes--the collective or mythic and the individual. The social and the symbolic are then incorporated as images that emerge in a woman's life story. As Etter-Lewis (1991) points out, language that shapes text also shapes images of self. Speech then can be viewed as an act of identity that locates the speaker as both an individual and a member of a particular social group (p. 52). Self concept both reflects and emerges from the intersection of collective and cultural identities with the personal and the individual through language and communication practices. The general purpose of this study was to examine the negotiation and access to a shelter for battered and homeless women. More specifically, the study examined the negotiation, construction and enactment of social identities in and through communication, shaped and structured at the point of access to an urban shelter for homeless and battered women.

Rationale

Shelter life provides a site for the study of the construction of identity at a point of rupture when the norms for judging a "good woman"--that is woman as wife, as mother, and as homemaker--appear to have been violated. Homeless individuals are without the basic components believed to be

essential to life --home, family, property, secure jobs (Wagner, 1993, p. 175). Golden (1992) suggests that female homelessness carries a different set of meanings for society than does male homelessness. She states that "Women are so entirely defined in terms of whom they belong to that no category exists for a woman without family or home" (p. 5). Merves (1992) notes that homelessness among men is attributed to the economy whereas women are held personally accountable for their failure as or to be a partner or parent. She adds that a "homeless woman is more of a social outcast than a homeless man because she violates the stricter prescriptions of the proper role for women" (p. 229). However, Wagner argues that street people can and do develop their own culture, values and community. Such a "failed event" as homelessness provides loci to study the re-construction and negotiation of female identity and presentation of self (see Goffman, 1959).

Blau (1992) notes that although homelessness has a history that can be analyzed in terms of periods or phases, the popular view is often ahistorical. As such it has failed to account for changing social factors. Blau calls for an adequate theory of homelessness that would account for the interaction between the political, economic, and the psychological.

The prevailing theories of homelessness traditionally have not accounted for the presence of women in the homeless population. The availability of shelter space for women has been directly affected by popular notions of homelessness. Consequently, until the 1970s there were no

shelters with space set aside for women let alone a shelter exclusively for women. Shelters were a "man's world inside and out" and "until 1973 nobody seemed to think of doing anything for these women" (Hirsch, 1989, p. 110).

Homelessness received recognition as a major social issue facing the nation in 1981 when the U.S. Congress began hearings on homelessness, the first held since the "Great Depression" (Hombs, 1990, p.133). The presence of the "visible homeless" has become impossible to ignore. Equally difficult to ignore, is the increasing presence of single women, and female headed families among a population that had been viewed as typically male (Merves 1992).

As the public debates about the shape of public policies continue at the municipal, county, state and federal levels, researchers attempt to define and categorize homelessness, to estimate the numbers of both the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless, and to construct a theory of homelessness that not only accounts for homelessness but suggests a solution (Bassuk, 1984; Baxter & Hopper, 1981; Hope & Young, 1986; Rossi, 1989; Wolch & Dear 1993).

Blau (1992) notes that defining homelessness is "deceptively easy" and offers the definition of a homeless person articulated in the Stewart B. McKinney Act as "one who lacks a fixed permanent nighttime residence or whose nighttime residence is a temporary shelter, welfare hotel, or any public

or private place not designed as sleeping accommodations for human beings" (p. 8).

The difficulty arises when efforts are made to count the homeless based on what seems to be a clear and unambiguous definition. Blau (1992) points out that "in discussions of homelessness, three different usages of the term correspond to three different political agendas" (p. 8). The homeless population can be defined to include or exclude people residing in shelters, people living "on the streets" or those housed in welfare hotels "in keeping with the definer's political agenda." Rossi (1989) identifies the range of definitions as:

> running the gamut from highly inclusive ones that cover all those who are inadequately housed—including doubled-up households, persons living in (by some standards) poor housing, and persons temporarily housed in hospitals or other institutions, as well as those who do not rent or own conventional dwellings. (p. 47)

Rossi attempts to resolve some of the definitional dilemmas by distinguishing between *literal homelessness*--"having no home to go to" and *precariously housed*--"having a tenuous hold on housing of the lowest quality" (p. 9).

Such ambiguities of definition have worked to exclude women not only from shelters, but from inclusion in the research and shelter counts. Domestic violence is now recognized as a leading cause of homelessness among women. Yet battered women often are excluded from homeless studies and

homeless counts (Merves, 1992; Rossi, 1989; Somer, 1992; Zorza,1991). For example, both Rossi (1989) and Snow & Anderson (1987) excluded local battered women's shelters from their studies.

Manuel (1986) remarked on the lack of literature and research on the subject of homeless women. Many of the current studies still do not focus on women. Although gender may be used as a variable or category with differences noted between homeless women and homeless men, the tendency has been to collapse the data collected from women within the same categories as those identifying men so that their presence among the homeless and their issues become obscured. Portland State University (as of April 1995) had available 125 titles catalogued under the subject heading of homelessness. Only twelve were devoted exclusively to the subject of homeless women. Currently (April 1997), of 187 titles, 20 fall under the heading of homeless women. Yet, according to Blau (1992), there are nearly as many homeless women as homeless men. Merves (1992) notes that current literature about homeless women is devoted to dispelling myths and providing richly detailed portraits of the plight of homeless women (Bard, 1990; Ferrill, 1991; Golden, 1992; Liebow, 1993; Nietzke, 1994; Rousseau, 1981).

Although studies indicate a relationship between domestic violence and homelessness (Zorza, 1991), studies that have focused on women in battered women's shelters key in on domestic violence, its causes and effects or the

operation of the shelter in relation to political ideology and social movements (Loseke; 1992; Roche, 1992; Shepherd, 1990) rather than the issue of homelessness. Psychologically oriented research examines the issue of self esteem or dependency and attempts to measure the explanatory power of learned helplessness theory in predicting a woman's return to her abusive partner (Knous, 1990; Walker, 1996) or as it relates to homelessness (Tobin, 1992). Drawing on feminist and critical perspectives, some studies challenge the patriarchal system that puts women at disadvantage (Ferraro, 1981; Manuel, 1986; Merves, 1992; Schillinger, 1988; Srinivasan & Davis, 1991; Watson & Austerberry, 1986).

Yet, as Snow and Anderson (1987) point out, a consideration of the "webs of meaning" the homeless spin and the personal identities they construct has been neglected in the current research (p. 1337). However as they consider the identity work and talk of the homeless in their sample, Snow and Anderson focus primarily on homeless men living "on the streets" and omit from consideration homeless women residing in the battered women's shelter. Current studies have not examined either the process by which homeless women, or the women that provide services for them, acquire a theory of self (view of self) or spin their own webs of meaning within the shelter institution through interaction with each other. Studies that have investigated the interaction between women and the institution have treated communication as an epiphenomenon rather than as both the medium and

outcome of the everyday social practices within the shelter. The communicative practices and patterns that suggest a speech community and implicate the development and enactment of a collective identity among homeless women, staff, and volunteers in a shelter setting have not been the focus of study. Nor has the negotiation of identity among the women who work at and the women who live in a shelter been the focus of any research. Little is known about how women acquire a certain view or theory of self in and through communication within the shelter institutions.

This study, with a focus on communicative practices and situated discourse, co-construction of social identities, and the interplay between cultural identity and individual identification, is unique and contributes to a better understanding of the impact of shelter life on women and the resources that can be brought to bear on the problem of homelessness. Through a study set in an urban shelter for women using the ethnography of communication, this study attempts to present "compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 1991, p.41).

The research was guided by the following questions:

Research Questions

1. What will an examination of the negotiation of access to a shelter as a process of inclusion or exclusion reveal about the distribution of power and underlying processes of social control?
2. How is gendered identity symbolically developed, negotiated and performed through the speech situation of coming into shelter by shelter staff, volunteers, and program participants?

The ensuing chapters present the results of the study. Chapter 2 outlines key concepts and the theoretical perspectives that guided the research. Chapter 3 describes the ethnographic methods used to gather data and describes reliability and validity as they apply in qualitative research. Chapter 4 and 5 present the findings framed within the ethnography of communication framework. Chapter 6 concludes with data analysis and the critical move, an evaluation of the ethnography of communication as a heuristic guide, discussion of the limitations of the findings and the implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

AND SENSITIZING CONCEPTS

Bulmer (1979) comments that although emphasis is placed on emergence in data analysis by qualitative researchers, "in practice concepts do not merely form themselves out of the data" (p. 672). Rather, he suggests an interplay of data and conceptualization with concepts mediating between theory and data. Concepts provide categories for the organization of ideas and observations (Bulmer, 1979). A sensitizing concept "suggests directions along which to look" providing a "general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). The following section presents an overview of the sensitizing concepts that inform this study. They include a notion of a socially constructed self developed within the perspective of symbolic interaction, the notion of gender articulated within a feminist perspective and a critical analysis reflected in the work of critical ethnographers.

Symbolic Interaction

This study draws on the assumptions, definitions and concepts developed within the theoretical framework of symbolic interaction. Mead is credited as the chief architect and prime mover of what would become known as symbolic interaction (Littlejohn; 1989; Meltzer, 1972). Mead (1934) developed a theory of human behavior that he identified as social

behaviorism through a series of classroom lectures he gave at the University of Chicago between 1893 and 1931.

Blumer, a leading exponent of the interaction perspective, continued the classical Meadian tradition at the University of Chicago giving it the name of symbolic interaction (Farberman, 1985). However, Stryker (1972) notes that there is "no single orthodoxy" which counts as symbolic interaction theory. Rather, he sees symbolic interaction theory as addressing a set of questions concerning how "the human organism acquires the ways of behaving, the values, norms, and attitudes of the social units of which he is a part" (p. 436). Stryker lays out a series of assumptions or propositions that remain consistent with the work of the early interactionists.

1. Valid principles of human social psychological behavior cannot be derived from, or inferred from, the study of non-human forms.
2. The most fruitful approach to man's social behavior is through an analysis of society...by beginning with the social act. Its basic unit of observation is interaction, and from interaction both society and individual derive.
3. The human infant ...has the potentialities for social development. Original nature is amorphous and plastic..
4. The human being is actor as well as reactor. (pp. 437-438)

Mead's Concept

Symbolic interaction also draws upon a series of concepts that were organized by Mead as he developed his theory of social behaviorism. Mead was not the first to articulate the notions of mind and self, but he transformed these ideas when he "rejected the nagging individualism in James and the pervasive mentalism in Cooley" (Farberman, 1985, p. 19). According to Morris (1934), Mead succeeds at demonstrating that the mind and the self are emergent and that language, in the form of the vocal gesture, provides the mechanism by which the mind is socially constituted and through which self, conscious of itself, appears (pp. xiii-xiv).

Standpoint of Social Behaviorism and the Social Act

Mead (1934) stresses that an approach to the study of social experience that deals "with experience from the standpoint of society" must be "from the standpoint of communication as essential to the social order." The value of this approach according to Mead is that it is able to address communication in a way not available to behaviorists. This is essential to Mead because he wants "to approach language not from the standpoint of inner meanings to be expressed, but in its larger context of co-operation in the group taking place by means of signals and gestures. Meanings appear within that process" (p. 6).

The Self

Mead insists that the self is emergent within the process of social experience and activity. It develops as a result of both the individual's relationship to the social process and his[1] relationships to other individuals within that process and is made possible through the use of significant symbols. When the individual takes the attitudes of other individuals toward himself, he has, in effect, become an object to himself. To become an object to oneself presupposes a self. Mead explains:

> in order to become aware of himself as such he must, to repeat, become an object to himself, or enter his own experience as an object, and only by social means--only by taking the attitudes of others toward himself--is he able to become an object to himself. (p. 226)

However, for the self to develop in what Mead termed the "fullest sense" he must not only adopt the whole social process into his experience in terms of attitudes towards himself, but must take on attitudes towards the social activity and undertakings of the social group as part of "the general social process which constitutes its life and of which these projects are specific manifestations" (154). Thus the structure of the complete self is a reflection of the complete social process.

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[1] The masculine "he" is in keeping with the language used by Mead and reflects the sexist bias of the writing of his time.

Mead summarizes the implications of his conceptualization of the process that gives rise to the self. It implies the pre-existence of the group, it implies co-operative activity, and it implies an elaboration and evolution of social organization within which selves arise and exist. Symbolic interaction is then "both the medium for the development of human beings and the process by which human beings associate as human beings" (Meltzer, 1972, p. 18). According to Meltzer (1972) and consistent with the "organic unity" of Mead's position, any "distinctively human act necessarily involves: symbolic interaction, role-taking, meaning, mind, and self" (p. 18). The key link is communication, communication realized in and through language.[2]

Etter-Lewis (1991) points out that language that shapes text also shapes images of self. Speech then can be viewed as an act of identity that locates the speaker as both an individual and a member of a particular social group (p. 52). Self concept emerges from the intersection of collective and cultural identities with the personal and the individual through language and

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[2] Mead's work was grounded in the beliefs and values of his times. His published lectures reflect the ontological and epistemological concerns of his era to discover and describe human cognitive processes. Mead addresses the trend towards behaviorism demonstrating that mind and self are not biologically given, but socially emergent and that human beings are not passive puppets who respond mechanically to stimuli but actively construct their behavior, "carve out" their objects and their environments. However, as Meltzer (1972) points out, Mead oversimplifies the concept of the "generalized other" by "assuming, apparently a single, universal generalized other for the members of each society—rather than a variety of generalized others (even for the same in individuals at different levels of generality" (p. 20). Meltzer also criticizes Mead's work for ignoring "affective elements in the rise of the self and in social interaction generally" (p. 20).

communication practices. Identity is also performative. Bauman and Sherzer (1989) conceptualize performance in terms of the interplay between communicative resources and individual competence, within the context of particular situations. They assert that "performances thus have an emergent quality, structured by the situated and creative exercise of competence" (p. 7).

Gender

Weedon (1987) characterizes feminism as both a politics and a range of theories. Flax (1990) identifies the goal of feminist theory as the analysis of gender relations in terms of how they are constituted and experienced. One starting point for a feminist analysis is the patriarchal structure of society--patriarchy referring to "power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men" (Weedon, 1987, p. 2). Feminist analyses of patriarchy involve assumptions about sex, gender, femininity, masculinity, lesbianism, identity and change (Weedon, 1987, p. 4).

Relevant to this study is the notion of gender that is central to the development of feminist theory. With the "problematization" of the existence of gender relations by feminist theorists, gender "can no longer be treated as fact" (Flax, 1990, p. 44). Gender is both an analytic category and a social process. Gender represents the social, cultural, and psychological meaning imposed upon biological sexual identity (Showalter, 1989). "It is about the linking of other fields of social practice to the nodal practice of engendering"

(Connel, 1987, p. 140) that is accomplished communicatively through discourse. "Gender attributes of the sexes form a discourse through which human beings, both men and women, experience gender differences as natural and inevitable" (Thakur, 1991, p. 116). Through identification with dominant discourses on gender, individuals come to construct themselves as gendered (Flax, 1990).

Showalter (1989) notes that gender, regarded as masculinity and femininity, cannot be conceived of as simple binary forms because they are intersected by other categories of difference such as sexual preference, class divisions, and racial hierarchies (p. 4). She cautions that "gender should not be treated as an isolated category within a purely psychoanalytic framework, but should rather be seen as part of a process of social construction" (p. 5).

Informed by a feminist theory, this study engages a critical feminist practice understood as "ways of understanding social and cultural practices which throw light on how gender power relations are constituted, reproduced and contested" (Weedon, 1987, p. vii.) It is here that the boundary between genres blur and blend as a feminist critical practice is informed by critical ethnography (see Geertz, 1983, pp. 19-70).

Critical Ethnography

Anderson (1989) describes critical ethnography as a marriage of critical social theory and ethnographic methods. He explains that the

interpretivist movements in anthropology (see Geertz, 1973, 1983) and in sociology (see Giddens, 1979) have blended with neo-Marxist (see Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 1971; Horkheimer, 1972) and feminist social theory (see Chodorow, 1978; de Beauvior, 1953) to produce the genre of critical ethnography.

Grounded in the traditions of conventional ethnography, a critical ethnography presents a qualitative interpretation of data that is structured by the rules of ethnographic methods and analysis informed by the symbolic interactionist paradigm, and which develops theory inductively. It differs from conventional ethnography in its analysis, discourse and political purpose by providing a "more direct style of thinking about the relationships among knowledge, society, and political action" (Thomas, 1993, vii).

Operating from an ethical juncture, a critical ethnographer uses knowledge to create social change by bringing into sharp relief the symbolic sources and processes that shape social existence. Selecting the mundane-everyday events and social processes as an object of study, the critical ethnographer attempts to reveal underlying social processes of control, highlight inequities in the distribution of power within social relations and expose the mechanisms that produce and reproduce sets of privileged or preferred meanings or behaviors over others. This is accomplished by describing, analyzing and opening "to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas,

power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain" (Thomas, 1993, p. 2).

The research act as a process and a source for the production of knowledge is also open to scrutiny through self reflexivity. Critical ethnography integrates self reflexivity into the research act. According to Anderson (1989), self reflection works as a dialectical process among the researcher's constructs, the informants' commonsense constructs, the research data, the researcher's ideological biases and the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study (p. 254). The process of self reflexivity or as West (1993) identifies it, "taking the ideological turn" in ethnography is necessary because research, as a production of discourse takes place within "historically contextualized communicative interactions that are structured by ideologies" and enacted within relations of power (p. 211). West argues that ethnographic projects within the communication discipline need to articulate the relations of power in which the researcher and her subjects are enmeshed.

The Critical Move

The ethnography of communication that guides this research project provides the data for a critical move. Although the focus of the ethnographer is on discovering, describing and analyzing the patterns discoverable in and through communication as a cultural system, it does not preclude a critical move. There is a natural link between ethnography of communication and

the critical move. The ethnographic work can support the claims of critical work by providing necessary and sufficient details through "thick description" (Geertz, 1973).

The theoretical grounding that justifies a critical move is implicit in the fundamental assumption that undergirds the ethnography of communication framework. The unit of analysis is the speech community conceived of as an "organization of diversity" in which the knowledge of "shared or mutually complementary knowledge and ability (competence) of its members for the production and interpretation of socially appropriate speech" is differentially distributed among its members" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989, p. 6).

Bauman and Sherzer acknowledge that "one of the most fully and richly developed lines of comparative inquiry generated by the ethnography of speaking concerns the nature, forms, functions, and situational contexts of use of political language" and is evident in the "recognition of forms of talk as constitutive of political action and in the service of exercising power and reproducing the mechanisms that make power possible" (p. xii). They applaud this work as a "valuable critical complement...demonstrating that the political process as enacted turns fundamentally on the control and use of expressive means, whatever might be the structure of power and authority in a given society" (p. xii).

Hymes (1986), recognizing the value of critical analyses, praises Katriel's 1986 study of Dugri speech because "it attends to the costs as well

as the benefits, or, more neutrally, the trade-offs inherent in the adoption of any one cultural style" (vii). He notes that "too often accounts of language miss the ambiguity as a resource, praising or blaming and disturbing its powers, but neglecting the task of discovering the balance sheet in actual lives. The significance of the "study of speech communities as actual communities of speakers" is that it will:

> go beyond a liberal humanism which merely recognizes the abstract potentiality of all languages, to a humanism which can deal with concrete situation, with the inequalities that actually obtain, and help transform them through knowledge of the way language is organized as a human problem and resource. (pp 55-56)

In conclusion, an interpretive approach using the ethnography of communication and the critical stance are mutually informing. The former enables the researcher to probe below the surface levels to the deeper structures of shared meanings, beliefs, and identity. Research that has used the ethnography of communication to build communication theory has provided a conceptual lens through which culture in communication and communication in culture can be examined (Carbaugh, 1990). The critical move grounded in critical ethnography allows for analysis of the implications of differential access to communication resources for power relations and equality within the context of a particular community that is bounded by time and space.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study is grounded in the assumptions of the qualitative approach to communication studies and is a case study. This chapter provides the rationale and theoretical grounding for the qualitative case study. It also includes an explanation of the descriptive theoretical framework, ethnography of communication, followed by a discussion of the methods used, including site entry and data collection, reliability and validity and results of the pilot study. The chapter ends with a discussion of the procedures used to reduce and analyze the data.

The Qualitative Approach to Communication Research

Qualitative research as "an empirical, socially located phenomenon" allows for the "sustained interaction with the people being studied in their own language, and on their own turf" (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 10 & 12). This study used a qualitative approach because it best fit the research goal to discover, describe, and interpret recurrent patterns of speaking as staff, volunteers and clients jointly constructed and enacted identity and created webs of meaning in a shelter community (Geertz, 1973).

Case Study

More specifically, this is a case study, a viable research strategy in communication inquiry that can be used to gather and organize data (Philipsen, 1982). The qualitative case study, as a type of qualitative

research, is defined as "a prose description, of an instance of a specified class of phenomena, which is written so as to permit cumulative analyses and interpretations of multiple instances of the class" (p. 4).

Qualitative case studies of similar phenomena can contribute to the development and testing of descriptive frameworks and communication theories. At the descriptive level, the qualitative case study can be characterized as "focused exploration" of a phenomenon of interest guided by a descriptive framework for the study of that phenomenon. It is designated exploratory because the investigation takes place in the context in which the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs without completely depending on use of a priori categories or codes to capture the data. At the level of qualitative abstraction, the qualitative case study can be used to develop communication theory. It can be used to generate hypotheses, to test the soundness of empirical claims and extant generalizations, to qualify the scope of extant claims, and to construct and test descriptive frameworks (Philipsen, 1982, p. 18).

The ethnography of communication is one such empirically derived descriptive framework that developed in and continues to be constituted by qualitative case studies. Philipsen (1982) explains that "each ethnography of communication produced--each case--uses the extant framework as a heuristic tool for description, and each study is to be examined for its potential contribution to development of the framework" (p.18).

Ethnography of Communication

Ethnography of communication is a descriptive theoretical framework first articulated by Dell Hymes in 1962. It is both a theory of speaking and a guide "for examining and describing speaking in particular communities" (Braithwaite, 1990, p. 146). Observation and description are guided by the components of speaking organized under the mnemonic SPEAKING; setting, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norm and genre. The principal concern of the ethnographer of communication is the identification of the "diverse range of resources put to use in the creation of situated discourse, drawn upon and manipulated in the conduct of speaking in social life" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1975, p. 103). The discovery of recurring patterns of communicative conduct among individuals suggests a system of shared knowledge that guides the appropriate use and non use of communication.

The social unit of analysis for ethnography of communication is the "speech community" (Hymes, 1986, p. 52). As Braithwaite (1990) notes, identifying a speech community is partially a reflexive process "in that one needs to assess the presence of dimensions of a speech community before one can posit the existence of a speech community" (p. 146). Despite the problem of circularity in identifying a speech community, language plays a significant role in identifying the boundary of the social unit. As Saville-

Troike (1989) notes, "the societal functions of language will include the boundary functions of separating, unifying, and stratifying" (p. 18).

