Structural Justice: A critical feminist framework exploring the intersection between justice, equity and structural reconciliation

Dr. Camille Burnett, PhD, RN, University of Virginia School of Nursing
Dr. Michael Swanberg, PhD, RN, University of Virginia School of Nursing
Ashley Hudson, BSN, RN, University of Virginia Health System
Dr. Donna Schminkey, PhD, RN, James Madison University School of Nursing
    Corresponding Author: Dr. Camille Burnett, Associate Professor, Academic Director, Community Engagement and Partnerships, University of Virginia School of Nursing, cjb4yw@virginia.edu

ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a human rights violation (UN, 2006). It affects the health of women globally (UN, 2009) and its elimination is at the heart of many international and national goals. Intimate partner violence (IPV), one of the most common forms of gender-based violence, affects one in three women worldwide (WHO, 2013). The consequences of IPV create negative health outcomes for women that diminish their quality of life and their overall well-being. Abused women access community supports such as shelters to seek safe refuge from the abuse and restore their lives. While shelters play an extensive role in helping women to rebuild their lives they often struggle to navigate inflexible and unjust systemic structures that can be re-victimizing to women and undermine their ability to live violence free. This study describes an emergent narrative of structural justice (SJ) that arose while examining the structural challenges of 6 shelters for abused women in urban and rural Virginia. It details the critical exploration of the intersection between structure and justice by integrating existing literature with qualitative participant narratives (N=36); and constructing an operational definition of structural justice (SJ) through an iterative process. Findings reveal SJ oriented patterns that shape five core tenets at the heart of this narrative. This SJ offers a framework out of which we can create a narrative of hope and a call-to-action. to rectify systemic violence. This framework contributes to the discourse concerning the elimination of VAW as it focuses on creating justice, equity and structural reconciliation.

    Keywords: Structural justice, intimate partner violence, violence against women, policy, structural violence

INTRODUCTION

The gendered nature of violence against women is rooted in unequal power and the injustice of existing social gender norms that are embedded within many systemic structures.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is an epidemic negatively affecting 35% of women and girls worldwide (WHO, 2013) and creates substantial health consequences and debilitating costs to our society. Addressing IPV, the most prevalent form of violence against women (VAW), requires systems working together to realize policies designed to diminish it. In recent decades, many declarations have encouraged country-level policies with the goal of eliminating VAW (United Nations, 1981, 1994, 2006, 2011). Despite well-intended policies and supports for women exposed to violence, this goal has not yet been achieved and intimate partner violence remains the most common form of VAW (UN, 2009).

Social safety nets are often used to help women live violence-free lives, and shelters for women exposed to violence are ground zero for the support that women most frequently use to escape abuse. As a place of refuge for abused women, shelters provide emergency and essential services to abused women and their children and are designed to enhance mental health and quality of life (Tutty, Weaver & Rothery, 1999; Chanley, Chanley, & Campbell, 2001). Shelter staff are insiders who bear witnesses to women's experiences and engage on the frontlines of the daily battle to keep women safe. They facilitate abused women's interactions with additional service providers (i.e. housing, legal, and social services). At many of these system entry points it is policy obstacles that are revictimizing and impede the shelters' best efforts to support these women (Burnett et al 2015). Shelter service delivery and utilization are shaped by broader structural contexts. It is essential to evaluate the context of shelter service delivery structures to understand the systemic challenges women and shelters face. Embedded structures within service delivery systems create "barriers that trigger emotional vulnerability" (p. 131) for abused women (Wuest et al., 2007). When well-intended service systems compound the violence they are intended to mitigate, it is a form of re-victimization that perpetuates inequities "sustained through systemic, policy-based oppression" (McGibbon, Etowa, and McPherson, 2008). In this study, our approach was to elucidate underlying obstacles to eliminating VAW and highlight opportunities to alleviate unintended structural and policy consequences.

Initially, we proposed to explore the structural context and policies affecting the delivery of domestic violence shelter services in Virginia. Its findings described an alternative narrative articulated by participants about how they believe problematic structures could be rectified. This latter process involved both a conceptual exploration of the intersection between structure and justice by integrating existing literature with participant narratives and constructing an operational definition of structural justice (SJ).

The participants' experiences illuminated and shifted the discourse towards justice-making. Justice making has been at the root of many feminist theories and pervasive throughout the predominant three waves of feminism. Reflexively, the nurse researchers who conducted this study live and work in Charlottesville, Virginia, a community that received international attention in 2017 during the August 11 and 12th racially fueled violence. We see it as possible that the resulting SJ narrative responds to the call for a new feminist approach that expands justice concepts to be elastic enough to embrace the *#me too* and *#black lives matter* movements and could be instrumental to informing a fourth wave of feminism. SJ is timely in that: a) it is at the epicenter of a theoretical shift; b) it is critical to the process of rectifying structural violence that exists; and c) it can help inform the direction for transformative change within problematic structures. SJ provides both a common language and framework for mutual understanding across sectors, disciplines, and government action plans.

BACKGROUND
<u>Systems and Structures</u>

Systems and their structures replicate much of society's inequities by inherently reflecting the unequal distribution of power, privilege and resources. This often puts the most vulnerable populations at a disadvantage, thus creating structural violence. Structural violence is the violence exerted by structural deficiencies, barriers and system actors that occur when policies and structures constrain and exclude groups from reaching their full potential. It is rooted in gender and power-based inequities reflective of societal norms and attitudes. Galtungs' (1969) early definition of structural violence described it as violence that is built into a structure but has no actor. Structural violence sets the stage for patterns that perpetuate inequity, particularly for those of lowest rank, and prohibits them from gaining any coordinated power against oppressors (Galtung, 1969). This dynamic creates an unjust environment of adverse outcomes that include death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatization, and psychological terror, for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations (Farmer, 2004). Yet, systemic structures can be a change mechanism as well as a problem source (Gupta et al., 2008; Farmer, 2004). Nowhere is this opportunity to create structural change more apparent and relevant than in the lives of women exposed to violence. The CDC recently reported that slightly more than 1/3 of women in the US experience contact forms of IPV (i.e. physical, sexual or stalking) and close to 1/2 experience IPV in the form of psychological aggression (Smith et al, 2017). Structural violence reinforces the vulnerability of abused women and further increases their risk of intimate partner violence particularly among impoverished families (Kohrt and Worthman, 2009; O'Donnell, Agronick, Durna, Myint-U, & Stueve, 2010).

