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“Even if they live a destructive life, at least they won’t die”

A qualitative study of how social workers at housing facilities for individuals in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women

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Abstract

Titel: “Even if they live a destructive life, at least they won’t die” - A qualitative study of how Social workers at housing facilities for individuals in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women.

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Key words (Eng): *Homelessness, Substance abuse, Housing facility, Shelter, Housing, Women, Violence against women, Intimate partner violence, Sweden.*

Nyckelord (Swe): Hemlöshet, Missbruk, Boende, Kvinnor, Våld mot kvinnor, Våld i nära relationer, Sverige.

The aim of this study is, from a Swedish point of view, to investigate and analyse how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women. Previous research demonstrates that women in substance abuse are more commonly subjected to violence than women without substance abuse. Women with substance abuse that also live in homelessness, are in an even greater risk to be subjected to violence. Women in homelessness and substance abuse might live in shelters. Women that live in shelters have a high-risk life and a big vulnerability to victimisation. They risk being subjected to violence by a range of different perpetrators. Because of this vulnerability it is of interest to investigate and analyse how social workers at shelters, understand and act upon violence against women.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to answer the research questions: (1) How do the social workers understand the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities? (2) How do the social workers explain possible occurrences of violence against women at the housing facilities? (3) How are the social workers handling the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities?

The data gathered from the interviews were analysed through a theoretical framework consisting of two central perspectives of violence against women; individual focused and structural perspectives, as well as the normalisation process theory, the social support theory and two perspectives of power; *power over* and *power to*. It was found that: the social workers experience that women at the housing facilities are at risk to be subjected to violence by intimate partners as well as a range of other perpetrators. All of the social workers have experiences of housed women being subjected to violence at the housing facilities. The social workers both used structural and individual focused explanations, as well as explanations based on the normalising process of violence when they were talking about the issue. Individual factors such as homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness as well as the masculine environment of the housing facility is described to make the women even more vulnerable in the patriarchal social system. The social workers emphasise the importance of the relationship to the women, to be able to provide social support and address concerns about violence. It is explained that they engage in support and counselling also for the perpetrators in order to support the women. The social workers describe that they try to protect the women by controlling the physical room and intervene in potentially violent situations between housed individuals. However, their power to protect the women seems to be limited. It is explained to be a challenge to help the women when the women, society and sometimes also the social workers tend to normalise the violence. Helping the women on an individual level by reducing the harm seems to be the approach, rather than working for structural changes and concrete interventions.

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During the last three years I have on the side of my studies, been working as a sub-worker at different housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse, in two different cities in Sweden. From the very beginning that I entered one of these housing facilities I was concerned about how vulnerable the women are in these environments. I have experienced and heard a lot of stories about how the women living at the facilities are subjected to violence. I have also noticed that the women are less visible in the facilities which I think could be explained by the atmosphere which I consider to be masculine. I have often felt helpless in how to help and support the women. Since then I have had a desire to do further research how the violence is taken into consideration and what preconditions social workers in these kinds of housing facilities have to support the women. I want to thank the social workers that made this study possible. They saw the importance of this subject and wanted to contribute with their knowledge and experiences. I also want to take the opportunity to thank my dad Dan and my best friend Lovisa for supporting me during the process of writing this study.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem definition

This study concerns women in homelessness and substance abuse subjected to violence. Homelessness in itself can lead to greater exposure to violence. Both men and women in homelessness experience traumas and abuse, but the women are considered to be more vulnerable than their male counterparts to physical and sexual violence (Harris et al., 1994). In addition to this violence is often an essential factor for women becoming homeless (Evans & Forsyth, 2004). Huey and Berndt (2008) refer the streets” as a masculinist space that implies a variety of danger to homeless women and state that this issue has gotten too little attention in social science.

Research demonstrates that women in substance abuse are more commonly subjected to violence than women without substance abuse (Armeliu & Armeliu, 2010). Research also demonstrates that women in substance abuse that also live in homelessness, are in an even greater risk to be subjected to violence (Beijer et al., 2018; Birath et al., 2013; Tucker et al., 2005; Wenzel et al., 2004, 2006). Women in homelessness and substance abuse might live at shelters and other housing facilities. This raises the question about the women’s safety when living there.

Tucker et al. (2005) states that women that live in shelters have a high-risk life and big vulnerability to victimisation. They risk being subjected to violence by a range of different perpetrators, such as partners, former partners, acquaintances, strangers, potential sex-trade customers, and relatives. Tucker, et al. (2005) states that potential threat of violent acts are important problems among this group of women and the problems need to be addressed by treatment providers. It is important that services focus on safety and on supporting and promoting independence from abusive partners. It is common that women subjected to violence feel ashamed and blame themselves for what has happened to them. Hence the way the women are treated by professionals is crucial. The approach of the professionals that the women encounter can either enhance or decrease the feelings of shame and guilt, that the women might have (Tucker et al., 2005).

1.2 The aim of the study

The aim of this study is, from a Swedish point of view, to investigate and analyse how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women.

1.3 Research questions

To fulfil the aim of this study, the three following research questions will be answered:

- **How do the social workers understand the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities?**
- **How do the social workers explain possible occurrences of violence against women at the housing facilities?**
- **How are the social workers handling the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities?**

1.4 Disposition of the study

This study starts with a background information to define concepts and explain the subject of substance abuse and homelessness with a focus on women, within a Swedish context. After this background information a literature review about the subjects is presented. This is followed by a presentation about the theoretical framework consisting of two central perspectives of VAW; individual focused and structural, as well as the normalisation process theory, the social support theory and two perspectives of power; *power to* and *power over*. After that, methodological considerations are discussed. Then the result will be presented and analysed through this theoretical framework and previous research. Finally, the last part the results from the analysis will be discussed. Discussions about personal reflections and ideas for future research will be presented. The study will end with a final summary.

2. Background information

2.1 Homelessness and substance abuse in a Swedish context with a focus on women

Homelessness is most frequent in big cities. 42 % of the homeless population is estimated to be in the three biggest cities of Sweden; Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. Of the homeless population, 23% in Stockholm, 27% in Gothenburg and 47% in Malmö, live in shelters or sleep in public spaces (Swärd, 2008). One third of the homeless population was 2005 estimated to be women. The problems of women in homelessness are often characterised with family issues such as divorce or domestic violence. Many women get homeless as a result from escaping domestic violence. Many homelessness researchers suggest that the situation of women in homelessness have not got enough attention and that the situations of the women are assessed with the same norms as for men (Swärd, 2008).

It is common that women in acute homelessness have an addiction or substance abuse problems. Violence against women with substance abuse or addiction problems have for a long time been a sparsely illuminated as a social problem (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). In a proposition the Swedish government states that women with substance abuse or addiction problems subjected to violence, is a particularly vulnerable group. It is harder for this group of women to search for help and get help. The proposition also states that here is a lack in knowledge about this group of women and that there is a need to gain more knowledge, so that the women can get the help and support they have the right to (Socialdepartementet 2006). This group of women is particularly vulnerable since they, because of their addiction, do not have access to protected shelters for women subjected to violence (Missbruket, Kunskapen, Vården, 2011) and in the substance abuse treatment the violence is not considered the primary concern (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a).

Based on the fact that women in substance abuse and homelessness subjected to violence is considered to be a vulnerable group, the focus of this study is on violence against women (VAW). In this study violence is viewed upon as a continuum of sexualised acts that express patriarchal power and control over women, which will be further developed in chapter 4.1.1 about the theoretical framework. The violence is also discussed in terms of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). World Health organisation defines IPV as “[...] physical, sexual, and

emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner” (WHO, 2012, p. 1). However, since this study has a broader perspective of violence, IPV in this study refers to being subjected to violence by an intimate partner but does not define the violence. As a result of the focus of the interviewees, previous research and theory, men are mainly discussed as the ones subjecting women to violence.

2.2 Social efforts in regard to homelessness and substance abuse

Once homelessness was defined as a political housing problem. Nowadays it is considered to be a social political problem with a perspective on care and treatment as a solution (Sahlin, 1996). “The staircase of transition has been accredited as being a special Swedish solution to homelessness” (Sahlin, 2005). This alcohol-political line of action has since then marked the homelessness politics in Sweden (Sahlin, 2005). The basic idea with the staircase model is as follows:

.../ homeless people ascend step by step from the streets to a regular dwelling of their own via low-standard shelters, category housing (i.e., houses for specific categories, such as homeless male alcoholics), training flats and transitional flats. The higher they climb, the better their conditions in terms of physical standard and space, integrity, freedom, and security of tenure. Meanwhile, social workers monitor their efforts and progress in resolving ‘underlying’ problems (like debts, substance abuse, unemployment, etc.), and provide ‘training in independent living. (Sahlin, 2005 p. 117).

The staircase transition model is the most common model in how municipalities in Sweden organise the social efforts targeting individuals in homelessness. However, the Swedish social board recommend the social services of municipalities to arrange housing to individuals in homelessness in line with the “housing first” model. The staircase transition model is only recommended in exceptional cases (Socialstyrelsen, 2019). For example in Gothenburg city, there seems to be a desire to leave the staircase transition approach and step by step move towards an approach of housing first (Göteborgs stad, n.d.). Housing first rests on the notion of harm-reduction and is based on the philosophy that homeless individuals should get immediate access to independent housing (Löfstrand, 2010). However, the different types of dwellings offered to individuals in homelessness can still be understood with the staircase model.

At these different kinds of dwellings, the individuals in homelessness receive support. For example, in Gothenburg the support is described as follows: The housing is provided as a social relief granted by the social service. At the housing facilities the housed individual gets a special assigned social worker. Together they form a plan that includes what type of support that is needed to achieve the specific goal of the housed individual. The social workers at the housing facilities provide support and motivate to change (Göteborgs stad, n.d.).

As described in the previous quote, individuals in homelessness are offered different kinds of dwellings at different stages, starting from shelters, to different category housing, to training flats and in the end a dwelling of their own (Socialstyrelsen, 2019). Shelters and category housing can be defined as low-threshold housing. In this kind of housing it is allowed to be in an active substance abuse (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). The most vulnerable group of homeless individuals are suggested to be individuals that additionally are in substance abuse and have mental health issues. This group of individuals are often offered low-threshold housing (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). In this study the focus will be on shelters and different category housing which can be defined as low-threshold housing. To include all different types of housing within this area the term housing facility will be used in the study. The individuals living in the housing facility will be called housed individuals, housed men and housed women. The professionals working at the housing facility will be referred to as social workers.

The definition of homelessness that is used in this study is based on the definition made by the Swedish social board. The definition has a broad perspective including individuals sleeping in the streets and emergency housing as well as individuals living in temporary housing solution, they arranged themselves, without a lease, (Socialstyrelsen, 2017).

In Sweden, municipalities and county councils, have a common responsibility for support and treatment of individuals with substance abuse or addiction. There are many different terms and definitions for having a problematic relationship to alcohol and narcotics. The terms that are used also differ depending on the agencies and professionals connected to the situation. For example, in medicine the DSM diagnosis substance use disorder is used. In term of alcohol the consumption is often viewed upon as “use” and “risk use”. The Swedish social service act use the term “missbruk”, which in this study is translated into substance abuse (Socialstyrelsen, 2019). The individuals living in the housing facilities are placed there

through the social service act and because of this, this term is used. Substances refer to alcohol and narcotics.

2.3 List of definitions and abbreviations

- VAW = Violence Against Women
- IPV= Intimate Partner Violence
- Housing facility = Low-threshold shelters and different types of category housing for individuals in homelessness
- Housed individual/Housed Woman/Housed Man = The individuals living at the housing facilities
- Substances = Alcohol and Narcotics

3 Literature review

This chapter is presenting previous research that is related to the issue of how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women. The literature review aims to position this study in the scope of previous research and to identify what gap in knowledge this study possibly could fill. Research that is related to this issue is research about violence against women in homelessness, violence against women in substance abuse and violence against women that both are in homelessness and substance abuse. The situation of women at treatment centres with mixed genders, could to some extent be compared to the situation of women at housing facilities with mixed genders. Because of this, research about violence against women at treatment centres will also be included. It is also of interest to review literature about what kind of help women in homelessness and substance abuse, can get and how professionals treat them and take violence into consideration. After discussing these broader parts of the issue, the last part presents research about violence against women at shelters, and how professionals take violence into consideration. Mainly all literature found in this area use the term shelter and will therefore be used in the literature review. However, as previously explained, shelters are included in the definition “housing facility”.

3.1 Violence against women in homelessness

The main literature on homelessness focuses on men or the homeless population in general. However, researchers have demonstrated that the experience of homelessness for women is different than the experiences of men. Phipps et al. (2019) has conducted a literature review on research about women in homelessness, based on an American, Australian and British context. The review demonstrated that despite the fact that men represent the majority of the homeless population, women are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. There might even be an underestimation of women in studies that use traditional definitions of homelessness. Phipps et al. (2019) explain that women are more likely to become “couch people,” and live at protected shelters for women, which might not be included in the definitions of homelessness.

The literature review by Phipps et al. (2019) shows that women face different challenges than men because of their reproductive health and sexual health needs. Evans & Forsyth (2004) investigates in an American context whether sex influences the pathways into homelessness, endurance of victimisation and survival strategies, by interviewing 42 men and women. Is it worth mentioning that 12 of the interviewees were women. They found that women are likely to have stereotypically female routes into homelessness and in some cases to rely on traditional female strategies of survival. However, they saw a lot of similarities between men and women in the behaviour patterns once on the streets, with similar experiences, opportunities, and obstacles. The authors suggest that it is important to develop homelessness programs that are designed to meet the needs of both men and women. They also express that it will benefit our society if we not just see sexual abuse or victimisation as a problem for women but for everyone (Evans & Forsyth, 2004).

Homelessness in itself can lead to greater exposure to violence. Both men and women in homelessness experiences traumas and abuse but women are considered to be more vulnerable than men to sexual and physical victimisation (Harris et al., 1994). Evans and Forsyth (2004) state that this issue has gotten too little attention in social science. Huey and Berndt (Huey & Berndt, 2008) refer to “the streets” as a masculinist space that implies a variety of danger to homeless women. Women are likely to engage in prostitution as they encounter the daily problems of finding food, work, and shelter (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Another aspect of violence against women in homelessness is that violence is often an essential factor for women becoming homeless in the first place (Evans & Forsyth, 2004).

Jainchill et al. (2000) have conducted a literature review that studies the relationship between psychiatric disturbance, homelessness and the experiences of abuse among adult individuals. The study found that women had higher rates of abuse and psychiatric disturbance than men. The relationship between psychopathology and abuse also appeared to be stronger for women than men. However, the relationship between abuse and homelessness seems to be similar between men and women. The authors explain that the difference between men and women was that women internalised the trauma caused by experiences of abuse, men on the other hand, externalised the traumas. Based on this result the authors state that the impact of abuse concerns both men and women in homelessness, but there is need for gender specific interventions (Jainchill et al., 2000).