A speech community is recognized "in terms of overlapping and mutually complementary resources and rules for the production and interpretation of socially appropriate speech" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1975, p. 112). A speech community also reflects general cultural themes regarding language and speech underlying all communicative behavior. Bauman and Sherzer stress that the most important point is that "it is conceived of as fundamentally an organization of diversity" (p. 112). Access and command of resources for speaking as well as competence are differentially distributed among the members (Bauman & Sherzer, 1974, p. 6). Thus every social context or community is grounded with its own roots, and "each situation and community, through its unique patterns, situations, and uses of communication, says something about itself, displaying what could be called its cultural identity" (Carbaugh, 1990, p. 1).

Sampling Procedures

The sampling procedures used in the conduct of this study were purposive non-random. As noted by Honigman (1970), a purposive or judgment sample is most appropriate when the goal of research is to "understand a social or cultural system to whose operation or dynamics individual actors or artifacts offer only clues" (p. 277). The cultural system investigated in this study was the shared ways of speaking among staff,

volunteers and clients living in and working at a shelter for women including the rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech as they relate to the construction and performance of identity. The research site, population, and behaviors, sampled were chosen by criteria consistent with the research questions and theoretical underpinnings including the ethnography of communication framework.

Sample type and size

Number of informants is not as much a contribution to the overall research as the "strategic" coverage of the total social system (Johnson, 1990). Johnson asserts that nonprobability samples provide "representative pictures of aspects of information of knowledge distributed within the population" (p. 23). Position in the social structure shapes perceptions, recollections and descriptions of the informant. Bias can be introduced into a study due to informants' investment in their position or in specific outcomes in an organization. A small number of specially chosen informants that includes contrasting cases provides a broader perspective of the social system under study and helps to guard against potential bias.

The research questions in this study focus on the construction, negotiation, and enactment of identity in and through communicative practices at a point of rupture and crisis in a woman's life--at a time when she is homeless and without resources. Homeless women can be found in a number of sites throughout an urban area. However, for the purposes of this

study, a shelter location afforded the best opportunity to observe the range of communicative resources used to negotiate access to a shelter and the implications for the construction of women's social identities including staff, volunteers, and program participants at that point.

Research Site[1]

I first contacted the shelter director of Women's Place[2] as part of a project for an urban communication class in 1992. I was granted permission to conduct a study in the shelter and completed several projects over the year as I developed my fledgling qualitative research skills. I continued as a volunteer after the projects were completed. Shortly after I completed my course work for a master's degree, I met with the shelter director to discuss the possibility of doing a research project in the shelter for completion of the degree requirements. With the stipulation that the confidentiality of shelter clients be respected, she gave me verbal consent to collect data through interviews and participant observation.

However, shortly after receiving formal consent from the Human Subjects Research Review Committee in the spring of 1996 and much to my dismay, one of the staff members objected to the research project. She suggested that I bring it up at the next staff meeting. After several weeks of

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[1] A local shelter for battered and homeless women was selected as the site for this study because it did not discriminate between women escaping domestic violence and homeless women.

[2] All shelter names used in the study are pseudonyms including Women's Place and Hoyt house to protect the confidentiality of the women participating in the shelter.

waiting, I finally attended a staff meeting with all the interested parties present. Terrified that I was about to lose access to the research site, I briefly outlined my research proposal. I left the meeting without gaining access to any of the shelter activities outside the Intake and Referral offices. After a brief absence, I returned to the shelter, and the subject of access for my research was broached again by a staff member. She told me that everyone was in "a better place" and that she did not think that I would be denied access. With feelings of trepidation, I again presented a brief synopsis of my project to the assembled staff. To my amazement, all resistance seemed to have evaporated. However, because the access granted was limited to observations within the Intake and Referral Department and a small portion of staff meetings relevant to intake and referral work, the research questions were more narrowly focused on the intake and referral activities within the shelter.

Data Collection Methods

I used basic methods of qualitative research including participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and document review.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is not a single method, but a blend or combination of data-collection strategies (Sevigny, 1981, p. 65) that provides ample opportunity to collect data difficult to obtain except through observation (Freilich, 1970) including the study of unconscious social and

cultural processes (Sarett, 1984, p. 213). It includes the recording of events that are relevant to the research questions and supported by the theoretical and sensitizing concepts that guide the research. It is an "interweaving of looking and listening, of watching and asking" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 70), a process through which "an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and relatively long-term relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of that association" (p. 12).

I began this study with an extended period of observation facilitated by my role as a volunteer. I observed shelter activities focusing on speech events, spending ten to twenty hours a week at the shelter during the year that I collected data. My duties included intake and referral work, attending weekly staff meetings and participating on work committees, as well as co-facilitating a domestic violence support group for women in the shelter. I also participated in several training sessions for new volunteers providing information about intake and referral work. Finally, I provided anti-oppressions training, an education piece for all new volunteers and staff required by Services for Children and Families as well as the state Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

My status as a student and researcher was known to staff, to volunteers, and to the women residing in the shelter. I remained a participant observer throughout the research process for a number of

reasons. First, because of my commitment to create places of safety for women and their children. Secondly, I found that remaining in the field for an extended period of time facilitated and increased rapport with staff and clients. Finally, it allowed for validity checks with staff on information collected through the interviews and observation during the data analysis phase.

The value of time in the field for developing an understanding of the community was highlighted for me when I reviewed one of the first interviews I completed with a shelter client in 1992. The woman was living in the shelter, working for her GED (Graduate Equivalency Diploma), and attending parenting classes mandated by CSD (Children's Services Division). All of this she patiently explained to me because I was new to the setting and unfamiliar with the language of social services. The client also told me that she was receiving services from CPA. " What's that," I asked. "Oh, I get counseling there," she replied. CPA is the name given to an agency that works with women leaving prostitution. The full title is Council for Prostitution Alternatives, but is abbreviated to CPA so that a woman's connection to prostitution will not be spelled out. Not only did I not notice the code switching, but I also failed to realize the woman did not trust me enough to disclose her involvement in prostitution.

Informal interviewing was an integral part of the on site research. Unstructured or casual interviewing, a key part of participant observation

(Lofland & Lofland, 1995), was used extensively to elicit rich, detailed information and to develop an understanding of the structure of the speech events studied. Casual interviewing can be thought of as a "guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis" that "seeks to discover the informant's experience of a particular topic or situation" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 18).

Ethnographic Interviewing

As noted by Spradley (1979), the ethnographic interview is intended to elicit samples of the participant's language, in this case, the basic units in her cultural knowledge, and the meaning of the terms used. The interview itself "is a particular kind of speech event" that is governed by "cultural rules for beginning, ending, taking turns, asking questions, pausing, and even how close to stand to other people" (p. 55). As a particular kind of speech event, the interview became part of the data set and was subject to analysis.

Ethnographic interviews began after I gained rapport with the women in the shelter and developed a knowledge of the system under investigation. I interviewed eight women working at or receiving services from the shelter using the interview protocol (Appendix A and B) refined during the pilot study (see page 39 for discussion). Informants selected for the study included a representation of the staff positions within the shelter organization in order to account for the differential distribution of information, knowledge and

resources throughout the social system. This helped to protect against bias by insuring a sampling of the range of perspectives within the shelter system. The sample included the shelter's Executive Director, the Domestic Violence Resource Coordinator, an Intake and Referral volunteer, and the Crisis Specialist. With the exception of the volunteer, all of the shelter workers interviewed are survivors of domestic violence. Two of the survivors who stayed in a shelter when they left their abusers are also "in recovery" from drug or alcohol addictions.

Barb,[3] the shelter's Executive Director, is a middle aged white woman who enthusiastically supports the various projects of students outside and inside the shelter as part of "empowering women." Donna, the Domestic Violence Resource Coordinator is a young white woman with whom I have co-facilitated the shelter domestic violence support group. Cathy, the Crisis Specialist, is a young white woman who has been instrumental in shaping the Intake and Referral Department and has been a key informant during the research project. In addition to participating in a lengthy interview, she also answered numerous questions during more informal interviews. Zoey, an Intake and Referral volunteer, is a young Korean American work study student from one of the local universities. Zoey also provided numerous insights into the organization and structure of intake work.

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[3] All names used for staff, volunteers or clients in the study are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the women.

Selection of the women living in the shelter for the study was done with input from the case managers and the Crisis Specialist to ensure that no additional hardship would be imposed on the women. Again, although the sample of clients was small, it reflected the diversity of clients providing a variety of perspectives in keeping with a judgment sample. Four shelter clients agreed to an interview including a young homeless pregnant Hispanic woman, Angela; a young white woman leaving a domestic violence situation, Burgundy Ann; a young African American mother of a toddler, Jonnée who had been battered by her partner and then abandoned; and a young white woman, single with no children, Ronnie, who had left an "unsafe" living situation.

The interview questions were guided by the ethnography of communication. Standardizing the interviews provided a basis for comparison across interviewees. The interviews lasted anywhere from twenty to ninety minutes. All were taped with the consent of the interviewee and transcribed for analysis. I provided each of the staff with copies of the transcript and elicited feedback. However, all the clients who were interviewed had left the shelter by the time the transcripts were completed.

Human Subjects

To protect the confidentiality of all the women participating in the study, pseudonyms were assigned and used throughout the study both in the transcripts and the data log. The master list of names matched to

pseudonyms was kept in a secured location separate from the secured storage area of the tapes, to which only I had access. Upon completion of the project, both the tapes and the master list will be discarded. As an additional measure, descriptive details that might clearly identify any participant were omitted.

I met individually with the study participants to discuss the risks that participation in the study might pose, and answer any questions they might have about the study or their participation in it. Interviews were not begun until the consent forms were signed (see Appendix C and D) and all the requirements of the Human Subjects Review Committee met.

The Data

Working with the ethnography of communication as a framework and heuristic, I attempted to capture the words and actions of the people observed and interviewed as wells as descriptions of the physical setting, the participants, and the events. The field notes included not only descriptions but my impressions, feelings, analytic ideas and inferences. As Geertz (1973) expressed it, I attempted to inscribe the "said," turning a passing event into an account (p. 19) and fix it in "perusable terms" (p. 20). In keeping with the traditions of qualitative research, the logging record became the data (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 47).

I adapted Spradley's (1979) field note system. It included jotted notes and brief accounts done on the spot that were expanded into a full account

as soon as possible after each field session in a shelter log. Additionally, I used the coding system suggested by Schatzman and Strauss (1973) of observational notes (ON), theoretical notes (TN), methodological notes, (MN) and added personal notes (PN). Observational notes were the details of the event including exact quotes recounted with as little interpretation as possible. Theoretical notes included interpretations, inferences, tentative hypotheses, theoretical links between concepts and data, and emerging concepts. Methodological notes consisted of observations and evaluations of the researcher as instrument and discussions of the methodological process itself, a significant feature of the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 243). Personal notes included fears, frustrations, confusions, puzzlements as well as any emerging biases discovered during moments of confusion or revelation.

Field notes and journal entries were a very productive tool for structuring questions for casual interviews to elicit multiple perspectives from the shelter workers and the clients and confirm or disconfirm my interpretations. Periodic review of the field notes made it possible to notice emerging patterns that suggested norms and shared understandings and helped to begin to map the boundaries of a shelter speech community. The repeated use of certain terms suggested a specialized shelter vocabulary, one that I had to master in order to function in my dual role as a fledgling researcher and shelter volunteer.

Reliability and Validity

Kirk and Miller (1986) state that "the objectivity of a piece of qualitative research is evaluated in terms of the reliability and validity of its observations" (p. 13). Reliability is the "extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out" (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 14). Validity "refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" (Babbie, 1992, p. 132).

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue that the criteria for judging the reliability and validity of positivistic research must first be translated and made relevant for judging qualitative research endeavors. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer the alternative criteria of credibility, transferability of findings, dependability of findings, and confirmability for ascertaining the "trustworthiness" of the findings of naturalistic inquiry because they "stand in a more logical and derivative relation to the naturalistic axioms" than the conventional criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (p. 301).

Credibility

Techniques to protect the credibility of the research were incorporated into the research design in keeping with suggestions made by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Activities in the field included prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation. Extended time in the field allowed

for an understanding of the shelter culture so that I was able to recognize distortions introduced into the data either by myself or the participants. Persistent observations provided the depth necessary to identify and focus on salient characteristics and elements of the shelter speech economy. Triangulation,[4] a combination of methodologies, increased the likelihood that the findings and interpretations of this study would be credible.

Using a combination of strategies for data collection compensated for inherent weaknesses in any single method. Triangulation also allowed for the identification and organization of the salient features of the phenomena into a descriptive account that included the multiple perspectives of shelter staff, volunteers and clients (Sevigny, 1981, p. 79). By triangulating, that is, using multiple and different sources of data and informants, I was able to come to a more holistic understanding that could not be obtained through any single observation or single data collection strategy.

I have been an active volunteer at an urban shelter for women and children since October 1992. During this time, I served on the board of directors of the statewide Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Such intensive involvement borders on "going native," a threat to the internal validity of the study (see LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The challenge for me,

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[4] Triangulated research methodologies involve "multiple comparisons of a single phenomenon, group, or unit at two or more points in time or they purport to use multiple perspectives to measure a single phenomenon at a single point in time" (Sevigny, 1981, p. 73).

as I shifted from participant to researcher, was to "manufacture distance" to facilitate the questioning and examination of the ordinary and taken for granted social practices of daily life (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; McCracken, 1988). In keeping with Whyte's (1984) suggestions, I left the field every few weeks to gain perspective and periodically met with and reported to peers unfamiliar with the scene.

Dependability and Confirmability of Findings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the metaphor of an audit trail as a means of proving the dependability and confirmability (that is, the reliability) of the findings of a qualitative inquiry. They recommend that the data collection process be guided by the requirements for an audit. In keeping with Lincoln and Guba's advice and consistent with the linearity of research design (Philipsen, 1977), I maintained an audit trail that entailed a "residue of records stemming from the inquiry" (p. 319). These records included the data collected in the field, reduction and analysis of the data, as well as specification of the theoretical links between the data, extant literature and sensitizing concepts contained in the shelter log.

Qualitative research depends so much on the researcher that the metaphor "self as instrument" figures prominently in the literature (McCracken, 1988; Philipsen, 1982; Whyte, 1984). In fact, qualitative research cannot be accomplished without the use of the researcher's own experience (McCracken, 1988). According to Philipsen (1982), the

researcher "deliberately" employs his or her own responses to the phenomena as one source of data. He explains that critical reflection upon the researcher's experiences with the subject of the inquiry allows for the subjective voice, which becomes one of many sources of insight (p. 11). However, the subjective voice is used in a disciplined and not an impressionistic manner. The researcher cannot "abandon himself" to any single perspective, his or the participants (Wilson, 1977, p. 261).

Philipsen (1977) notes that researcher bias can be introduced into a study if "the unfamiliar is defined in terms of its differences from what the investigator expected." I followed Philipsen's suggestion by eliciting and confirming the categories and assumptions of the shelter workers and clients in their own language. Kirk and Miller (1986) stress that applying the wrong label will lead to spurious conclusions. I used frequent member checks with the intake staff as well as the swing shift residential assistants to establish credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) by confirming or disconfirming my perceptions.

In order to guard against undue influences of my biases, I kept a shelter log that included self reflexive personal notes that helped provide the bases for an evaluation of myself as the research instrument (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This included an ongoing list of biases and expectations that began prior to entering the field. Committed to a critical stance, I expected to find inequities in the distribution of power that disadvantaged the shelter

clients. As I became constituted as a shelter worker, I identified with the women that worked in the shelter. I came to dread the critical move wanting to prove my biases wrong rather than see the shelter workers as the oppressors or even more devastating, to meet the "oppressor within" (see Jewell, 1992).

Transferability of Findings

Qualitative observations are researcher dependent, governed in part, by the fit between the personalities of the observer and observed. Thus it is not realistic or fruitful to attempt an exact replication of previous research. Kirk & Miller (1986) comment that "the implicit theory that requires all observations to be identical is rarely appropriate." According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability of findings which is an empirical question open to investigation, depends on sufficient descriptive data to form the basis for future comparisons. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explain that "translatability assumes that research methods, analytic categories, and characteristics of phenomena and groups are identified so explicitly that comparisons can be conducted confidently" (p. 316).

In using the ethnography of communication, I have provided "the specification, in advance of data collection of both a purpose for research and the steps to be taken to serve the purpose," (p. 42) meeting the need for linearity of research design called for by Philipsen (1977, p. 42). He argues

that the ethnographer of communication satisfies the demand for linearity by stating in advance:

1. the phenomenon to be described.
2. conceptual linkages of that phenomenon to the process of communication.
3. the descriptive framework to be used to study the phenomenon selected as well as the heuristic value of the framework itself. (p. 45).

However, the ethnographer does not specify in advance the particularities of the phenomenon that is subject to inquiry. This allows for the "anticipated surprises" (Philipsen, 1977, p. 48) in the field that are occasioned by violated expectations that indicate the presence of "otherwise hidden cultural categories and assumptions" (McCracken, 1988, p. 23).

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted at Hoyt House, a shelter that is similar in both its structure and population served to the one that was selected as the research site. The pilot study provided an opportunity to test the clarity and appropriateness of the interview protocol based on the ethnography of speaking as well as examine the skills of the researcher "as instrument." It included a total of three interviews. Two were done with Teresa, a staff member, and one was completed with Sheila, a shelter resident.

I found that shifting roles from participant observer to researcher proved to be more of a challenge than I realized. I also found myself approaching a shelter environment in a role that felt totally alien to me. Feeling like an outsider in this setting highlighted for me the extent to which I had become a part of the scene at Women's Place. I was reminded to be careful that my role as volunteer staff member not bias my research.

During the first interview at Hoyt House, I realized I had not given enough thought to the number of questions or their ordering. Although I had originally planned to do only one interview per person, it became apparent after the first interview that I might need to do at least two interviews with each person. An analysis of the transcript of the first and second interview with Teresa pointed to a need to stay more focused on the respondent's emic terms and avoid leading questions. A revised interview guide was tested with Sheila and functioned well enough to have eliminated the need for a second, follow up interview. I concluded that one interview with each participant would be sufficient. Feedback elicited from Teresa and Sheila contributed to the final refinement and modification of the interview guide that included the elimination of unclear, overlapping or redundant questions. The questions that remained were re-ordered in a more logical sequence.

Data Analysis

Goetz and LeCompte (1981) note that without a strategy for analysis and presentation of data, observational research will generate large amounts

of unanalyzed and uncodified data that lead to "a trivialization of findings into mere descriptive afterthoughts" (p. 52). In keeping with their suggestion, I adopted a strategy of analytic induction which involved "scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon an examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them on the basis of subsequent cases" (p. 57).

In other words, the process of analysis occurred in conjunction with data collection using the constant comparison of grounded theory outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1966). The ethnography of communication provided both the theoretical grounding and the analytic framework for this study. The components represented by the mnemonic, SPEAKING; setting and scene, participants, ends, acts (sequence), key, instrumentalities (message and channel), norms of interpretation, and genre became the categories used to analyze the data in keeping with the goals of the ethnographer of speaking. Bauman and Sherzer (1989) note that the central task of the ethnographer of speaking is "to identify and analyze the dynamic interrelationships among the elements which go to make up performance, toward the construction of a descriptive theory of speaking as a cultural system in a particular society" (p. 7).

Beginning with multiple copies of each of the interview transcripts, I began a preliminary coding of the data using the categories taken from the

ethnography of speaking framework, including speech community, and speech event. My next step was to describe the act sequence of the two speech events of interest, the screen and intake since it is at the level of the speech event and speech acts that the components of the mnemonic are used to discover and describe how speech is used in the community (Braithwaite, 1990, p. 158).

Once this was accomplished, it became possible to view the components not only in relationship to each other, but as features of the larger system. Hymes points out that any component can serve as the starting point and the others viewed in relation to it. The normative system of shelter rules that was a major feature of shelter life and the focus of talk among staff and clients emerged as a major organizing feature of the shelter screen and intake. Other components were viewed in relationship to the normative system and less salient components were integrated and used to provide context or background information reducing the data set.

The relationship between the normative system of the rules and the screen and intake process that surfaced during the preliminary analysis provided the basis for the critical move and an analysis of the distribution of power through the communicative practices produced and reproduced by shelter workers drawing on the work of Giddens (1979).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: SETTING AND SCENE

The presentation and analysis of data gathered through interviews and participant observation are organized through the lens of the ethnography of communication descriptive theoretical framework. This includes the notion of speech community, speech event and the pneumonic of SPEAKING, the components of speech acts. Although the components are presented as abstraction in a linear fashion, they exist in dynamic relationship to each other as part of a cultural system that make up the communicative resources of the community (Bauman & Sherzer,1989, x). Any one component may serve as the starting point from which generalizations about rules for speaking can be made.

The chapter begins with an introduction to homelessness in the community and a brief description of the shelter network. After situating Women's Place within the larger shelter community, a description of the shelter setting follows. The psychological scene is presented as it is experienced by the women working and living in the shelter. The final section involves the identification of two paired speech events, the screen and intake, within the shelter context.

Homelessness and Shelters

The battered women's movement drew attention to the issue of domestic violence and led to the establishment of shelters to provide safety

for any woman regardless of race or class. According to Schecter (1982), the battered women's movement was a natural outgrowth of the feminist movement and the changing political consciousness as women worked to make a woman's right to control her body and her life a reality. At the 1976 International Women's Year conference in Houston, the battered women's movement took form. The years between 1974 and 1980 saw the advent of women's hotlines and crisis centers throughout the United States as a result of grass roots organizing by women. By 1982 the movement included coalitions of service providers in 48 states, 300 shelters, and a national coalition instituting social and legal reform. Before the establishment of the shelters through the efforts of the battered women's movements, only a few isolated shelters provided housing for victims of alcohol related violence, though these shelters provided refuge for many battered women. There are now about 1800 shelters for battered women (Matesa, 1995).

At the same time the battered women's network was developing shelters for battered women, the National Coalition for the Homeless formed to advocate for the homeless. Gaining federal dollars for shelter was one of their goals. The other was to legitimate homelessness as a grave social problem (see Hirsch, 1989). To accommodate the "new" homeless that included families and single women, more shelters had to be built. Rossi (1989) notes that "on a scale that was inconceivable earlier, considerable funds for the new homeless have been allocated out of local, stage, and

federal funds." Funding has also come from private charity with some subsidy from public funds and grants from foundations.

Out of these parallel movements developed two distinctly different types of shelters for women. One that provides services for homeless women and one that works with battered women. At the intersection of these two populations are homeless women who have been battered. According to Green (1991), they are excluded from the battered women's shelter as unsuitable and from the homeless shelters because of the threat the batterer poses to the safety of the shelter population. There is a third type of shelter for women that does not make a distinction between homeless and battered but recognizes that the majority of homeless women have experienced battering or some form of abuse. The shelter that was selected as the site of the study, Women's Place, provides refuge to all homeless women and their children regardless of the precipitating event. It is one of two such shelters in a northwest regional area.