As women try to escape abuse, they often encounter structural barriers and lack of resources, including limited shelter space, inadequate time to secure affordable housing, and difficulties finding any job, much less a well-paying one (Burnett, Ford-Gilboe, Berman, Ward-Griffin & Wathen, 2015). Abused women often deal with layered legal issues such as divorce, custody and access to children in the midst of obtaining protection orders. These multifaceted challenges occur within a complex system of structures (including policies) that create obstacles that negatively affect women's ability to rebuild their lives (Burnett, Ford-Gilboe, Berman, Wathen & Ward-Griffin (2016). They impair not only women's ability to live violence-free but also their overall health, well-being and self-actualization.

Eradicating VAW has been an international priority for decades. Yet, several international declarations (UN, 2011, 2006, 1994, 1981) and goals (UN Women, 2013) intended to prevent violence against women and support women to live violence-free lives have not explicitly explored the need to modify structures that unintentionally perpetuate additional violence. Without any formal imperatives addressing structural impediments, only moderate progress (e.g. increased women's participation in political positions, embracing women empowerment principles) has been made. The UN post-2015 agenda focused more broadly on 5 transformative shifts intended to foster universal collaboration, shared responsibility and a progressive vision of hope (UN, 2013). Still, it is problematic that tangible action-oriented approaches to this issue are noticeably absent. Recently, the World Health Assembly draft resolution took a systems approach in its focus on strengthening the role of health systems in addressing VAW and girls (World Health Assembly, 2014). This recognition of systemic inadequacies at all levels of government calls for a comprehensive multisectoral action-based orientation. Although this resolution brings us closer to action, a common action-oriented discourse is absent within its text.

The development of such discourse begins with constructing a language reflecting the collective meanings of social dilemmas and injustices that surround VAW. Sociolinguistic discourse is concerned with the "relationship between the forms and structures of language and its uses in society" (Mercer, 2010, p.8). Critical pedagogic theories and analysis have underscored sociolinguistic discourse in examining power, inequity and injustice (Freire, Fairclough, Cho, 2010, Wodak, 2012). Efforts to eliminate VAW can be strengthened by attending to how discourse (or its' absence) can influence and shape action-oriented strategy to facilitate justice.

<u>Theoretical Background</u>

Our study was guided by both a critical feminist perspective and Gidden's Theory of Structuration (1979, 1983). A critical feminist perspective was used since VAW is widely understood as a gender-based issue. It was essential to use a perspective that specifically acknowledged the gendered nature of VAW and its root causes (inequity, power, patriarchy) to guide deeper critical inquiry. This was complemented by Gidden's Theory of Structuration that describes how structures influence human actions and thinking (Fuchs, 2003) and how they produce and constrain human agency (Barley & Tobert, 1997). Together these approaches shape an understanding of the interactions of service delivery structures and their unintended consequences.

Thorne's (2008) "interpretive description" methodologically informed our conceptual analysis of the primary study narratives. Interpretive description deepens the researchers' involvement in qualitative methods. When the application of techniques and procedures beyond a concepts' conventional context is justified, this method encourages pushing the boundaries of conceptual development (Thorne, 2008). Thorne (2008) describes it as a method that "generates questions" based on what we do and know; it "creates the context in which engagement with the data extends the interpretive mind beyond the self-evident-including both the assumed knowledge and what has already been established—to see what else might be there" (p.35).

METHODS

The intended purpose of the study was to examine the policy impact on Virginia shelters for abused women. To that end, 3 urban and 3 rural shelters for abused women and their children from across the Commonwealth of Virginia were recruited from a list of the accredited Virginia domestic & sexual violence agencies' shelters. These shelters were grouped according to their geographical region and categorized as either urban (more than 100,000) or non-urban (less than 100,000). Many of these agencies provide similar basic services including: 24-hour shelters for women and children in a highly secure environment; a wide range of housing services; outreach and advocacy services; counseling; transitional support; and crisis line support. A total of 36 participants were recruited who had a minimum of 1 year of experience working in the shelter environment; this included both executive directors and frontline shelter staff. A semi-structured interview guide was used in interviews and focus groups that included 6 directors and 30 frontline staff and managers which were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

Our qualitative approach to data analysis clearly aligned with Thorne's (2008) descriptive interpretation, which allows the researcher to "deconstruct the angle of vision" in order to "generate new insights that shape new inquiries" (p. 35). Meaning was elucidated; concepts were identified: and then converged. A literature search was done to help inform this new line of inquiry. Interpretive descriptive analysis became a "strategy for excavating, illuminating, articulating and disseminating knowledge that sits somewhere between fact and conjecture" (p. 1). Using inductive

reasoning, iterative triangulation between director's interview data, data collected from shelter staff the literature led to our conclusions (Thorne, 2008). This allowed the emergent data to produce meaning, convergence and conclusions of SJ based on its interrelatedness to each other and the larger data set (Thorne, 2008). What resulted was the integration of data which provided congruent-synergy and a better reflection of participant experiences and the evolution of the critical concept of SJ.