The study of Evans & Forsyth (2004) showed that women were more likely than men to get sexually abused. Ten out of twelve women reported being sexual abused. In addition to this it was only women that reported sexual abuse as a factor leading to their homelessness and only women reported entering into and maintaining intimate relationships in order to cope with homelessness. This is, in accordance with other research, explaining that violence often is an essential factor for the women becoming homeless (Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Socialstyrelsen, 2011a; Swärd, 2008). When talking about the experiences of sexual abuse of homeless men and women Evans & Forsyth (2004) recognise the fact that men may have experienced sexual victimisation but because of the stigma might not want to report it.

3.2 Violence against women in substance abuse

It is common that women in acute homelessness have addiction or substance abuse problems (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). In the substance abuse research area, an extensive amount of studies have been done that address the gender perspective (see Laanemets, 2002; Mattsson, 2005; Palm, 2007). Karin Trulson has conducted a literature review on Norwegian and International research about substance abuse and gender issues. The review shows that between one third and one quarter of the individuals with substance abuse are women. Trulson explains that society stigmatises women with substance abuse more than men with the same problems. There is more shame connected to women and substance abuse and women are offered less social support than men. Because of this, women have a bigger barrier than men, to search for help. Holmberg et al. (2005) explain that another reason for women not to search for help, is also that women are afraid that the social service will take their kids into custody if their substance abuse is revealed.

Individuals that live in environments of substance abuse are often in situations where they risk being subjected to violence (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). The Swedish social board has created a rapport about violence against women with addiction or substance abuse problems. In the rapport it is stated that violence against women with substance abuse or addiction problems, has for a long time been a sparsely illuminated social problem. Nowadays, the group is to a bigger extent considered to be a particularly vulnerable group (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). This group of women is particularly vulnerable since they do not have access to emergency shelters for women subjected to violence, because of their addiction (Missbruket, Kunskapen, Vården, 2011) and in the substance abuse treatment the violence is not considered the primary

concern (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). In the study of Socialstyrelsen (2011a) professionals explain that it is common that women exchange sexual services to get access to shelter and drugs and the ones purchasing the sexual services are often subjecting the women to violence.

Holmberg et al. (2005) have on the request of the Swedish organisation “mobilisering mot narkotika” (mobilising against narcotics) conducted a study about violence against women with substance abuse, by using surveys and interviews. In the study 103 women with substance abuse answered a survey and out of them, 94 of the women had at least at one point in their adult life been subjected to physical or sexual violence. 90 of the women reported being subjected to violence at more than two occasions and 48 of the women reported being subjected to violence more than ten times. The perpetrators were both men and women, but the majority of the women had been subjected to violence by a man. In accordance with these results another Swedish study of women with substance dependence, showed that 91% of the 79 participating women, had experienced male violence (Birath et al., 2013).

Armelius and Armelius (2010) have conducted a study on the request of the Swedish social service board. In the study of 4290 women’s Addiction Severity Index Assessment (ASI) for substance abuse, it was demonstrated that a 75% of the women in substance abuse had been subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence earlier in life. It was almost twice as common for women in substance abuse to be subjected to violence, compared to women without substance abuse (Armelius & Armelius, 2010). The women in substance abuse that had been subjected to violence were more likely to have grown up with parents with substance abuse and mental problems. The authors also state that it is likely that they have been exposed to violence during childhood. Examples of other factors were that the women subjected to violence, were more likely to have mental issues, violent behaviour, lower education and to be foreign born. The women subjected to violence were more likely to have bigger problems in different areas in life such as physical and psychological health, criminality and living situation. If the women had been subjected to all three types of abuse, consisting of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, their problems were enhanced even more (Armelius & Armelius, 2010).

Women in substance abuse subjected to violence, are often scared not to be treated well by professionals. There seems to be a prevailing mistrust against governments from the women and the women think that this mistrust is mutual (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). Specific for this

group of women is that they often have been subjected to violence from the time they were children and the violence has become normalised, both by themselves and by society. Often governmental professionals seem to have normalised the violence the women are subjected to (Holmberg et al., 2005). It is common that the women internalise the shame and blame themselves. They see themselves as hopeless and dependent. As adaptive strategies to the violence they are subjected to, they solve the problems with substance abuse and maybe also violent behaviour. These strategies create a risk for the women to be part of a circle of violent relationships being reproduced (Armeliu & Armeliu, 2010).

Socialstyrelsen (2011a) explains that it is important that support and help are adjusted to the individual needs and that there are possibilities to get support regarding the experiences of violence, without demands to quit the substance abuse (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). However, Holmberg et al. (2005) showed that governmental departments had not given the women in the study, the right help and support. In the cases where the women had applied for help, the help had been conditioned on that the women had to stop their substance abuse. This demonstrates a view that violence is a result of addiction/substance abuse and the solution to the violence is to stop using substances. Something that further demonstrated this view is the fact that according to Jarnling, there are very few protected shelters for women subjected to violence that accept women with substance abuse (Holmberg et al., 2005).

A study of Beijer et al. (2018), that will be further discussed in chapter 3.6, demonstrated that experiences of male violence was connected to symptoms of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) of the women in the study. Based on this, the authors suggest that experiences of male violence should always be taken into consideration in treatment of women with substance abuse problems, as well as in other societal services that meet women with substance abuse problems. Several of the women in the study of (Holmberg et al., 2005) agreed that all professionals that meet women, that live in substance abuse-environments, should take violence into consideration and always ask the women about it. Asking questions about violence makes it possible for the violence to be revealed. It also sends the signal to the women, that violence is not acceptable (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). In the study of (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a) a professional with long experience of working with women with substance abuse subjected to violence, describes that the way the women often ask for help can be described as a hand wrapped in barbed wire. This demands professionals to approach the women with tolerance, patience and understanding.

It is important to have knowledge about the effects of violence. To have knowledge increase professionals' will and ability to identify violence and ask about it (Birath et al., 2013; Nationellt centrum för kvinnofrid, 2010). A standardised assessment questioner might be useful for professionals in order to assess the risks and as a support for the professional in how to ask about violence (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). To be able to provide support and help to the women, organisational strategies and guidelines are needed (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). Professionals also needs to have knowledge about the policies and guidelines in their organisation and what other organisations and governments to collaborate with. It is important that professionals get education, and continuously reflect over and work on their own attitudes and values. It is also necessary to systematically work with the issue on an organisational level (Socialstyrelsen, 2011b).

3.5 Violence against women at treatment centres

It was the women's movement in the 70's that highlighted gender issues in treatment for alcohol and drug problems. Researchers realised that also women where in treatment and started to study their conditions often searching for differences between the genders. It has often been stated that treatment for alcohol and drugs was designed for men and when women entered treatment institutions the treatment stayed the same (Palm, 2007). In a Swedish historical perspective men and women have been separated in institutional addiction treatment. In the 1970's this changed, and the mixed gender model was looked upon more positively. During the 1980's critique was raised about the mixed gender perspective, with the arguments that the treatment was male focused and that women risked being invisible and sexual exploited. Today there is no consensus on what the best approach is and there is a mixed range of both gender-specific and mixed-gender treatment institutions (Mattsson, 2005). A reason to have gender-specific treatment is to protect women from harm. Women might risk getting involved in relationships and sexual harassments or sexual assaults may occur (Laanemets & Kristiansen, 2008; Palm, 2007). It is important to have the aspect of protection in mind, for example by preventing women from having their perpetrators as co-patients. This might prevent them from applying for care and treatment in the first place (Greenfield et al., 2007).

A research report, done on the request of the Swedish institution board (Statens institutionstyrelse) investigates how gender is taken into consideration in the compulsive treatment centres, both for youngsters and adults. In the study the majority of the staff either partly or completely agreed with that women suffer more from being treated in a group of mixed genders (Laanemets & Kristiansen, 2008). In an Official Report of the Swedish Government about the Swedish substance abuse and addiction treatment (Missbruket, Kunskapen, Vården, 2011), Birath & Borg have conducted a scientific study about gender perspective in Swedish addiction and substance abuse care by interviewing representatives from science, the professional field and interest organisations. The interviews demonstrated the view that specific groups like women subjected to sexual violence have less access to treatment and need specified treatment. For example for women with complex care needs like substance abuse, psychological disabilities and homelessness, gender specific treatment may be crucial to ensure security (Missbruket, Kunskapen, Vården, 2011).

The report of Socialstyrelsen (2011a) refers to the study of Järnling where experiences and working methods in protected shelters for women and treatment centres are studied. Järnling suggests that the knowledge of violence against women in treatment centres is weak. It is seldom that the treatment centres deal with issues of violence against women. When it is done it is often at treatment centres with only women. When it comes to treatment centres with mixed genders it seems like it is either not brought up or it has been dealt with in an offensive way (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). Holmberg et al. (2005) suggest that the fact that it is not obvious that women should get care and support in gender specific groups could be seen as an expression of that professionals do not consider the violence the women are subjected to as sexual violence.

3.6 Violence against women in homelessness and substance abuse

Individuals that live in environments of substance abuse, are often in situations where they risk being subjected to violence. If the individuals are also homeless, the risk of being subjected to violence is even higher (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). Birath et al. (2013) have conducted a Swedish study with the aim to investigate the type and extent to which women with substance dependence, have been exposed to male violence during their lifetime. As previously mentioned 91 % of the women had been subjected to male violence during their

lifetime and did not receive any help for the consequences of the violence. Both groups of women had substantial problems with their psychological and physical health, but the problems of the homeless women were more serious.

Beijer et al. (2018) have conducted a similar Swedish study about women with substance abuse problems exposed to male violence during the lifetime. The study also aimed to examine possible differences between women with a residence and women in homelessness. 91 % of the women have experienced male violence, 88% from former partners and 26% from male friends or acquaintances. When the two groups of women with substance abuse were compared, the result demonstrated that homeless women had a three times higher risk of having experienced violence from a partner and almost a six times higher risk of having experienced violence from a male friend or acquaintance. Furthermore, 84% of the homeless women had experienced countless occasions of violent events, in comparison with 52% of the women with residence. Women from both groups had experienced domestic violence in childhood, but homeless women were almost twice as likely to have been aware of domestic violence between adults. The Homeless women were also almost three times more likely to have been prosecuted for criminal offence (Beijer et al., 2018).

The women's experiences of childhood abuse discussed in the previous discussed studies can be compared to an American study of homeless woman. The study found that childhood abuse was a direct predictor of later physical abuse, depression, less self-esteem and had a significant indirect effect on issues such as substance abuse problems and chronic homelessness. Recent physical abuse was a predictor of chronic homelessness, depression and substance use problems. Childhood abuse had a significant indirect effect on substance abuse problems and chronic homelessness. (Stein et al., 2002).

In the previous mentioned study of Beijer et al. and Birath et al. (2018; 2013) it was demonstrated that it was more common for women in substance abuse that also live in homelessness to be subjected to violence, than the women in substance abuse with residence. An American study of 78 individuals in homelessness with substance abuse and mental health disorder, did not compare women in homelessness to women with residence, however the study demonstrates that it is more common for women in homelessness and substance abuse to be subjected to violence than their male counterparts. The data in the study was collected from individuals participating in a social programme for homeless individuals with co-

occurring disorder. The purpose of the study was to examine the prevalence of self-reported trauma and for example to see if there were any significance in relation to sex. The result was that 100% of the women had experienced lifechanging events of trauma such as physical or sexual abuse, compared to 68.6 % of the men (Christensen et al., 2005).

3.7 Violence against women at shelters

Shelters and other kinds of housing facilities are not giving substance abuse treatment in particular, but is still a social effort, where women in substance abuse subjected to violence might live. The housing facilities might be both gender-specific and with mixed genders living there (Holmberg et al., 2005). Holmberg et al. (2005) suggest by referring to Jarnling that the staff at these kinds of housing facilities, often lack deeper knowledge about sexualised violence. Interviews in the study of (Holmberg et al., 2005) showed that women experience it as difficult staying at mixed gender shelters, because they risk meeting men that have subjected them to violence. Some of the respondents tell stories about being abused by men at the shelters while the staff at the housing facilities was unable to do anything about it. Based on these stories Holmberg et al. (2005) states that it all together seems like that even if the staff tries to protect women from sexualised violence it seems like the sufficient protection cannot be guaranteed at shelters, housing facilities and treatment centres where women are mixed with violent men with substance abuse problems.

Tucker, et al. (2005) have conducted a study in the USA, of 172 women in substance abuse, living in low-income housing and in shelters. Low-income housing refers to subsidised apartments. The two groups of women were compared to investigate differences in experiences of violence. The stories of the sheltered women living in shelters that they live a high-risk life and have a bigger vulnerability to victimisation. Their worst events involved a range of different perpetrators as partners, former partners, acquaintances, strangers, potential sex-trade customers, and relatives. In contrast to this, relatively few women in low-income housing reported assaults from other perpetrators than partners or former partners. However, 62% of the sheltered women still reported an incident with a partner or former partner involved. It was more common for the sheltered women to blame themselves and their substance use for the incidents of violence and rape. In similar studies by Wenzel et al. (2004, 2006) that also compared women in substance abuse living at shelters and women in substance abuse living in low-income housing, it was also demonstrated that it was more

common for the women living in shelters to have experienced physical and sexual violence. Also in the study by (Wenzel et al., 2006) the perpetrators of sheltered women was diverse, including sexual partners, family, and strangers. The authors explain that these results demonstrate that comprehensive screenings and interventions are needed. They also suggest that there might be a need to educate women to recognise behaviours as harmful and inappropriate to facilitate them to take steps to leave abusive relationships.

Huey et al. (2014) have conducted a study with 42 in-depth qualitative interviews with victimised homeless women living in two big cities in the USA. The study investigated if the case management at the shelters involved the staff to as a routine ask about victimisation. The result was that the women were rarely asked about experiences of violent victimisation. It did not seem to be a routine among staff members to ask about violence. The few times the women were asked it seemed rather to be as a result of discretion of individual workers. The authors of the study suggest that as access brokers to resources for the client, the staff is in a position to be able to help victimised homeless women to get medical post-victimisation and psychological services. Overwhelmingly many of the respondents thought that it would be helpful if the staff would have asked about previous experiences of violence. They thought it would have opened up a door to speak about relevant services where they could get support.

Based on their study Huey et al. (2014) give suggestions on how professionals at shelters should take VAW into consideration. Policies that requires all clients to be asked about possible/past/current violent victimisation should be established at shelters. These screening policies should be implemented consistently among staff and across facilities. These policies should be assessed as a routine (Huey et al., 2014). Some of the women in the study described that they had felt resistance when they had been asked about violence, because the topic was addressed by professionals in such a way that made the women uncomfortable or not able to trust the professional. Based on this, the authors suggest that it is important to explain that the women are asked about violence in order for the professional to be able to provide support. The assessment questions should be specific and put straightforward leaving less room for interpretation (Huey et al., 2014). Tucker, et al. (2005) explain that potential threat of violent acts are important problems among this group of women and needs to be addressed by all societal services meeting women with substance abuse. The way the women are treated by professionals is crucial because the approach can either enhance or decrease the feelings of

shame and guilt that the woman might have. Professionals that meet these women need to have knowledge about how to help and treat women subjected to violence.