Although the Portland area has an estimated 6000 homeless (Blake & Abbot, 1989, p. 165), 40% of whom are women, there is a lack of shelter beds. The majority of the shelters in the tri-county area for women are confidential shelters funded only for women who are escaping an abusive partner. Statistics kept by shelters indicate that about 89% of those seeking shelter are turned away (Hubbard, 1991). Currie (1994) reported that

Portland has had the largest increase of all American cities in the number of homeless families.

Portland ascribes to a model that keys in on "breaking the cycle" (Housing Authority of Portland,1989) that became known as the continuum of care (Currie, 1994). This can be thought of as a four-tier approach that includes prevention for "at risk" individuals and families, emergency services and housing for individuals and families in crisis, transitional services and housing to ease individuals and families out of homelessness and dependency through stabilization and finally, independence (Housing Authority of Portland, 1989, pp. iii-iv). Shelter and emergency services case managers work to link clients to the neighborhood multi-service agencies that manage transition housing units or to agencies that work with special populations. These include mental health agencies, drug and alcohol treatment programs, and agencies that work with adults 50 years of age and older.

Women's Place

Women's Place, the site for this study, shelters both homeless and battered women. The larger organization that manages the shelter has been providing emergency shelter and other services to women and children since 1976. The shelter serves approximately 350 women and children per year. African American women are over represented in the shelter, consistent with their over representation in poverty. In a county that is only 6% African

American, African American women make up 26% of the shelter population, white women 57%, Hispanic 4%, Native American 3.5% and Asian 1%.

The shelter is located in the downtown urban area. The downtown area has been compared to a European city partly because of the transit center and the light rail system that provide easy access from the adjacent communities and because of the mix of businesses, tree lined park blocks and apartments. The shopping area consists of several major department stores as well as small shops and boutiques and a few thrift shops.

The historical society, the county library, and the city's art museum are also within the downtown area and close to the shelter. The sheltered patio adjacent to the museum provides a convenient picnic area for the women to meet and lunch with their friends or partners or take their children to play. A series of "park blocks" near the art museum is a haven from the heat and the confines of the shelter during the hot summer months. One mother took advantage of the nearby park setting even when it was raining to ease the strain of living in crowded quarters with a two year old:

> we do walk around a lot cause he likes you know/ even the little kids they can't be/ it's hard to confine them/ ...yeah so I try to take em out like on the weekends/ when we're here all day/ we'll go to that little park ...he enjoys it...[1]

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[1] Quotes from the interview transcripts have not been edited for punctuation and grammar to preserve the phrasing and expression of the speaker. A "/" represents pauses.

Many of the social service agencies women need to contact are within a ten block radius of the building including the Social Security Office, the Employment Office, and Senior and Disabled Services. Although the site is within easy access of the many services required by the women, it is also in close proximity to the old town area frequented by drug dealers and drug users.

The building that houses the shelter is an unassuming five story brick building that blends in with the neighboring buildings. Each floor is easily distinguished from the outside by the bank of windows at each level. As I would approach the building from the south, I would often pass by a cluster of men. Some were residents in a nearby low income rental unit. Others were homeless. All engaged in panhandling. The composition of the cluster would shift depending on the time of year, who was in, on their way to, or out of "*detox*" (the local detoxification center), just released from jail, or newly arrived in town.

Toward spring and during summer, the number of young men and women hanging out along the sidewalk, sometimes squatting or resting against the wall, would increase. At times, because of similarity in dress, it was hard to distinguish between the homeless youth passing through or staying nights at the nearby Salvation Army youth shelter and the local high school students that hang out during the lunch hour and after school. The youth often chat among themselves, occasionally stopping their talk to ask

pedestrians for change. However, the presence of slightly inebriated men panhandling before heading around the corner to buy beer was a constant. On rare occasions an adult woman would occupy the spot. Once a shelter resident, unsuccessful in her attempts to cadge money from shelter residents and staff, joined the panhandlers to the dismay of shelter staff.

A gaily colored awning over the front entrance lettered in contrasting colors announces the building's name. However, there is no indication that a shelter for women and children is housed within the building. All foot traffic into the building is encouraged to pass by the front desk through a system of guides. There, they are required to show their organization picture identification cards or obtain a pass coded with a different color for each floor. This measure was taken to provide more safety by keeping a check on who is in the building. The front desk staff keep records of "*dangerous persons reports*" and do not hesitate to call the police if such a person is seen entering the building. Front desk staff have been assaulted and intake staff threatened. A locked door controlled by the front desk staff is located in the back of the building and is used by staff entering from the parking lot behind the building.

At the time the study began, the main floor consisted of a hotel-like front desk that was remodeled to accommodate the new computerized phone system. The front desk staff, often referred to as the *"front desk,"*[2]

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[2] Native terms will be italicized and enclosed in quotation marks.

serve as the hub of the building's communication system answering all calls to the organization, paging program participants and staff for visitors in addition to their role in maintaining building security up until 10:00 pm. The front desk is usually staffed with several persons during the day and one person during the evening hours.

All the various offices, meeting rooms, gymnasium, theater offices, and bathrooms, as well as the Women's Resource Center, are entered from the lobby. The Women's Resource Center, located on the main floor, is the program that manages a crisis line, provides referrals to community resources and manages the shelter.

Moving past the front desk and the spacious lobby that is furnished with faded green couches and chairs reminiscent of the seventies, women and the occasional man coming to the resource center pass down a 100 foot hallway. An old sign that has been hanging from the wall for at least five years points the way to the Women's Resource Center. A bulletin board, mounted on a moveable frame covered with posters, colorful flyers and advertisements partially secludes the area from the general traffic passing on to the meeting rooms and stairs, helps to define the resource center boundaries and provides some privacy from the hallway traffic. The WRC is the first place to which a woman comes when accessing the shelter either as a walk-in requesting services or by appointment for a shelter screen or an intake.

The Women's Resource Center consists of a reception area and a number of offices on the main floor as well as offices, rooms, and facilities that make up the shelter on the fourth floor. The WRC reception area is furnished with a round table with four chairs, a donated couch and a few book cases. The couch is pushed against a large window that provides a view of the street. To the right of the couch was an old TV stand that doubled as a book case until it was replaced by a large book case. To the left of the couch is a wobbly floor lamp. Here women waiting to be seen by staff or volunteers or take advantage of the "*free phone*" available only to shelter clients. Other women use the table to sort through the numerous job announcements that are posted on various clipboards hung from the bulletin board mounted on the wall to the right of the table.

Two small offices flank the right of the reception area. The larger of the two is the "*Volunteer Office*" since it is occupied by volunteers and work study students. It was once referred to as "*the hole*" by a former employee. It contains an old desk and chair positioned against the partition opposite the outside wall. A large four drawer filing cabinet is pushed out of the way against the outside wall making it possible for one or two chairs to be placed in the cleared area so there is no physical barrier between a woman seeking services and the woman providing the services. A makeshift shelf the length of the outside wall just under the windowsill contains several baskets for sorting and storing mail. The smaller office, appropriately named "*the cave*,"

is now being used by the volunteer Volunteer Coordinator (the volunteer coordinator is a volunteer) if it is not stuffed with unsorted donations or former clients' belongings. It barely has room for a desk, filing cabinet and two chairs.

The WRC expanded into the three inter-connecting offices adjacent to the WRC office and reception area when the program using the space relocated to another floor. The last office to the left of the reception area now contains donated clothes and household items in various stages of sorting. Boxes of clothes are stuffed onto makeshift shelves lining the walls while additional bags and boxes of clothing stacked on the floor sometimes make it impossible to move through the room. A table for sorting is pushed against the far wall with a window that looks out on the street.

The middle office is now the Intake and Referral Office, or "*Cathy's Office.*" It is furnished with an old battered desk and swivel chair, a computer station and office chair, a small table top copier, and two four drawer cabinets that contain old client files. The office has been personalized by the Crisis Specialist with pictures of her family that rest on two of the three shelves along the partition between the donation room and the office.

The third room is the toy room used by the children while their mother talks with staff in the Intake Office. This room, closest to the reception area, must be entered to access the Intake and Referral Office. With the door open, anyone in the Intake and Referral Office looking through the toy room

and out the window can monitor the activity in the two offices and reception area.

The toy room's furnishings and arrangements change from time to time as new donations come in and others break down and are discarded. A play kitchen module, the focal point of most children's play, rests near the wall with the street view window. It is stocked with play dishes and play food. Two large baskets contain an assortment of blocks, teething toys, stuffed animals, and trucks and are placed against the walls. Blocks, puzzles and books are crammed into two book cases.

The shelter occupies over half of the 4th floor that was once used as a women's hotel and hostel and provides space for a maximum of 12 women and 9 children. It includes four private bedrooms for the families, and four shared rooms for "*single women,*" a communal kitchen, a "*quiet room,*" and a communal bathroom that contains a coin-operated washer and dryer in addition to toilets, showers and a bathtub.

Each of the bedrooms for single women contain two twin beds and an assortment of donated dressers and end tables, some in better shape than others. The four rooms set aside for women and their children are furnished to accommodate a specific family size. This provides the women with children much needed space and privacy . The largest family room, known as the "*big family room,*" contains a bunk bed/futon that can fit two children on the bottom bunk and one in the top. It also has two twin beds and a roll

away bed or crib that provides space for one more child. Not many of the local shelters serving homeless women have space for a large family. A smaller room for a "*mom and one child*" holds a twin bed and a crib or a roll away. Another room is equipped with a bunk bed and a twin bed for a "*mom with two children*" (over the age of two for the bottom, and three for the top bunk). The fourth family room contains two twin beds for a "*mom and an older child.*"

The rooms were painted in different pastel shades and decorated with stenciled borders during one of the shelter's annual shut down for repairs and cleaning. A group of men from the county corrections daily reporting center provided the labor. The redecorating of the rooms did much to improve the feel of the shelter:

> yeah I remember being struck by how rundown everything seemed um/ at that time it was before we had done all the repainting/ with the stenciling by the elevators and everything/ and the rooms were all/ white not very pretty and so I remember/ things seeming really/ rundown and bare/ and/ torn up...

The shelter kitchen is furnished with a stove, two refrigerators, a large oaken table that seats ten with the leaves pulled out, a counter with sinks, built-in shelves above the counter and a dishwasher that fits in under the counter. There are two built-in cupboards adjacent to the counter that are barely adequate for the many pots and pans and dishes used by the women

leaving little room for their foodstuffs. Along with numerous boxes of cereal, donated day old bread and bakery goods are stored wherever space can be found--on the table, on top of the two refrigerators and on the windowsill. A television set that sometimes works and sometimes does not rests on another built-in shelf. Ventilation is so poor that a fan must be turned on and the door kept shut while cooking or the fire alarm in the hallway will be triggered requiring immediate evacuation of the building.

Adjacent to the kitchen is the "*quiet room*" equipped with a couch, recliner, an old computer and printer, a TV with a VCR, a book case containing donated books and children's toys. Children over the age of eight years can play in the "*quiet room*" while their mother prepares dinner, easing the crowding in the kitchen during meal times.

Donated food from a number of sources including the local food bank and an organization of the local police department is kept in a storage area separate from the kitchen along with the shelter cleaning supplies, and diapers for emergencies. The door to this room is labeled "*linen closet*" although the linens along with bedding, office supplies, and personal care items were moved to the "*scary closet*" (named by a former employee because its contents are always a surprise) at the end of the floor adjacent to the counseling offices that occupy part of the fourth floor. Medications for women are also stored in the food closet to prevent theft or abuse of prescription drugs. Women must "*check in*" all medications upon entering

the shelter including over the counter drugs and herbal remedies. Staff are required to dispense, record, date and sign the log each time a woman takes her medication in the red "*meds log book*" that is kept with the "*meds.*"

Cleaning equipment, including the mops and buckets used by the clients to do their chores and clean their rooms, are kept in the janitor's closet next to the bathroom. The hotel housekeeper washes and provides clean bedding once a week and towels twice a week along with a sympathetic ear for a woman's troubles.

The walls in the hallway are decorated with a number of posters depicting women of various ages and ethnicities in an effort to create an environment that reflects the diversity of staff and clients. There is also an original acrylic painting of an African American woman and survivor of domestic violence donated to the shelter by an artist who works with survivors of domestic violence. Two bulletin boards provide space for information on a range of topics including drug and alcohol treatment programs and domestic violence. An In/Out Board for staff and volunteers hangs by the director's office.

Offices for case managers, the shelter director, and the children's program coordinators (including a playroom) are located in the central portion of the fourth floor. Traffic coming off the elevator, the only way to access the fourth and fifth floor, must pass by the case manager's office that is shared with the residential assistants before reaching the main hallway.

There is a phone booth with a pay phone next to the RA's office that can be heard from both ends of the main hallway. A printed set of rules regarding phone use is taped to the phone booth wall directing women to leave messages on the chalk board on the wall across from the phone and next to the elevator. Taped to the side of the elevator doors are several flyers that remind women of mandatory meeting days and times as well as the meeting days and times for Alcoholics Anonymous group sessions.

The Shelter Scene

Whereas setting refers to the physical grounding for social interaction, scene refers to the psychological or cultural definition of a scene (Hymes, 1986, p. 60). A shelter is not only a physical building in which women can live, but a social location and a process. A sense of "shelter as process" is evident when shelter workers within the statewide coalition refer to a shelter as "shelter" dropping the article "the." Thus a woman is in shelter, as opposed to in a shelter. Jonnée touches on this when she describes her discovery that the shelter was more than a "roof over her head" and help with housing:

> but what happened was/ I had a roof over my head/ some help finding **housing**/ got to meet some really nice special people/ got (drops voice) **counseling**/ which I / really needed/ and I'm still using and still need/ and um/ and yeah/ and the staff people/ um have been really

helpful and nice and just/ really wonderful/ so that was all more than I expected cause I was expecting just the **bare**/ you know ...

In the case of Women's Place, the setting itself has a profound impact on the scene. Although a shelter is meant to be a place of safety and refuge, the women working at and living in Women's Place do not always experience it positively. Women's Place is not only imbedded within a larger organization that manages the Women's Resource Center and the shelter, but is located within a building along with several other programs.[3] Donna, the domestic violence case manager, felt that "because we are a part of a bigger organization /then/ it seems like you are fighting bureaucracy a lot/ a lot more than I would like to be." She also felt that the physical

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[3] There is a fitness program that uses rooms spread out on three floors. The offices, shower and locker facilities for men and for women are located in the basement. The fitness program includes the body shop, a work out room with free weights located in the basement mezzanine. The aerobics classes and equipment are on the second floor. The second floor is used as offices for the work release program staff. A well appointed kitchen reminiscent of the kitchens used for home economic classes during the fifties is now rented out to a program that provides meals to preschools. The third floor contains the small auditorium and stage used by a repertoire theater, the business offices for the non profit organization, a staff lounge, and the board room used primarily by the board of directors of the organization that manages the Women's Resource Center and other programs. Counseling offices used by the MSW Counseling Program are located at the south end of the fourth floor. The few rooms left to the hotel on the fourth floor are periodically contracted out to other programs including a program for *"teen moms"* and for women from the fifth floor work release program. If these programs have no need for the rooms, they are rented as hotel rooms. A small room with a kitchenette, a small refrigerator and a microwave is provided for the hotel guests. The 5th and final floor of the building contains an early-release women offenders residential program for women coming from both federal and county correctional facilities.

setting accounted for the rules that the women have to abide by to please other program staff such as the "*front desk*." She felt that the woman would have more autonomy and participation if the shelter program was not part of the larger institution:

> so I think it's hard/ it it's it's a weird place/ I mean/ it's a weird place that there's a fitness center here/ and that that goes on/ and there's a theater/ and that goes on and/and then there's a shelter/ and then there's a criminal program and and so I think that um/ I mean I/ it's a testament to the strength of the women that they seem to function pretty well here/ at the same time I think it's hard/ you know/ it's hard for children here/ it's hard for women to keep a handle on their children and/ keep them functioning within the rules...

Donna also feels that shelter is not a "happy place" nor is she sure that it can it be made to be that way because:

> women come here in crisis and they come here in times of great stress and I think they do the best they can
> and that's a great testament to their strength
> and their ability to bounce back
> um I still think a shelter that what it is you know so
> we can make it all homey and make it as pretty as we want to
> it's still a shelter and it's not anybody's home...

Donna notes though, that there is variation in how women experience and make meaning of the shelter. She commented that she did not know how each woman constructs meaning but:

> for each woman I think it's different
> some women may see it as a great sign of safety and assurance
> other women who we try to get them to have that feeling about it
> don't and they leave because they don't feel that way
> so I don't know...

Some women, who do not have a positive view of shelter, experience the program as too structured. Overwhelmed by a lack of privacy and too many rules, they leave. The rules exist, all thirty six, to maintain the shelter structure. Cathy, in intake and referral, noted that "when it's this large of a community, the director "really likes to stick with/ the structure created by the rules." She also added that "they have to/ it's it's/ so many women coming moving/ it has to be structured some structure to it." Donna pointed out that the shelter structure is not ideal, that it is hard, and that many of the women do not like it:

> many times women come and say they don't like it here and/
> I don't quibble when they/ of course they don't like it here nobody
> wants to be here/ nobody would choose to be here/ if they didn't have
> to be um/ so/ I think it's hard /I think they're a lot of rules/ that don't

> make very much sense to/ I mean/ we sort of understand why we have them the women you know certainly don't...

For Angela, being in the shelter and abiding by the rules was like being in jai again where she spent five years off and on between the ages of 12 and 18:

> I was in jail for a long time and it really bothers me that I have to get UAd now that I'm off parole and I'm out of the system and it's like I feel like I'm in jail again.

Cathy referred to the experience of women being confined to the shelter from 10:00pm until 6:00am as "lock down."

Other women, both staff and clients, experience the shelter as a "haven." According to Barb, the shelter director, the shelter provides education, safety, services and a "safe secure heart place" for women. It is a place that has a heartbeat, indicating that it is living, growing and changing. One of the clients described her experience as "coming alive" during a support group meeting. Other clients describe it as coming back to themselves when they leave an unsafe situation and come into a safe environment. Burgundy Ann explained that although she always knew who she was, she "just let that go:"

> I'm a better person than what he told me. I'm smarter than what he thinks I am. I mean I mean I believed for a while that I was stupid because he let me believe it. I mean he told me over and over...

Burgundy came into shelter to receive support and to escape the "little box" in which she had to live her life once she moved in with her boyfriend:

> I came into shelter because I knew this time I didn't want to go back to him, that it wasn't healthy for me...I knew that if I went into a shelter I would be totally secluded from him... I didn't want to feel like I was worthless when I'm worth more than that...

The experience of gaining back a sense of self is not unique to Burgundy Ann. Cathy, the Crisis Specialist in Intake and Referral, confirms that shelter is a place where a woman can and does change "from coming in just feeling horrible and then really blossoming and growing" and getting "back her own sense of self." Others like Ronnie experience the shelter not only as homelike but family like:

> it's a really good shelter...it's kinda homey upstairs like / like one night like two people got together and they/ just totally cleaned out the refrigerators and/ or somebody'll make a big pot of something be it like/ yeah it's time to eat or somebody'll get a movie and/ so it's it's cool it's kinda like a big family thing...

However, before a woman can experience the shelter setting and scene and setting, she must first successfully negotiate access by completing a screen and an intake. This chapter has provided a brief overview of homelessness and the battered women's movement as well as a "'thick description" of the setting and scene to provide the context within

which the speech events of screen and intake are enacted. The following chapter will provide an in depth analysis of the screen and intake.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: SHELTER SCREEN AND INTAKE

The paired events, shelter screen and intake are highly salient within the shelter context and the focus of this analysis. A homeless and/or battered woman cannot access shelter services without first doing a screen, followed by an intake. The shelter screen is a single speech event whereas the intake is a speech situation that is associated with a number of speech events.[1]

Speech acts or a single speech act within a speech event can also be analyzed into instances of genre based on the formal features of the speech act or acts and the traditions governing that form (Hymes, 1986, p. 65). By genres, Hymes is referring to categories identified as but not limited to poem, myth, tale, proverb, riddle, curse, prayer, oration, lecture, commercial, form letter and editorial. The shelter screen relies on and can be considered an instance of the "interview" genre. Intake activities also depend on and are organized around an intake interview. Interview is not only a genre, but:

> a powerful force in modern society. Starting from birth, we are confronted by questions posed by educators, psychologists, pollsters,

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[1] According to Hymes(1986), the distinction between a speech situation and a speech event is that the speech event consists of one or more speech acts that are governed by a set of rules or norms for the appropriate use of speech. A speech situation, on the other hand, is associated with the presence or absence of speech but is not subject to a single set of rules through out the event(s) (p. 56).

medical practitioners, and employers, and we listen to flamboyant interviewers on radio and television. (Briggs, 1986, p. 1)

Briggs notes that the interview is an accepted and widely researched event. The literature in psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, folklore, oral history, and other fields has focused on interview techniques. In the field of speech communication, Stewart and Cash (1991) have applied communication theory to the practice of interviewing, but identify their primary concern as "the principles and techniques that can be translated into immediate practice in and out of the classroom" (p. xiv). Less inquiry has focused on the interview itself as cultural encounter. As a form of talk (Gumperz, 1992), an interview is an interactional accomplishment governed by "cultural rules for beginning, ending, taking turns, asking questions, pausing, and even how close to stand to other people" (Spradley, 1979, p. 55). Stewart and Cash (1991) define interviewing as a "process of dyadic, relational communication, with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to interchange behavior and involving the asking and answering of questions" (p. 3).

Webster's dictionary defines screen as a type of interview, the purpose of which is to separate according to skills, personality, aptitudes etc. (Neufeldt & Guralink, 1994). The screen, usually done as a phone interview, serves as an assessment tool for determining a woman's potential for the shelter

program. The shelter screen is used to define the population of potential shelter clients according to a set criteria that is both explicit and implicit. All of the domestic violence shelters within the three county area require that a screen interview be completed as a first step to accessing shelter, and Women's Place is no exception.[2]

Whereas the screen interview is a speech event, the intake is actually a speech situation that includes a number of speech events including an intake interview. The intake interview is partially an iteration of the screen interview with the added feature of face to face communication. As a genre, the intake interview is another instance of the interview process that is utilized within the medical and social service community. Within the shelter community, programs that are funded through HUD (Housing and Urban Development) are required to perform an intake interview in order to meet the funding requirements.

Hymes (1989) points out that genres may coincide with the speech event or may occur in or a single event or as a feature of several different events (p. 65) . Shelter workers draw upon personal narrative and joking to help ease tension and establish rapport during a screen or intake interview.

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[2] The domestic violence shelters that are confidential locations do not take "walk-ins." Others cannot take walk-ins because of agreements with the community. Women's Place is the only domestic violence shelter that screens women who walk in.

This exemplifies the blending of genre, ends, tone, and norms into a coherent and interactive system that guide the use and interpretation of speaking during the screen and intake. The screen interview and intake procedure are structured sequentially and governed by the shelter's normative system of rules. The following section will describe the shelter screen interview and the shelter intake activities including the structure of the screen interview and the intake.