RESULTS

Executive directors shed light on the system level structural impacts and demands on shelter service delivery, including the overall functioning of the shelter, while shelter staff and managers described the day-to-day reality of delivering services.

During the initial examination of the data it became apparent that much of the participants' description of their experiences addressed justice-oriented ideals. In response to this emerging justice narrative, concepts of justice in existing literature were reviewed in an effort to appropriately identify and understand the data. This included examining multiple forms of justice that are related to structures. What emerged was an overarching theme related to the need for system change to create a more just process to address and prevent VAW.

Various forms of justice that we found reflected in participants' voices were examined. These included global, social, distributive, procedural, interaction and gender justice. An iterative triangulation process allowed us to compare both types of participant data with the justice literature to determine what aspects of these forms of justice were and were not captured in the data narratives.

Justice

Justice is a critical landing place for redressing wrongs. It is often defined as the measure and mechanism of fairness. Justice language was found across a variety of disciplines particularly in the social sciences, business and law literature. Each discipline reflected its own perspective and approach to various types of justice. Distributive, interactional, procedural, social, global, and gender justice were types of justice that seemed to align with the ideals important to understanding justice related to structures. However, none of these frameworks fit neatly with the characteristics of the structural justice theme that emerged from our interviews. The theoretical framework we found that most closely aligned with the theme of justice that emerged from our interviews was the structural justice framework of Iris Marion Young (2011; 2003).

Distributive justice focuses on the distribution of public goods and burdens in an equitable manner (Gross, 2007). Procedural justice considers the fairness of organizational structures and decision-making (Tyler & Lind, 1992). The dynamic of power and the degree of collective efficacy shapes and influences procedural justice which can undermine or promote this form of justice (vanDijke, Cremer, Langendijk & Anderson (2018). Vulnerable populations face immense structural disadvantages such as poverty, limited social mobility, racial disparity, and low social cohesion that erode their power and perceived collective efficacy. These structural disadvantages obstruct their ability to value and trust procedural justice (Nix, Wolfe, Rojek & Kamisnski, 2015). Interactional justice plays somewhat of a moderating role between distributive and procedural justice by its focus on the quality of interpersonal interactions (Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002). According to He, Fehr, Yam, Long & Hao (2016), when an individual is "treated with interactional justice, he or she is treated with dignity, with respect and provided with explanations in a timely, open and truthful manner" (para. 48). The strength of interpersonal relationships is

nurtured by a sense of belonging and serves as a influencer of individual and team outcomes (Buengeler & Hartog, 2015).

Global and social justice both aim to create favorable inclusive conditions that remove the barriers that impede peoples' ability to reach their fullest potential (Pogge, 2010; United Nations, n.d.). Both global and social justice acknowledge that not everyone starts from the same space, or has the necessary fundamentals or same degree of opportunity to reach their fullest potential. These perspectives also underscore inclusion which according to Cornwall & Rivas (2015) "has served to reframe rather than challenge, problematic dominant discourse and policy prescriptions" (p.398). Within this same justice paradigm is gender justice. Gender justice refers to the "equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys" (OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming–Concepts and definitions). Gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and empowerment (UN fact sheet, n.d.) are all aspects of gender justice. These aspects are highly relevant to IPV due to the gendered nature of VAW that is deeply rooted in ongoing societal patriarchy and role ideology. The inequity of male dominance suggests that gender justice is a transformative form of justice. Transformative gender justice considers bias, structural inequalities, and relational issues beyond gender that thwart even the best intended justice goals. Moreover, transformation gender justice interest lies in "imagining new ways of responding to persistent social and political violence, since existing responses seem to mitigate and at best repair, but not transform the social and political relationships and institutional arrangements that feed into violence in the first place" (Boesten & Wilding, 2015, p.8).

The framework of justice identified in our interviews did not fall neatly into any of the aforementioned justice frameworks. Therefore, best efforts were made to ascertain which aspects of these other justice frameworks most closely aligned with the narrative of the study participants. The closest associations in the literature were scholarship related to Iris Marion Young's (2003) structural injustice work and to structural violence (Galtung, 1969). Together these frameworks led us to recognize that our informants were describing the concept of Structural Justice (SJ).

Young's (2011; 2003) described structural injustice as a moral wrong resulting from unintended consequences of institutional and individual action in the pursuit of other interests. This orientation appeared to be very similar to our participants' lens. Structural injustice exists when social processes are reinforced through systems and structures that allow some individuals to flourish while simultaneously inhibiting or interfering with others' autonomy, self-efficacy and self-sufficiency.

This concept of SJ shares at least one attribute with Young's (2011) framework: that structures and social processes are reproduced through individual action and reinforced through the dynamics of power and values. But a major departure from Young's work is that SJ has an action-orientation that includes a moral responsibility to act to remedy structural injustice. This transformative terminology of change-making can be used to ground a common discourse and propose system change focused on our aspirations to reduce VAW.

The emerging SJ discourse is instrumental for both the exploration of structures as a justice subject and the pursuant responsibility for creating just and nonviolent social structures. Reiman (2012) furthers this view by claiming that beyond acknowledgement of injustice, there is an individual and collective responsibility to rectify it. Clifford (2013) adds moral courage as a caring virtue that one needs to challenge injustice. Young illuminates the consequences of injustice and the need to remedy it, however, language that obliges a virtuous act of caring is noticeably absent in this literature and other related policy texts.

As data was reconsidered it was apparent that SJ should be guided by salient justice fundamentals. Five *a priori* tenets common across literature on the forms of justice were identified as relevant to the concept of SJ. Data was deconstructed and reconstructed, revealing the gap between what elements of the SJ framework existed in the justice literature and what was missing. This led to five expanded tenets of SJ based upon the themes found in the data.