3.8 Summary

The literature review has given a broader understanding of the situation of women in homelessness and substance abuse in relation to the greater risk of them being subjected to violence. It also showed that women in substance abuse often have been subjected to violence since childhood and both they and society have normalised the violence. As a result of this, the women often blame themselves. It has also been demonstrated that it is harder for this group of women to get help and support for the violence they are subjected to. Professional strategies in how to help and treat women in substance abuse subjected to violence have also been discussed. Women might live at treatment centres with mixed genders which might put them in a risk of being subjected to violence. Women in homelessness and substance abuse might also live at shelters with mixed genders and they are in a greater risk than women with their own residence to be subjected to violence by a range of different perpetrators. The literature discusses the importance of the professionals working at shelters to address the violence and have a role as access brokers so that the woman can get help and support for the violence they have been subjected to. The literature presented does not discuss the experiences of the professionals working at the shelters in how they understand the issue and how they act in relation to women being subjected to violence. This particular study focusses on the perspective of the social workers at housing facilities and I hope the study will contribute with more knowledge in the area.

4 Theoretical frameworks

4.1 Two central perspectives of violence against women

Steen (2003) explains that the knowledge field of men's violence against women consists of three ideal types of how to understand and explain men's violence against women; individual, marital or as a structural social problem. In this study the individual focused and the structural perspectives are used to analyse how the social workers understand the issue of VAW at the housing facilities.

4.1.1 Structural perspective

Steen (2003) explains by referring to Lundgren that with a structural perspective, all violence against women must be understood within a *patriarchal social system*. The patriarchy can be described in the following way “/.../ a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.” (Walby, 1989 p. 214). All men are not considered to use VAW but it is considered that all men benefit from living in a society where other men use VAW (Walby, 1989). Steen explains by referring to Lundgren, that within the patriarchal social system the male sexuality and violence are closely connected as a result of cultural understandings of masculinity with a close relationship between violence and virility. Hence, sexualised violence is an expression for oppression of women (Steen, 2003).

Kelly (1988) has created the concept of a *continuum of violence*. Men's violence against women is understood through the gender power structures in society and violence is viewed upon as a continuum of sexualised acts that express patriarchal power and control over women. “The sexual violence ranges from extensions of the myriad forms of sexism women encounter everyday through to the all too frequent murder of women and girls by men.” (Kelly, 1988, p. 97). In other words, violence is viewed upon as a scale of variation including both acts that are more acceptable in society and acts that are considered criminal. The acts are used to demonstrate male dominance. The continuum is used both to describe differences between acts but also as a way to see connections in acts connected to gender related violence. The perspective includes the general limitation women face in society by having to take potential violence into consideration in their life. Kelly (1988) connects the general fear most women experience to the violence that underline the fear. She speaks about the fear in terms of a continuum of fear, ranging from a woman being limited a short period of time to

affecting all aspects of a woman's daily life. Based on women's previous experiences, women might, to different extents, be afraid and some women might constantly need to be aware of the environment to predict men's actions and motives (Kelly, 1988).

The continuum of violence also includes intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as a range of different acts that can be connected to male power such as gender mutilation, pornography consumption, and buying women for sexual purposes (Steen, 2003). In line with this perspective all heterosexual intimate partner relations involve male dominance, even if there is no abuse involved. With this perspective the violence is seen as something that can happen to all women and be perpetrated by all men, from all different socio-economic classes. The violence is an expression of the societal oppression of women (Steen, 2003).

4.1.2 Individual focused perspective

In contrast to structural perspective of VAW, Individual focused perspective sees the violence as more or less independent of society and explains violence on individual psychological or intra-psychological levels. The solution to the violence is also based on these individual factors (Steen, 2003). The violence is in contrast to the structural perspective, categorised as different forms of violence and relationships are categorised as violent relationships and non-violent relationships. It can be understood that it is specific men that perform the violence and specific women that are subjected to the violence. This perspective has strongly been criticised by feministic scholars for not taking societal gender power structures into consideration (Steen, 2003).

4.2 The normalisation process theory

To further analyse how the social workers, understand the issue of VAW at the housing facilities the normalisation process theory is also used. Lundgren has developed the normalising process theory (Steen, 2003). The theory views violence as a process and takes the whole context where the violence happens into consideration. The violence cannot be reduced to single situations of violence; the violence is always present (Steen, 2003). This theory has had a big spread both among scholars and practitioners that meet women subjected to violence. For the man the violence gives control, both in a short-term perspective when being violent, but also in a long-term perspective by gradually controlling the woman more and more. The man does not only subject the woman to violence, he can also be warm and

tender which ties the woman harder to him (Steen, 2003). When the man mentally and physically isolates the woman, the woman gets less access to anyone else than the man to reflect upon what is happening to her. The limits of what is acceptable and non-acceptable gradually dissolves and the woman starts to see herself and the violence from the man's perspective – she internalises his motives for the violent acts. Because of the internalisation of the violence the woman feels shame and guilt. For the woman the normalising process is a downward spiral were she gradually adapts to the violence to make it stop and then it is a survival strategy (Steen, 2003).

4.3 Social support theory

The social support theory is used to analyse how the social workers act upon VAW against housed women. Social support theory “[...] hypothesizes that social support serves to protect individuals against the negative effects of stressors by leading them to interpret stressful occasions less negatively. Social support is defined as “the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations” (Taylor, 2011, p. 2). The support may come from friends, family, co-workers, pets, social and community ties. Social support is often classified in different categories. *Informational support* is when someone helps another individual to understand a stressful situation and advice what resources and coping strategies that might be necessary to handle the situation. *Instrumental support* involves the provision of specific assistance such as services and financial assistance. *Emotional support* involves providing warmth and nurturance to another individual such as showing that the person is of worth and are cared for by others.

Vaux (1990) has developed a definition and understanding of social support with an ecological perspective. Vaux explains that stressors and support are not independent. They have a relationship and the relationship can only be understood as part of an ecological system. “The process involves transactions between people and their social networks, including the active development and maintenance of support network resources, the management of support incidents to elicit appropriate supportive behaviour from the network and the synthesis of information to yield support appraisals. The process is shaped by features of both the person and the social ecology.” (Vaux, 1990, p. 507). What Vaux calls “the support incident” is the transaction wherein support is offered or elicited and accepted or rejected. Even persons with perfect resources might fail to benefit from them by handling the

incentives wrong. The helper also needs to adjust the intensity of support, by maybe ignoring assurance that everything is fine but also not being too generous with support (Vaux, 1990).

4.4 Power over and Power to

Over recent years social work has been concerned with issues of power, especially in relation to concepts of oppression and empowerment. Power is a strongly debated concept and there is no agreement on how to define it (Tew, 2006). By referring to Pease, Tew states that “The unclarity about power may be seen to lead to the often woolly and sometimes contradictory usage of the term ‘empowerment’ in social work and social welfare.” (Tew, 2006, p. 34). To provide a practical tool to map complex power relations in a certain social situation Tew (2006) has developed a framework consisting of the two concepts *power over* and *power to*. This theoretical framework will also be used to analyse how the social workers act upon VAW at the housing facilities. The mode of these forms of power can be either productive or limited. The productive mode of *power over* can be protective power, where the power is used to give protection to vulnerable individuals and their possibility to advancement. A limited mode of *power over* can be oppressive power, then the differences are exploited as a way to enhance one’s own position, resulting in powerlessness to the other part. A productive mode of *power to* is co-operative power which is taking collective action supporting each other by valuing commonality and differences. The limited mode of *power to* is collusive power which is when banding together internal or external to suppress others (Tew, 2006).

5 Methodology

5.1 Research design

The research design of this study is cross-sectional. This design involves data on a sample of cases, at a single point in time, forming a body of data in connection with two or more variables. The cases can be variations between for example people or organisations. In this study the focus is on variations between the experiences of the social workers at a certain time and not variations between the different housing facilities. Cross-sectional design is often closely connected to questionnaires and structured interviews but can also be used as a design to qualitative research with semi-structured interviews as the method (Bryman, 2016, pp. 53–55).

5.2 Epistemological and ontological departure

Epistemological issues concern the question of what kind of knowledge that is to be considered acceptable in a discipline (Bryman, 2016, p. 24). This study seeks to investigate how the treatment assistants understand the issue of VAW in relation to housed women. Hermeneutic approach is based on interpretation. The social reality is considered to be too complex to reach knowledge only by observations. To be able to understand the deeper levels of reality, the social surrounding must be interpreted by the scientist. The scientist in hermeneutic approach research should start the research free from pre-determined values. Hence hermeneutic implies relativism. Most hermeneutic approaches also put emphasis on how the language is the basic structure of the constructions of societies (Delanty, 2005, p. 42).

Ontological issues concern the nature of social entities. The main question is whether social entities can/should be seen as objective or as social constructions, created by perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). Constructivism is the discourse that runs through the tradition of hermeneutic. Social entities are considered as meaningful constructions and not as objective reality (Delanty, 2005). The social entities are constructed by social interactions and are in a constant state of revision (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). This study seeks to reach the knowledge of the interviewees, based on how they interpret the issue and how they speak about it. Hence a hermeneutic epistemological approach on knowledge with a constructivist view on the reality should be the best approach in order to answer the research questions.

5.3 Research method

The method of the study is qualitative semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research is more interested in words rather than numbers as quantitative research is. Qualitative research has an inductive view on the relationship between theory and research, hence the theory is developed from the research (Bryman, 2016, p. 375). Before conducting the research, the ideas are more open-ended. As a result, the research is flexible and can take different turns and hold focus on the interviewee's point of view instead of the researcher's own concerns as in quantitative research (Bryman, 2016, pp. 466–467). Qualitative methods have an epistemological position of interpretation and an ontological position described as constructionistic. The world is understood by examining how the participants interpret their world (Bryman, 2016, p. 375). Since the interest in this study is in how the social workers interpret the issue of VAW and not to test a pre-determined theory a qualitative method is best suited in order to answer the research question.

In qualitative interviews “rambling” or going off at tangents is something that is being encouraged because it gives insight into what is relevant to the interviewee and provides rich answers. Quantitative interviews seek answers that follows the outlined structure and are codable to make the interviews possible to be standardised to get a result. Because of this rambling off is on the contrary discouraged in quantitative research. Even though qualitative interviews might depart from an interview guide, the interviewing is more flexible and follows the directions that the interviewees take. New questions can be added to follow up replies and the order of the questions can be changed. Also, the focus of the research can be adjusted based on what significant issues that get visible during the course of the interviews (Bryman, 2016, pp. 466–467). Hence using qualitative interviews has made it possible for me as a researcher to stay away from pre-determined theories of the issue. This has made it possible for the study to capture what is of importance to the interviewees, who are the ones with the knowledge the study wanted to reach. During the course of the interviews there has come up interesting aspects that before the interviews were not taken in to consideration. Using qualitative interviews has made it possible to adjust the questions based on these new aspects. With this method it has been possible to adjust the emphasis during the process and theories have been developed through what is captured in the interviews.

There are two major types of Qualitative interviews; unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. The type of interview that has been used in this study is semi-structured. In a semi-structured interview an interview guide is used to give some structure to the interviews. An interview guide is a list of questions related to quite specific topics that the interviewer wants to cover. The interviewee still has a lot of room in how to answer the questions. Additional questions can be asked to pick up interesting information from the interviewee and the questions do not have to be asked exactly as planned in the guide (Bryman, 2016, pp. 468–469). Since the study has a clear focus and not just a general idea of what to investigate, semi-structured model was to prefer above unstructured interviews. All the themes in the interview guide have been asked and a similar kind of wording have been used. This gives some structure in the interview process which makes some comparisons between different experiences of social workers possible (comp. Bryman, 2016, pp. 468–469).

5.4 Conducting the literature review

When conducting a research, reviewing existing literature is crucial. The aim is to present a picture and critical interpretation of what is already known about the subject. It also serves to give a background of the topic and to justify the research questions by finding gaps in knowledge that this study possibly could fill. In this study a narrative literature review is presented. Narrative literature review is the traditional type of literature review (Bryman, 2016, pp. 90–91).

Social work, compared to, for example health care, is based on different academic disciplines. As a result, a big range of different search services might be relevant. If only a small number of data bases are used there is a risk to miss relevant research (Mcginn et al. 2016). The data bases that were used are ProQuest social science, Pro Quest Sociology, Scopus, Google Scholar, Gender studies, Super Search (University of Gothenburg). To find qualitative evidence it is necessary to do very sensitive searches (Mcginn et al. 2016). To be able to conduct sensitive searches, two groups of key words, have been developed and the key words have been used in different combinations within these groups:

- "Gender based violence" OR rape OR "sexual abuse" OR "Spouse Abuse" OR "Sexual coercion" OR "domestic abuse" OR "sexual assault" OR "Partner Abuse" OR "Battered women" OR "partner abuse" OR IPV AND "Drug addiction" OR

"substance abuse" AND shelter* OR "treatment centre" OR housing OR homelessness OR residential treatment* AND women* OR female* OR girl*)

- "Gender specific treatment" OR "gender specific housing" OR "gender responsive intervention" AND "drug addiction" OR "substance abuse" OR drug* OR "chemical dependency" AND women* OR female* OR girl*.

These keywords have been developed from conducting general searches in relation to the research questions. When reading the literature, notes have been taken of possible keywords and synonyms related to the research questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 111). The Thesaurus function in ProQuest have also been used to find synonyms. When conducting the searches, the result was limited only to include peer-reviewed literature in English and Swedish as well as literature in the field of social science, sociology and psychology. Literature was also found through Swedish reports that were found through searches on google scholar. Other articles were found through references in these articles and by searching on other articles referencing to specific authors. Some of the articles found were medical or psychological articles which was not the criteria when conducting the searches with the key words. During the searches the title and abstract that seemed to be relevant was reviewed to determine if the articles where of relevance. During this process of including and excluding literature, articles considered to be of relevance if their main topic was one of the following themes: Women in substance abuse; Women in homelessness; Violence against women in substance abuse; Violence against women in homelessness; Violence against women at treatment centres; Violence against women at shelters/housing facilities.

When articles relevant to the topic were found they were uploaded in NVivo, that was used to sort the research into different themes. In this way I could get a more comprehensive overview of the existing literature in the different subjects related to the topic. The themes that were used were the following: women and substance abuse; women and homelessness; violence against women in substance abuse; violence against women in homelessness; violence against women in substance abuse and homelessness; gender specific treatment; violence against women at treatment centres; violence against women at housing facilities.

Both Swedish and international research has been included in the literature review. This might cause some difficulties since the welfare systems are different in other countries and the definitions of for example homelessness might differ. However, including international

research makes it possible to discuss this study in relation to a broader scope of previous research.