Screen Interview Speech Event

Before a shelter worker takes crisis calls or brings a walk-in into the office to do a screen, she is expected to have read the "*WRC Log*" that "*lives*" in the ED's (Executive Director) office. The log is part of the internal communication system among staff and volunteers. When a woman comes into the shelter or leaves the shelter, the information is noted in the log. Messages about "*holds on rooms for intake*" (room reservations) may also be written in the log. She will also have checked the roster to see which rooms are open and which rooms have "*holds*" on them making sure that it is consistent with the information on the erase-board roster in the RA's Office so rooms are not double booked. She has checked the clipboard hanging from the wall by the door to the intake office as well as the log for pending intakes. Generally, no more than one intake for each case manager can be done on any given day. However, the two case managers can negotiate with staff to

place a "*hold on intakes*" if they can't meet with a new client within twenty-four hours. A case manager is "*maxed out*" when she has a case load of six clients. Therefore, the shelter worker needs to check in with the two case managers to see how they are doing before screening and scheduling intakes.

The screen is both a written form and a verbal process. A shelter worker is limited to the auditory channel and verbal messages to collect information and interpret a woman's story when the screen interview is conducted over the telephone. Although inferences are made based on "*how a woman sounded*" (and "*how she looked*" if conducted face to face) as part of the assessment process, it is not listed on the screen as a category for assessment. After the screen is completed, the shelter worker will be required to recount and interpret the woman's story to other staff in the intake office including how the woman sounded as well as what she said.

Intake and referral staff and volunteers perform the majority of screens. After the intake offices closes, screens are done by a residential assistant in her fourth floor office. Screens are also done with women who come as "*walk-ins*." "*Walk-in hours*" during the afternoons and early evening are maintained for homeless women coming in "*off the streets*" or for women in crisis needing to talk. Frequently, women contact the shelter on a daily basis until they access the shelter or find housing at another shelter. Over time, the

screening process may be repeated with a number of different shelter workers to update her situation.

Not all women who are screened will be accepted into shelter, partly because of lack of bed space and partly because they will not be deemed appropriate for shelter by the shelter worker. Women on the shelter's "*no take*" file are excluded from the shelter. The "*no take"* file is kept confidential among staff members and neither its existence nor contents is shared with clients. All shelters maintain a "caution" list or file of names of women who "would not be welcomed back into shelter" because they are considered inappropriate and/or dangerous. Shelters within the tri-county area have agreed to share this information among themselves in order to better ensure the safety of shelter workers and residents. If a woman is listed as a "*no take*," she will be told there is no bed space for her or " the shelter is full, let me suggest some other shelters."

The process begins with a request for shelter call answered by a shelter worker (volunteer, work study student or staff) who takes the call in one of the first floor WRC offices or in the fourth floor RA office. The battered and used desks in each office are supplied with a number of resource books essential for referral work. An in basket sometimes contains the forms for the screening process. A clip board that sits on each desk usually has old stat sheets, the current stat sheet, blank stat sheets, a current roster and

sometimes a few "*blank screens*." The shelter worker notes the information that a woman shares with her during a call for shelter on the "*stat sheet*:" e.g., single woman (no kids), woman with children, abuse. If there is space available for her given her circumstances and the woman is not on the "*no take*" list, the shelter worker will pull out a "*blank shelter screen*" from whatever nook or cranny she stores them in and start entering the information without interrupting the flow of the "*conversation*." There are times when the shelter worker will finish filling out the "*screen*" after the call rather than interrupt the flow of the conversation by creating spaces of silence while she stops talking to write.

The women who call for shelter may be calling from their home--an apartment or house they share with other family members or a partner. If she is escaping domestic violence, she may be calling from a pay phone on a street corner or in a convenience store. Homeless or battered women also access phones through sympathetic counselors, nurse health practitioners, discharge planners from hospitals, Services for Children and Families workers, disability workers, drug and alcohol counselors or case workers from the multi-service agencies. Women call from other shelters when their time is up or they have been asked to leave because they have too many rule violations or have broken confidentiality. There are no free phones that

people without housing can access if they are not a client and already receiving services.

Overall Structure

Over a period of four years, I learned to "*do the screens*," make decisions about who would come into shelter applying, and sometimes contesting, the not always clear criteria, and then "*do intakes*." Through training, practice and occasional violations, I found myself constituted as a shelter worker. I was not only able to perform the sequence of communicative acts known as a "*screen*" and an "*intake*" as competently as staff but upon occasion trained and supervised other volunteers to do screens and intakes. The following description and analysis of the sequence of the speech acts that constitute the shelter screen and the speech events and acts that constitute intake are based on my knowledge as a participant in the process as well as observation of other staff members doing screens and intakes. As a validity check, I shared the analysis of the screen act sequence with several shelter workers for feedback. Zoey commented that although she had never thought of the screen in that way, seeing it mapped out made sense.

The sequence of the speech acts that constitute the shelter screen seem to fall into three parts with each part governed by norms of interaction and norms of interpretation that guide the shelter worker through the process. The first division, identified as the preliminaries to doing a screen, include

introductions followed by a quick assessment of the woman's current situation and her needs as wells as negotiations to do a screen. The second division marks the beginning of the formal questioning directed by the assessment categories laid out in the screen. An overview of the shelter program including a description of the physical structure of the shelter, an explanation of the programs, policies, rules and the "*Mary Smith status*" and a discussion of the benefits of coming into the shelter for the woman, signals the end of the screen interview portion guided by the screen form. The third and final division involves finishing the screen process and can include arrangements for future contacts, an intake appointment, and/or referrals to other shelters. There are a number of points at which a screen may be terminated before completion. If a woman is on the "*no take*," or a battered woman needs to be in a confidential location or a woman has boys over the age of nine, she will be given referrals to other shelters. Sometimes a woman will refuse to answer the questions.

Sequence

The questions outlined in the screen can be viewed as categories of assessments. A speech act sequencing model of the telephone screen process examining each of the categories of assessment as a speech act is presented below. The model reflects native terms.

PARTICIPANTS	SPEECH EVENT/ACT SEQUENCE
	PRELIMINARIES TO DOING A SCREEN
	Introduction
Woman	Summons Shelter Worker by telephoning
Shelter Worker	Responds with greeting, identifying program and self by first name
	Assessing needs
Woman	Requests services
Shelter Worker	Clarifies request, e.g. housing, shelter, DV,
Woman	Elaborates
Shelter Worker	Asks for woman's name
Woman	Responds with name
Shelter Worker	Checks "no take"
	Turns woman away if on "no take"
	Continues with process if not on "no take,"
	Negotiating to do Screen Interview
Shelter Worker	Negotiates doing a screen interview with woman
Woman	Agrees to do screen
	Declines or refuses to do a screen
	DOING THE SCREEN
	Interview
Shelter Worker	Asks for an account of the woman's experience with drugs and alcohol, mental illness, etc.
Woman	Responds with a description of her experience including explanations, excuses, justifications
Shelter Worker	Accepts the account or questions the account and asks for clarification
	Provides supportive statements as an active listener
Woman	Elaborates in response to questions
Shelter Worker	Switches topic to the policies and rules that apply to this category e.g. drug and alcohol policies
Woman	Assures shelter worker that she has no problem with said rules and policies or argues about the policy
Shelter Worker	Continues if woman accepts rules, policies

Suggests alternatives to shelter if the woman cannot function within the rules and guidelines of the shelter

Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview

Shelter Worker	Reads the Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview or restates it in her own words
Woman	States that she has no problem with the guidelines/asks questions about shelter Indicates she would be uncomfortable with lesbians, women with children, etc.
Shelter Worker	Answers questions

FINISHING THE SCREEN

Scheduling intake and providing referrals

Shelter Worker	Sets up an Intake or suggests woman call back if she agrees to the Diversity Statement and to follow the rules Provides other resources if possible for the woman who has a problem with the shelter population or the rules

Closing

Woman	Thanks the shelter worker
Shelter Worker	Wishes the woman good luck
Woman	Disconnects

Preliminaries

During the shelter screen interview, the shelter worker generates a written document using the screen form. The completed screen is used later in the evaluation process among intake staff. The screen, as a written document, satisfies the need to maintain records of the interaction and provides a place for recording any future interactions. If a woman comes into

shelter, the screen is included in her client file. The screen form consists of two parts. The first page of the three page form provides space to record basic demographic information as well as a set of instructions for the shelter worker. The second and third pages contain the interview guide and space to record the interviewee's responses to a series of questions.

Introduction. The shelter worker begins the screen by phone with an identification of herself and the WRC and waits for the woman to respond with her own introduction and expression of need. Face to face interactions will also begin with introductions.

Clarification of needs. The caller then will make her request for shelter often without introducing herself. If she does not introduce herself, the shelter worker will ask for the woman's name including the spelling so it can be matched to names in the "*no take*" files. There is a reminder on the first page to check the "*no take*" because shelter workers often do a complete screen without checking the file.

Whether she is eligible to come into the shelter or not, shelter workers will always listen to a woman and provide support and suggestions as part of the referral work. It is not always clear from the first interaction what a woman wants when she call the Women's Resource Center. Women may confuse the shelter with the transitional housing programs that are managed by the multi-service agencies. Others, who seem to be reluctant to identify as

homeless and ask for shelter, sometimes start with a request for food referrals or ask for help with housing. She may not be in need of immediate shelter but is facing an eviction at some future date without rental assistance. Other women are considering leaving an abusive environment (domestic violence or drugs and alcohol) and have no other options but a shelter. Sometimes the caller is asking for herself or for a friend, relative or a stranger whom they wish to help. A preliminary step in the shelter screen assessment process is to first clarify a woman's need for shelter. If she is escaping domestic violence and needs a confidential location, the screen will be terminated.

Domestic Violence or Homeless: Immediate Danger. The next determination the shelter worker needs to make is whether the woman is in any immediate danger of physical abuse. This constitutes emergency domestic violence and includes threats to do bodily harm even if there has been no prior history of physical abuse and the woman has no safe refuge available. Whenever a woman discloses that she is escaping domestic violence, the next question is "are you in a safe place, and can you talk now." She may answer yes, but hang up a few minutes later if the "abuser" returns. She may say she or he is in the other room, and talk in a very low tone. If she is not in a safe place, the shelter worker may suggest finding a safe place, even suggesting she come in person to the WRC to talk if she does not "feel safe."

"Mary Smith Status." *"Mary Smith status"* applies to women who are in immediate danger from an abusive partner or family member. She will be brought into the shelter under the assumed name of "*Mary Smith*" so that her name will not appear on the formal register to keep her presence in the shelter confidential. If the threat of being found by an abusive partner is so great because he or she frequents the facility or the surrounding area that a "*Mary Smith status*" is insufficient protection, she will be referred to other shelters that have unlisted addresses. If all those shelter are full, she may be brought into Women's Place with the understanding that she will be required to move to a confidential location as soon as possible.

If her abuser does not frequent the downtown area, is in another state, or in jail, the "*Mary Smith status"* is explained to her as a condition of her coming into the shelter. Women do not always welcome the "*Mary Smith status*" because it means that they cannot receive phone calls or visitors other than those from social service workers, nor can they tell anyone where they are. The shelter worker explains that the "*Mary Smith status*" measure was developed to ensure her safety and explains that the shelter is located in a public building with a listed address.

Determining that a woman is in an abusive situation is not always an easy task for the shelter worker. As Barb, shelter ED, explains it:

> domestic violence wears a lot of faces/ and homelessness wears a lot of faces/ so/ my perception is if someone handles all the money in the family and this woman can't get two dollars to put together to/ go rent an apartment for herself/ or buy an outfit/ or go out to lunch with a friend/ or go to school or whatever she wants to do/ that's violence that abu(ses) power and control that's abusive/ it's real obvious as somebody mentioned last week at staff meeting if someone gets punched in the eye that that's abuse/ but it's hard sometimes because the way we're raised I think/ and because of cultural perspectives and/ whatever just to think of violence as being something that's/ um/ psychological something that doesn't leave bruises/ and yet leaves tremendous damage /on another person...

There are times when a woman may be involved in an abusive relationship but will deny that she is to herself and to the shelter worker for any number of complex reasons. Women still committed to the relationship in spite of the abuse will minimize the abuse, justify it, or deny it. She may say things like: "He hasn't hit me for three years," "We used to fight, but it was my fault 'cause I was drunk and the neighbor called the cops and we got evicted," "He was abusive, but now he's taking anger management and we're in counseling." Because the shelter offers services to both homeless and battered women, it is possible for a woman to access shelter without ever

disclosing an abuse history. Yet during the interview it may become clear to the shelter worker that she is being abused at least psychologically and verbally. Usually a woman who is in immediate danger and fearing for her life will disclose this information. If after careful and considered discussion with the woman, it is still not clear to the shelter worker that the woman is being abused, the shelter worker will let the woman know that if her partner becomes abusive to staff or women in the shelter, he (or she) will be barred from the facility and that she risks losing her housing.

Women with or without children accompanying them into shelter. The shelter worker, at this early point in the screening interview, clarifies and confirms the request for shelter space, including whether the client will be bringing children in with her. She asks only the ages and sex of the children to determine whether the shelter has a room free that has enough beds to accommodate her family size and that any boys with her are under the age of nine. If her boys are too old, she will be referred to other shelters.

Although the screen uses the term "single," women with children may answer that they are single, that is, without a partner. If you ask if they have children, they may answer yes, but they are not bringing them into the shelter. The shelter worker needs to be explicit with the question--do you have any children coming into shelter with you. If the shelter is "*full*" (no rooms or holds

on intakes) the screen process will be terminated and the woman given referrals to other shelters.

Negotiating to do the screen. If there are beds available and no "*holds on intake*," and the woman is in a safe place to talk, the shelter worker will ask the woman if she has the time to complete a phone screen, a "little interview" as Cathy calls it. Sometimes women are reluctant to answer questions, insisting that they just want to know if there is space, and if there is not space for them, to have their name put on a waiting list. Although the two local single shelters operate this way, Women's Place does not. At times, a woman will respond rather curtly with "I'm homeless and I need shelter. Do you have space for or not?" The shelter worker will explain that she cannot talk about space until she has more information from the woman, and the woman has more information from the shelter worker about the shelter program. The shelter worker explains that there is no waiting list because priority is given to women escaping domestic violence. Instead, completing a screen that is kept on file is the first step in a process that leads to coming into shelter. Once the screen is completed, a woman is asked to "*check in*" every day as long as she is looking for shelter. It takes about one to two weeks for space to become available at Women's Place. Women with children may have to wait longer for shelter. When I do a screen, I tell the women with children that Women's Place has only one room that fits their family size and

the family may use it for as long as five weeks. Thus rooms turn over slowly. I tell her that accessing shelter space may take a while, and it has to do with space, and not anything she is doing wrong. If there are staff are busy, the woman may be told to call back in the morning to do a screen.

If the woman refuses to answer any questions and insists that she be told if there is shelter space available, she will be told there is no space for her today and to check back tomorrow. Sometimes a woman asks if the worker knows of any future openings. She is told that it is impossible to know on any given day what space will be available and which rooms have been promised by other staff. Sometimes the weekend RA tells a woman a room might be available on Monday and she hears that as a guarantee. However, a room is not considered available until a woman has actually vacated it and the room has been cleaned. Sometimes a woman is scheduled to leave but loses the apartment for which she applied or encounters some other delay.

The woman then decides whether she wants to "*do*" the screen, or not. If Cathy has answered the call she may transfer it to Sarah, Zoey or me to do the screen. If she is on another call, she may ask the woman to call back later, or ask the woman for a number, and have one of the volunteers call her back to do a screen.

Doing the Screen

Accounting for homelessness. The first part of the questionnaire focuses on the woman's recent history of homelessness. These include the reasons for needing shelter, where she has been staying within the last month, where she is now, and any other shelter stays. If she has had other shelter stays, the shelter worker asks for her consent to contact her case manager at that shelter and notes that on the screen. If she has had prior stays at Women's Place, the date is noted so her file can be pulled and her case manager contacted.

At this point, a great deal may have been learned about the woman during the preliminaries. The first question on the screen is about the woman's reasons for needing shelter and can be used to clarify the shelter worker's understanding of the woman's story as she writes down the account. If little or no information has been exchanged, then the woman will be asked, "What's going on with you," or "So you need shelter, what's going on," or "why do you need shelter?" It is never just one thing, but a chain of events. As she weaves her narrative, the shelter worker attempts to sequence it in a linear and coherent order so it will make sense to anyone who reads the screen. She may ask for clarification whenever she loses the thread. For example, she may ask, "So before you stayed with the cousin that beat you up, you were living with your boyfriend who beat you up? And how long were you with

him? So you've been at your mom's since last night? And where is she living? Can I have her address please and the phone number?"

Names and ages of children. The shelter worker returns to the topic of children coming into shelter, asking now for their names and their ages and whether or not they are coming into the shelter with her. Women are asked to account for the circumstances around relinquishing custody of their children. This information may point to a history of drug or alcohol addictions, "*criminal history*" or domestic violence. Some have lost custody through the intervention of Services for Children and Families and the courts. Until they fulfill the terms of a "*service agreement*" that they have been required to sign, they cannot regain custody of their children. Many hope that coming into shelter will facilitate the process, since some agency workers view shelter as a supervised and safe setting.

Age of the woman. Shelter workers are also required to ask for the age of the woman asking for shelter. Printed on the screen is the reminder that the shelter is prohibited from bringing in clients under 18 years without permission from a parent or legal guardian.

Domestic Violence. The last of these questions is the date of last contact with her abuser(s). "*Mary Smith*" status is imposed on a woman who has had contact with her abuser within the last 6 months. As women talk about their situation, especially if it has been one of domestic violence, the

worker may share information about the cycle of violence: that abuse is a consistent and repeated pattern of mistreatment that is based on power over and control of one partner by another. She will be reassured that she is not alone and that many abused women feel isolated, depressed, even crazy. Cathy notes that:

> that's a common thing/ the domestic violence is is really/ like a lot of women when they come in/ they feel like their stories are really individual/ and they can't believe they're in those situations or they let themselves be in that situation/ and/ I just reassure them/ it's a funny way to reassure somebody but I'll say/ I've heard this from so many women/ and so you're not alone in this/ this this is common/ this happens a ***lot/*** you know and I'll say I you know/ I know you've been feeling like totally isolated cause they are/ they're cut off/but there's so many women with their children out there that are feeling the same way that you are...

She may be told that psychological abuse is considered more damaging than physical abuse because bruises can be seen including the healing process.

In addition to asking for an account of her homeless history, the shelter worker is actively listening and providing support, reassurance and education around issues of abuse. A "*safety plan*" will be brought up and discussed with the woman who is leaving an abusive situation. This includes suggesting that

she stash enough money for bus fare in a safe place along with any identification of her and her children that she might need. She is asked if she has thought of a safe place to go if she is in immediate danger like a relative or neighbor and reminded that she can dial 911. She is told that the time that a woman leaves her abuser is probably the most dangerous time so she needs to be careful and protect herself and any children involved. The shelter worker lets the woman know that she takes any threats the abuser may have made very seriously. Although domestic violence is lethal, women often minimize the danger they face. Frustrated shelter workers often find themselves attempting to persuade the woman to leave her abuser and find a safe place to stay when they sense any reluctance on her part to come into shelter. I have often heard Cathy say, "What you need to do is get away from that jerk. You don't need that." She commented that she hates it when women minimize the danger they face.

Drug and Alcohol History. Shelter workers are trained to acknowledge the importance of asking permission before moving to invasive and personal questions addressing drug and alcohol addiction, criminal history, and mental health history. The woman is told that these questions are asked of everyone in order to have a sense of what "*issues*" confront a woman in order to be able to help her.

"Substance Abuse History," is probably one of the most crucial in which dishonesty through lies or omission will seriously jeopardize her continued access to shelter. If her case manager discovers that she lied on intake about her drug and alcohol history, she will be immediately asked to leave the shelter. The importance of being honest is conveyed to the woman by reminding her that if she lies on intake she can lose her housing. It is reinforced when she finally signs the disclosure statement on the intake form. She is given assurances that the information she shares will not be used against her. However, if drug and alcohol abuse has been an issue, she will only be able to come into the shelter if she is committed to recovery and actively working a program. She will also be told that the shelter has a policy of administering random urine analyses in order to maintain a drug and alcohol free environment and "support a woman in her recovery process."

The drug and alcohol history includes the nature of use (social drinking, experimentation in high school) or abuse (addiction issues), how long using, how long clean, date of last use and a treatment history--when and where. AA meetings are not considered "treatment," so a woman may be attending meetings but has never received treatment. Methadone programs are considered a treatment program, and the Women's Place is one of the few shelters that will accept women who are taking methadone. If she is on methadone, the dosage level is noted as well as whether she is on

maintenance or detoxing, i.e., in a detoxification program. She is told that she cannot bring her weekend dose into the shelter.

In constructing the questions, it is important to be as specific as possible covering the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Asking a woman if she has a problem with alcohol may elicit a "no" because she is not drinking now. Yet when asked about the past, she will mention a drug and alcohol treatment program she went through. A woman may claim 5 years clean and sober, but then admit to relapses or slips when asked. The dates of relapses may be different for each of the drugs she used. If she has a history of addictions and has not been going to support groups, she is told that she will be required by her case manager to attend meetings and bring back the "*meeting slips*" as a requirement to remain in the shelter. If she refuses to consider a treatment program or attend meetings, she is told that she is not eligible for our shelter program.

Beneath the questions pertaining to substance abuse history on the form is a reminder for the shelter worker to inform the women applying for shelter that she must be clean and sober for five days prior to entering the shelter. The shelter worker is directed to state that "this is an alcohol and drug free environment. Clients cannot use any drugs or alcohol during their stay in the shelter, in or outside of the building." The five days clean and

sober requirement applies to all clients whether they have ever had a problem with alcohol.

At least two of the shelter workers carefully construct the question of last use in such a way that women who have no history of drug and/or alcohol abuse are cued to answer in a way that will not exclude them from shelter. The cueing is done by first telling a woman that the shelter requires five days clean and sober, and then asking for the date she last had a drink. If a woman has had a drink in the last 24 hours, Cathy may ask the shelter director to make an exception if there has been no history of abuse and the woman is in an unsafe environment.

Mental Health. The next category is a woman's mental health history. Sometimes this has come up as a reason for homelessness when a woman is being released from a hospital after receiving treatment for a suicide attempt or a breakdown with no place to go and a bag full of medications. She may have talked a little bit about her psychiatric problems when she discussed her domestic violence situation: "I was so depressed that I tried to kill myself." She might have discussed it in conjunction with drug and alcohol issues--"I have a dual diagnosis." A common segue to this question, if it has not been covered, is: "With all this going on, have you ever sought out counseling or support groups?" or "With all the stress in your life, how is your mental health?" The shelter worker will ask if the woman has ever been diagnosed

with or hospitalized because of mental health problems. Cathy observed that women may be reluctant to disclose information about their mental health because the "stigma about mental health or something ...kinda makes them feel funny or something." Any suicide attempts are noted including when, why and the circumstances surrounding it as well as whether she was hospitalized and received counseling.