The five common *a priori* justice tenets identified were: 1) Giving Voice; 2) Reforming Structures; 3) Social Responsibility; 4) Moral Courage; and 5) Acknowledgement of Injustice. Through deep analysis of the data, five corresponding tenets of SJ emerged: 1) Critical Acknowledgement of Intersectionality and Oppression: 2) Multidimensional Accessibility and Coordination: 3) Buffering Vulnerability: 4) Intentional Equalization Through Equity; and 5) Elevated Consciousness and Action (see table 1). Table 1 compares the literatures' core tenets of justice and the corresponding expanded tenets derived from the study data. Ethical perception, flexibility and the intentional centering of humanity in structural approaches were influencers from the narratives salient to SJ. The extent to which these influencers shape the concept of SJ requires further exploration.

Table 1	
Tenets from the Justice Literature $\longrightarrow$	*Emerging Tenets of Structural Justice*
❖ Giving Voice	❖ *Critically Acknowledges Intersectionality and Oppression*
❖ Reforming Structures	❖ *Multidimensional Accessibility and Coordination*
❖ Social Responsibility	❖ *Buffers Vulnerability*
❖ Moral Courage	❖ *Intentional Equalization Through Equity*
❖ Acknowledgement of Injustice	❖ *Elevated Consciousness and Action*

Giving Voice $\longrightarrow$Critical Acknowledgement of Intersectionality and Oppression
Giving voice is the notion that those most affected by systemic consequences should have the opportunity for system input to achieve fairness. Participants recognized that being heard requires the creation of space for intersectionality and the acknowledging oppressive structures. Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality demands that we consider how the experiences of women exposed to violence are shaped by "other dimensions of their identities such as race and class" (p.3). In the absence of structures that account for these other dimensions of identity, the totality and variation of human experience are ignored and devalued. This creates layers of complexities and a reality of inequity, exclusion and oppression.

Shelter staff described how the 'absence of knowledge' regarding the hidden reality of abused women's lives is problematic because it keeps the issue of IPV and the women affected by it in the shadows of our society. As insiders who bear witness to the intersecting complexities faced by the women in shelter SJ would help make the experiences of women more visible because, as shelter worker said, "you don't know what you don't know". They described how when women

with complicated histories try to access the system, they are met with structures that are appear ignorant or insensitive to the extent of their needs and even worse, incapable of addressing them. SJ incorporates an intersectional perspective to consider the spectrum of abused women's vulnerabilities in relation to the many systemic obstacles they face and it expects the redress of system layers that reify inequity, exclusion and oppression. This is a pivot point for enacting structural reform. SJ then becomes what shelter workers described as a solution--a more upstream prevention focused alternative to eliminating VAW. SJ can be used to "promote personal and collective reflection and activism on women's and girls' rights to live free of violence" (Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt and Zimmerman, 2014, p.1)

Reforming Structures ⟶ Multidimensional Accessibility and Coordination

Popular justice narratives allude to structural reform as did our participants' narratives. Participants described policies that often keep service delivery in silos. For instance, privacy laws, or fear of breaching such laws may keep healthcare agencies from communicating with legal services. This affects their ability to offer better coordinated and streamlined services for women exposed to IPV. The data portray how lack of coordination across multisectoral agencies and actors present obstacles affecting service accessibility and contributes to system complexity and. This inflicts structural violence on an already highly traumatized and vulnerable population. Our data called for structural reforms to examine and address the unintended consequences of segmented policy implementation across sectors.

Participants noted service navigation and limited resources in and outside of shelter as a major concern for women's transition out of an abusive relationship. Abused women who seek shelter need access to multiple services (e.g. legal, health-care, and social services) in order to transition out of shelter and live violence free. Participants reported that women are expected to navigate multiple, cumbersome social service contact points. They frequently spoke of the need for less burdensome access across various systems as they pondered a more coordinated and cohesive system. SJ endorses creating an easily negotiable system where multiple service providers intentionally work together at critical and overlapping system junctions to create the best options for abused women. Garcia-Moreno et al. (2014), acknowledge that a collaborative approach for women exposed to IPV is "fundamental to the provision of a holistic seamless service". The urgent need for better system flexibility including policy congruence, increased IPV prevention approaches, and collaboration both across the continuum of care and at key safety-net system junctures was clearly articulated by participants. This justifies multidimensional accessibility and coordination as a tenet of SJ necessary to enhance system strengths and minimizing structural violence to the consumer.

Social Responsibility ⟶ Buffering vulnerability

Social responsibility is an aspect of justice that connotes shared responsibility for the well-being of the greater good that is rooted in social connectedness and interdependence. From a SJ perspective, obstacles to social connectedness must be removed. Repeatedly participants described the need to move beyond a 'duty' of being socially responsible toward a more pragmatic orientation in which the system and its' actors remove harmful barriers experienced by abused women through acts and processes in order to buffer their vulnerability. Providers of services and supports to women exposed to violence are exemplars of social responsibility. However, as abused women access services and supports the processes should be structured in ways that do not increase their vulnerability. Service providers want a system that offers an uncompromised level of services to women and their children. However, women exposed to IPV often have limited access to social

networks and lack social capital. These women, we were told need interventions at various system access points (e.g. legal, housing and health care), routinely requiring interactions with system policies and actors that expose them to structural violence. For example, women are expected to retell their stories of violence to obtain services, navigate visitation of children with an abuser, or face immigration hurdles when leaving an abusive partner who is also her sponsor. Therefore, the importance of buffering vulnerability adds sensible levels of social protection that are undergirded by principles of trauma and violence informed care to promote better overall help seeking experiences; enhance system encounter experiences and minimize harm to women. Systems that consider the spectrum of abused women's vulnerabilities and administer its supports with trauma-informed care principles are better equipped to address and attend to the intersecting factors that perpetuate vulnerability. A SJ approach advances system functioning by integrating safeguards that dependably buffer vulnerability and promote responsive cross-sector solutions.