5.5 Developing the interview guide and the process of conducting the interviews

The interview guide was developed in accordance with the research question and the aim. Some of the questions are based on what was found in previous literature and manuals from for example the Swedish social board. However, the main questions are open questions, asking the interviewees to define the issue and give examples of personal experiences. The answers were followed up with further questions. Asking the interviewees to give personal experiences should make the answers richer and less general. The risk that the answers are based on hearsay is also reduced. Using this technique, the focus has been on the interviewee's point of view instead of the researcher's own concerns. This technique is in line with the inductive approach on conducting research as well as the understanding of knowledge being socially constructed. By asking the interviewees to describe cases related to the issue, that they personally had experienced, a lot of information was included in the answers and I could ask a lot of follow-up questions. It was more them telling different stories, and in their stories, they naturally covered many of my questions I had prepared. Hence, the interview-guide served more as a reminder for me, not to forget any parts that I wanted to know about. The interview guide has to a small extent been modified and adjusted between the interviews. Questions that I realised were important after interviews were added during the course. However, the core of the interview guide has remained the same, with the same themes in all of the interviews. The interviews were held in Swedish because the native language of the interviewees is Swedish, and I wanted them to be able to express themselves without any limitations.

Due to the pandemic that was present during the time of writing this study, half of the interviews could not be held in person as planned, instead they were carried out on the telephone. Telephone interviews are especially useful in order to eliminate the risk of transferring a disease. Asking sensitive questions over telephone might be more effective, because interviewees might be less concerned about answering the questions when the interviewer is not physically present. Irvine et al. have also found that in telephone interviews answers tend to be longer (Bryman, 2016, p. 111). I thought the telephone interviews worked

just as well as the ones held in person, except from the drawback that I could not observe the interviewees' body language when the questions were asked. It might be important to see if the interviewee for example is uncomfortable by the questions asked and to see on the body language if the person is thinking and might want to continue answering if more time is given (comp. Bryman, 2016, p. 111).

5.6 Sample selection

In qualitative research purposive sampling tends to be used, especially in interview-based research. The idea of purposive sampling is that the research question should be an indicator/guideline of which categories of people that is the focus of attention and because of this should be sampled (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). I work as a sub worker at some housing facilities. Thanks to that I have an insight in what facilities there are and what different categories of individuals they are targeting. This knowledge has been used as an asset in choosing what facilities to contact.

The demands in the purposive sampling was that the social workers should work at housing facilities that target individuals in homelessness, allowing an active substance abuse and to have mixed genders living there. The housing facility should also be located in one of Sweden's big cities, since homelessness is most frequent there. Eight housing facilities that met these demands were chosen. After this purposive sample of housing facilities, the "snowball method" was used. Snowball method implies that a group of people relevant to the topic are used to establish contact with others that also are relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). The Staff Managers at the chosen housing facilities were contacted. They were asked to forward an information email about the study to their staff and to ask the staff to contact me if they were interested in participating. Out of these eight facilities six social workers from four different facilities contacted me. Two other social workers were reached by asking one social worker at a housing facility that did not participate in the study, to ask his co-workers. Due to the pandemic that was present during the time of writing this study, some of the intended interviewees got sick or had too much work to do and cancelled the planned interviews. In the end the sample consisted of 6 social workers working at 5 different housing facilities.

In qualitative research it might be hard to determine how many interviewees that will be enough to reach theoretical saturation. Criteria for when theoretical saturation is reached are rarely articulated in detail which makes it hard to determine. The opinions about how many interviewees a research needs, to be able to make convincing conclusions are very divided. Some explain that one needs more than 60 and in very intensive life story interviews, one or two interviewees might be enough. The size of sample that makes it possible to support convincing conclusions is likely to vary between different situations. Qualitative researchers have to balance between having enough interviewees to be able to reach theoretical saturation and at the same time not having too many, which makes it difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 425). Due to the pandemic the sample was smaller than planned. However, all of the interviews were between 60-90 minutes and were very informative and included many specific incidents of different women subjected to violence at the housing facilities. This resulted in a big and rich data. After five interviews I started to see connection between the answers and common denominators between the interviews, which could be explained as theoretical saturation was reached.

5.7 Coding and analysing proceedings

The interviews were recorded and after every interview they were carefully, word by word, transcribed into Swedish. Even though some parts seemed irrelevant, all parts of the interview were written down, not to miss things that later on in the process might be relevant (comp. Bryman, 2012, p. 486). In qualitative interviews the researcher is not just interested in what the interviewees say, but how they say it (Bryman, 2012, p. 482). Because of this everything was written down, in the way that the interviewees expressed themselves, word by word. For example, if the interviewees repeated the same sentences it was written twice, since this could imply that the interviewee wanted to highlight that particular point. In this way the transcriptions might be able to present deeper meaning to what is said and be closer to the context.

The coding of the transcription have been operated in line with what Bryman (2012, p. 575) calls basic operation in qualitative data analysis. First the transcripts were read through carefully. After that the transcripts were read again but this time, notes of general thought were written in the marginal. Then the transcript was read again but this time more significant remarks or observations, as many as possible, were written on the other marginal side. The

words used were general words, like words used by the interviewees. After that these words and sentences were given more carefully considered names and were then to be considered codes. Then the transcripts were read again and were divided into these codes. The codes were reviewed a couple of times and manually divided into themes. In order to get a better overlook over the themes the transcripts were then uploaded to Nvivo and the files were divided into these themes also in the program. The process of creating codes and themes were done in Swedish. When starting to write the analysis different themes were gradually combined to create the headings of the analysis. Further on in the process the headings were translated to English.

While writing the analysis the transcripts were constantly reviewed in order to not forget important parts and new parts of the transcripts were added to the themes through the process. In order not to lose context of what was said in the interviews, the full context was read before using the quotes in the analysis (comp. Bryman, 2012, p. 575). After creating these themes, the theoretical framework was developed from the themes. Based on the themes it got visible to me that the interviewees gave explanations for the violence in line with structural and individual focused perspectives as well as the normalization process theory. I am familiar with these perspectives and theory from earlier studies and that could be the reason why I interpreted their explanations in line with these. I also noticed that when they were talking about how they handle the issue they had a lot of focus on their relationship with the woman and the support they could give because of the relationship. Based on this I thought that a theory about social support would be of help in analysing the data and got familiar with social support theory after searching for different theories. I also noticed that the interviewees focused on their possibility and limitations to protect the women by controlling the physical room. Based on their professional role I thought that these possibilities and limitations could be based on the power they have as social workers. I am familiar with Tew's (2006) framework of power and thought this could be helpful in analysing different aspects of power. When Tew (2006) explains this framework, he uses explanations of domestic violence which also made it easier to see the connection between the data and this theoretical framework.

During the analysing process the transcripts were still in Swedish and the quotes that I added while writing, were kept in Swedish even though I wrote the rest in English. The reason for this is that Swedish is my mother tongue and it is easier for me to notice different nuances and to problematise the quotes when seeing them in Swedish. The quotes used in the analysis

were not translated into English until the very end. When the quotes were translated into English, they could not be completely translated word by word. To make the quotes understandable small modifications had to be made.

5.8 The trustworthiness of the study

Reliability and validity are important criteria in order to establish and assessing the quality in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012, p. 389). Reliability refers to the replicability of the study and validity is concerned with the question whether you are observing, identifying and measuring what you say you are (Bryman, 2012, pp. 46–47). However, among qualitative researchers there have been discussions if these criteria really are relevant to qualitative research. Because of this, alternative criteria have been developed. Guba & Lincoln suggest that it is hard to apply validity and reliability in qualitative research because “/.../the criteria presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible.” They explain that there is no absolute truth about the social reality and that there can be more than one account (Bryman, 2016, p. 390). Instead they suggest the two criteria trustworthiness for assessing qualitative studies. Trustworthiness is divided in four parts. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to that the presented result should represent the reality that the information derives from (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). To ensure that the study is representing the reality the interviewees, have during the interviews, been asked to explain terms and words they have used or things that have been unclear. Sometimes their answers have been summarised by me as the interviewer and they have been asked if they have been understood correctly. In this way the risk of misunderstanding has been minimised, even if it cannot be guaranteed because of the open dialogue that is in place in a qualitative semi structured interview (comp. Bryman, 2012, p. 390). It should be taken into consideration that some co-workers and Staff Managers seemed to be aware of the interviewee’s participation in the study, and this could lead to a wish to present oneself in a certain way to avoid conflicts or a wish to present the organisation in a positive way. The fact that the interviews were recorded could make the interviewees nervous about that their words will be saved for the future, which could also make them prone to present themselves and their organisation in a good light.

To make sure that the transcriptions would be as close to reality as possible, they were done right after the interviews. As previously discussed, when coding and analysing I have continuously been going back and read the transcripts to capture the context the quotes derive from. In line with the inductive approach of this study some questions have been added between the interviews when the interviewees contributed with new perspectives. This could be an additional way to give a better picture of the reality. One drawback of the study is that the interviews were hold in Swedish and are translated by me to English. Since English is not my mother tongue there is a risk that the data might be translated in a way that does not picture the accurate meaning of the quotes. Because of lack of resources for this study there was not an alternative to hire a professional translator. However, even though some parts of the quotes could lose the accurate meaning I would still not like someone else to translate the quotes because that person would not have been present during the interviews to hear the stories and understand the context surrounding the stories. When I translated the interviews, I remembered the context the words were said in and based on my experiences in the field it might be easier for me to understand the meaning of what is said when translating. I think that contributes to a data that is closer to the context.

Transferability refers to in what scale the result of the study holds in other contexts or in the same context but at another time. Qualitative research is more about presenting a deep picture of a phenomena rather than presenting a broad general picture as in quantitative research. Instead the aim is to produce, what Geertz calls thick description, of a phenomenon. This thick description will then serve as detailed material about a phenomena for others to make judgment about the possible transferability of the findings in other contexts (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). In order to make it possible for others to make this judgement about the possible transferability, many deep questions about the interviewee's experiences have been asked. In addition to this, a background about the issue within a Swedish context and how the organisation of the housing facilities work were presented in the beginning of the study. A reader that is not familiar with the Swedish system of support to individuals in homelessness and substance abuse, might with this background information understand how the housing facilities are organised and easier make a judgment wheatear the results of this study are possible to transfer to other contexts.

To ensure a trustworthy investigation approach the researcher should be able to report the

process of all phases in the research. This implies dependability (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). In order to ensure this, notes have systematically been kept during the whole process of reflections and problems that have been thought of and problems that have come up during the processes of the conduction of the literature review, the recruitment of interviewees, conducting the interviews, transcribing, coding and analysing the data. This has been presented in this study for others to take part of. In addition to this a supervisor from the university of Gothenburg has been involved in the process

Confirmability recognises that it is impossible for the researcher to be completely objective in social research, but it has to be shown that the researcher at least has acted in good faith. To do this the researcher should be able to show that personal values or theoretical inclinations have not had an overtly strong influence in the conduction of the research and the result deriving from it (Bryman, 2012, pp. 392–393). Violence against women is a question of personal importance to me and I work at a protected shelter for women. I have knowledge about this subject and the subject brings a lot of feelings to me, which could affect my objectiveness. One way of avoiding this was by asking the interviewees to define VAW and let their definition be leading the interviews.

I have worked at some of the housing facilities a few times, where I have met some of the interviewees. I am aware that this could affect my neutrality and objectiveness as a researcher (comp. Bryman, 2012, pp. 392–393). Since the interviewees knew about my pre-knowledge, they might assume that I know certain things that I might not know, or even if I know it, the information might not be captured in the data. Hence, some information could have been left out. To limit this risk during the interviews, I tried to ask them to define certain terms they used, even though I could understand what they meant. I also asked a lot of follow-up questions to get their deep explanations. In addition to this I sometimes summed up their answers and asked if it was correctly understood. Even though there might be limitations, I think my pre-knowledge mainly has been an advantage. Since the social workers knew that I have experiences of working at housing facilities, it might be easier for them to talk about these cases, since they know that I can understand their struggles. As previously discussed it also made it easier for me to ask deep and detailed follow-up questions.

5.9 Ethical considerations

The ambition of ethical considerations in research is to protect human's dignity, autonomy and integrity (Kalman & Lövgren, 2012). Discussions about ethical principles in social research is usually concerned by the following issues: "whether there is harm to the participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy, whether deception is involved" (Bryman, 2016 p. 125). In accordance to the Swedish Scientific Council the four main demands in social science research in order to protect individuals is to give information about the research, get consent from the participants after the information is given, give confidentiality and only to use the material accordingly to its purpose (Vetenskapsrådet n.d.). In line with these ethical guidelines a document about informed consent was created and read out loud to them in Swedish, their native language. The document was also given to the interviewees, so they could read it, sign it and keep a copy of it. They were informed about the purpose of the study, that the interviews would be recorded, informed how the data would be kept so no one else could access it, and that they will be anonymous. They were also informed that the data only will be used to its stated purpose and will not be handed over to any other individual or company (comp. Bryman, 2012, pp. 126–127). Potter & Hepburn (2012) emphasise the importance to give a full description of the research to the participants before the interview is conducted. They state that it is important to be able to prove that the information has been given. For this reason, the recording was started in the very beginning to capture their consent after them having heard the given information.

When writing the study certain measures have been taken to strive for that individuals and housing facilities would not be identifiable (comp. Bryman, 2016, p. 127). The interviewees have been anonymised by calling them social worker 1-6, as well as not revealing their gender. These numbers are given randomly and are not based on in which order I interviewed them. The housing facilities are not named, and the geographic location of the housing facilities are not revealed. In some cases, small parts in quotes were changed to make the individuals and housing facilities even less identifiable. These measures were taken from the beginning when I transcribed each of the interviews. At two times quotes that describe the environment of the housing facilities, are used. To avoid that someone could understand at what housing facilities that interviewees work at, and connect it to something else that person has said, the interviewees are in these cases called social worker x. During the interviews the

social workers anonymised the housed individuals they were talking about. In one situation a social worker gave a brief description of two housed individual's appearance, but this information was not written down in the transcription to avoid that housed individuals would be identifiable.

The decision to include some of the housing facilities where I have worked in the sample were taken after ethical considerations. I am still obliged to follow the professional secrecy as a social worker that have worked at the housing facilities. I am also obliged to follow the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Scientific Council. Because of these obligations I do everything I can to ensure that no housed individuals are identifiable. However, I thought it still could be an ethical issue if I would be able to identify what housed individuals the social workers were talking about, even if they anonymised the individuals. This could be an ethical issue since the housed individuals have not given their consent for me to take part of information about them personally. Based on that I have just worked a few times at the concerned housing facilities and that it was a long time ago, made me conclude that I would not be able to understand which housed individuals the social workers were talking about. After conducting the interviews, it can also be concluded that I did not have any guesses of which individuals the social workers were talking about.

One ethical dilemma that occurred during the process was recruiting interviewees. The original plan was to contact the Staff Managers and ask them to refer me to two of their staff that I could interview. This plan was changed when I realised that it could imply possible harm to the participant. As previously explained the interviewees, housing facilities and the geographical location of the housing facilities, were planned to be anonymised. However, I realised that there is still a risk that the Staff Managers of the interviewees would guess who has said what, since they would know who of their staff that was participating. This might create a risk of conflict, for example if the respondents would criticise the organisation. To reduce this risk the social workers were asked to answer me straight by phone or email if they were interested. In addition to this they were also offered to conduct the interviews at the university to be in a neutral location. Two of the interviews took place at the housing facilities where the interviewees work, which can imply that co-workers and Staff Managers could know about their participation.