If the woman has disclosed that she has mental health issues and is on medication, she is then told that she must continue to take those medications and stay in touch with her doctor in order to be eligible for the shelter services. If the woman appears to have mental health issues or an undiagnosed mental illness, she is told that a mental health evaluation may become part of her case plan. Women who are psychiatric survivors as well as abuse survivors may be reluctant to submit to the ministrations of the mental health system. This decision may close off their access to shelter.

Physical Condition. The next area to be covered is the physical health of the women. If the woman has been battered, she will be asked how she is doing, and whether she went to the hospital or not. She is asked about any chronic illnesses or disabilities she might have and what if any prescription medication she is taking. The final question is one that requires the shelter worker to asses whether the client is capable of self care. This only comes up as an issue for women with severe physical or developmental

disabilities who need services that cannot be provided by the shelter. The shelter is one of the few that have wheel chair access.

Criminal History. Women who are evading arrest are not accepted into shelter. Therefore, women are asked if they have been arrested, what their offense was, what their sentence was, and if they are currently on probation or parole. If they are on probation or on parole, the shelter worker notes the name and number of the officer. Sometimes they are in the process of answering to criminal charges and have court hearings pending.

Convictions for assault, arson, or theft raise concerns for the safety of the shelter community. Women will be asked to give an account of the circumstances of their arrest if they haven't volunteered it already. If, after staffing, the woman is considered to still be abusive and a threat to the community, she will be excluded from the shelter.

Resources. The final category for assessment on the screen covers resources and includes her emotional support network as well as her financial resources. Sometimes she has family and friends who cannot offer her housing for any number of reasons. The place may be too crowded with people sleeping on couches and floors. Family members or friends may be using or selling drugs. Her abuser may be threatening the family or her friends. Women leaving an abusive partner may be completely isolated without friends or family contacts.

Women coming into shelter must be at or below poverty. The shelter worker asks for information about current income noting the source and the amount on the screen. This is also the time that the woman is asked about her plans to find housing and a means of financial support. She may have already signed up on a housing list, qualified for a welfare grant, had an appointment with a disability worker, or have a hearing pending regarding her application for disability income. This is recorded on the screen in the section for additional notes along with the information about her homeless history that did not fit in the three lines provided.

Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview. At some point during the screen interview, the shelter worker will present the "*Diversity Statement*" and provide an overview of the shelter program including a brief introduction to the rules she will be expected to follow and if it applies, a reminder of the "*Mary Smith*" policy. Very few shelter workers actually read the statement verbatim. Most will restate it in language that is more in keeping with their normal way of speaking. After the "*Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview*" is presented, the woman is offered the opportunity to ask any questions she might not have had answered during the interview.

She may then quiz the shelter worker about the services offered, about help with housing, and whether the curfew will interfere with her ability to leave the shelter to work. Sometimes she asks if she will have her own room.

For women with mental illness, this can be a deciding factor. As Cathy explains, sometimes women will opt out once information is shared about the shelter structure:

> and sometimes um it'll be just a matter a one one glitch that can come up would be a matter of a practical thing like/ say she has all these things that she she has anxiety disorder claustrophobia and can't can't room with roommate that just is/ not gonna work out for her/ that might be it/ so she wouldn't be able to come in...

If she has never been in shelter and sounds a little bit apprehensive, I will say, "You haven't ever been in a shelter, so let me tell you a little bit about our shelter" and then I segue into the *"Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview."* Other times her questions will provide the bridge to the statement and overview. Like many of the other staff, I do not read the statement verbatim but cover the major points. I usually start with the physical layout, then explain that it is a structured case managed program and what that means for her: that together with her case manager she will make out a plan and then follow through with it reporting back to her case manager on a daily basis; she will attend mandatory meetings twice a week unless she is excused in advance; and she will have to abide by the rules, including a ten o'clock curfew, while she is in shelter. If she indicates that she does not want to be

case managed, attend meetings, or follow rules, I suggest that she look elsewhere for shelter where she can maintain her independence.

I then read through or paraphrase the diversity statement piece. Women never stop me when I mention that women working and living in the shelter are a diverse group including women of color. They usually respond with, "I get along with everyone" or "I'm not racist. However, on several occasions, women have expressed an unwillingness to room with a lesbian. One woman said she did not want to "live with no lezzy." If a woman is apprehensive that she might have to room with a lesbian, I point out that sexual contact between women is prohibited and that lesbians generally are not interested in "*straight*" women. When a woman expressed shock that she might have to room with a lesbian, feeling testy that day, I asked her what made her so sure that I wasn't gay. "Staff and clients are a diverse group," I said quoting the statement. "If this is a problem for you, then our shelter would not be right for you," I added, letting the silence build until she responded.

Finishing the Screen

After the screen is completed, all questions answered, and the woman reminded to call back on a daily basis, the screen process is almost completed. If an intake appointment has not been made, the shelter worker ends the call with the suggestion that the woman continue to contact other

shelters. If the woman does not have the phone numbers of other shelters, the shelter worker provides them. The shelter worker signals the close of the interview by wishing the woman good luck. The initiative for terminating the call is usually left to the woman although there are times when women will "cling" to the shelter worker. Zoey describes those calls as the "hard ones" that she finds emotionally draining:

> and even now you know/ every once 'n a while I get/ one of those calls or one of those walk ins that/ you know they just sayin I've no where to go and you just/ you know it/ I I still um sometimes I'm just like ow what'm I supposed to do you know what'm I suppose to say / you know I've given them/ all the resources I think I/ I know but you know they're still kinda clingin on to you and/ some o that that's um/ I don't know that that's the hardest part to deal with/ sometimes the emotional...

Completed screens are given to Cathy with a positive recommendation if the woman has been cooperative with the screening process, has presented a coherent narrative, has taken some responsibility for her situation, has presented a plan of action and has accepted the notion of case management and rules. If the woman has been resistant to the screening process, if the shelter worker is concerned that there may be mental health issues and problems that have not been addressed or she is concerned that the woman may be abusive, a note of caution will be recorded on the screen. A woman

who has had previous stays at Women's Place or other shelters cannot come into the shelter until her "references" are "checked out." A great deal of value is placed on the recommendations or "cautions" that come from the staff of the other shelters. However, Cathy will not exclude a woman based on her previous experiences at other shelters without first hearing the "woman's side of the story." This contributes to the tension between the case managers and can result in the client getting caught in the middle. In one instance, the client was asked to leave the shelter when a poor reference from another shelter was given to her case manager rather than Cathy the day after she came into the shelter.

When the decision is made to "bring a woman into shelter," whether it is during the screen or when she calls back, she is given an appointment for an intake and told that the bed will be held for only two hours after the time of intake. She is also told that intake is the next step to coming into shelter, but a bed is never guaranteed until information is shared and the paper work is done. Without a guarantee of bed space some women will opt out of the process. However, as Cathy points out, many women take the chance and come in to the shelter for the interview expecting to have a bed:

> I think the women some women/ some/ can pick up on/ the fact that/ they're probably gonna come in because they'll straight-out ask/ well should I bring my stuff with me/ ...there's no harm in saying that if

> you're pretty sure the woman's gonna/ get through the intake okay/ that's the chance we take/ and during the interview/ during intake interview process/ if the woman comes in she's been drinking for an example (uhhuh)/ that's just our problem then of how we're gonna figure out how to help her get her (starts to laugh while talking) and her stuff outta here...

She adds that "there's a really good chance a woman isn't gonna come down here intoxicated after/ cause after go over the rules on the phone."

The following section will describe the intake interview as a set of speech events, the next step a woman takes in coming into Women's Place.

Intake: A Set of Speech Events

A comment by Cathy captures the mixed feelings that women bring to the intake as well as some of what the intake worker is experiencing when she brings a woman into shelter:

> the women are/ coming from unsafe to safety/...and even though some of the woman might/ might like feel/ frustrated angry/ and and sad and everything/ they're still most of the time/ gra very grateful/ that they they can be here ...so they're re usually ***really*** grateful when they're sitting there with me /(uh huh) so/ so that's good/ it makes up for the/ the/ information that's shared between the woman and myself that might be

> really really hard intense in information/ there some intakes um that are really really hard/ to get through...

Like the screen interview, the intake interview is a process and a written document that is guided by a number of forms and contracts that become part of a woman's file. The intake can be thought of as a continuation of the screening process in that it builds on and uses information gathered during the screen as one measure the consistency of a woman's narrative. Additionally, the intake interview provides an opportunity to confirm or disconfirm the initial assessment made during the screen interview with the added advantage of face to face interaction. It is a time when any lingering questions about a woman's ability to function in shelter can be answered. These usually have to do with a woman's ability to stay within a system of rules, cooperate with authority figures, follow through with the case plan, or maintain sobriety. If she has questions about a woman, Cathy will tell a woman to "come on down and talk" before even committing to "*doing an intake*" and "bringing a woman into shelter:"

> first call of the day is from this girl/ I asked her a few questions went over the screen and I'm like that's she's coming in/ I'm like like come on down/ come on down/ you and I need to talk before I can promise you a bed but come on down /and she came down and we talked and I was

even/ more fine with it/ so all the questions in my mind were settled when I finally met her...

Unlike the screen, the focus during the intake interview is less on how a woman became homeless and more on demographic information for statistical reporting purposes and for providing case managers with a starting point for developing a case plan for the client. Most importantly, the intake process acquaints a woman coming into the shelter with the structure of the program through the "*thirty-six rules*" and various contracts she is required to sign. The shelter worker makes up an "*intake packet*" that contains the completed screen, all the required forms and contracts to be signed by the client as well as information on low income health care resources, food resources, a welcome letter, a duplicate copy of the rules for easy referral and if she is a "*Mary Smith,*" a "*DV packet*" that will be given to the client at the end of the intake. The intake process can be broken into a number of speech events (see below) that begins with the greeting and welcome downstairs, settling in the office and doing the interview, front desk check in and ends with the "*upstairs portion*" that includes the "*grand tour.*"[3]

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[3] The model presented below of the shelter intake differs slightly from the model of the screen. The shelter screen is a single speech event whereas the intake is a speech situation that is associated with a number of speech events.

SHELTER INTAKE SPEECH EVENTS SEQUENCE

GREETING AND WELCOME

Introductions
Phatic communication

SETTLING IN

Stowing her "*stuff*"
Settling the children down if it is a family intake
Getting situated in an office

THE INTAKE INTERVIEW

Negotiating available time for intake
Gathering demographic information and verifying Identification
Going over substance abuse history
Accounting for being homeless
Verifying and clarifying account including discrepancies or omissions
Signing the intake disclosure statement

RULES AND MORE RULES

House Rules read and signed
Various contracts explained and signed (drug and alcohol, linen, DV, etc.)

CHECK-IN AT FRONT DESK

Introduction to front desk staff
registration and sign in "*WRC notebook*"

"UPSTAIRS PORTION"

Client is given the "*grand tour*" of building and shelter facilities punctuated with a repetition of the rules for the use of those resources
Introductions to any women on the floor (staff and/or clients)
Emergency food and personal care items given out if needed
Room assignment
Shelter worker ends by reminding client can ask for help

Greeting and welcome

Cathy recognizes how intimidating it is for women to come into a shelter environment. She stresses the importance of making a woman feel comfortable with the intake process and creating a sense of safety and support for her.

> just/ the feeling of security support/ caring and empathy when you first come in shelter those first few days I think is really crucial/ and I don't see that sometimes happening/ even with two case workers/ I mean ***I give it my best shot*** when those women come in for intake and I trust that all my intake people do this/ to make that woman feel/ as comfortable as possible...

She begins her intakes by taking a few moments to greet the woman and engage in some small talk before settling in for the intake. If she is not doing the intake, but scheduled the appointment, she will greet the woman and introduce herself and then introduce the woman to the shelter worker who is doing the intake. She will tell the woman that she is glad she is here, ask her if she had any trouble finding the shelter, and emphasize that the woman in now in a safe place.

Settling In

Once the woman has been welcomed and introductions completed, the settling in begins. This involves finding a safe place to stow any bags, suitcases or miscellaneous items that she has brought with her. If the woman has brought her children with her, they are given some age appropriate guidelines for their behavior and the use of the toy room. Older children are given some activities to occupy them if they haven't brought their own with them. The woman is then seated in the office next to the desk and the door is shut for women who need privacy and open for women who need space.

Intake Interview

The first order of business is to make sure the woman understands that the intake is a lengthy process and that she does not have any important appointments that would interfere with completion of the intake. If she has appointments within the hour, a new time for the intake may be negotiated, or jthe "downstairs portion" will be completed with the "upstairs portion" assigned to the swing shift RA.

Like the screen, the intake is structured by the need to acquire information and to record it. The four page shelter intake form is designed filled out by the shelter worker. The first page was developed to provide quick and easy access to the demographic information needed by the shelter director for statistical purposes. The intake worker begins to gather the

requisite demographic information—name, age, birth date, social security number, marital status, education level, ethnicity or race--by asking for and checking the woman's identification. Although women are reminded to bring identification with them, they sometimes forget or are unable to access their papers and documents when leaving an abusive situation. If a woman has been "*on the streets*," her purse may have been stolen along with her identification. She can use her food stamp identification or any mail that has her name on it.

After much discussion, it was decided to add "committed relationship" to the intake form as an alternative to marital status to be more inclusive. However, it seems an inappropriate question to ask a woman who has just ended an abusive relationship. Moreover, for some women, it does not fit their way of talking about their relationships. I have noticed many women looking directly at me with a puzzled look when I ask the question.

Once identification has been verified, and the demographic information recorded, an emergency contact provided and any previous shelter stays noted, the woman is asked for information about her children before moving on to her own history. This is recorded on the intake form after it is cross checked and compared with her previous account recorded on the earlier screen.

The intake form provides a category for "*abuse history*" that includes whether she is a "*survivor*" of prostitution. Many women are reluctant to admit to involvement in prostitution because some shelters will exclude them, especially if they are still active in prostitution. One woman told me most emphatically that she was a call girl for an escort service and was "kept" at different times by men but that she was not a prostitute because she was not "selling herself on the streets." Abuse history also covers domestic violence past and/or present as well as child/sexual abuse and "*gang affected,*" that is, involved in any way with gangs.

If the woman is leaving an abusive situation, a detailed description of her abuser is elicited along with a description of his car if he owns one. If anyone matching the description shows up at the front desk, the police will be called. If the woman is seen with anyone matching the description of her abuser, she will be questioned about violating the domestic violence contract she signed and possibly asked to leave the shelter.

The remaining categories match the screen and include criminal history, physical health, mental health and substance abuse. Although women state that they have at least five days clean and sober before coming into the shelter during the screening process, some reveal that they drank or used within the last few days during the intake.

Although featured first in the screen, the account of homelessness is one of the last questions during intake: the woman is asked to "describe reasons for needing shelter in detail and give the chain of events that led to your homelessness." This is followed by a category for assessing "*current resources*" including food, income/employment, government assistance, medical, housing, counseling, and other needs.

The final piece of the intake form is the disclosure statement that women sign, verifying that the "the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge." The statement also outlines the terms of her stay in shelter: that she is a guest, that she pays nothing, that she agrees to follow and implement her case management plan that is recorded in her file, that she will receive only three written warnings for failure to abide by the rules, and that "some violations may be of such a nature" that she will be expelled immediately and without warning. The statement also includes a consent to release of information to the region area shelters, Coalition member programs and any state Child Protective Services and community corrections.

Rules and more rules

The next part of the shelter intake could be organized around the theme of "rules and rule violations" and the role that they play in structuring the shelter experience. Rules are the crystallization and codification of norms. Many of the rules have been added over time as clients have violated the

norms, requiring the director to make explicit what had been the tacit understandings for appropriate behavior.

Several documents support the theme of "rules and rule violations" including the disclosure statement on the intake form itself. The disclosure statement on the intake form introduces the theme by including an acknowledgment that she "agrees to follow and implement her case management objectives," that if she receives three written warnings "for failure to abide by the rules" she will be discharged immediately, and that "some violations may be of such a nature that I will immediately be expelled from the shelter without any written violations given."

The packet includes two copies of the three page residential House Rules covering thirty six rules, one to be signed and attached to the clients file, the other for the woman to keep for easy referral. Women are expected by the case managers to remember all of the rules from the moment they enter the shelter. However, some of the residential assistants give women "*verbals*" (verbal warnings) during their first week allowing for a period of adjustment. Women with children in shelter receive an additional set of rules and a "*Mother's Contract*" that asserts her responsibility for her children.

There is some variation in the presentation of the rules to a woman during the intake. If a woman arrives early, she will be given the rules and the Alcohol and Drug contract to read. To save time, Cathy will give the woman

the rules to read while she fills out the demographic information and verifies identification. She will interrupt her with the demographic questions then ask them if they are "clear" about the rules before asking them to sign. Only with women that cannot read or have developmental disabilities does she read through the rules. She frames the rules as simple, "common sense, not hard to follow at all." However, as Janie, a weekend RA points out, there is no such thing as "common sense." What is not acceptable in the shelter may have been the norm in that woman's home. Yelling is just one example that Janie provided.

This may give clients the wrong message about the importance of the rules. By glossing over the rules, the women may get a message that the rules are not taken seriously until they receive their first rule violation. Case managers are concerned that women are not being properly informed about the rules especially when clients claim that they weren't told. Policy requires that intake workers read and explain the rules with all the women before they sign. I always read and discuss the rules with the women after I finish filling out the intake form not only because it is policy, but to provide the rationale for many of the rules, to help them make sense of the shelter organization, and to stress how seriously the case managers and RAs take the rules and rule violations. When Sarah does an intake, she hands a woman the three pages

and accompanies it with the dictum, "Here are the rules, thirty six rules, five weeks, and three rule violations and you're outta here. Read them." Like many of the staff, she doesn't think the rules make sense, but she believes it is better to be "up front" and "lay it on the line" than have the women coming into shelter find out too late just how inflexible the structure is in accommodating to the clients.

The next form is the alcohol and drug policy agreement that gives the shelter staff permission to conduct random urine analyses. The current policy is a revised version after consultation with a lawyer to allow for legal room searches and seizure of contraband, breathalizer tests for alcohol levels and urine analysis to screen for drugs. The contract stresses that the Women's Place Shelter is a drug and alcohol free program.

Although the form states that urine analyses are random, they are done at the request of the case manager when a woman is suspected of using drugs. "Random" was included in the wording to prevent the woman from feeling targeted and to protect staff from a confrontation with an angry client. As Angela points out complaining about her unfair treatment because she is not "on drugs," the women quickly realize that the analyses are not random:

> Mary said that they do it/ randomly/ but no they don't/ I think that it's a/ I think it's invading my right as a/ **per**son I mean I'm not in jail/ I have no

reason to be UAed/ you know/ I can understand it if I came back intoxicated or someone thought I was on drugs/ but/ I'm not (laughs)...

The form also declares that "firearms, alcohol, illegal drugs, knives or drug paraphernalia" can be confiscated until the woman is "discharged from the shelter" with the exception of illegal drugs. This provides the cue to check in any self defense weapons with her including knives, mace, or pepper spray. Guns are not allowed in the shelter.

Women escaping domestic violence are required to sign the "*DV contract.*" She agrees to come in under an assumed name, "*Mary Smith,"* not to have contact with her abuser and to not reveal her location to anyone if she is to come into the shelter. In the event that she has contact with her abuser, planned or accidental, she agrees to leave the shelter. A check off space for quick referral is provided in a central and visible space on the intake form for "*Mary Smith status"* in the event that someone does call for her or she insists that she is not a "*Mary Smith*" once she is in the shelter. A woman's status as a "Mary Smith" is determined by the intake worker and is nonnegotiable.

The next group of forms are considered less important and are handed to the woman to sign in fairly quick succession. They also can be viewed as an iteration of the rules. This stack includes the liability contract which I call the "you're responsible for your stuff" form, the room status and bedding contract that means "you cannot take the linens with you when you leave" and

"don't damage the screens because they keep the children from falling out" and the fire procedure "that is a rule violation if you don't evacuate when the bell rings."

The liability contract allows the shelter to contact a friend or relative or give a woman's "*stuff*" away if she does not retrieve it within three days of leaving shelter. The three day deadline was grafted on to the liability statement after a woman complained that she had not been told that her stuff would be stored for only three days and then given away.

A bedding contract that lists the bedding and linen checked out to the woman as well as the condition of the room furnishings is included in the packet. This is to remind women that the bedding is not a gift that they can take with them when they leave. However, blankets and pillows along with portable fans and silverware do turn up missing.

Fire safety procedures are covered and are considered important. There was a fire in a fifth floor office that started because of faulty electrical wiring. It was quickly contained by the fifth floor staff and then extinguished by the fire department before any one was hurt or the fire spread. The fire highlighted the importance of evacuation procedures in order to ensure the safety of the women and the clients. There are two fire drills a month, and all building staff and guests must leave the building by the appropriate route. It is

the responsibility of the shelter worker to make sure this is understood by women coming into the shelter.

Occasionally women who come into the shelter have had a recent history of suicide attempts. Sometimes women in the shelter become so depressed that they contemplate suicide. For these women, a suicide contract is signed requiring the woman agrees to *check in* with staff if and when she feels suicidal. The contract is for a set period of time and is renewable when the specified time period lapses.

Check in at the Front Desk

Once the forms are filled out, the woman has agreed to all the terms for her stay in shelter, and there is no doubt about her appropriateness and willingness to function within the structure, she is considered in the shelter. The next step is to take her to the front desk, introduce her to the front desk staff and have them check her in to the shelter just as a hotel guest would be checked in. The woman is required to fill out a card with a forwarding address if possible and to supply an emergency contact. While she is filling out the registration card, the intake worker enters the date, woman's name, her room number in the shelter, and if she is a "*Mary Smith*" in the hotel twenty four hour log. The woman is given a room key if there is one. Some of the rooms operate with combination locks. The combinations are periodically changed and then logged in a small notebook kept in the desk in the RA's office on the

fourth floor. All women are required to sign in when they return to shelter noting the time of return. This is initialed by the front desk staff and provides evidence if a woman misses bed check at 10:00 PM. This is an imperfect system because the front desk staff does not notice when a woman falsifies the time.

"The Upstairs Portion"

The first order of business is to collect the woman's "*stuff*" that she stowed in the intake office and head for the elevator. Coming off the elevator, the woman has entered what will be her home for the next few weeks. The purpose of the upstairs tour is to familiarize the woman with the shelter resources as well as some of the "rules" governing the use of those resources. As she is given the tour, she is introduced to any of the residents and staff who are on the floor.

The tour includes the bathroom that contains showers, toilets and the laundry facility. Women are told that they will need to see their case manager about accessing money for laundry and soap. The woman is shown all the staff offices and encouraged to sign up for an appointment with her case manager on the "*sign-up sheet*" taped to the office door. While still in the hall, the new clients is shown the fire exits at the end of the halls and reminded that she needs to follow the fire drill procedures.