To buffer vulnerability, the extent of the vulnerability faced by abused women and their children has to be exposed. The shelter system can be viewed as an 'invisible world'. Although this is in part because shelters are often at undisclosed locations it contributes to an aura of secrecy and lack of insight into the day to day reality of shelter services that challenge abused women. For instance, fleeing an abusive relationship often means 'choosing homelessness' or settling for unacceptable living accommodations (Sev'er, 2002). Hence seeking refuge in an abused women's shelter means women and children are homeless. One participant felt that it is hard for providers to name this reality; "domestic violence providers don't want to talk about [being] the homeless service providers, but in reality, we are." By not naming how 'every time a woman has to choose to leave her home, she has to choose to be homeless', it renders the reality less visible. This invisibility affects public and policymakers' awareness of IPV, its' impacts, and the extensive role of shelters. Securing affordable housing is one of the most critical obstacles to women remaining violence-free. This hidden reality negatively affects funding, resource allocation, and legislative decision-making that exacerbates abused women's vulnerability. SJ fosters structural fairness by making the extent of this vulnerability visible thereby ensuring sufficient alternatives are in place to support abused women and equity in resource allocation and policy reauthorization occurs.

SJ views social responsibility as a shared responsibility to support abused women across the continuum of care and within our society. Shelters should not be the default to solve or absorb most of the responsibility for helping abused women who have little to no resources. This is extremely taxing on shelter services and on the staff working there. A SJ approach would help to mediate staff's disenchantment with their work demands and the broader system support failures they witness. Buffering the vulnerability of abused women, their children and the front-line service providers is an essential tenet of SJ.

Moral Courage $\longrightarrow$ Intentional Equalization through Equity

Moral courage is a virtue in the praxis of justice and care (Clifford, 2013). Although the virtuous acts of caring and justice appear to be inextricably linked in the literature, critical insight and clear direction on how to establish both within any system is lacking. Our findings suggest that implementing moral courage to achieve SJ requires intentional action that creates equity in resource distribution, policy implementation and system access. Evoking a mandate of courageous intention entails honest acknowledgement of the realities faced by abused women and service providers and responding to these with equitable systemic approaches. The needs of each shelter and the circumstances of the women seeking refuge there can be similar yet unique. Any structures must account for the variation of experiences and need. Women accessing shelter services have

limited personal resources and have been described as "liv[ing] in a state of poverty many, many times" (Burnett et al, 2016). SJ assures a system oriented toward the most pressing social determinants of health needs of abused women and their children. This would involve sufficient, consistent and sustained government funding that is earmarked for decreasing health disparities within this population and equitable appropriations for abused women services such as women's shelters. Funding models and priorities must shift to provide capacity at multiple service levels to meet the complex needs of this population and include consideration of geographic and demographic characteristics. Input from those on the frontlines is needed when identifying and developing policy that is conducive to meeting the needs of abused women and their children. Intentional inclusion of those affected by these policies in the decision-making process values their voices as experts. It is a starting point that levels the playing field where equitable solutions to mitigate and diminish systemic obstacles for women exposed to IPV can be generated. Instead of perpetuating structural violence, systems and structures become more humane with embedded caring that shapes its capacity for fairness.

Acknowledgement of Injustice ⟶ Elevated Consciousness and Action

Virtually all forms of justice directly or indirectly acknowledge injustices. However, injustice is most noticeably addressed in the procedural justice literature where attending to elements of 'due process' in decision-making are essential to producing fairness (Leventhal, 1980; Tornblom & Vermut, 1999; Walter & Gutscher, 2011). The concept of fairness assumes due process would be equally accessible across all groups. This cannot be the case since there is no degree of sameness in access, opportunities and life experiences that exists across all populations to produce fairness. Moreover, the responsibility to shape and execute due process 'fairly' to those with limited power falls to the powerful; thus, the nature of this arrangement is inherently unfair. The structural embeddedness of the dynamics between who holds power and the determination of due process cannot be overlooked. To achieve SJ, we have to move from simply acknowledging injustice to removing obstacles to equity, rectifying power differentials and create conditions where justice can flourish. In supporting abused women to live violence-free lives, it is essential to enact this epistemology to make pragmatic ontological gains.

A high prevalence of cumulative (often life-long) trauma and consequent mental and physical co-morbidities, sometimes including substance use/abuse are pronounced challenges faced by women exposed to violence. A structural justice framework may inform our awareness and action and lead to a more just system sensitive to IPV, across service sectors. This might involve: 1) integrating trauma and violence informed approaches in all healthcare settings; 2) instituting IPV expert knowledge from the frontline to inform multi-level government decision-making pertaining to abused women and their children; and 3) dispelling the unrealistic expectation that women suffering from the effects of abuse and other cumulative trauma to function with sufficient agency can reconstruct their entire lives within a limited time period—most often 45 days. SJ processes encourage a realistic and significant presence in mainstream consciousness of IPV and its far-reaching consequences. Heightened attention to the epidemic of IPV is critical if it is to become a priority that government and the consciousness of our society cannot ignore. Otherwise, the epidemic continues without a reasonable pathway forward, now or in the imminent future, to remedy it. SJ starts with structural reform including examining policies for unintended consequences and use of evidence-based action-oriented approaches at all prevention levels at key system junctures.

Defining Structural Justice

Our understanding of SJ was enriched and refined through the iterative process of examining it within the context of delivering shelter services to abused women. Our process supports the following definition:

> Structural justice acknowledges the oppressive and re-victimizing inherent nature of structures as unacceptable and requires purposeful rectification. It demands that primacy and privilege be extended to the most vulnerable, through sustainable structural processes that attend to equity, power and human dignity.