Another ethical dilemma is that the social workers have been talking about traumatic memories of women they have had a relation to. I do not know how the interviewees personally have dealt with these incidents and memories. Speaking about these incidents could imply that they relive traumatic experiences. Taken this into consideration the interviewees were informed that they could decline to answer questions and end the interview, without any further explanations. I was also informed before the interviews that the organisations of the housing facilities can give the social workers some sessions of counselling free of charge, if needed. My idea was to remind them of this, in case I noticed that they were emotionally affected during or after the interviews. One of the social workers expressed in the end of the interview that it felt good to get an opportunity to speak about these experiences to process these memories to get ready to tackle future obstacles.

The interviewees were asked to share incidents about housed women subjected to violence. Even though the women were anonymised by the social workers, the women did not get the chance to decide how their stories should be told. This could be seen as problematic, because the concerned women will not be given the chance to define their problems and how their stories are told. Maybe the housed women would have shared another narrative, for example they might have presented themselves in a less victimised role than what the social workers might do. However, the interest of this study lies in the experiences of the social workers, to understand how they define the problem and how they act upon it. This was the reason for not interviewing the housed women. I hope that more research will be done about this group of women where they get to be part in defining the problem and sharing their experiences. Steen (2003) explains that VAW is often described in accordance with the “normalise process theory”, which also is used in this study, where women often are pictured as victims of men’s violence unambiguously. This might limit the conceptions of the effect of the violence and the concerned women’s experiences and needs. However, this view helps the problem to be looked upon as a societal problem and be put on the political agenda (Steen, 2003). In addition to this I think this theory is important in order to understand the psychological processes to be able to give women subjected to violence adequate support and help. To limit the risk of picturing the women as passive victims in this study, I do not use the word victim and neither did the interviewees. However, in the literature review the word victim and victimised are used and when referring to previous research these terms are used.

6 Results and analysis

The aim of this study is, from a Swedish point of view, to investigate and analyse how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women. To fulfil the aim, the three following research questions is answered in this chapter: How do the social workers understand the issue of violence against women at the housing facility? How do the social workers explain the occurrence of violence against women at the housing facilities? How are the social workers handling the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities? In this chapter the research questions are answered by analysing the information gathered from the interviews, through the previous described theoretical framework. The theoretical framework consists of both individual and structural perspectives of VAW, as well as the normalisation process theory, the social support theory and two perspective of power; *power over* and *power to*. The information is also compared to, and analysed through the previous research, that was presented in the literature review. The first question is mainly answered by analysing the information through previous research, but also to some extent through structural perspective of VAW. The second question is answered by analysing the information through the two different perspectives of VAW; structural and individual. The last question is answered by analysing the information through the social support theory as well as the concepts of *power over* and *power to*. The normalisation process theory is used both when answering question one and question two.

6.1 How do the social workers understand the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities?

6.1.1 A continuum of sexual acts

All of the social workers have experiences of housed women being subjected to violence at the housing facilities. They explain that the housed women are subjected to different types of violence such as physical, psychological, sexual and economical. In the following quote a social worker describes physical injuries on a housed woman subjected to violence: *“In her case, there were visible bruises, black eyes, injuries from burns, cuts and things like that”* (Social worker 3). The social workers also use examples of when women have been locked in, isolated and how men make them dependent on them by providing substances. In the

following quotes the social worker gives examples of violence that have been occurring at a housing facility:

She has been held captive in her apartment, her passport, bankcards and all her money were confiscated... Many of these men exploit their women by forcing them to prostitute themselves. (Social worker 4).

She had been abused in her room during a long period of time when we discovered how much bruises and other injuries she had, it was really bad. The fact that this had been going on in our housing facility felt horrible. And she denied, but in the end, she couldn't walk because both her legs and arms were broken. (Social worker 4).

In the described cases above, the violence can be described as physical, psychological, economical and sexual. A woman has been held captive and other women have been forced to prostitute themselves.

The social workers explain how the housed women use transactional sex as a survival strategy to get substances, services and protection: *“Some women that live in these environments are so much more vulnerable and as a survival strategy [...] I think that women in this environment exchange sex for some form of safety, maybe protection, favours like for example drugs maybe. Sometimes this might be a factor of why the women stay in these destructive relationships.”* (Social worker 6). This is in accordance with previous research suggesting that women in homelessness are likely to engage in prostitution as they encounter the daily problems of finding food, work, and shelter (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). In the study of Socialstyrelsen (2011a) professionals state that it is common that women exchange sexual services to get access to shelter and drugs. Social worker 6 also explains how transactional sex leads to that women end up in relationships where they are subjected to violence. This can be compared to the study of Socialstyrelsen (2011a) that demonstrates that the ones purchasing the sexual services often are subjecting the women to violence. Also in the study of Tucker et al. (2005) sheltered women reported being subjected to violent incident while trading sex.

The social workers also explain that the housed women often stay in relationships with men as a survival strategy to get protection, even though also these men might subject the women to violence: *“If you have a man, even if he is mean and horrible, you won't at least be exploited by other men. Both as protection and safety are reasons for why they would expose themselves to this.”* (Social worker 4). The previous quote can be understood as even if the

woman gets subjected to violence by her partner it might still be a better alternative, because otherwise she risk being subjected to violence by other men. This can also be explained in line with the study of Evans & Forsyth (2004) that showed that women in homelessness are likely to rely on traditional female strategies of survival. The study also showed that it was only women that reported entering into and maintaining intimate relationships in order to cope with homelessness. This will be further developed in chapter 6.2.

The violence that the social workers describe, also consists of threats of violence. These threats are explained to be both implicit and explicit: *"It's these fine nuances of violence, that someone makes themselves a bit bigger. Sometimes when you are at the office you see gestures [...]"* (Social worker 5). To live with a general fear of being subjected to violence is also used as an example of violence that the housed women are subjected to, which is demonstrated in the two following quotes. *"The fear is hard to pinpoint. But if you have been subjected to loud, violent men previous in your life, and then you come to a housing facility, even if it's not the same men that have violated you, it's still the same pattern."* (Social worker 5). *"She got away but will still be aware of that he lives down there and I live up here, and the staff is only here during the day... It's hard for them, I understand that."* (Social worker 2). This perception of violence can be understood to be in accordance with the concept "continuum of violence" where VAW are seen as a continuum of sexual acts. The continuum of violence includes violence such as transactional sex and to live with a general fear of being subjected to violence. The continuum of violence includes general limitation that women face in society, by having to take potential violence into consideration in their life, which clearly is the fact for the housed women (Kelly, 1988). Kelly (1988) also uses the concept continuum of fear, and based on previous fearful experiences women might constantly need to be aware of the environment to predict men's actions and motives. The social workers explain that the women, based on previous experiences, might have to live with a general fear of being subjected to violence. In other words, the women are also subjected to violence in the sense that they might live with a general fear of being subjected to violence at the housing facilities.

6.1.2 A place with a range of different potential perpetrators

The social worker describes that the environment of the housing facilities as *"an environment of criminality and drugs"* (Social worker 5) with violence as a natural part in it. They describe how this environment makes all individuals living here vulnerable: *"[...] the vulnerability is so much bigger here, because so many persons in need, in active substance abuse and in*

homelessness, are gathered here.” (Social worker 3). This is in accordance with previous research, suggesting that homelessness in itself can lead to greater exposure to violence (Harris et al., 1994). Harris et al. (1994) further explains that both men and women in homelessness experiences traumas and abuse, but women are more vulnerable than men to sexual and physical victimisation. In the study of Evens & Forsyth (2004) it was found that women were more likely than men, to have been subjected to sexual abuse. Even though the social workers do not explicitly express that the housed women are in a greater risk than the housed men to be subjected to violence, all of them express that women are vulnerable and are in a risk to be subjected to violence at the housing facilities: *“Unfortunately, I would say that that the risk is very high that women will be subjected to some form of violence here. Especially during the night.”* (Social worker 3). *“The women are vulnerable, I think it is many of the women that are scared to be raped, harassed and things like that.”* (Social worker 2).

When the social workers describe cases of VAW at the housing facilities, they mainly use examples where perpetrator is a man. This can be compared to the study of Holmberg et al. (2005) of women with substance abuse subjected to violence. In the study, the majority of the reported incidents were women being subjected to violence by a man. The social workers used examples of male perpetrators that the housed women might or might not have a relation to: *“It might be that they had a relationship, has a relationship or that the woman sometimes say that she wants to have a relationship with him. He barged into her apartment, and sometimes she says it’s okay and sometimes she calls us and ask for help to get him out. But it’s impossible.”* (Social worker 3). The social worker also explains that women risk being subjected to violence by men that live in the same housing facility: *“The women might feel threatened by other men living here. Nine persons might live in the same staircase. It only takes that someone is mentally unstable. They might be scared to go home and walk the stairs.”* (Social worker 2). The social workers also explain that non-housed individuals move around in the area of the housing facilities and that implies a risk for the housed women:

What happens is that it’s hard for the women, also for the men to say no, to not let people into their apartment at night. Many people that doesn’t live here, comes here anyway. Many of them live at another housing facility. This is also a risk for the women, because these people enter their apartments and it hard for them to say no. (Social worker 3).

One of the social workers gives an example when a woman was subjected to violence by a non-housed individual: *“One external individual entered the apartment and touched himself in front of a housed individual. She was too afraid to reject the person.”* (Social worker 6).

In line with previous research suggesting that violence is often an essential factor for women becoming homeless (Evans & Forsyth, 2004), the social workers explain that the women might have moved into the housing facilities as a way to get away from men subjecting them to violence. However, by moving into a housing facility, they still risk being subjected to violence. This is demonstrated in the following quote. *“You might be protected from the person that subjected you to violence, but you will still be in an environment of criminality and drugs and you will meet persons that might have subjected other people to violence. So, it just continues, you will be exposed to the same thing but at another place.”* (Social worker 5).

In the previous quotes it is demonstrated that the social workers experience that in cases of VAW at the housing facilities, there is a range of different perpetrators or potential perpetrators. They describe that the housed women risk being subjected to violence by men living at the housing facility. It is also described that non-housed men might move around in the area and force themselves into the women’s apartments, which puts them in risk to be subjected to violence. This can be compared to the study of Tucker et al. (2005) where the worst events of the sheltered women involved a range of different perpetrators, as partners, former partners, acquaintances, strangers, potential sex-trade customers and relatives. In contrast to this, relatively few non-homeless women reported assaults from other perpetrators than partners or former partners. When homeless women and non-homeless women, with substance abuse were compared in the study of Beijer et al. (2018) the result demonstrated that homeless women had almost a six times higher risk having experienced violence from a male friend or acquaintance. Based on the fact that the housed women risk being subjected to violence by intimate partners, as well as housed men living next to them and non-housed men that might force themselves in their homes, it can be understood that the housed women live in risky environments. This is in accordance with the study of Tucker et al. (2005) suggesting that women living in shelters have a high-risk life and a big vulnerability to victimisation.

Even though the social workers described that the housed women risk being subjected to violence by a range of different perpetrators, most of the times in the described incidents, the perpetrator was described as an intimate male partner living at the same housing facility as the

woman: “[...] I experienced that many of the times that I suspected violence it was between couples.” (Social worker 4). This is in accordance with the study of Tucker et al. (2005). Even though, the sheltered women had higher risk than the non-homeless women to be subjected to violence by other perpetrators than intimate partners/former partners, 62% of the sheltered women still reported incidents of violence with a partner of former partner involved (Tucker et al., 2005).

A few of the social workers also develop the complex picture of who the perpetrator is. The social workers express that women can subject other women to violence and some women might subject their male partners to violence: “We never saw anything physical, we heard discussions, sometimes he had injuries that he accused her for and sometimes she had injuries that we suspected him for.” (Social worker 6). The social worker describes that it might be hard to know what is going on between housed couples. In the described case, also the man was accusing the women for subjecting him to violence, while the woman did not accuse the man, but the Social worker’s suspected it, based on her injuries. In the following quote the social worker explains another case where it seems to be hard to determine who the perpetrator is and who the one being subjected to violence is:

The woman had for a long period of time described that this man, that has a better financial situation than the woman, were demanding sex in exchange for drugs and money. At the same time, she demanded half of his medications and money in order to stay in the relationship with him. A couple of months ago when he was physically injured and in a bad shape, it was discovered that she was abusing him, so she was discharged from the housing facility. (Social worker 1).

It seems like the social workers think it is a transaction of services between the couple. The woman is providing sexual services to get substances. Even though the social worker might think the woman is subjected to violence by having to provide sexual services to the man, the social workers also seem to think that the woman is subjecting the man to some form of violence, by demanding substances and money in order for her to stay together with him. However, since the woman is dependent on the man to get substances, it is questionable whether what she demands really can be compared to what he demands, since he can be considered to be in a position of power (comp. Tew, 2006). In the end it was obvious for the social worker that the woman was subjecting the man to physical violence after he got sick, and because of this she was discharged from the housing facility.

In the following quote the social worker also address that women might subject other women at the housing facilities, to violence:

[...] today we have many women that live here, which creates new problems. They might subject each other to violence and threaten each other. It's very similar to male behaviour, the women often adopt a male behaviour. (Social worker 4).

This quote can be understood as the environment of homelessness, in which the housing facilities are situated, can in line with the research of Huey and Berndt (2008) be understood as a masculine space. The women have adopted to this environment with a behaviour that is explained as masculine. This can also be compared to Armelius & Armelius (2010) suggesting that women with substance abuse subjected to violence, might adopt a violent behaviour.

6.2 How are occurrences of violence against women at the housing facilities explained?

6.2.1 Structural explanations of violence against women

During the interviews, explanations behind why the housed women and women in general, are subjected to violence got visible. Half of the social workers partly used structural explanations for the violence that the women are subjected to: *"It can be explained by the power structures, the woman's ID and money were taken and that sort of things."* (Social worker 4).

I think the women have a fundamental vulnerability. Women often have smaller pension, because they've worked less in their lives, have had a lower salary and women in general often work in low wage occupations, so their economies are not so good. This might put you in situations where you are economically dependent on others or are forced to do things that you are not comfortable with, because you cannot afford any other option and you have to pay with other services. (Social worker 2).

The previous quotes can be interpreted as the social worker explains VAW as a result of the patriarchal social system. The social worker explains that women might have less access to independence because of their financial situation. It can be understood that women, due to gender power structures in society, generally have other preconditions than men do. There are inequalities between genders based on different access to social, economic and cultural sources of power, both structural and local. Since women might be dependent on men, it

might result in that women have less resources for resisting or challenging violence that they might be subjected to (comp. Tew, 2006; Walby, 1989).

The social workers have a wide definition of violence: *“Also general in society, there is so much violence against women through all norms that violates individuals right to autonomy, to live your life as you want, instead women are given a template. I think it is harder for women than men,”* (Social worker 2). The quote can be understood as the social worker use a structural explanation and describe VAW as a result of the patriarchal social system. The definition of violence is in accordance with the concept of “continuum of violence”, were violence has a wide definition and also societal norms limiting women could be considered as violence (comp. Kelly, 1988). Another of the social workers explains VAW in the following way:

All violence that makes a woman question who she is, her identity, how she is allowed to be or not to be. [...] men’s violence against women get very tangible and concrete when your body is no longer your own body, someone else has taken the right to decide what should be done with your body. It’s no longer on your terms. (Social worker 3).