Entering the kitchen, the new client's attention is directed to the chore list fastened to the kitchen door. She is told that she will be assigned a chore at the weekly "*housekeeping meeting*" and expected to complete it by 10:30 P.M. in time to have the RA sign it. She is acquainted with the elaborate cooking procedure--"shut the door and turn on the fan" needed to prevent triggering the fire alarm. She is told that after marking her perishable food with her initials and room number, she will need to store it in the kitchen. She is shown the shelf of "*house food*" that she can use including assorted baked goods and breads, canned goods and staples. If a woman has absolutely nothing to eat or the means to purchase food, as the shelter director points out, "She can always survive on peanut butter sandwiches."

If the woman has come into the shelter without any food, in addition to the "*house food*" in the kitchen, she can select enough canned goods to last a few days. While in the food closet, she is asked to "*check in*" any medications, vitamins, herbal remedies or over the counter medications she has brought with her. She is reminded that all her medications need to be accounted for at all times or she risks losing her shelter if she is asked to do a UA and hasn't been forthright.

Finally, the new client is shown to her room, given the combination to the door lock and reminded to keep the door locked at all times. It usually takes several tries before she can work it, allowing for a demonstration of the

alarm that is triggered if the correct combination is not used. As she is shown her room, she is reminded that she is entitled to half the space and is responsible for keeping it clean. If the room is a mess, Cathy eases the tension by joking that now we know "what way a room should not look." If the bed has been stripped but not made up with fresh linens or the client is in need of personal care items, a trip to the "*scary closet*" (storage closet) at the end of the hall to retrieve the needed items provides an opportunity to finish the shelter tour.

Once the new client has been given the tour and shown to her room, the intake worker's responsibility for her is over. The woman is officially in the shelter having successfully negotiated both the screen and the intake. The shelter worker leaves the client with a reminder that she can ask staff to assist her if she should need anything or have any questions. The intake worker's final task is to enter the information in the "*WRC Log*" and leave the completed forms on the desk in the RA's office.

This completes the "thick description" of the paired events, the screen and intake. The following chapter presents the critical move that examines the underlying processes of social control and the implications for both a collective and an individual identity addressing the questions posed in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in this chapter addresses the research questions posed in the first chapter. It includes a fine grained analysis of the structure and stylistic features of the screen and intake including its function within the shelter community. Still working within the ethnography of communication framework, the underlying processes of social control and distribution of power are examined from a critical perspective. This leads to a discussion of the construction and negotiation of gendered identity at both the collective and the individual level that is implicated in the screen and intake process. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations and implications of the research.

The research questions are:

Research Questions

1. What will an examination of the negotiation of access to a shelter as a process of inclusion or exclusion reveal about the distribution of power and underlying processes of social control?
2. How is genderered identity symbolically developed, negotiated and performed through the speech situation of coming into shelter by shelter staff, volunteers, and program participants?

Ends

The general purpose of a shelter screen and intake, as it is understood by shelter intake workers and the community at large, is to bring women into the shelter until all beds in the shelter are filled. During the event itself, the two women involved may actually have goals and expectations that can overlap, be complementary or competing. The expected outcome of the woman calling for shelter space may or may not coincide with that of the intake worker. Although Hymes (1989) assigns both the "conventionally recognized and expected outcomes" of an event by the community members and the purposes of individuals engaged in the event to "ends," he recognizes that they need not be identical. Hymes also makes the distinction between ends in view and ends as outcomes because the "conventionally expected or ascribed" differ from the situational or personal and from the latent and unintended. He adds that the "interactions of a particular speech event may determine its particular quality and whether or not expected outcome is reached" (p. 62).

A brief summary of some of the goals and expected outcomes of each of the participants during a shelter screen is provided to highlight the relationship between the goals of the woman applying for shelter and the shelter worker that plays out in the negotiation of access to the shelter. It is the tension between these overlapping and competing ends that the intake

worker and the potential client must manage though their interactions during the screen and the first part of the intake. The shelter intake worker is attempting to evaluate and screen out all women who do not meet the criteria of "*appropriate*" to ensure the safety of the women living and working in the shelter. She is also mindful that the shelter needs to be filled in order to receive funding and that she must eventually make a choice among the women who are calling in. (Funding depends on the percentage of occupancy determined by the number of "bed nights" used by homeless women). The woman asking for shelter, on the other hand, must manage her anxiety and desperation as well as her anger and frustration if she expects to access the shelter at any time in the future. She must convince the shelter worker that she needs shelter because she has no other resources and that she will be a "good client." An analysis of the interview and observational data suggested the following schema:

ENDS

Participant 1: Shelter Intake Worker

- determine appropriateness of prospective client along a number of dimensions including self sufficiency, mental organization, ability to function within the rules, and ability to fit into the shelter community
- to get at the truth through careful questioning
- assess a woman's emotional and physical needs and the shelter program's ability to meet those needs

- assess whether the woman has goals and is committed to ending her homelessness, e.g., not "abusing" the welfare system
- fill the available bed
- manage the tensions within the interaction

Participant 2: The Woman seeking shelter

- obtain shelter by constructing a plausible narrative accounting for her homelessness by presenting herself as a victim of circumstances or of abuse
- in telling her story, create the impression of total honesty, but only disclose enough of the truth to be convincing but not so much that she jeopardizes her chances at gaining shelter
- persuade shelter worker she is deserving of shelter services by assuring the shelter worker she will be a good client and will follow the rules
- escape abuse by coming into shelter
- move up on the housing list and/or get help with housing by coming into shelter
- manage her tension and/or anger against the system

Style

The immediate challenge for the shelter intake worker when she picks up the phone or faces a "*walk-in*," is to conduct the screen and later, the intake, in such a way that she remains in control and does not provoke or trigger an angry or tearful confrontation. This is often the case if she must turn the woman away either because there is no shelter space or because the woman is not appropriate for the program. The data suggests that the shelter intake workers accomplish this by conducting the screen and intake as a

guided interview in a conversant style and friendly manner in order to elicit information from a woman while navigating an emotional minefield that threatens to erupt at any moment. Although the screen and a portion of the intake follow an interview format, i.e., question and answer, observational and interview data reveal that not only do the intake workers and the shelter director characterize the screen and intake process as having a "conversation with a woman," but so do the volunteers--including the researcher. Cathy stressed the importance of not doing the "question and answer thing" but letting a woman talk:

> let her talk / and have a conversation/ instead of/ the question/ the answer/ sometimes it's appropriate you have to really feel somebody out if somebody's not / if you can tell they're hesitant...

The shelter screen as well as part of the intake are not by definition conversations, but an instance of the "interview" genre. It is structured by a question and answer format that relies on a non-directive approach, that is, allowing the interviewee, at times, to control the pacing of her response and the subject matter she includes in order to gather more information (see Stewart & Cash, 1991). Observational data and a transcript of a screen reveal that shelter intake workers actually combine a directive and a non directive approach in the conduct of screens and intakes.

Gumperz (1992) identifies an important feature of the "interview," is a a key speech event new to modern society and bureaucratic institutions, that is equally applicable to the structure of the screen and intake:

> Although on the surface an air of equality, mutuality, and cordiality prevails, participant roles, i.e., the right to speak and the obligations to answer, are predetermined, or at least strictly constrained. In interviews the interviewer chooses questions, initiates topics of discussions, and evaluates responses. The interviewees respond, i.e., they answer. Often they are expected to volunteer information but what it is they can say is strictly constrained by expectations which are rarely made explicit. (p. 9)

In other words the "participant structure of such events thus reflects a real power asymmetry underneath the surface equality, a serious problem when the lesser communicator does not know the rules" (Gumperz, 1992, p. 9). Framing the screen and intake interviews as "having a conversation" credits the prospective client with more agency than the structure of the event allows. By definition, a conversation is characterized by an equality of speaker rights to initiate talk, interrupt, respond or refuse to do any of these (Wilson, 1987, p. 96). That the shelter worker can "let her talk" locates control with the shelter worker. The potential client has to be willing to sustain her part in the conversation by answering the questions put to her in order to access the

shelter. If at any point, she refuses to answer the probing questions, the interview is terminated and the woman is no longer eligible for services. If she becomes angry or verbally abusive, she might be asked to call back when she is not so distraught or angry and "in a better place to talk." However, she is more likely to be excluded from the shelter and categorized as uncooperative or verbally abusive.

Given that one of the immediate goals of the screen and intake interview is to gather information and meet the challenge of managing tension, a communication style must be adopted that will further these goals. Although the screen and intake are not conversations, a conversational style is adopted. Joos (1967) identifies five levels or styles of communication (p. 11). Of the five styles available, i.e., intimate, casual, consultative, formal and frozen, multiple observations of the screen and intake as well as an examination of a transcript of a screen revealed that shelter workers utilize a blend of three—formal, consultative, and casual. Each of the styles used seems to serve a different function.

Throughout the interview, the consultative style tends to dominate, necessitated by the need for information. In keeping with a consultative style, the shelter worker supplies information about other resources in the community, about how to succeed in accessing a shelter with daily "*call ins,*" the shelter structure and rules. If the woman has been battered, the shelter

worker will provide a paradigm for interpreting and understanding her experiences as an abused woman that is grounded in a grassroots feminist perspective. In turn, the potential client reciprocates by providing information about her needs and her history, sometimes contesting the shelter intake worker's interpretation of her situation. Both actively participate through back channeling and coordinated turn taking.

Consultative style blends into casual style most often when the shelter intake worker is providing support or changing topics. According to Joos (1967), both consultative and casual are colloquial styles that "deal in a public sort of information" but differently. Casual style alludes to information whereas consultative states it. Therefore, casual style is most appropriate when the information is already known. Casual style also serves another function. It is normally used for friends, acquaintances and insiders (Joos, 1967). When it is used to address a stranger, it defines the person as an insider by speaking to her as an insider. The casual style is useful for establishing rapport between the shelter worker and the potential client. In cases of domestic violence, Cathy is comfortable saying "enough of this guy" to move on to another question or "what you need to do is get rid of this jerk who is beating on you" to encourage a woman to come into a shelter to be safe. To a homeless woman, she will provide sympathy by saying, "You've

been through a lot" and remind a woman that she can "hook up with counseling."

Although using a casual style established a level of intimacy between the two women, an intimate style is not used. Shelter workers use a form of standard English, although there is wide variation in use of idioms and in application of correct grammar. If a woman seeking access to the shelter shifts to intimate style or draws upon a linguistic repertoire unfamiliar to the shelter worker, the shelter worker will direct the conversation back to standard English maintaining the consultative style. "You see what I'm sayin'" or "You know what I mean" are a call for a request for clarification. Even if the shelter worker has some familiarity with other English variations, her account of the screen interview in the screen documents is in standard English. The shelter worker must make explicit what would normally remain implicit among intimates to prevent any misunderstandings or gaps in the narrative in her account of the interview recorded in the screen document. Intake and Referral staff are trained to never make assumptions about a woman or assume meanings without seeking confirmation. The shelter worker will not be able to provide an adequate account to staff if she has failed to catch any omissions, code switching or ellipsis.

Maintaining control during the screen is crucial to the success of the interview. The issue of control was highlighted for me by an analysis of the

awkward fit of the "*Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview*" in the overall process of screening and intake that I was attempting to understand. The "*Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview,*" is usually the final piece of the shelter screening process. Reflecting a feminist politic of inclusion, it is a formal statement designed to be read verbatim or used as a model to be incorporated into the shelter intake workers own presentation. The language that is used is unfamiliar to both staff and clients. For several shelter workers, shifting to a formal style and vocabulary of the prepared diversity statement, violates for them the overall tone and structure of the screen. When asked if she reads the prepared statement to clients, Cathy answered vehemently "no." "Women don't know what diversity means" she added. "I only read it if a woman has a lot of education." Most of the staff restructure the statement in their own words in an attempt to manage the shift but it still brings in a jarring note. The "*Diversity Statement*" comes at a time in the "conversation" when the intake worker has established rapport and approached a level of intimacy by the personal and painful nature of the woman's disclosure and through its resonance with the experiences of the shelter intake worker. The presentation of the "*Diversity Statement*" interrupts the intimate sharing by abruptly moving to a formal plane. It is formal because participation of both parties has dropped out (Joos, 1967) and the worker is now telling the woman in a lecture format what the shelter is like and what will be expected of her.

This represents a shift through three different levels from casual bordering on intimate to formal, through consultative to formal. Joos (1967) identifies this kind of move as antisocial.

Joos (1967) claims that "only two neighboring styles are used alternately, and it is anti-social to shift two or more steps in a single jump, for instance from casual to formal" (p. 19). Shifting from casual to formal is antisocial because it violates the equality established by treating the woman as an insider and a friend. The three shifts from consultative to casual to formal reveal an underlying structure of control, necessary for the shelter worker to achieve her goal in managing the screen and intake. Not only does it reinstate the intake worker in control of the "*conversation*," it violates the friendly tone of the interview,

To summarize, although the screen and intake are not conversations, a conversational style (Joos, 1967) is adopted to further the goal of the interview--the gathering of information by posing as a friend and encouraging the woman to disclose information that may be used to deny her access to shelter. This is revealed in the words of Cathy as she discusses how she manages a screen using a "conversational style:"

> when I do say a screen/ assessment for shelter with a woman / I sometimes I'll even side track / right right off the screen/ to get more information of the idea of the personality of the woman and if they'd fit

> into shelter/ um because the more women can open up to me on the phone and /and feel like I'm their friend or that I'm a really concerned person that they can trust / then than more they disclose...

It was not until a work study student commented that the screen was like a formal interview "like for a job" that I realized the contradiction obscured by the shelter ideology in and through which I had learned to do screens and intakes. I was trained to ask probing questions in a sensitive manner that is respectful to the woman in order to help her as a friend would when in reality, I was "ferreting out" information that potentially could be used to exclude her from the shelter. This ideology of the shelter worker as sensitive and caring is reflected in the shelter director's words about doing the screen:

> Oh I think just/ do a golden rule thing/ treat her the way you want to be treated/ and if/ I think if you're not sure/ then people can always fall back on/ saying to someone/ I would be willing to bet this sounds pretty intrusive to you or pretty hurtful to you have to answer these questions / and then explain why we need that information/ lots of times that really cuts through a lot of ice/ and helps people understand we're not doing it just because we're nosy/ but because we really want to help them the very best that we can/ and that's supporting that person's decision to hang up on us if they choose/ to yell at us if they choose/ or to start crying and say yeah I'll answer the questions...

The friendly style used by the shelter workers is deceptive. Meant to provide positive feedback to recognize, encourage and reinforce the clients, it offers only the appearance of friendship and not the reality. Shelter norms prohibit forming friendships with the women in the shelter. Staff as well as volunteers are required to maintain clear boundaries between themselves and clients. Because of the open and friendly manner or communicative style of shelter staff, clients at the relational level often mistake the relationship for one of friendship and have to be reminded that it is in fact a professional relationship.

Framing the screen as a conversation and not as an interview obscures not only the asymmetrical distribution of power within the speech event with style creating a relational contradiction, but even the nature of the interview as a speech event that is constructed in the moment. As Briggs so cogently points out about the transparency of interviewing, "what is said is seen as a reflection of what is 'out there' rather than as an interpretation which is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent" (1986, p. 3). Pool (1991) observes that gathering data between interviewer and respondents is a performance, an enactment as well as a production of knowledge that is produced rather "than simply called up from some cognitive reservoir" (1991, p. 59).

A woman, desperate for shelter, may be interpreting from contextual cues provided by the shelter worker a way to create knowledge about herself

that will enhance her chances of accessing shelter. The identity that the woman constructs and performs is cued by the shelter intake worker as a representation of the community in which she is embedded and a reflection of the values of the larger community in which the shelter is embedded. For her, it may be less a question of "truth" telling and more a presentation of an identity that will be supported by the shelter worker so that she will viewed in a positive light. I asked a woman whom I had screened and who had been a drug dealer in another state where she was implicated in a gang murder why she had not told me the truth about her connection to drugs and her real reason for needing shelter. During the screen, I had asked her if she had used or abused drugs, not thinking to ask if she had sold drugs. Her response was that it was not relevant to her need for shelter. Another woman that had called for shelter using the phone at Women's Place told me that she knew from her previous shelter stay not to disclose her most recent consumption of alcohol. Angela, when asked to leave Women's Place because of too many rule violations, was accepted into a domestic violence shelter that only takes in women in immediate danger from an abuser. Although she had a history of abuse in past relationships, the precipitating events that led to her current homelessness did not involve domestic violence. However, by creating a narrative that involved a threat to her life by an abuser, she was able to access a domestic violence shelter. This suggests that women control their

presentation of self and the amount of disclosure within their narratives during the process of accessing shelter.

Rumelhart (1984) notes that social workers misinterpret client responses when they attempt to mask their uncertainty by using defensive strategies--saying as little as possible or offensive strategies--saying too much. She stresses that the need to manage the immediate social interaction should never be overlooked as a motivation for a client's creating an answer that sounds right (p. 33). Clearly Cathy takes advantage when a potential client uses the offensive strategy of saying too much. Cathy describes doing the screen and even "side tracking to get more information," one of the advantages of a non-directive approach to interviewing:

> oh okay I was telling you that the way/ when I do say a screen/ assessment for shelter with a woman / I sometimes I'll even side track / right right off the screen/ to get more information of the idea of the personality of the woman and if they'd fit into shelter/ um because the more women can open up to me on the phone and/and feel like I'm their friend or that I'm a ***really*** concerned person that they can trust / then than more they disclose/ and you get a lot of/ extra side input...

However, she and others are deeply offended if a woman creates an answer that fits at the time, but proves later to be a fabrication. Cathy experiences it as a betrayal of trust. Donna, commenting on the problem of screening out

women who are "inappropriate for shelter" that present well during the interview, locates a possible solution in asking more questions:

> maybe I would ask more questions/ but then that would make a really long process and that would not be helpful either so I don't know/ I think the questions I mean we've all had input about what the intake forms look like/ and what the phone screens look like and/ I think they're/ pretty okay the way they are/ I mean/ (intake) can't know if somebody's lying I mean if you/ ask them if they're clean and sober and they say they are then/ that's what you go with so...

As Barb explains, the screen is a matter of asking the "right" questions:

> we're gonna we're gonna ask these questions/ no more no less/ well/ as we learn more about every situation/ whether its domestic violence/ drug and alcohol issues/ mental health stuff/ whatever/ teen pregnancy well/ you name it/ we need to start asking different questions/ or more depth questions...

Shelter workers are required to be thorough with their questions. Cathy commented once while looking at a screen that she wants every question answered and every "scrap of information" gathered about a woman.

If a woman fails in the shelter program, it is Intake that is most likely to be held accountable for not asking enough questions or thoroughly screening. It is, after all, the responsibility of the intake worker to "ferret" out the "truth" of a

woman's story and determine her "appropriateness" for shelter in terms of her ability to cope with communal living and to set goals for herself. This becomes a standard against which the competency of the shelter intake worker is judged by the case managers and her performance evaluated.

A woman's identity as a competent shelter worker is at risk during the screen and intake and at risk when she makes a decision to bring a woman into the shelter. Cathy discusses the tension she feels when she is so confident that a woman "will work out" that she hurries the screen and has not "totally screened:"

> you know a hundred per cent/ you know sure I might/ sure put the information on paper but there's a lot of missing/ ***things*** that I've er could've/ side things I could've gotten into but I didn't because I just ***knew*** that person is gonna make it/ they're gonna/ if they don't make it they're at least gonna get in and try/ so no I do get a little nervous like oh maybe I was too fast on that one you know but/ but I have learned to to slow down on em a little bit/ before I have them come down...

The screen and intake process are the means by which the shelter intake worker comes to a decision and constitutes the shelter population of clients. The shelter intake worker is clearly in a position of power during this transaction in that she controls a woman's access to the shelter without sharing all of the decision rules with the applicant. The asymmetrical

distribution of power is obscured by a number of discourses that circulate within the shelter about the screening and intake process. One of these discourses, as discussed above, frames the process as a "conversation" attributing more agency to a woman than is actualized. Another contradiction embedded in discourse is Barb's statement about "supporting that person's decision to hang up on us if they choose/ to yell at us if they choose/ or to start crying and say yeah I'll answer the questions..." The belief that women are exercising choice persists, leaving unexamined the limited nature and extent of the choices left to a homeless and/or battered woman. In reality, the shelter intake worker allows a narrow range of expression and offers affective choices only within a context that is shaped and controlled by the intake worker. If a woman "talks back" and challenges the intake worker she risks her chance at coming into the shelter. If she hangs up, as noted earlier, she loses her chance altogether.

Access to the community within the shelter is governed by the shelter intake worker who selects women that most closely approximate the idea or ideal of appropriateness that has been predetermined by staff including the case managers through their ability to challenge and influence intake decisions. Women applying for shelter are measured by an a priori set of criteria that are reflected in the discourse within the shelter community and represented in the rules and policies that govern a woman's stay in the

shelter. A shelter worker's competence is evaluated within the shelter community by staff as well as clients through her enactment of the screen and the intake interviews consistent with the prevailing norms for speaking and the norms of interpretation greatly influenced by the case managers. A woman can not access the shelter if she does not first participate competently throughout the screen interview and then throughout the intake. She will not be "*brought into shelter*" unless she demonstrates her appropriateness for shelter as judged by the shelter worker. Both women, shelter intake worker and potential client need to manage the immediate transaction as best they can and as competently as possible.

What kind of community is created through the work of the Intake and Referral Department as they assess whether a woman can fit into the community based on her responses to the screen and intake interview process? Whose notions of community are being enacted within the shelter? With the stress on "appropriateness" and a focus on communal living, what are the possibilities for community and what are the implications for identity as it is intersected by gender, race and social class? The following section focuses on the ways of speaking that shape the rules and policies that are constitutive of the community of speakers and what that reveals about the community against which they are being measured.

Speech Community

The social unit of analysis for an ethnography of communication is the "speech community." According to Gumperz (1986), membership in the same speech community depends on the extent to which speakers "share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations" (p. 16). He notes that the boundaries for speech communities "coincide" with the boundaries for countries, tribes, religious or ethnic groupings although the adequacy of methods for measuring social groupings has been called into question.

As Braithwaite (1990) notes, the identification of a speech community is "partially a reflexive process in that one needs to assess the presence of dimensions of a speech community before one can posit the existence of a speech community" (p. 146). He adds that the ethnographer makes an "initial gross generalization as to the location of a speech community focusing on a social group that regularly interacts while leaving open for further analysis the degree of shared linguistic, normative and cultural features within that group" (p. 146). In mapping the boundaries of a speech community, the ethnographer of communication makes a "case for varying degrees of community, rather than simply positing its existence" (p. 146). A speech community can be thought of as structured diversity because access to and

command of the knowledge necessary for production and interpretation of speech within the community is differentially distributed among the members (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989).