This definition declares the unacceptability of current structural conditions as unjust and violent. Through a SJ lens, existing structures are viewed as intolerable and disruptive to individual autonomy and impediments to well-being. Importantly, no particular blame is placed on existing entities. Instead, SJ illuminates the inherent nature of the system and its actors' behaviors to unintentionally and implicitly create injustice and structural violence. Enacting the tenets of SJ can begin to redress this condition.

A fundamental principle of SJ is that it requires intentional action that deliberately shifts the system and its' structures to achieve equity and promote human dignity. It expects a humane system designed to promote the belief that we share a common interdependent experience irrespective of our social, racial, or economic location to enable a deeper capacity for health and well- being. Critically, SJ believes this to be a moral imperative and necessary for structural reconciliation.

DISCUSSION

This explicated narrative of SJ provides new language (and strategies) to address current inequities. Cornwall & Riva (2015) warned against the problems that result from framing a new agenda using old language. Though numerous examples of structural violence and injustice were shared in these interviews, even more prominent were the participants' suggestions on how to improve the system. These ideas may seem radical, but they point the way to new and just approaches for rectifying the systemic violence and structural inequities experienced by women seeking shelter. The subjects provided concrete examples of how unjust structural conditions could be dismantled to reverse unjust outcomes. They also illuminate the issues abused women face and unique strategies for decreasing disparities and inequities.

How can communities and governments provide more appropriate services to vulnerable, marginalized populations whose highly complex situations require maximum supports? Shelter workers' perspectives offered a deep system level examination of the intricate landscape of supports for abused women in shelter that underscores the system level obstacles they encounter. They described structural problems such as lack of awareness of shelters services, insufficient and unpredictable funding, limited and overstretched resources trying to support abused women. Their stories illustrate where more robust safety nets are needed and where SJ-based reform should occur. Staff stand ready to assist communities and policy-makers in addressing these issues in constructive and just ways. Many of those just ways evolved into the tenets of SJ outlined earlier, which inform its' definition and operationalization. Minimizing structural violence and injustice for abused women and children is a worthy agenda for us all.

Lastly, we were awakened to justice-making and the realm of possibilities that SJ presents. This narrative of SJ calls for shared responsibility and change across the ecological spectrum of public and private services to achieve the goal of eliminating VAW. Systems and structures need

closer examination and evaluation to understand their failures, critical service gaps, and intersecting vulnerabilities that perpetuate disparity and impede women's abilities to live violence free. Health systems in particular provide a crucial response to violence that must be strengthened locally, nationally and internationally. This requires multisectoral action plans that encompass all levels of government and society. These plans should include appropriate allocation of resources and firm commitments to overhaul and reform current policies and programs (Garcia-Moreno et al., (2015). Our findings suggest that in the development and strengthening of any multisectoral action plan or policies targeting VAW, common language that promotes a universal understanding of the change is both needed and required.

As a narrative and call to action, SJ is a responsive intersectional approach to address variations in context and needs of abused women and their children. Key stakeholders and policy makers can better serve and support abused women and their children by enacting strategies that promote SJ. By redressing the consequences of structural violence, confronting barriers to equity, and minimizing structural revictimization, the entire system can progress toward helping abused women improve their health outcomes and rebuild their lives.

<u>Future Direction and Limitations</u>

Elucidating this SJ narrative is a first step towards developing a more complex and robust theory. Future research directions for this work include a grounded theory exploration of SJ as a population health approach and framework. As a theory and framework, SJ could provide a road map for addressing disparities and fostering healthy equity across vulnerable populations. The resulting SJ theory and framework can then be examined as a mechanism for achieving 'proportionate universalism' proposed by the Institute of Health Equity (2013). Proportionate universalism aims to reduce the gradient of health inequity in proportion to and in ways that reflect the severity of disadvantage (Institute of Health Equity, 2013). This gradient between social circumstances and health is pronounced for women exposed to IPV creating multiple layers of disparity. Poverty and IPV each have marginalizing effects, and when compounded, the options for safe harbor are extremely limited (Goodman, Smyth, Borges, & Singer, 2009). When a woman seeks to leave her abuser, the socioeconomic impact on her well-being and that of her children is magnified by these health consequences. IPV is a significant risk factor for housing instability (Daoud et al., 2016). Women who recently faced IPV had almost four times the odds of experiencing housing instability (Pavao, Alvarez, Baumrind, Induni, & Kimerling, 2007) compared to women who did not. Additionally, there are numerous short and long-term consequences of IPV related to health and well-being. A significant relationship exists between IPV and mental and physical health disorders including adverse pregnancy outcomes (Alejo, 2014; Alhusen et al., 2014; Campbell, 2002; Santos et al., 2018). The way in which we address health inequities that result from IPV is a justice issue. If the system is unable respond to abused women's need by providing her adequate protection she may be forced to take drastic action that ends up putting her into the criminal justice system and leaving her children in the hands of an abusive partner. Although women are incarcerated at a lower rate than men, if women are arrested they are less likely to afford financial bail (Hess, et al. 2015), which has far reaching health effects because 80% of incarcerated women are mothers (Swavola, Riley, and Subramanian, 2016). When released, women face a more difficult job securing employment, further oppressing an already vulnerable family (McCampbell, 2005; Swavola, 2016). These circumstances show the scale of disadvantage abused women face that require not only cross sectorial synergy of policies but also decries the need for some form of structural congruence to ameliorate these outcomes.

Although the focus of this study was to examine systemic impediments in the delivery of shelter services to abused women, given the enormity and array of challenges faced by abused women it is a limitation that women in shelter were not interviewed. Certainly, future studies examining both women's experiences in shelter and obstacles encountered while attempting to transition to living violence-free lives are warranted. Research focused on exploration and understanding of SJ from the abused women's perspectives would be beneficial to the evolving concept of SJ related to VAW.