The social worker explains VAW as a result of a society where men can decide over women’s bodies, like for example buying a woman’s body for sexual purposes (comp. Steen, 2003).

6.2.2 Violence against women in patriarchal micro societies

A few of the social workers combined the above described structural explanations of VAW, with perspectives of the environment of substance abuse and homelessness in which the housing facilities are situated. This understanding of the problem is demonstrated in the following quote.

When you speak about violence you think about physical violence, but my experience is that it’s much about control, power and it’s about women that are so much more vulnerable than women in general. This is about them being dependent, often on a man. [...] Here the man has another purpose. Many women explain that they need the man for protection, protection from other men. If you have a man, even if he’s mean and horrible, at least you won’t be exploited by other men. (Social worker 4).

It can be understood as the social worker compares women in general and women in homelessness/substance abuse and explain how the latter group of women are more vulnerable to the societal gender power structures, since they in their need of substances and protection depend even more on relationships to men. The social worker further explains: *“Also women that are not in relationships. Not to generalise, but if the women have had a*

long-lasting substance abuse, they are vulnerable and in some strange way has to reach out to men.” (Social worker 4). This can be compared to the study of Evans & Forsyth (2004) where only women reported enter into, and maintain intimate relationships in order to cope with homelessness. The previous quotes can be interpreted as women are oppressed because of the patriarchal social system, which makes it harder to access social, economic and cultural sources of power (comp. Tew, 2006; Walby, 1989). The housed women, that are in substance abuse and homelessness, might be even more dependent on men since they often need men as survival strategies, to get access to protection and substances. The fact that the housed women might be more depending on men than women in general, could imply that the gender power relations are even stronger in this environment, in which the housing facilities are situated. One could say that within the patriarchal social system the housing facilities are micro societies with an even higher concentration of patriarchy.

6.2.3 Individual focused explanations of violence against women

As previously discussed, during the interview’s explanations that can be understood in line with a structural perspective, of why the housed women might be subjected to violence got visible. Beside these explanations the social workers also used explanations that can be understood to have an individual focused perspective (comp. Steen, 2003). These explanations were both used to explain why the housed women might be subjected to violence and why the housed men might perpetrate violence. The social workers explained that the housed women’s history of having experienced traumas might lead them to enter violent relationships: *“What you have been subjected to in regard to different traumas might affect you, especially depending on how you react to different situations or knows how to say no.”* (Social worker 6). Another social worker also explains how a woman’s previous experiences of being subjected to violence since childhood might be factors of why she enters violent relationships:

Her history leads her into very destructive relationships. She has a history of being abused by men. She has been abused by men here as well. Both by men living here and men not living here. [...] In this woman’s case, she has been subjected to violence since she was a small child, this is her normalised world, this is what she knows, and it is very clear that she needs validation from men. (Social worker 3).

The social worker explains that because of the woman’s past, violence is normalised, and the woman needs to be validated by men. This could be one reason for why she enters abusive relationships. Holmberg et al. (2005) explains how women with substance abuse often have

been subjected to violence from the time they were children, and the violence has become normalised, both by themselves and by society. According to Stein et al. (2002) women's experiences of childhood abuse are a direct predictor of later physical abuse. Childhood abuse also had a significant indirect effect on substance abuse problems and chronic homelessness. Armelius & Armelius (2010) explain that substance abuse might also be a way for women to cope with experiences of trauma. Both the social workers and the previous research explain why housed women are subjected to violence by using psychological explanations, such as experiences of childhood abuse and previous traumas. These explanations can be understood as individual focused explanations (comp. Steen, 2003).

Apart from giving explanations for why the housed women are subjected to violence, the social workers also give explanations for why the housed men might be violent and subject women to violence, which is demonstrated in the following quotes: “[...] *I don't really think any man really wants to beat up someone. It depends on so many things, like frustration over living like this and not to get somewhere. To have a substance abuse and all the time...*” (Social worker 4).

Unfortunately, I think that some violence occurs because of frustration over lack of drugs, your life situation, feelings of “who am I?” Sometimes I think that the person that happens to be subjected to violence, it might not have to do with gender but frustration over your bad life situation. (Social worker 5).

These explanations can be interpreted as men in substance abuse and homelessness, might feel frustration over their life situation and as a result of this be violent. In the second quote it is explained that this does not have to do with gender. These explanations can be understood to have a perspective that focuses on individual factors (comp. Steen, 2003). Steen (2003) gives an example of individual focused perspective of VAW by referring to Hedlund, that can be compared to the social workers' explanations. Hedlund explains that violence is a way for a man to demonstrate power. The masculinity grows stronger in him if he deprives a woman from the power that he thinks she disposes. In this way the man uses his sex to get rid of feelings like anger, powerlessness, insecurity and inferiority. According to Hedlund the man's violence is not in control, instead the man rapes in blind rage. This view differs from feministic violence researchers, that rather emphasise that the man is in control when he abuses the woman and might for example wait until they are alone (Steen, 2003). Steen (2003) suggests that these kinds of individual focused analysis of violence is limited to an

intra-psychological level with traditional psychological theories and terms, which gives rather individual than structural explanations.

Substance abuse and homelessness was often used as explanations for both housed women being subjected to violence and housed men to perpetrate violence. The explanations were often mixed with different individual factors and social problems seen in the following quote:

The combination of an active substance abuse and mental illness, some of them have schizophrenia and some of them have other kinds of mental illnesses. It is clear that this might lead to that the women are even more vulnerable. Both in terms of them having this combination of problems, but also in terms of that the men living here have these problems. They might be violent when they are in a psychosis. The violence might be drug-induced, but also caused by mental illness. (Social worker 3).

The social worker explains how the combination of an active substance abuse and mental disorder might both result in that women are at a greater risk of being subjected to violence and men being more likely to be violent. Also, in the following quotes a similar explanation is given:

The psychological violence against women, this drama of mental hostage-taken, I think it's more common within the area I work in, in comorbidity, substance abuse and mental illness. I think this violence is much more common in these relationships, weather they last a short or a long period of time. I think it's very common and is related to substance abuse, traumas, previous traumas and new traumas. (Social worker 6).

The social workers explain how the combination of mental disorder, substance abuse, violent behaviour as well as psychological factors such as traumas can be part of explanations of VAW at the housing facilities. The social workers present a complex picture of the housed individuals. The housed individuals can be understood to have multifaced problems, which put them at higher risk to be subjected to violence, as well as to perpetrate violence. This is in line with previous research demonstrating that women in substance abuse is a group particularly vulnerable to be subjected to violence (comp. Armelius & Armelius, 2010; Beijer et al., 2018; Birath et al., 2013; Holmberg et al., 2005) and women in substance abuse are in a greater risk to be subjected to violence if they also live in homelessness (Beijer et al., 2018; Birath et al., 2013; Tucker et al., 2005; Wenzel et al., 2004, 2006). In accordance with the explanations of the social workers, the study of Armelius & Armelius (2010) demonstrate that among other factors, mental illness enhanced the likelihood for women in substance abuse to be subjected to violence.

Social worker 6 further explains that: “[...] consequences of a long-term violent behaviour, it leads to some form of psychological abuse that gets stuck and eventually the situation is so tangled up so it’s hard for the woman to get away.” (Social worker 6). This quote can be understood through previous research. Armelius & Armelius (2010) suggests that women subjected to violence might use adaptive strategies, such as solving the situation with substance abuse and maybe violent behaviour. These strategies create a risk for the women to be part of a circle of violent relationships being reproduced.

The previous mentioned research and the social workers explanations can be understood as individual focused explanations of VAW. Being under the influence of alcohol has historically been an explanation and excuse for men’s VAW. These kinds of explanations might lead to enforcing stereotypical images of perpetrators, as for example men in substance abuse, and reduce the structural understanding that men in all socio economical groups might be potential perpetrators (Holmberg et al., 2005).

Even if the individual focused perspective of VAW might stand in contradiction to the structural explanations of VAW, it seems like the social workers use both these perspectives when explaining VAW at the housing facilities. Combining the two perspectives makes it possible to problematise the housed women’s situation even more. The women might be oppressed and exploited as a result of the patriarchal social system. By having individual problems like substance abuse and homelessness as well as living in the masculine environment of the housing facility, the women might be even more vulnerable to oppression and exploitation.

6.2.3 The normalising process of violence

During the interviews the social workers mostly spoke about VAW at the housing facilities in terms of IPV. All the social workers spoke about the difficulty of helping housed women subjected to IPV, because of psychological mechanisms that makes the woman rationalise the violence and wanting to stay together with the man even if he subjects her to violence. In the following quote the social worker explains these psychological mechanisms.

[...] the fact that they stay in these destructive relationships even if they are so abused. Not only in terms of physical but also the mental part, the fear, the projection, the woman’s will to stay. They feel obligated because they are scared that the man will die if they leave him. All these turns that might be a result of the man projecting it on the woman, to make her stay in the relationship. (Social worker 6).

This explanation why the woman stays with the man can be understood through Lundgrens normalising process theory (comp. Steen, 2003). The social worker's explanation can be understood as the woman has internalised the man's motives and rationalisation for the violent acts and as a result of this, starts to see the violence from the man's perspective. Internalising the man's motives of the violence results in feelings of guilt and shame. The guilt is not only in relation to the violence, the woman might also feel guilt just by the thought of leaving the man and the situation it would put him in if she left (Steen, 2003). In the following quote the social worker speaks about a housed woman that remained in an relationship where she was subjected to violence. *"It really was a tragic and broken relationship and she didn't leave it. She said the horrible and typical phrase: 'I see the love in the beating'."* (Social worker 2). Also the previous quote explains how the woman rationalise and trivialise the violence she is subjected to, which can be understood as a result from Internalising the man's perspective of the violence (Steen, 2003).

She really got a lot of help from him too. Even though it was not a safe environment, he was there all the time and could be of quite good help. He made it possible for her to live independently and could be of help to her. So, they had been in a relationship for a long time and they liked each other, but there is a dark side of it as well. (Social worker 2).

The previous quote demonstrates another perspective of the normalising process theory. The social worker also presents a positive side of the relationship, with the man being able to help the women that had difficulties due to her physical health. They also explain that the couple had been together for a long time and that they liked each other. This can be understood through the normalisation process theory which explains that the man is not only violent, he can also be kind and caring and this shift from cold to warm is what ties the woman even stronger to him (comp. Steen, 2003).

Many women are vulnerable, and they easily end up with men that have alcohol and then they get stuck in a destructive pattern where they are badly exploited. [...] But somehow, these men need the drugs to maintain the women's dependence on them, something they probably don't reflect over. This is part of the problem, the woman cannot be allowed to be strong enough to leave, because then she might leave him, and then he will be lonely, not having anything in common anymore. If you have the drugs, you'll always have a bond. (Social worker 2).

The previous quote can be interpreted as the dependence on the man to get substances makes the woman even more tied to him. This could be understood as an aspect that make the normalisation process even stronger. The social worker also explains what could be

understood as the man's perspective of the normalising process. The social worker explains the man's motives to keep the woman dependent on him is to not be lonely. To keep the woman he has to use strategies to feel in power and be in control (comp. Steen, 2003).

6.3 How are the social workers handling the issue of violence against housed women?

6.3.1 Establish a relationship with the housed woman

The majority of the social workers highlight the importance of the relationship to the housed women. It is described as an important factor to be able to support the women subjected to violence:

[...] to have a personal relation to the woman, a relation based on trust, if you call that a method, then it's probably one of the most important. Our strength is that the people have known us for a fairly long time and they trust us, at least quite often. (Social worker 1).

The social worker describes how a long relationship based on trust is one of the most important methods to be able to support the housed women. In the following quote it is also described how this approach might be seen as the best one available to the social workers, when it is not possible to provide physical protection: *"In those situations, I've felt that I have been able to support her, even if I've not been able to physically protect her, I've at least felt that she knows that I see what happens to her."* (Social worker 3).

One of the social workers explains that the women at the housing facility might lack a supportive network which might make their relationship to the housed women even more important:

Because when you miss certain people in life, that many other women subjected to violence have, like co-workers, a family member or a friend that suspect something. This is often not the case for the women here. Of course, they've friends, but most of their friends live in the same situation, and then we get to the point of the normalisation. Most of the other women have experienced the same thing or live in environments where they're subjected to violence. Because of this, they might not say "oh you've been abused" or "what should we do about this?" [...] What they have in terms of social support network, is often staff at the housing facility and the social service worker. They are the ones that can notice what happens to you. (Social worker 3).

The quote can be understood as the social worker thinks the housed women might lack adequate social support from a network that is not normalised to violence. Social support may

come from friends, family, co-workers, pets, social and community ties (Taylor, 2011). It could be interpreted as if the social workers become a deputising social network, that are able to give healthy reactions to the violence the woman is subjected to and offer constructive support.

Because, to some of them one can say “I’m worried you’ll be beaten to death, that you’ll get seriously damaged if you keep on prostituting yourself like this, I feel really worried about you”. The times they might listen to this and take it seriously, is when we have a personal relation. (Social worker 3).

The previous quote can be understood as when a stable personal relationship based on trust has been established, social support, categorised as informational support and emotional support can be accepted (comp. Taylor, 2011). What Vaux (1990) calls “the support incident” is the transaction wherein support is offered or elicited and accepted or rejected. The transaction of social support has to be done in the right way, in order for the other person to accept or elicit the support. It can be interpreted as the women might be able to accept the social support of advices and demonstration of care, because of the established relationship based on trust (comp. Vaux, 1990). The following quote can also be understood through “the support incident”:

In her case we have a strong collaboration with the social service office. I’ve tried to suggest that the best for the woman would be for her to move to a housing facility only for women. The social service worker agreed with me. But the client doesn’t want to live at a housing facility for women only. Then you feel that your hands are tied behind your back, and as a professional it’s hard to do anything concrete. I’ve had to accept to just take a step back and be there and see the gradually building of trust and the relation to the woman, as the winning concept. (Social worker 3).

The social worker has tried to offer a gender specific housing facility, which can be understood as instrumental support by being an offered service. In this transaction, the social support was rejected by the woman. The social worker realised that emotional social support was the only kind of support that was accepted by the woman at this stage (comp. Taylor, 2011; Vaux, 1990).

The majority of the social workers speak about the importance of always addressing the violence in the conversations to the housed women subjected to violence. They describe that by addressing concerns about the housed women being subjected to violence, they are challenging the normalising process of violence. The social worker explains that it is hard for the women to open up about experiences of violence and that when they are asked about it

they often deny it. Because of this it is important to read behind the lines and always address what they see even if the women deny it:

[...] when I've been able to notice and address what I see, like in occasions when she's had distinct bruises and black eyes and so on, we've been able to have good conversations. Sometimes it works and sometimes she doesn't want to talk about it. But sometimes she has talked about it and opened up and talked about what she thinks might be underlying reasons for her to end up in situations where she is abused. (Social worker 3).