Applying Braithwaite's notion of speech community to a study of a women's shelter, I began by positing the existence of a speech community and then sought to confirm that assumption. Using participant observation, I attempted to ascertain the ways in which the criteria of shared linguistic code, shared communication rules for speaking and shared meanings are present or co-vary among the women who work or live in the shelter.

The *"core"* of the shelter community are full-time or three quarter time staff. Their continued presence in the shelter provides them with the ability to shape the rules and policies that bear on intake and referral work through weekly staff meetings, ad hoc committee work organized around specific issues such as the *"Mary Smith"* policies, rules for mothers accompanied by their children or drug and alcohol policies—for example, whether to bring in women on methadone, and even through impromptu gatherings in staff offices.[1]

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[1] Staff consists of a Crisis Specialist and a Referral Specialist working in the Intake Department. A case manager that is funded to find housing for women leaving domestic violence is referred to as the Domestic Violence Outreach Coordinator in formal documents. Unofficially and more commonly, she is referred to as a case manager. The second case manager works with women who are homeless and/or escaping domestic violence and is referred to as a case manager. The Families Program includes two Families Program coordinators that job share. The program includes an Early Childhood

Weekend staff, RAs (Residential Assistants) and on call RA's along with volunteers, spend less time in shelter, tend to work with only one or two staff members, and may or may not attend staff meetings. They must rely for the most part on the written log entries in the "*WRC Log*," memos kept in the "*policy notebook*" or information shared during debriefing at shift change to keep up with the ever shifting ground of shelter life. Rules for clients and intake policies are constantly being revised as more restrictions are added. Barb, the shelter director, in a memo dated 12/14/95, noted that night and weekend staff are at a disadvantage because "there is limited communication at night and on the weekends, and that day staff is spoiled because we have each other to bounce things off."

Within the formal structure of the organization, a weekly staff meeting functions to create community and to maintain and legitimate ways of speaking consistent with the shelter's system of values. Barb is very conscious of the key role staff meetings have in creating and sustaining the group process :

We try very hard to work with as a group-a unified system of people.

Education Program for preschool children. The shelter program is supervised by the Executive Director, referred to as the ED. Swing shift (5:00 PM to 11:30 PM) and week ends are covered by the Residential Assistant abbreviated to RA. At times, funding has been adequate to allow for a graveyard RA. Volunteers who are paid work study students and true volunteers (women not paid for their time) are an integral part of shelter staff.

> One of the ways that I think safeguards that, is to do our group process around issues, clients, whatever it may be. So if a person particularly biased in a specific area or leaning in a direction that may or may not be the most helpful to them and or the client, there's a table full of people that will gently remind them that maybe your perspective's a little off and let's talk about this.

Barb believes that staff meetings function to connect staff and volunteers to the shelter community as well as maintain the shelter values:

> when the people that have worked nights or weekends ...started attending staff meeting during the week, there is a tremendous change for them as far as feeling a part of and feeling connected to and I see people's commitment level go higher. They're more eager and willing to be invested and involved in what's happening within shelter because they feel a part of. So if staff meeting does nothing else but bring people together and help them feel connected and be a part of, then I think it's doing it's job along with helping to maintain values.

Barb uses the weekly staff meetings to maintain consistent criteria of selection for the screen and intake process among the intake workers staff and to resolve any differences between intake and case management that arise through what she calls "*the group process*:"

> we try to keep it as consistent as possible but/ because of the individual/ mental processes/ personal screening and filtering of information/ information's skewed constantly/ doesn't necessarily mean it's wrong/ it's just/ there's a lot of differences/ (sighs) so to counteract some of that or combat some of that/ um/ I think that we talk about again it as a group/ we encourage people if you're dealing if you're working down in the I&R Office and doing intakes/ and answering the crisis line/ and you have questions or concerns or confusions/ bring it to the table/ let's talk about it/ or call another staff person up on the phone/ or/ sit down with two or three other people and say/ I'm not sure about this and you know what does this look like...

Opening up intake decisions to discussion as part of the group process leads to an attitude of "*blame it on intake*" when a woman is not "*successful*" in shelter. Rather than examine the strategies of case managers as a contributing factor to a woman's failure to follow through with a case plan, the appropriateness of her selection is questioned. "Blame it on intake" as one of the case managers quipped during a staff meeting becomes a prevailing attitude exhibited by case managers.

Within the shelter speech community, shelter workers evidence different levels of competency as judged by other workers. One area of concern is the level of professionalism reflected in written records that

includes screens and intake forms. The log and the intake forms that make up the client file are subject to subpoena into court at any time. Staff are cautioned (Memorandum, December 31, 1995) that they may find themselves in court defending what they have written. In the same memo, women are directed not to log their opinions as fact, not to use slang terms unless quoting clients, to be concise and relevant and not to use the log as a place for venting about the job or clients. This also applies to evaluations of a woman's potential on shelter screens. In another set of written directions kept in the policy notebook, women are reminded to provide "factual information and not personal judgment." "Last night Sally was acting really weird and I was afraid she might kill herself. After hearing about her history, it wouldn't surprise me..." is an example of inappropriate entries. On completed shelter screens, descriptors such as "seems very nice" or phrases like "did not like the way she sounded" are not acceptable. Like log entries, shelter screens are to be filled out using behavioral descriptions and not personal opinions and value judgments. "*Mentally disorganized*" became the descriptor for women that may have mental health issues or have been diagnosed as mentally ill as an alternative to "crazy" or "nuts" after a consultation with the social work counseling program director.

The guidelines for writing about clients is also the standard for ways of talking about and to clients. Like many instances within a speech community,

norms are often violated with the ideal being the standard against which the behavior is measured. The language used by shelter workers in casual conversation to ascribe identities to the participants in the shelter program are often in terms of the behaviors exhibited by the women that can be measured along two dimensions, good behavior and bad or bizarre behavior. An example of bizarre behavior and a favorite "war story" told by one of the volunteers is about an intake with "the client from hell who wanted me to drink her urine." Donna described another client as "the client that tried to burn the kitchen down because she hates me." Staff and volunteers talked about the "client that thought aliens had beamed into her roommate's head who had been in shelters in five states" and of another client who would "taint" a favorite former client who was due for a visit on her birthday. An example of talk about good behavior is the discussion about a former client that "told those great stories about being a stewardess, who looked great all the time, and did everything she was supposed too." Although Cathy (the Crisis Specialist) has challenged the ways of speaking about clients that marginalize them, this remains a way of managing tension for the case managers. As many times as the adjective "nice" has been contested by some of the staff as a class based judgment reflective of white middle class values that carries little informational content, it continues to be used to describe compliant clients with great frequency in staff meetings and in case notes. Women are

also represented by their issues in addition to their name or in place of their name. For example a short exchange between two shelter workers included a reference to a woman as the "cocaine and heroin" and the response was, "No, not one of those." This talk about clients also provides a map of the attributes of the "ideal client" and implies success or failure for the intake worker. Intake workers have interrupted the talk, turning it around to challenge the case manager and shift the blame from intake and the client. This strategy created so much tension between Intake and Case Management that intake workers were excluded from the first part of the weekly meetings during which the clients are "*staffed.*"

Most of the women who work as volunteers and staff have had experience with abuse or sexual assault and or drug and alcohol addictions and think of themselves as survivors. They also think of themselves as feminists. Not all have completed a college education, but all have had training through the network of shelter service providers and feminist activists. One woman lists her "lived experience" in place of formal education. Most of the staff are working for low wages, but bring the values, experiences and resources of mainstream middle class U.S. to bear on their understanding of issues-an example of the intersection of gender, and class issues. Donna discusses the differences she perceives between the resources she can access and those available to clients:

everybody is low income because/ if you were from a higher income/ like let's say that I was being abused and I wanted to leave/ well I have parents I could go to/ I have parents who would send me money if I needed it/ I have/ a coupla credit cards that if I had to I could certainly max out/ in order to get some place safe um/ you know I have enough of a credit limit where I could easily put plane tickets/ and more um/ I have a car that's in my name um/ I have a lot of resources um/and it's because I'm not / my wage might qualify me as/ somewhat you know lower income but um/ so you know/ that's the only pattern I see is that we tend to see women who don't have other resources/ you know and that tends to be a class issue and income issue...

This can and does create tension and social distance between the women and the clients. Clients complain to intake workers with whom they identify that the case managers do not understand them because they have never experienced poverty or abuse although this is not entirely true. The bond the women feel for Cathy adds to the tension between Intake and Case Management. The social location of staff and their perception of clients as "other" was emphasized when a professional woman who is a part time case manager for the parent organization at another center came into the shelter as a client. The typical comment from staff about her was that she was not the kind of woman "we normally see in shelter" and therefore how "hard and

scary" it must be for her to be in the shelter with the clients. Although it is true that we do not see many professional in shelter, the startling feature of the talk was that the shelter is considered "scary" only for women with class status, a place that such a woman should not have to be. The social and cultural distance between staff and clients is also increased by the absence of Hispanic, African American or Native American women on staff who identify with or as members of those cultures and are familiar with the language or linguistic varieties used by these groups.

As in many organizational settings, coalitions among staff and volunteers form. The bonding between some women seems to work through a shared dislike of the behaviors of other shelter workers, behaviors that are inconsistent with shelter policies or compromise the philosophy and mission statement of the shelter, e.g. those "*that don't get it.*" At times, this talk becomes routinized and predictable, though the focus may shift from time to time sometimes targeting intake workers and the decisions they make. Participation in this routinized talk constitutes and maintains the "in group." Outlyers are the women who "*don't get it,*" and who are the subject of the talk as well as those who choose not to participate in what has been labeled "*gossiping.*"

The shelter functions within a larger forum of the state Battered Women's Movement. Ways of speaking are influenced by the rhetoric of the

movement. The Battered Women's Movement is represented by the thirty two member shelter and crisis line programs of the state's Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. The state's Coalition Board of Directors that includes the seven regional representatives, board officers and caucus representatives developed policy requiring all its member programs to conduct "*anti-racism training.*" A three hour component on "*unlearning oppression of sexual minorities*" was recently added to the Coalition's "*anti- racism training standard.*"

Women's Place, as a member of the coalition, embraces the philosophy and principles of the Battered Women's Movement in words, if not in deeds. Women's Place is committed "to the advancement of women and the elimination of racism and other forms of discrimination" (Women's Place's mission statement). This is reflected in the "*Diversity Statement*" read during a shelter screen and enforced by the rules that is the extent to which communal living is modeled or defined for the women. Shelter workers also hold each other accountable to these standards of rhetoric. To the extent that a woman is seen to participate in the politics of the movement, a woman is judged to have "*politics*" that are "*right on.*" These politics include acknowledging that we live in a hierarchically structured society based on racism, classism, and homophobia. A basic assumption is that all white men and women are racist and need to unlearn the dominant ways of thinking and

speaking as well as "unlearning the oppression of sexual minorities." Those who have attended mandated training, but do not share the perspective of the Battered Women's Movement or who actively resist it are said to "*not get it*" and are marginalized by staff. Eventually they leave or are fired.

The distinctive way of speaking includes a way of addressing issues of battering. Staff and volunteers receive *DV 101* training, an introduction to the shelter perspective on domestic violence, so that they can understand and address the issue of battering without a "*blame the victim*" attitude. A central organizing principle and characteristic feature of the Battered Woman's Movement rhetoric is that battering and abuse are not the result of anger, but come about through an abuser's need to exercise power over and to control his partner. Gender becomes part of the explanatory framework used by the shelter workers as they struggle to understand the causes of domestic violence and why women stay. This in turn, becomes the interpretive framework within which women can construct their narrative and come to understand their experience during the screen, intake and during her stay if if she comes into the shelter:

> Narrating experiences of intimate, interpersonal violence is a means by which abused women make the violence coherent to self and to others. Narratives demonstrate that the abusive relationships have courses, that women's actions within these relationships are rational and

> reasonable, and, further, that these actions can be made understandable to others. (Lempert, 1994, p. 411)

However, many women reject or resist the identity implied by this paradigm, that of victim or survivor of domestic violence. One woman explained that she did not want to characterize a thirty year relationship by one instance of violence in which her partner threatened to kill her although it was serious enough for her to terminate the relationship. Another woman explained to me that she is more than the experience of abuse and an identity suggested by survivor felt too limiting. Whereas the shelter workers explain that violence towards women is based on male privilege that includes social, economic, psychological and sexual abuse, many of the women calling for shelter believe that they provoked the abuse, and their experience with an abuser is an anomaly. They accept and desire the gendered arrangements and roles assigned to women in contemporary cultures.

Although it was evident that staff and volunteers constituted a speech community, it is less clear how the shelter residents fit in. Hymes (1986) delimits the notion of speech community to locality and primary network. Women who come into shelter, "*walk-ins*" who live on the street, have only brief or sporadic contact with the shelter. Former clients participating in transition housing or receiving rental assistance through RASP maintain a relationship with shelter case managers on an outreach basis. In the sense

that the shelter is an organization, women coming into the shelter go through a process of acculturation first during the screening interview, followed by the intake process, and then through interactions with women including staff and client once they are in shelter.

The shelter community is ongoing. It exists before a woman enters the shelter and it continues after her exit. She is influenced by and influences the shelter community. The community cannot be thought of as static, for the shape and texture of the talk among the women is formed from a number of discourses and changes weekly. There are norms within the community of women that are not explicit, but are clearly read by the women and can be taken as further evidence of a speech community.

> so most women don't they don't talk about anything except you know/ it's the current ellipse/ but you know some women will open up to you know you find things/ little bits and pieces they'll go when I was in a/ this happened/ and then that's it/ then they'll change the subject...

From week to week, each group of "clients" can be said to have its own character. As women come into the shelter, they develop a sense of belonging to a particular group:

> ah the first group I didn't get to know because they ha you know you form a little clique and a little/ you socialize and everything is kinda like you know/ desert island/ hierarchies...

One of the features of talk that is constitutive of the community of shelter clients center on the rules and norms first encountered during the screen and intake:

> women talk well there's thirty six rules and it's hard for me to live by well it's easy for me to live by because I'm living here for free/ in a safe environment for my son/ and all I have to do/ to live here/ is to wash the damned dishes and put them in the dishwasher rather than wash em once a week/ so that that's one thing that I do have trouble/ understanding what the people who complain/ about...the cleaning...

Challenges to staff around their judgments about "*rule violations*" and subsequent dismissals of women from shelter act as a catalyst to draw the women together defining the boundary between "us" and "them."

A common feature of the linguistic repertoires drawn upon by the women in shelter are those codes developed and enacted in the arena of asking for and receiving services from social service providers. Many women coming from backgrounds of poverty have had many contacts with a variety of social service providers. Some of the women perform this role during the screen and intake so well that they are described as "*really working you.*" However, there is great variation in how willing women are to perform the role of client when dealing with their case manager. They seem far more willing to agree to role of client when they are requesting shelter than when they are in

shelter. Those women who refuse to be a "client" preferring to maintain their autonomy usually expressed as "I just need a bed" are screened out. Thus, competent performance of the role of client is often a contested one between the case manager and the client despite intake worker's efforts to screen out women that are"*resistant to case management*."

To summarize, membership in the shelter community seems to be structured by both a woman's formal position within the shelter hierarchy as client, staff or volunteer and her informal position in relationship to other clients, staff and volunteers. Although it was evident that staff and volunteers constituted a speech community, initially it was less clear how the shelter residents fit in to the speech community. However, keeping in mind the notion of a speech community as structured diversity with competency varying across performances, and examining the fit between the various performances of roles and ways of speaking in the shelter, it can be argued that the shelter in question constitutes a speech community whose boundaries are defined by staff through the normative system of rules and policies as well as a feminist politic. The talk of the women, once they are in shelter, is about staff and is a response to the "*thirty-six rules,*" enforced by staff. The women living in the shelter then are a defining feature necessary to support the identity of the shelter staff as a community of women dedicated to helping women.

The Good Woman/Good Client-Identity Work

Women working in the Intake and Referral Department function at the boundary between the shelter population and the larger population of homeless and battered women allowing some, but not all that contact the shelter to pass through. There are a number of ways that identity work is implicated in the negotiation of access to shelter at the intersection between the shelter and the "mean streets." Speech is an act of identity that locates the speaker as both an individual and a member of a particular social group (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 52). As the two women negotiate access to the shelter, identity at both the individual and collective level are being constructed and performed. Components of identity include gender, class and race. There are several levels to identity including a theory of self, or self concept, personal identity that consist of self designations and social identity, that is, the identities ascribed to the self by others (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p. 1347). Due to limited access and to my position within the shelter hierarchy as staff, the discussion is limited to the level of social identity that can be inferred from observation and participation in the performance of the shelter screen and intake procedure.

The process of selecting women to come into the shelter is governed by the set of norms represented in the rules, and contracts that are not always interpreted or presented to women during screening and intake in similar ways

by intake workers. Nor is there agreement between case managers and intake workers regarding the interpretation and application of screening and intake policies. This contributes to the tension between intake workers, whose purpose, in keeping with the goals of the Battered Women's Movement, is to provide safety and shelter to all women, and the case managers whose goal is to provide "*quality services*" for "appropriate" clients who can cooperate with case management and be successfully housed. The shelter intake worker motivated by a feminist politic that emphasizes the value of believing a woman's story and providing safety, that is "doing the work," is oriented to bring all woman into the shelter. On the other hand, she is pressured by case managers and keenly aware of the shape they give shelter life through the imposition of the thirty-six rules that they are committed to maintaining, perhaps even take pleasure from enforcing. To be viewed as competent by her peers, the intake worker must bring into shelter clients whose appropriateness is measured by their compliance with the program. The shelter intake worker is caught at the collision of her personal identity as pro-woman and part of grass roots organizing to end domestic violence and the collective identity of a good shelter worker framed within the bureaucratic and institutional discourses of the organization each time she makes a decision to bring someone in the shelter. In a sense, the success or failure of

a woman in the shelter program reflects back on the shelter intake worker's competence.

Decisions about who will come into shelter are generally made by Cathy with input from the volunteers. However, if it is a woman's second or third time in the shelter, Cathy is required to consult with two staff persons who had contact with the woman during her stay and abide by their decision. Although Cathy wants the volunteers to feel comfortable with making decisions about intakes, she recognizes that this may be difficult for them:

> or they might/ question it and have to come and ask ***me***...but anyway they come and ask me and I I want/ the intake workers to just make their own decisions/ I really do/ but sometimes I mean you know/ they're just not here/ as as often as I am and they're not/ dealing with the qua/ the quantities of/ women/ they haven't dealt with/ however many intakes I've ***done***...

Rather than take the risk of bringing in someone who might fail and lose face or worse yet, lose their job, the swing shift and weekend RAs (residential assistants) and volunteers also tend to defer to Cathy. This is especially true for Mary, the swing shift RA, after she was reprimanded for bringing in two women who were not considered emergency domestic violence victims by one of the case managers. She has not made a decision to bring a woman into

the shelter since. Zoey, a work study student discusses her initial feelings about doing screens and intakes because of her lack of experience:

> I did some shelter screens but/...I just felt like/ I didn't have enough enough experience and I still don't/ I still don't think I have enough experience but/ um at least you now I/ you know I can/ I kind of get a sense/ and then I'll talk with other staff members about it/ but before/ it's like I didn't want really want to/ do it cause it was like/ I you know/ I / I don't know in terms of specially like drug history or something/ cause / you know I have I had never done any drugs so you know I don't know/ the potential/ for you know people to relapse or whatever/ or what kind of problems that could be associated with that so I just thought I wasn't qualified/ to do that but...

However, over time, during Cathy's leave of absence, Zoey started participating in the decision making process and becoming more comfortable with it:

> I didn't do any intakes until/ pretty recently I guess/ so I pretty much let Forrest do it / just then I know you know I know that she was having a hard time so I try to/ more active in that but then you know/ there was some fiascoes with certain people I just felt/ oh my gosh um/ but now/ I think I'm comfortable enough to feel like/ okay if it works it works/ if it doesn't/ it doesn't/ you know um/ you know we just give it our best

short you know the person just didn't work out/ so um now I/ I feel a little bit more comfortable doing it...

Cathy attributes the reluctance of volunteers to make decisions about intakes as rooted in a fear of failure and in the difference between the priorities of intake and the central concern of case management:

I think some of that is is/ fear that the woman is gonna come in and not work out or have you know/ or case management plan not/ happen or some hassle with the case worker/ the intake workers know very/ well from past/ experience that/ sometimes/ case management isn't going over very well with this particular person/ but at least they're safe and not getting hit in the head any more / you know/ that that's where we're kinda coming from sometimes/ we're not thinking of the case plan of the person/ you know / just because of the ***safety*** factors...

As Barb points out, shelter workers do not have a set standard or criteria to which they can refer when making intake decisions. There are a number of guidelines or criteria. A woman should be at or below the federal guidelines for poverty and without safe housing. Women with drug and alcohol addictions need to be clean and sober at least five days with a commitment to receive counseling. Women who have a diagnosis of mental illness need to be stable, on medication and following a treatment plan. Each woman presents with a number of problems that are balanced with a number of

strengths. Cathy carefully weighs all of the factors before making a decision. Although showing diligence and follow through recommend women for shelter, women who are in immediate danger with no resources are given priority. Cathy discusses these considerations:

> yeah and even though this person has been diligently calling me every single day / there are other women that have/ been calling me maybe not every single day/ but/ enough where okay/ for example this other woman is in a domestic violence/ but she has a place to stay/ but she knows she's gonna have to leave/ I don't find anything in the screen process that would prevent me/ from bringing her in/ I only feel like um I I feel like I have to/ um/ morally you know bring her in here I have the space/ even though the other women were calling for a longer period of time/ I didn't know I can't help I can't help every single person with one bed space/ so I put the other person off and bring this one in/ you know there's a lot of stuff I look at...

Swing shift RAs and week-end RAs take over the crisis line when they come on duty. Although they can screen women for shelter, they can only bring in women in immediate danger, that is, emergency domestic violence. On rare occasions when the intake staff is not available, other staff will have to make those decisions and are then subject to the same risks as the intake staff. Most of the staff have at least one "war story" about bringing in

inappropriate clients similar to Donna's story. As Donna points out, a number of staff members, volunteers, and even the security guard have brought in women who were "*inappropriate*:"

> I find that frustrating um/ at times/ what someone has brought in and they're obviously to me inappropriate/ and um and that that's not just intake I mean that sometimes happens with/ RA's on the weekend or people who work at night/ it's happened it's happened with ah/ security guards before...