CONCLUSION
Many international declarations and national initiatives express the desire and commitment to eliminate all forms of VAW. SJ gives us language, a narrative and actionable approach to address this goal. It also forms the foundation for a more modern theory that meets current realities and seeks to resolve the disparate and devastating impact of injustice for those who need it the most. Infusing new VAW policies and initiatives with the language of SJ is both a critical starting point and a pathway forward. The tenets of SJ, if operationalized, would provide a roadmap for how to shift structures that tolerate and exacerbate violence into ones that diminish violence and optimize health and well-being. This is crucial to achieving the broader universal goal of eliminating VAW.
Front-line shelter service providers have informed the concept of SJ, suggesting there are meaningful and actionable items to be leveraged for multi-level systemic change. Services need to be highly visible and well-funded. Prevention outreach needs to be supported rather than relegated to crisis reaction with negligible resources. SJ narrative is a call-to-action and powerful demonstration of hope and responsibility that furthers the discourse surrounding the elimination of VAW. In addition, it models justice, equity and structural reconciliation. It underscores an expectation that structural inequities, injustices and power imbalances should be named to begin to create change. The language of SJ invokes a moral imperative to change the way we think. It also assumes that changing the narrative is a fundamental impetus to action. Shifting our language is the first step toward changing our policies, platforms and approaches. That in itself is an act of caring and a call to action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES
Alejo, K. (2014). Long-Term Physical and Mental Health Effects of Domestic Violence. Themis: Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science, 2(1). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/themis/vol2/iss1/5
Alhusen, J. L., Bullock, L., Sharps, P., Schminkey, D., Comstock, E., & Campbell, J. (2014). Intimate partner violence during pregnancy and adverse neonatal outcomes in low-income

women. Journal of Women's Health (2002), 23(11), 920–926. https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2014.4862

Barley, S., & Tolbert, P. (1997). Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and institution. Organization Studies, 18(1), 93-117.

Boesten, J. & Wilding, P. (2015) Transformative gender justice: setting an agenda. Women's Studies International Forum, 51. pp. 75-80. ISSN 0277-5395 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.11.001

Buengeler, C., & Hartog, D. (2015) National diversity and team performance: the moderating role of interactional justice climate, The international Journal of Human resources management, 26(6), 831-855.

Burnett, C., Ford-Gilboe, M., Berman, H., Ward-Griffin, C., & Wathen, N. (2015). A Critical Analysis of Provincial Policies Impacting Shelter Service Delivery To Women Exposed To Violence. Politics, policy and Nursing Journal. 16(1-2), 5-16. DOI: 10.1177/1527154415583123

Burnett, C., Ford-Gilboe, M., Berman, H., Wathen, N. & Ward-Griffin, C. (2016). Day to day reality of shelter service delivery to abused women in the context of system and policy demands. Journal of Social Service Research. DOI: 10.1177/1527154415583123

Campbell, J. C. (2002). Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *The Lancet*, *359*(9314), 1331–1336. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08336-8

Chanley, S., Chanley, J., & Campbell, H. (2001). Providing refuge: The value of domestic violence shelter services, *The American Review of Public Administration*, *31*, 393-413.

Cho, S. (2010) Politics of critical pedagogy and new social movements, Educational Philosophy and Theory, 42 (3), 310-325.

Clifford, D. (2013). Ethics, Politics and the Social Professions: Reading Iris Marion Young. *Ethics and Social Welfare, 7(1),* 36-53.

Cornwall. A., & Rivas, A. (2015) From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development, Third World Quarterly, 36:2, 396-415, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*, 1241-1299.

Cropanzano, R., Prehar, C., & Chen, P. (2002). Using social exchange theory to distinguish procedural from intersectional justice. *Groups and organizational management, 27*(3), 324-351.

Daoud, N., Matheson, F. I., Pedersen, C., Hamilton-Wright, S., Minh, A., Zhang, J., & O'Campo, P. (2016). Pathways and trajectories linking housing instability and poor health among low-income women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV): Toward a conceptual framework. *Women & Health*, *56*(2), 208–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/03630242.2015.1086465

Ellsberg, M., Arango, D., Morton, M., Gennari, F., Kipesund, S., Contreras, M., & Watts, C. (2014). Prevention of violence against women: What does the evidence say? *The Lancet, November,* 5-16.

Fairclough, N. (2005). Critical discourse analysis. Marges Linguistiques, 9, 1-27.

Farmer, P. (2004). An Anthropology of Structural Violence. Current Anthropology, 45(3), 305-325.

Fuchs, C. (2003). Structuration theory and self-organization. Systemic Practice and Action Research, 16(2), 133-167.

Freire, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, M. Ramos, trans. (NewYork, Continuum).

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6(3),* 167-191.

Garcia-Moreno, C., Hegarty, K., Lucas d'Oliveira, A., Koziol-Mclain, J., Colombini, M., & Feder, G. (2014). The health-system response to violence against women. *The Lancet, November,* 17-28.

Garcia-Moreno, C., Zimmerman, C., Morris-Gerhig, A., Heise, L., Amin, A., Abrahams, N., Montoya, O., Bhate-Deosthali, P., Kilonzo, N., & Watts, C. (2014). Addressing violence against women: A call to action. *The Lancet, November,* 53-63.

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central Problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction*. New York, NY: The Mac Millan Press ltd.

Giddens, A. (1983). Comments on the theory of structuration. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 13*(1), 75-80.

Goodman, L. A., Smyth, K. F., Borges, A. M., & Singer, R. (2009). When crises collide: how intimate partner violence and poverty intersect to shape women's mental health and coping? *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, *10*(4), 306–329 https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838009339754

Gross, C. (2007). *Energy Policy, 35,* 2727-2736.