In the previous quote it is explained how the social worker repeatedly addressed concerns, when he/she suspected that a woman was subjected to violence. Also, social worker 6 gives a similar example: *"Many times, I've experienced that when we noticed or suspected things, we addressed our concerns, we repeatedly addressed the concerns as the time went by, so that the concerned woman finally dared to open up about it."* (Social worker 6). These described cases can be understood in line with the "support incident", where the helper also may need to show sensitivity by responding to subtle signals. The helper may need to adjust the intensity of support, by for example ignoring assurance that everything is fine (Vaux, 1990). By establishing a relationship and address concerns about the woman being subjected to violence, the women in some cases accepted this emotional support offered and opened up about their situation and experiences (comp. Taylor, 2011; Vaux, 1990). In the following quote, social worker 3 explains how she repeatedly addressed his/her concerns about the woman being subjected to violence, and how the woman at one point said: *"You've asked if I feel vulnerable and I usually answer no, but now I actually feel vulnerable."* It can be understood that at this particular stage the woman was prepared to accept the support that had been offered over time (comp. Vaux, 1990).

As demonstrated in the previous quotes, the social workers explain that it is important to ask about violence. This is in accordance with previous research that emphasise the importance of professionals, that meet women in substance abuse, to always ask about violence (Beijer et al., 2018; Holmberg et al., 2005; Huey et al., 2014; Nationellt centrum för kvinnofrid, 2010; Socialstyrelsen, 2011a; Wenzel et al., 2006). Asking questions about violence makes it possible for the violence to be revealed, but also serves as a way to demonstrate to the women that violence is not acceptable (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). However, the social workers do not seem to always ask about violence as a standardised procedure, which is recommended in previous research (Beijer et al., 2018; Holmberg et al., 2005; Huey et al., 2014; Nationellt centrum för kvinnofrid, 2010; Socialstyrelsen, 2011a; Wenzel et al., 2006). Half of the social

workers explained that they ask about violence when a new client moves in, but only one of them used a standardised questionnaire that among other things address violence. On the question if the social workers at the housing facility always ask about violence social worker 3 answered: *"Well, if it's something concrete. But I think some have scruples about it, because it might be uncomfortable for the client and for the staff."* Some of the social workers explain that it is difficult to ask about violence in the "right way" and that it might feel wrong to ask such sensitive questions to a person that you have only just met: *"What might be problematic is that the questions are asked when the person has just arrived. If it would have been me, if you had been subjected to violence, it's not a question you want to talk about just like that, with a person you've just met."* (Social worker 3).

In these kinds of matters, you want to do it the right way, you want to ask the right questions and not cross the lines, you want to respect the persons integrity. At the same time, you don't want to lose the possibility to speak about it by doing it in the wrong way, because you don't know how many chances you'll get. (Social worker 2).

The previous quotes can be understood through the social support theory. The social workers feel that they have to ask in the right way and not force themselves upon the woman with the questions before they know her. In line with the "the support incident" the social workers are worried that the support, of asking about violence, will not be given in the right way and that the woman because of this might reject the support. Social worker 2 expresses that if this support is offered in the wrong way, it might give the woman negative experiences of support and might make it harder for her to accept support in the future. This view can be understood in accordance with Vaux (1990) explaining that a person's ability to accept or elicit social support might be affected by previously negative experiences.

6.3.2 Keeping the relationship with the housed woman

The social workers express a desire to be able to separate the housed women from the men that subject them to violence, but explains how hard that is, especially when it is IPV. Example of this is demonstrated in the following quotes. *"What is difficult is when people are in relationships, it's in those cases you almost always feel that you fail."* (Social worker 1). *"It's so much easier to solve the problem, when the women have not been abused by a partner, because then we just discharge him."* (Social worker 5).

The majority of the social workers give examples when housed men have been discharged from the housing facilities because of IPV, and when the men have been discharged also the women have left the housing facility together with the men. The social workers explain that this is a dilemma since they cannot help and support the women if they leave the housing facility. This dilemma is explained in the following quote.

What happens is that he's discharged, because that is the rules, if you subject staff or housed individuals to violence, you get discharged. The dilemma with couples is that the woman often leaves with the man if he is discharged, and then there's nothing, she will be even more vulnerable [...] we lose her, the one that is vulnerable, that we are designated to help. (Social worker 4).

The woman can be understood to be tied up in the relationship because of the normalising process of violence, by internalising the man's perspective of the violence. This makes it hard for the woman to leave the man and feel guilt just by the thought of leaving the man (Steen, 2003). With the normalising process theory in mind, it is not hard to understand that also the women leave if their male intimate partners are discharged. The social workers try to protect the women and other housed individuals by discharging the violent men, but it becomes a dilemma when the ones subjected to the violence also leaves. The social workers are not able provide help and support to the woman anymore. The social worker in the following quote explains the feelings he/she had when also the woman left, after that her male partner had been discharged. “[...] a couple of hours goes by and then the woman is missing too. It doesn't feel good, because you know that she probably gets beaten up because he lost his housing.” (Social worker 5).

Two of the social workers describe how they a couple of times have let the perpetrators stay at the housing facility, even if it has been clear that they have subjected their female intimate partners to violence. Social worker 5 gives an example of a situation like this: “*Since that day we decided that the couple could stay, but they had to be separated. She was allowed to go to his room, but he was not allowed to go to her room, because she should have a place of her own.*” (Social worker 5). The social worker describes a strategy to keep the perpetrator in order to still be able to give social support the housed woman. The social worker explains how they tried to protect the woman by not letting the man visit the woman, but they wanted to leave it up to the woman if she wanted to visit the man.

6.3.3 Providing support for the perpetrator

Besides giving counselling to women subjected to violence, the majority of the social workers also explain how they deal with this issue, by also giving support and counselling to the perpetrators. In the following quote a social worker explain how they might do this. *“Also, to offer the one that is suspected to have been violent, different kinds of support, like counselling, relapse prevention, if the violence is related to the substance abuse [...]”* (Social worker 6). The social workers explain how it is easier to help the women by also helping their intimate partners, because then some of the responsibility and obligations they feel for the men are taken off their shoulders and are shared with the social workers. In the following quote a case is described, where a housed woman was subjected to violence by her intimate partner. He did not have a dwelling of his own, instead he lived in the woman’s apartment at the housing facility. The social worker explains that they helped the man to get an apartment of his own, at another housing facility and explains how this might reduce the woman’s feelings of obligation.

[...] to have the possibility to lock the other one out, without having to worry about the other one ending up at the streets. That is something that is hard in these relationships. You might want to feel secure in your own home, but you still might not want to make the other one homeless. (Social worker 2).

The social workers explanations of that the woman might feel obligations towards the man can be understood through the normalising process theory. The internalisation of the violence might make the woman feel guilt towards the man (comp. Steen, 2003). The social worker suggests that if they help the man, like helping him to be referred to a housing, it might reduce some of the responsibility that the woman feels, and it could be easier for her to close him out. In the following quote the social worker also explains how it might be easier for the women if the burden of the man is shared.

He got to talk to someone and that was a relief for her. A relief that someone else sees and talks to him, and “not only tells me to leave him, because I cannot do that”. It was something different and we raised awareness in a different way and that made it easier for us to establish a relation to them both. [...] we noticed that when we talked to the man straight away, it was easier to reach the woman, because she felt that the man got help and someone else talked to the man about this [...] It was not only her responsibility, also someone else saw. (Social worker 4).

In accordance with the normalisation process theory the woman might not only feel guilt towards the man but also towards people around her that express that she should leave the man (Holmberg et al., 2005). The social worker explains that, because of guilt, it might be

hard when someone tries to convince the woman to leave a violent relationship. Because of this they try not to just convince the woman to leave the man and also engage in conversation with the man. This is explained as an approach that can make it easier for the woman to open up about her situation. This can be understood through the ecological perspective of social support theory and the “support incident”. The woman was not in a situation where she was able to accept informational social support of advises to leave the man. However, the woman was able to accept emotional social support when the social worker shared the burden with her, by also trying to talk to and help the man (comp. Taylor, 2011; Vaux, 1990). The situation can also be interpreted as when the woman understood that the man would not be discharged even if she told the social workers about the violence, the social workers were no longer considered a threat and she could accept their support and open up and talk about her situation.

Two of the social workers explain how they also give couples counselling to the housed individuals. In the following quote it is demonstrated how the counselling had an informational dimension by the social workers talking about what kind of behaviour that is acceptable and not:

We had a lot of counselling with them both, about what is okay and what is not okay regarding the violence. As an outsider it's easy to say that a relationship where violence and threats occur, is not a good relationship. But we worked a lot to strengthen them through counselling, about what is okay and not okay to do. (Social worker 5).

In the following quote the social worker also explains how they tried to establish a relationship with both the man and the woman to be able provide informational support to them both (comp. Taylor, 2011).

We talked with them a lot, both individually and with them together. This made it easier to establish a relationship to them both [...] What was hard, was to stay objective, because you have to be objective, to be able to talk about it and address it in different ways, without being judgmental. (Social worker 4).

The social worker continues and describes how they performed this kind of counselling:

We started very generally by asking what they know about violence. They often interpreted violence as when you beat someone. We talked about that there are other forms of violence, like control [...] What is normal, what is not normal, what it is to be vulnerable. The woman might not recognise these terms that we use, because maybe she doesn't feel vulnerable since she is used to the situation. What I mean, is that we often use terms that they don't recognise, so we tried to make the information easier to access, also when talking to the man. (Social worker 4).

As previously stated, the social workers tried to establish a relationship with both the man and the woman to be able to provide support for them both and then tried to help them understand their situation and to find new strategies. This can be understood as informational support which includes advices on what resources and coping strategies that might be necessary to handle a situation (Taylor, 2011). The social worker speaks about the importance of not being judgemental towards the perpetrator, in order to also establish a relationship with him. Seen through the concept of the “support incident” it is different factors that determine if the person offered support is able to accept the support or not (comp. Vaux, 1990). It can be interpreted as the social worker also tried to establish a relation to the perpetrator, so that he would accept the informational support (comp. Taylor, 2011; Vaux, 1990). In other words, the social workers both explain the importance of establishing a working alliance with the man by not being judgmental, but also to demonstrate that the violent behaviour is not acceptable. Orme (2002) suggests that in these kinds of working relationships there should be a balance between having a caring and connecting relationship to the men at the same as being clear in questions of social justice, holding the man responsible for his actions.

Seen from the perspective of the woman, it might be necessary to give this kind of easily accessible information to the woman since she is likely to have normalised the violence. Wenzel et al. (2006) suggests that there might be a need to educate women to recognise behaviour as harmful and inappropriate to facilitate them to take steps to leave abusive relationships.

As previously mentioned, social worker 4 noticed that when the social workers also helped the man, the woman started to open up towards the social workers and to talk about her experiences. However, the social worker describe that they did not have enough capacity to be able to meet her stories of traumatic experiences:

[...] the dilemma was that these stories were much worse than we could ever have expected, it was horrible [...] it was very traumatic experiences and we did not have the resources to deal with these stories. (Social worker 4).

This quote shows that when the woman started to open up the social workers did not have enough resources to meet her needs and provide enough social support (comp. Vaux, 1990).

6.3.4 Controlling the physical room

As previously discussed, all the social workers express that it is hard to help the housed women subjected to violence, especially if it is IPV. In the previous part they described how their best opportunity to provide support is to establish a relationship built on trust with the woman and to keep this relationship even if that means letting her perpetrator stay at the housing facility. The social workers describe that they often feel limited in providing protection for the housed women. One of the social workers express: *“It is often that you see what is happening, but you cannot do anything. There is nothing that can be done, you just have to stand there and watch.”* (Social worker 4). However, the social workers explain that they at least, have the ability to minimise the violence to some extent, by intervening and controlling the physical room of the housing facilities. In the two following quotes the social workers explain how they in a concrete way control the housing facilities by staff presence in common areas and security equipment, to close danger out and to minimise danger inside. *“The staff is always present and available which may have a calming effect. There are surveillance cameras.”* (Social worker x).

We also have high fences surrounding the housing facility, because before people that didn't live here came in, they could for example climb in through the windows and this made the women vulnerable [...] We've also put up big mirrors to see if someone moves around the house or in the corridors where there's blind spots. (Social worker x).

The social workers that do not work at housing facilities that is within a closed area and do not have staff working night time, express that they have less possibility to protect the housed women. In the following quote one of them explains the difference compared to another housing facility. *“It's harder to control this type of building. The housing facility for women was a closed building where no one could enter, because the staff had to open the door for everyone.”* (Social worker 3). The social workers speak about how they in different cases have tried to move women or couples to other housing facilities, where the social workers are able to have more control and thereby provide more protection to the women. They especially speak about suggesting housed women subjected to violence, to move to gender specific housing facilities, in order for them to get more protection. However, it is described that the women often do not want to move there.

The social workers also explain how they personally intervene in situations between housed individuals to prevent violence from happening, which is seen in the following quotes. “[...] *for example, if someone raises their voice, if people are tittle-tattling, we go there straight away and ask what is going on and we often try to interrupt*” (Social worker 4).

[...] I noticed a person that doesn't live here but was still here all the time. They are allowed to have visitors during the day, but I suspected that this man had moved into one of the women's apartment. We tried to be annoying. We went in and confronted him and told the night guard to enter the apartment at every round. (Social worker 3).

In the previous quotes, it has been demonstrated how the social workers try to protect women from being subjected to violence at the housing facilities. It can be understood that they try to minimise potential VAW by controlling the physical room of the housing facilities and intervene between housed individuals, when potential violent situations start to arise. Through the concept of *power over* it can be understood that the social workers feel they have some power to protect the housed women with their professional role. However, it can also be understood that their power to protect the woman might still not be enough. In the following quotes one social worker explains that even if they to some extent can protect the women with their physical presence, it still does not feel like enough. “[...] *Sometimes it feels paltry, because what happens at night when we're not here?*” (Social worker 3).

The same social worker gives an example of when he/she was feeling powerless to help a woman that was in a great risk being subjected to violence:

A woman that was very intoxicated and had passed out in her apartment. There was a man, that no longer lives here, that was very psychotic at the time. He did not have a relationship with the woman. We saw that he'd taken her door key and hanged it around his neck. He sat there next to here like he owned her [...] I remember that we went in there and said “oh my god, are we really going to leave her now in this state? You feel powerless. In this case we asked for the key and made sure the night guard entered the apartment every round. (Social worker 3).

From the previous quote it can be interpreted that the social worker felt that he/she did not have enough power to protect the woman, that can be considered to have been in a high risk being subjected to violence. Apparently, the only measures that could be taken was to take the key from the man and instruct the night guard to control the woman's apartment.

Then you feel that in this kind of housing facility, we are not able to guarantee the safety for women subjected to violence. Because it's a housing facility where both men and women live and here you are exposed to violence. When it's an active substance abuse involved, it's even easier to subject the women to violence. (Social worker 3).

In the previous quote it is demonstrated that the social workers do not think they are able to guarantee a safe environment for women. The reason given for this is that men and women are mixed at the housing facility, and that the housed individuals have an active substance abuse. This view can also be compared to previous research that discusses the issue of gender specific treatment centres and shelters (Greenfield et al., 2007; Holmberg et al., 2005; Laanemets & Kristiansen, 2008; Mattsson, 2005; Missbruket, Kunskapen, Vården, 2011; Palm, 2007).