Not all women are evaluated positively as Zoey notes:

> I think just experience on their part like saying/ such and such person had/ you know this drug and alcohol history/ you know just/ you know/ whatever they they relapsed/ they used/ they abused/ you know/ um you know/ they didn't go to meetings or something you know and so/ um/...(3 sec pause) I wonder sometimes does that/ cut certain people out/ you know/ for/ not being given a second chance or something like that um/(3 sec pause) but I guess/ you know the whole criteria of picking people/ sometime okay/ I think I'm of course I'm/ leaning more toward/ you know like/ moms with kids you... sometimes I lean more toward/ I feel like I'm more toward people who've never **been** in shelter/ um you know and then/ kind of kinda look down on people who've been in here/ like the second third time/... I feel like I get frustrated with the

> people (uh huh)/ who/ had something going for them and they just totally/ lost it...if it was abuse situation ...and the housing situation was the abuser's name/ that's a little bit more easy to accept

What becomes clear from Zoey's discourse is that there is a hierarchy within the evaluative framework shared by most of the intake workers that determines who is most deserving of shelter services and who is not, coincident with an awareness that this may lead to exclusion. Clearly women with children escaping domestic violence are considered the most deserving. Women who have been in the shelter and other shelters, had transition housing and lost it through their own actions are considered the least deserving. Women who use drugs during pregnancy and have had their drug affected babies removed by Child Services more than once also fall to the bottom of the hierarchy of worthiness. This then becomes the filter through which a woman's story is heard and evaluated and determines the outcome for a woman, that is, whether she will be accepted into the shelter or not.

Of central importance to the notion of appropriateness as interpreted by shelter workers is the ability to live "communally." This is defined for the woman when the "*Diversity Statement and Shelter Overview*" is presented to the woman :

> Residents and Staff at the Women's Place are a diverse group of women which includes women of color, women with children, lesbians,

> and women with a variety of world views and social skills. Hurtful words, actions, put downs and comments of any kind which cause pain, distress or fear in another are not acceptable at the shelter. All people living and working within the environment of the WRC will be expected to not use racist, homophobic or abusive language, or they may be asked to leave. Is this clear? You will meet people whose experiences are different from yours. Residents and staff must be able to work and live with women from all possible backgrounds.

However, verbal behaviors that count as abusive are not clearly defined, an ambiguity that leaves the final decision up to staff. What counts as abuse differs dramatically across cultures. Furthermore, staff behaviors are rarely defined as abusive. Cathy discusses the problematic nature of such determinations in an interview with the researcher:

> R: yeah and that's just an example (uhhuh)/ and that to another staff person/ after after this person discloses this um deck my niece possibly deck my niece/ that staff person might say oh oh she can't come into shelter (uh huh)/ can't bring her in/ she's capable of hitting somebody/ end of conversation you know (uhhuh)/ so that's just one example
>
> I: but your focus might be on the almost/ she almost that means that she didn't
>
> R: right/ and and then I also look at like/ shelter clientele/ and what's going on/ like I would never bring her in/ with the shelter clientele with what's going on now in shelter/ why would I risk that/ you know/ with what's going up there now
>
> I: so you look at the level of tension/ and how the women are relating to each other/ before you bring in/ a woman

Creating safety by establishing rules for communication and judging a woman's ability to live by them during the screening process could be viewed as reflective of a value system that is rooted in white middle class norms of civility and white women's notions of politeness and of being "nice." The issue here is not so much that civility is being imposed in order to facilitate communal living but rather a question of whose notions of civility are being honored within the shelter. Green (1991), in analyzing the exclusion of homeless women from a battered women's shelter, points out that white, middle class woman is the norm so that the "different experiences of 'other' women are excluded" (p. 183). Allard (1991) points out that race plays a major role in the cultural distinctions between the 'good' and the 'bad' woman such that "the passive, gentle white woman is automatically more like the 'good' fairy tale princess stereotype than a Black woman, who as the 'other' may be seen as the 'bad witch'" (p. 194). Concerned that African American women were disadvantaged in a shelter embedded in a white organization, the case managers kept statistics on the ethnicity of women asked to leave for failure to abide by the rules. Slightly more African American women were asked to leave. This suggests that the model of communication highly valued and supported by the rules creates a situation in which women of color are more likely to fail.

By adopting a code of civility that seems universal and unproblematic, the shelter norms naturalize civility. In doing so, they are appropriating unexamined a code of conduct that regulates relations to maintain a principle of hierarchy. Hariman (1992) points out that "the study of a code of etiquette can be a study of the political experience of those who are regulated by that code." The rules of conduct subsumed by decorum can be understood as practices of communication and display according to a symbolic system that provides social cohesion and distributes power. It allows for the regulation of behavior without force through the enactment of the principle of hierarchy. The ultimate achievement of a political order grounded in civility is silence. To be regulated by a code of civility requires giving up voice in the public sphere. For those whose access to the public forum have been severely restricted, or for those who have not been allowed to speak, it may be more reasonable to be incivil than to be regulated by a code that requires silence and self restraint. In the instance of the shelter, women have had no voice in the formation of the norms for speaking or for enactment. An African American woman, reviewing the screen and intake forms as well as the rules commented that the screen and intake would take away her voice.

Hooks (1989) points out that it is a critical consciousness that enables true speaking as an act of political resistance and challenge to the politics of domination. "Talking back," which hooks distinguishes from the "ordinary talk"

of personal confession, transforms the black woman from object to subject. The shelter through its rules for action established without the participation of those governed by them create a "subjected group" that "enforces traditional roles, concepts, hierarchies and modes of exclusion" (Bogue, 1989, p. 87). Within an overarching value system that emphasizes civility and tolerance, the act of speaking is privileged over the content. The value system is held in place by dictating the form and channel for expression without the participation of those who will be regulated by that system..

The notion of critical consciousness is relevant to the analysis of this study because almost all of the staff who participated in this study identified as a feminist although there is a wide range of feminisms that describe the each woman's belief system. Given that these women are participating in a social movement that that views the personal as political and has social change and dismantling racism as a goal, some critical thinking and self reflexivity applied to the organizational structure as it produces and reproduces multiple oppressions was expected. Three of the four staff reported that as a result of working in the shelter, they had developed an increasing awareness of race and class issues, cultural issues and a willingness to "interrupt" comments based in oppression. As Donna put it:

> I think I have a better understanding now of women who are on welfare/ and probably a better understanding of class issues/ a better

> understanding of some of the addictions issues/ and some mental health issues/ than I had before having this job/ I don't think that my/ understanding of domestic violence I think that's been kind of static/ you know I think I had/ a pretty good understanding coming in/ I think I still have a good understanding of it um/ and as far as my interactions with other people/ I think I'm more willing/ to interrupt comments/ about welfare women or about/ addictions or some of those blaming comments/ that get made um/ I'm more willing to do that/ cause I have more information now/ and and I know that/ the stereotypes are wrong...

However, as much as women on staff understand "racism" and "oppressions", they do not seem to challenge the ways in which the normative system within the organizational structure privileges the white middle class notion of good woman in a shelter that serves women of color and working class white women. They continue to promote ways of parenting that conflict with African American and Mexican American families' child rearing and disciplinary practices. From the time a woman comes into the shelter with her children, she is told that she cannot spank. Women are also told at intake that they cannot allow older children to care for younger children even though this is the norm for these families, a way for young girls to learn to mother.

Although many women are helped by the shelter program, the scarcity of resources, ten beds for every woman brought in, force the intake staff to establish criteria of inclusion and exclusion. In a very long narrative, Cathy tells the story of a woman about whom she made a quick decision to "bring into shelter"- a "quickie" as she describes it. Threaded through this narrative echo a number of the values of mainstream white culture (italics added for emphasis):

> okay ummm this woman... I have *a lot of skills in running my own business* I've worked all my life/ so it's obvious this woman has *goals/*she's had goals/ *she's had possessions/ she's had money/* she's had a life/ to her/ you know and she 's/ projecting *that she's going to have these things again/* and she's doesn't have any fear / she's very open/ I can do it/ I'm relocating here/ I don't have a penny to my name and my car's almost out of gas with everything I own in it*/ but I can make it/ I just need a little help/ I don't have any drug or alcohol issues* at all/ I used to drink but I quit ten years ago cold turkey and I never/ never went back or I go to AA/ regularly I love AA/ um/ I'm on antidepressants/ but uh they really help me because four years ago my husband died and that was really hard for me/ and I went thorough a lot of grief cause we're married 26 years/ but/ I'm *I'm taking* ***prozac/***I mean she might make a joke about it/ but it's you know it's really help me

cope with/ life's stressors and/ so and I'm *really interested in in seeing a counselor/* because I really think you know / I've been through counseling it really seems to help me/ and/ just/ I don't know it it for to me it's like every category of assessment/ the woman already has a plan for it /or/ she might sure she might have some problems/ maybe it was foolish for her to think she could just start over in a big city/ but she has the *optimism the hope* / and and the *survivor's skills/* and and then/ she might have told me a little bit about her daughter's family and it gave me a little bitta insight on how she/ handles/ being around children six kids/ cause she told me like how she interacted with her grandsons and/ then like oh she can handle the kids in the shelter then/ no problem/ its not a real problem for her/ and then when you go over any/ rules and policies/ and read the diversity statement and if they don't have a problem with that/ then usually they don't because they're/ they're desperate they're gonna kinda agree to a lot/but when we're saying words like **lesbians** um/ **homophobic racist** / those are strong words/ and and/a lot of times when women don't have/ any concerns so/ and then the more I talked with her the more she/ I had some time that day the more she disclosed like about her past and you know she she lived/ she had a alcoholic another alcoholic daughter/ ah lived with her/ and she was kinda sidetracking and/ so I knew that she's been

through/ *she had been through a lot/ quite a bit/ but she didn't seem* ***shaken*** *by it/* she was like/ coping extremely well considering/ so that to me was an easy intake it was like you're in/ come on in/ your gonna be fine...

Values reflected in Cathy's narrative about the "perfect client" resonate with cultural values based on individualism and a consumer economy that combine with the cultural typification of the deserving poor based on the English Poor laws that were imported over 200 years ago (Wagner, 1993, p. 1). These values include self reliance reflected in her triumph over adversity, consumerism-had things and would again, work- had skills, had been productive and will be again, good mother--okay with kids. Clients who are willing to work are seen as more deserving than those who are not. Women who have been victimized but are not shaken fit the criteria of worth. All these values define the deserving client who is accepted into shelter, perhaps not so much to meet the clients basic needs, but that of a service industry "built upon the 'needs' of 'clients' which are defined by the industry providing the service" (Jewel, 1993, p. 538). Wagner (1993), in critiquing the distinction between the deserving "poor" and the "rabble," commented that "compliance with the major shibboleths of bourgeois society has been the primary condition for receiving minimal aid from both the state and private charity: brief, this includes compliance with the work ethic (e.g., the poor person is working or strongly

affirms his or her desire to work) and the family ethic (e.g. the poor person is in a traditional family constellation and accepts his or her role in it)" (pp. 2-3). The focus in the shelter of bringing women in and helping them "get back on track," "get a job" and "get into transition housing" often translates into minimum wage jobs at fast food restaurants or housekeeping for hotels. Jewell frames this as a process of oppression that turns subjects to objects by "turning them into workers who are willing to sell their labor to the cheapest bidder" (p. 498).

The rules for action embedded in the norms that direct the doing of a screen and intake set up and maintain a structure that excludes all women from the shelter who do not fit the definition of appropriateness. "Appropriateness" reflects the separation of poor into worthy and non worthy or deserving and non-deserving measured by the values of work, good mother, truth, and sobriety. Cathy also considers things like optimistic attitudes, managing anger in positive ways, coping skills, openness, ability to get along with children as well as adults, and survivor skills. Willingness to ask for and accept the help she needs including counseling or attending AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups is also important. These fit with the shelter staff's notions of the "good woman" mentioned earlier. Cathy also looks at whether a woman is "willing to go out and do something for herself" which may be a measure of a woman's willingness to be a social service client or to

receive mental health services, a form of compliance. A final consideration is the composition of the shelter community itself:

> I'm not so/ I'm not so quick to take people in as I used to be I think/ that's one area I've improved in/ to to think of the whole shelter population and what's happening / who would fit in best it/ it's still frustrating for me though because you know I have to turn away so many/ people/ I wish I could take in a lot more people but/ I can't so I gotta go with what I can do...

The notion of "good client" as well as the model of appropriate communication for women seeking shelter and for women in the shelter draw upon and fit the cultural ideal that circulates within mainstream white society. What is constructed and enforced is a white middle class notion of "woman" that is then supported by the thirty six rules. Women may accept this construction of "rule follower" like Burgundy Ann, or like Angela continuously defy the rules that move control of her choices outside of herself.

Conclusions

According to Shapiro (1988), all communication takes place within relations of power. The screen and intake are saturated with power relations that remain obscured through the symbolic framing of the screen and intake interview as a "conversation." Labeling it a conversation disguises the

asymmetrical distribution of power that advantages the shelter worker and disadvantages the potential client.

The framing of the woman receiving services as a "client" disguises and decontextualizes poverty and fails to account for the lack of agency the women have. McKnight (1995) notes that the "power to label people deficient and declare them in need is the basic tool of control and oppression" that is used by the "helping professionals....to declare their fellow citizens 'clients'- a class of deficient people in need" (p. 16). The questions contained in the screen, the categories of assessment, are designed to identify the deficits of the prospective client rather than her strengths. This raises the question of whose interests are being served by the questions, the women and/or the staff. The shelter discourse that legitimates the need for the information requested during a screen and an intake is grounded in the ideology of shelter workers as helpers. The value of safety provides the rationale for the thirty-six rules and is framed during the screen and intake as a way to keep all women (clients and staff) safe. Analysis of the data suggests that the questions are designed to maintain social control and to ensure the safety of the shelter workers by preserving order in a chaotic environment. Giddens (1979) points out that domination works through ideology that presents sectional interests as universal--in this case, the interests of the case managers in maintaining order and protecting them from the women they fear.

Domination is also accomplished through the denial of contradictions or when their real locus is obscured. One of the contradictions that emerged from the data analysis is that although the shelter workers see themselves as well intended helpers providing education to women to empower them, they are serving the interests of the larger society by acting as gatekeepers for the bureaucratic institutions that control access to low income housing. Although the workers have good intentions, the unintended consequences of their actions is the reproduction of the larger system of oppression. The rules that govern shelter life become the medium and the outcome through which the social structure of oppression is reproduced. Any time shelter life threatens to spin out of control, more rules are added without the participation of the women who are to be governed by them. Just recently, the shelter added to the thirty-six rules to control the use and potential abuse of prescription drugs and decided to exclude women using methadone.

Limitations of the study

In contrast to the homeless women I observed and with whom I interacted who are without resources; I have access to a college education and have a home in a wealthy community. I am white and therefore have an identity forged within structures of white privilege and patriarchy. White skin privilege and class advantages work to my benefit and set me apart from poor white women although my origins are working class. I also encountered

women many who were Hispanic, Black, Asian and Native American. I am concerned with the way that class and race privilege not only shape experience but systematically distort. It is hard to estimate the effect my class, status, and ethnicity have on the validity of my research. As Saville Troike (1982) points out, the researcher is an integral part of the social setting, influencing and being influenced, even manipulated by the behavior of the other participants. Yet, known as the observer's paradox, it is impossible to observe what would happen if the observer absented herself from the scene.

hooks (1989), a prominent black feminist and critical scholar, reminds her students of the responsibility of the ethical researcher to acknowledge biases formed by race and class privilege when studying the members of an oppressed or silenced group. Hooks considers cross-ethnic research only a problem when the scholar positions herself as an authority that is "constituted by either the absence of the voices of the individuals whose experiences they seek to address, or the dismissal of those voices as unimportant, the subject-object dichotomy is maintained and domination is reinforced" (p. 43). Therefore it is important to be clear that this study is linking theory to my understanding of the experiences of white women and women of color, an understanding that has been primarily shaped by white privilege and developed in isolation from people of color.

This research, drawing on a small sample, is a single instance of a case study and as such is limited, partial and contingent. It develops a theory of speaking within a particular community in and through communication within an historical and cultural context as it produces and reproduces structures of domination. It makes no claim to apply to all shelter communities. As West asserts (1993):

> neither the subjects of our research, nor ourselves as institutionally constituted writers reconstructing these subjects, are capable of ever evoking all the multivocal and multidimensional aspects of ourselves or others. (211)

Implications of the Research

The theoretical and descriptive framework of the ethnography of communication provided the basis for an understanding of the structures produced and reproduced by the shelter workers as well as challenges to that structure through communication practices. The use of the ethnography of communication is also a test of the framework itself in an environment in which it has not been used before. This was consistent with Hymes (1986) repeated stress on studying communication in social life as a resource and the "balance sheet in terms of costs and benefits in real life" (vii). Analysis of the speech act revealed the extent to which power is distributed asymmetrically in ways that can disadvantage the women seeking shelter. An

examination of the norms and the identities supported by those norms led to a link between the cultural typifications of good woman and the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor that were appropriated within the discourse circulating in the shelter.

The issue of homelessness among women remains understudied. Most of the literature about homelessness still focuses on men. This study is unique not only in its focus on homeless women, but its focus on staff and their attributions and ascribed identities to homeless women in and through communication at the point of access to a shelter.

Currently, shelters have failed to meet the needs of all populations of homeless women and children both in and out of shelter. Partly because of a lack of shelter space and a lack of funding to operate those shelters and partly because of the organizational structure of the shelter set against a larger cultural context of poverty and capitalism. Services for Children and Families (formerly Adult and Family Services and Children's Services Division) has funded a research project to assess the organizational capacity of shelters and the community to meet the needs of under-served populations including but not limited to immigrant women and children, disabled women, senior women, and Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and African American women and their children through out the state (A. Olivella, personal communication, June 2, 1997).

This study has touched upon a number of issues concerning a shelter organization by looking at communication as a system that produces and reproduces the shelter structure within the speech events at the point of enactment. In this analysis I have attempted to accomplish a number of tasks. One was to provide thick, rich description of the norms for interaction that guide the decision process for bringing a woman into shelter, then move to a discussion of what it reveals about the measure of competency of the shelter worker by her peers against her own values of helping women. Second was to discuss what the criteria of appropriateness reveals about the values that lead to the judgment of "good woman" and the consequences for women applying to and participating in the shelter program. Third was to analyze these complexities and contradictions that shape the discursive forms and social acts that serve to co-construct and sustain particular identities at the individual and collective level within the shelter setting. The goal of the analysis was to provide an understanding of one of the ways the shelter organization, despite the good intentions of the workers to dismantle racism and structures of oppression, produces and reproduces those same structures of oppression and social control in order to bring about social transformation and change.. It is my hope that this research, through the fine grained analysis of mundane and everyday events common to all shelters that highlighted the underlying processes of social control, provides a point of

entry for intervention in a system that is failing to meet the needs of the population it is intended to serve and lead to the creation of new ways of creating community while honoring diversity within a shelter context consistent with feminist principles of empowerment and equality.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SHELTER CLIENT

What did you do to get into the shelter? What did you do first, next, last? How did you find out how and what to do? How was that for you?

What does it mean to be in shelter?
How is that for you?
How do you think it is for the other women in the shelter?

What first struck you, when you came into this shelter?
How was it for you?

When you are here in the shelter, where do you spend most of your time in the shelter? Can you describe a day that you remember? Was that like other days?

What did you expect it to be like to be in the shelter (outcome expected)?

What did you hope to accomplish by coming into the shelter?

Is your shelter stay turning out in the way you expected?

Has being in the shelter changed the way you think/feel/see yourself?
Do you think it has changed the way other people think/feel/see you?

Who participates in shelter programs? How are they selected to participate?

Do you spend time with the other women in the shelter?

Tell me about "talk" in the shelter among the women here.

Who do you feel you can talk to?

What are your thoughts about the shelter staff? How does staff relate to the women in the shelter?

Shelter is an all women environment. How is that for you?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STAFF

What first struck you, when you came to work in this shelter?
How was it for you?

What does it mean to you to work in a shelter?
How is that for you?
How do you think it is for the other women who work in the shelter

What did you expect it to be like to work in the shelter ?

Is your work here turning out in the way you expected?

Has working in the shelter changed the way you think/feel/see yourself?
Do you think it has changed the way other people think/feel/see you?

What are your thoughts about the shelter staff? How does staff relate to the women in the shelter?

Can you describe a day that you remember? Was that like other days?

How do you think it is for women to live in a shelter?
What do you think it means to them to be living in a shelter?

Who participates in shelter programs? Is that a constant, or has the population changed over time.

What is the purpose of this shelter program and has that changed over time. Do you foresee it changing in the future? In what ways?

How do you think the staff select them to participate? Do you think they all have the same criteria? What is the hardest thing about deciding who will come into the shelter?

Are there things you absolutely cannot do or say to a woman asking for shelter? Are there things that you should cover with women asking for shelter? Is there a way to speak to women asking for shelter?

During a phone screen, are there things that you can not say? Are there things you should say?

What is your greatest challenge as _____(position in shelter) of a shelter?

In what ways to you think being a woman has affected your work in the shelter?

APPENDIX C

Letter of Consent

Dear shelter client, staff member or volunteer:

I am currently a graduate student in the Speech Communication Department at Portland State University, studying women's communication in a shelter environment and their view on how working or living in a shelter affects them and the way they think and feel about themselves. This study is part of the requirements for my master's degree. the goal in interviewing women about their views and experiences in a shelter is to better understand women's sense of themselves in and through the communication process.

Each interview will last one hour in length. It will be scheduled at participant's convenience and will take place at safe and comfortable locales. Information provided by participants will be held confidentially. Names of participants will not be identified in the findings. Participants will have the right to refuse to answer any question which they do not wish to answer, and to review and edit the final transcripts. Participants may withdraw from the study whenever they wish.

Your consent is part of the approval process as each participant gives permission in writing before taking part in the study. I hop that you will agree to help in this study, and I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation. Enclosed is a consent form for your signatures.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Kathy Drew at (503) 635 2035 or Dr. Sue Poulsen at (503) 725 3544. If you experience any problems that are the result of your participation in this study, please contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Research and Sponsored Projects, 104 Neuberger Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725 3417.

Thank you very much for your participation

Sincerely

Kathy Drew
Graduate Student
Speech Communication Department
Portland State University
Portland, Oregon 97201

Susan B. Poulsen
Chair, Thesis Committee
Speech Communication Department
Portland State University
Portland, Oregon 97201

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

I, _____, hereby agree to serve as an informant in the research project entitled Doing Woman: A Critical Ethnography of the Construction of Identity in a Shelter for Women conducted by Kathy Drew under the supervision of Susan Poulsen, Ph.D.

It has been explained to me that the purpose of this study is to better understand the shelter community and what it means to those who participate in it.

I understand that possible risks to me associated with this study are inconvenience and demand on my time spent in interviews. I may not receive any direct benefit from participation in this study, by my participation may help to increase knowledge which may benefit others in the future.

Kathy Drew has offered to answer any questions I may have about the study and what is expected of me in the study. I have been assured that my identity and information I give during the interviews will be kept confidential.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time without jeopardizing my relationship with Kathy Drew or shelter staff.

Participant signature_____
Date_____

If you experience any difficulties that are the result of your participation in this study, please contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Grants and Contracts, 303 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, PO Box 751, Portland Oregon 97207-0751, 503/725-3417. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Kathy Drew at 635 2035 or Susan Poulsen at 725 3544.