Gupta, G., Parkhurst, J., Ogden, J., Aggleton, P, & Mahal, A. (2008). Structural approaches to HIV prevention. *The Lancet 372,* 764-75.

He,W., Fehr, R., Chi, K., Long, L., & Hao, P. (2016). Interactional justice, leader-member exchange and employee performance: Examining the moderating role of justice differentiation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, (DOI 10.1002/job.2133

Hess, C., Milli, J,. Hegewisch, A., Román, S., Anderson, J., & Auger, J. (2015). *The Status of Women in the States*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Report. Access ID Number R400.

Kohrt, B. & Worthman, C. (2009). Gender and Anxiety in Nepal: The Role of Social Support, Stressful Life Events and Structural Violence. *CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics, 15,* 237-248.

Leventhal, G. (1980). What Should Be Done with Equity Theory? *Social Exchange: Advances in Theory and Research.* 27-55.

McCampbell, S.W. (2005). *The Gender-Responsive Strategies Project: Jail Applications.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institutes of Corrections. NIC Accession Number 020417.

McGibbons, E., & McPherson, C. (2011). Applying intersectionality & complexity theory to address the social determinants of women's health. *Women's Health and Urban Life*, 10(1), 59-86.

Mercer, N. (2010). The analysis of classroom talk: Methods and methodologies, *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 2010*(80), 1-14.

Michau, L., Horn, J., Bank,A., Dutt, M., & Zimmerman, C. (2014). Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice. *The Lancet, November,* 40-52.

Nix, J, Wolfe, S., Rojek, J., & Kaminski, R. (2015). Trust in the police: The influence of procedural justice and perceived collective efficacy. *Crime & Delinquency*, 61(4), 610-640.

O'Donnell, L., Agronick, G., Durna, R., Myint-U, A., & Stueve, A. (2009). Intimate partner violence among economically disadvantaged young adult women: Associations with adolescent risk-taking and pregnancy experiences. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 41(2), 84-91.

Pavao, J., Alvarez, J., Baumrind, N., Induni, M., & Kimerling, R. (2007). Intimate partner violence and housing instability. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, *32*(2), 143–146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.10.008.

Reiman, J. (2012). The Structure of Structural Injustice: Thoughts on Iris Marion Young's *Responsibility for Justice*. *Social Theory and Practice, 38(4),* 738-751.

Santos, A. G. D., Monteiro, C. F. de S., Feitosa, C. D. A., Veloso, C., Nogueira, L. T., & Andrade, E. M. L. R. (2018). Types of non-psychotic mental disorders in adult women who suffered intimate partner violence: an integrative review. *Revista Da Escola De Enfermagem Da U S P,* 52, e03328. https://doi.org/10.1590/s1980-220x2017030203328

Sev'er, A. (2002). A feminist analysis of flight of abused women, plight of canadian shelters: Another road to homelessness. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless, 11*(4), 307-324.

Swavola, E., Riley, K., & Subramanian, R. (2016). Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform. New York: Vera Institute of Justice.

Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Thorne, S. (2008). *Interpretive description*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Tornblom, K. & Vermunt, R. (1999). An integrative perspective on social justice: Distributive and procedural fairness evaluations of positive and negative outcome allocations. *Social Justice Research, 12*(1), 39-64.

Tutty, L., Weaver, G., & Rothery, M. (1999). Residents' view of the efficacy of shelter services for assaulted women. *Violence Against Women*, 5, 898-925.

Tyler, T. & Lind, E. (1992). A Relational Model of Authority in Groups. *Advances In Experimental Social Psychology*, *25*, 115-191.

UCAL Institute of Health Equity (2013). Working for Health Equity: The role of health professionals. Retrieved April 30, 2018 from http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/working-for-health-equity-the-role-of-health-professionals

United Nations. (n.d.). World Day of Social Justice: 20 February. In United Nations. Retrieved June 10, 2014 from http://www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday/.

United Nations. (nd.). Important concepts underlying gender mainstreaming fact sheet. Retrieved June 14, 2018 fromhttp://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf

United Nations (2006). *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (Resolution 61/143).* Retrieved from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/A_RES_61_143.pdf

United Nations (2011). *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women* (Resolution 65/187). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/187

United Nations (2013). A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The report of the high-level panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 development agenda. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

United Nations General Assembly. (1994). *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, General Assembly Resolution, 48/104 of 20 December 1993*. Retrieved from http://www.unhchr.ca/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/ (Symbol)/ A.RES.48.104.En

United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1981). *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*. Retrieved from http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf

United Nations (2009). United nations secretary general campaign to end violence against women UNITE: The situation. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/pdf/UNiTE_TheSituation_EN.pdf

UN Women (2014). *Progress toward meeting the MDGs for women and girls.* Retrieved from http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum#MDG3.

Wodak, R. (2012). Language, power and identity. *Lang. Teach 45*(2), 215-233. doi:10.1017/S0261444811000048

World Health Assembly (2014). *Strengthening the role of the health system in addressing violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children (WHA67.15)*. Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA67/A67_R15-en.pdf?ua=1

World Health Organization (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Geneva: Author.

vanDijke, M., Cremer, D., Langendijk, G., & Anderson, C. (2018). Ranking Low, Feeling High: How Hierarchical Position and Experienced Power Promote Prosocial Behavior in Response to Procedural Justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 103(2), 164-181.

Wuest, J., Merritt-Gray, M., Lent, B., Varcoe, C., Connors, A., & Ford-Gilboe, M. (2007). Patterns of medication use among women survivors of intimate partner violence. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 98*(6), 460-464.

Young, I. (2003). *Political responsibility and structural injustice*. University of Kansas, Department of Philosophy.

Young, I. (2011). *Responsibly for Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.