To minimise IPV, the social workers also try to intervene between the housed individuals. In the following quote a social worker explains how they did regular home visits to the apartment of a housed woman, where her abusive partner unofficially had moved in:

We did the home visits more often and at different times [...] he didn't know when we would turn up, and at least that made it harder to subject her to physical and sexual abuse. It works like a barrier; you know that someone with keys might just turn up and if you're busted it might be consequences. (Social worker 2).

The quote can be interpreted as the social workers at the housing facility tried to at least minimise the violence, by making it harder for the man to subject the woman to violence. The social workers have the power to enter the housed individuals' apartments/rooms and to discharge the housed individuals if they do not follow the rules. This power to discharge someone can be considered extra powerful since the concerned individuals are homeless and risk not having any shelter at all. This power can be understood as *power over*. The productive form of *power over* is protecting power, were the power is used to give protection to vulnerable individuals and their possibility to advancement (Tew, 2006). However, even though they made it harder for the man to subject the woman to violence, there is a lot of time, like at night, when there is no staff present that can control that he does not subject the woman to violence. Hence, the social workers protecting power can be considered to be limited.

The same social worker gives an example of another case where a housed woman was subjected to violence by her intimate partner that did not live at the housing facility: *"In the end they decided that the woman should be discharged from the housing facility. It was based on that we couldn't guarantee her safety [...] to make someone homeless because they are subjected to violence makes me feel shameful"* (Social worker 2). In this situation *power over* was used to discharge the woman, since the man could not be discharged, and the housing

facility could not guarantee her safety, even though discharging her might have put her in a worse situation. It can be seen as the social workers did not have enough protective power or that by discharging her, oppressive power was deployed (comp. Tew, 2006).

In the following quote one social worker explains a strategy to minimise IPV at the housing facility. The strategy was developed together with the couple during counselling.

We made an agreement that we would, as soon as we heard their voices rise, enter the room. To do this much earlier, instead of thinking, as you often do, that they will work it out themselves and it's probably just a small argument. So, we learned to enter the room at an early stage. (Social worker 4).

Also, this quote demonstrate that the social workers try to protect the housed women by interfering in arguments and potential violent situations between couples. It can be interpreted as the social worker tried to deploy *power to*, by forming co-operative working alliances with the couple to find new strategies. However, in the strategy described, the social workers still have a dominant role by entering the room and interrupting the arguments. As a result of this, it could also be understood that the social workers deploy *power over*. *Power over* in its constructive form protect vulnerable individuals to give them possibility to advancement. However, to use power to protect someone, may easily be turned from caring about a person, to caring for a person, which might construct them as inadequate of managing their own life (Tew, 2006). Tew (2006) describes that even though the best practice is to empower individuals, to give them potential to take back power for themselves and to make a long-lasting change, it may be necessary to use direct protective power in extreme and emergency situations. The cases of violence against housed women, that were described by the social workers during the interviews, can be considered to be extreme and situations of emergency. However, the social workers describe how the abusive relationships are ongoing and follows a negative spiral, where women stay in abusive relationships or move on to new abusive relationships. Hence, it can be understood that these extreme and critical situations are something constantly ongoing and emergency solutions are used by the social workers in a long-term perspective. This might be necessary if there is no other way for them to protect the woman, but it might undermine the woman's own ability and trap them in an ongoing position of powerlessness (comp. Tew, 2006).

It seems like the social workers do everything they can to protect the women by using their protective power. However, it is questionable if this power really is enough to provide

protection. It seems more like their protective power is just enough to minimise harm, which is clearly demonstrated in the following quote:

Sometimes you think: it's so much going on with the woman, we'll have to discharge them. But that wouldn't help the woman. Instead they stay here and at least we are able to have some control. Even if they live a destructive life, at least they won't die. (Social worker 4).

The social worker explains that they might at least provide some protection so that the woman does not die. This can be understood in accordance with the study of Holmberg et al. (2005) where some of the respondents tell stories about being abused by men at shelters while the staff was unable to do anything about it. Holmberg et al. (2005) explains that even if the staff tries to protect women from sexualised violence it seems like the sufficient protection cannot be guaranteed at shelters, housing facilities and treatment centres where women are mixed with violent men with substance abuse problems.

6.3.5 Limited power and violence as the norm

As previously discussed, the social workers sometimes feel that they do not have enough power to protect the women subjected to violence at the housing facilities. This lack of power could also be explained by how the problems of this target group is defined by society and thereby what resources that are available for the social workers to help the women. Some of the social workers explain how society is part of normalising the violence that the women are subjected to:

[...] many of the women I spoke with expressed that society thinks they are to blame themselves, because they are addicts, if you are an addict, things will happen, you will be subjected to violence. [...] You blame yourself and there are so many times that I've heard them say, after being subjected to violence: "Ah, I've been through worse". That is the standard answer. (Social worker 3).

It is described that society thinks that women with substance abuse are to blame themselves for the violence they are subjected to, because violence is a natural part of substance abuse, which also is in line with previous research (comp. Holmberg et al., 2005; Socialstyrelsen, 2011a). As, previously discussed in chapter 6.2.3, the social workers describe how the women get normalised to violence by internalising the man's perspective of the violence (comp. Steen, 2003). The previous quote can be interpreted as social workers think that also society is part of normalising the violence. Based on the normalisation process of violence, the women could be understood to internalise society's perspective of the violence they are subjected.

This is in accordance to Armelius & Armelius and Jainchill et al. (2010; 2000) explaining that it is common that the women internalise the experiences of being subjected to violence and blame themselves. In the study of Tucker et al. (2005) it was even more common for women with substance abuse living at shelters to blame themselves and substance use for the violence and rape.

The women here have often been, and are physically abused, but they do not get any help. They are not accepted at the protected shelters for women because they are addicts. They are not accepted by other services, like counselling and things like that, because “they are not to be trusted”. This implies that the women get the signal that they cannot get any help for the violence they are subjected to. (Social worker 4).

In the previous quote another perspective on how society might normalise the violence is presented. It can be interpreted as society normalises the violence the women are subjected to by sending the signals to the women that they cannot get any help. During the interviews, when talking about possible external services to refer the housed women to, some of the social workers express that there are services for women subjected to violence, but the services might not fit women in substance abuse and homelessness:

You can get protected shelters for women, you can get counselling... They cannot really get this. [...] Many of our women are not really in a condition to sit still for 45 minutes or be on time, because they're often in an active substance abuse and they're addicted to drugs and dependent on their man. (Social worker 4).

[...] it's hard involve external services for people that are in a substance abuse. It's hard for them to be on time, to get going, to be home, to be in meetings, to go through processes. There's so many obstacles for a person in substance abuse [...]. (Social worker 2).

The social workers explain that the external services women could be referred to, does not fit the needs of the housed women. This might result in that the women have less possibilities to resist or challenge the violence they are subjected to (comp. Tew, 2006) and it also implies that the social workers have less possibilities to refer the housed women to external support services. This can be understood in accordance with previous literature, explaining that there seems to be an approach that violence is a result of the substance abuse and if the women stop their substance abuse, the violence will stop (Holmberg et al., 2005).

As previously demonstrated, women at the housing facilities have been and risk being subjected to violence. All violence is serious, also to live with a general fear to be subjected to violence, but the majority of the violence described are criminal acts. The social workers

explain that when housed women have been subjected to violence they try to encourage the women to report to the police. However, most of the times the women do not want to do that, which is explained in the following quote.

They often do not want to report to the police, because they do not want to testify. That is our dilemma. We always encourage them to report to the police, to send the signal that violence is not okay and to not be part of normalising violence. We have to be the external, healthy and awaken voice saying; “what you have been subjected to is not normal, you should not have to experience such things”. (Social worker 2).

It can be understood that the social workers try to resist the normalising process of violence by demonstrating to the women that criminal acts of violence should not be accepted and should be reported to the police. In previous research it is described how society and governmental professionals often normalise the violence that women in substance abuse are subjected to (Holmberg et al., 2005). This view is also demonstrated in the following quote: “[...] *it’s very obvious, that they are considered to be second-class citizens. They are not prioritised, it’s very sad.*” (Social worker 3). Just by describing that the housed women are considered to be second-class citizens, demonstrates that the social worker try to resist society’s normalisation of the violence that the housed women are subjected to.

It the previous quote of social worker 2, it can be interpreted as the social worker deploys co-operative power by engaging the woman as active partner in work. In accordance to this concept of power, it may help the woman mobilise power and challenge feelings of powerlessness (Tew, 2006). However, since the women rarely want to report incidents of violence to the police, one could say that the violence to some extent remains normalised and accepted. One of the other social workers, explains that they always file a report to the police when they witness women being subjected to violence, even if the woman does not want to report it to the police. The social worker explains that they do this to resist the normalisation of the violence. With this approach the chance to form co-operative power is lost and it could be considered as paternalistic not to leave it up to the woman if she wants to report it or not. However, if the social workers are too keen on forming co-operative working alliances, they might desist from using possible protective power to report to the police. To not always report incidents of violence to the police, could imply that they deploy collusive power (comp. Tew, 2006).

As previously discussed, the social workers are aware of society's normalisation of the violence and they try to resist being part of it. However, some of the social workers explain how they still might be normalised to the violence at the housing facilities. In the quote below, the social worker describes the environment of the housing facilities, which are also their everyday work environment, as rough and violent:

There are much threats and violence here, also against staff. A rough climate quickly gets normalised, both as a work environment for us and as a home for the housed individuals. [...] I think that many of their feelings are projected on the staff. Because when they say: "I've been through worse", I think they transfer this view to us. As a result you unconsciously, even if you know it's not okay to be subjected to violence, still will say: "okay, you don't want to report it to the police", but you shouldn't let it go, even if you cannot force anyone to report to the police, it still has to stay in your mind. (Social worker 3).

The quote can be interpreted as also the social workers at the housing facilities are part of a normalising process of violence. This might be a result of that they work in the violent environment and where they even might be subjected to violence themselves. In addition to this they often hear the women trivialise and normalise the violence they are subjected to. Through the normalisation process theory, it can be understood that these rationalised explanations are the result of the women internalising the perpetrators perspective of the violence. The social workers might get used to hear these rationalised explanations and as a result of this, also internalise the perpetrators perspective of the violence. By this internalisation, the social workers norms about violence might also be pushed (comp. Steen, 2003). Another social worker expresses a similar opinion: *"Through the way the woman speaks about it, it gets normalised to us. Especially if she trivialises the violence. Because of this, it's good to speak about it with someone external that can help us see clearly."* (Social worker 2). The social worker also thinks that they might get normalised to the violence and explains that it is important to get professional coaching to be able to see the violence with an outside perspective. As previously presented in several parts of Results and Analysis, the social workers stress the importance of them being able to support the women by resisting their normalisation process of violence. They explain that they can do this by giving objective and healthy reactions to the violence that the housed woman are subjected to. Hence, it is important that the social worker does not get normalised to the violence and social worker 2 explains how they try to avoid that.

To limit the risks of also the social workers normalising the violence, the social workers express that they would like to develop ways to keep the issue as an ongoing professional

discussion. This is demonstrated in the following quote: *“A rough climate gets normalised quickly. [...] I would really like to get concrete tools, that can help us keeping the issue as a constantly present discussion.”* (Social worker 3). In the following quote one social worker describes how the issue always should be taken into consideration, not just in cases of emergency. *“To always have it as a question for discussion [...] not only react in cases of emergency.”* (Social worker 5). Two of the social workers, also explain situations when they, based on their knowledge about VAW, tried to take other actions in how to intervene in relation to housed women subjected to violence, but professionals at a higher level, without this knowledge, were standing in their way doing so. This is demonstrated in the following quotes: *“We felt that it might not have been based on knowledge about IPV. The staff has this knowledge, but they didn’t take our view into consideration.”* (Social worker 2).

We spoke about our project at seminars, but when we were about to take it a step further by talking to our politicians about it, we didn’t have the courage to see it through. The reason for this was that the administrative management didn’t have knowledge about the issue. (Social worker 4).

This is in line with previous literature suggesting that apart from the staff’s knowledge, it is important on an organisational level to systematically deal with the issue (Huey et al., 2014; Socialstyrelsen, 2011a, 2011b).

Except for these described organisational changes, some of the social workers also talk about changes that should be done on a structural level. The social workers think more resources should be devoted, and more attention should be drawn, to the situation of the target group, which is demonstrated in the following quote.

[...] This target group is forgotten in so many ways. The most important thing to change on a political level, is to start prioritising this target group. [...] it’s very obvious, that they are considered to be second-class citizens. They are not prioritised, it’s very sad and the fact that these women are so clearly vulnerable, gives me great frustration. (Social worker 3).

Based on the quote it can be understood that the housed women are part of a target group that is not prioritised in society and the violence they are subjected to is normalised. In accordance with the concept of *power over*, the social workers may feel that they are subjected to limiting power by the organisation or society, by not be given more resources to help the women. Hence, helping the women on an individual level by reducing the harm seem to be the approach, rather than working for structural changes and concrete interventions.

7 Conclusions

The aim of this study is, from a Swedish point of view, to investigate and analyse how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women. To fulfil the aim three research questions was posed and they have been answered in the previous chapter. In the following chapter the answers of the research questions are summarised and answered in a more concrete way. After that, discussions about personal reflections and ideas for future research will be presented. The study will end with a final summary.

7.1 How does the social workers understand the issue of violence against women at the housing facilities?

The social workers describe the environment of homelessness and substance abuse, in which the housing facilities are situated, as rough, criminal and violent. The social workers consider the housed women to be vulnerable and at a great risk to be subjected to violence at the housing facilities. All of the social workers have experiences of housed women being subjected to violence at the housing facilities. The women are, and risk being, subjected to violence by intimate partners as well as a range of different perpetrators. In the majority of the described incidents the perpetrator was a man. A few cases that were described were more complex and demonstrated that sometimes it might be hard for the social workers to determine who is the perpetrator and who is the one subjected to violence.

7.2 How are occurrences of violence against women at the housing facilities explained?

The social workers use both structural and individual focused explanations of the violence that the women at the housing facilities, are subjected to. They also explain why the women stay in the violent relationships by using explanations that can be understood through the normalising process theory. The woman internalises the perpetrator's perspective of the violence she is subjected to and in this way, the violence gets normalised and rationalised. The social workers explain that women risk being subjected to violence, as a result of the patriarchal social system. They also presented a complex picture of the housed individuals

with multifaced problems, both resulting in women being in greater risk of being subjected to violence, as well as men to perpetrate violence. The relationship to men is also explained to be part of the women's survival strategies in the environment of substance abuse and homelessness, in which the housing facilities are situated. The women might be dependent on men to get access to protection and substances. Also, the men providing protection might subject the women to violence. The fact that the housed women might be more dependent on men than women in general could imply that the gender power relation are even stronger in this environment. One could say that within the patriarchal social system the housing facilities are micro societies with an even higher concentration of patriarchy. The individual factors such as homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness as well as the environment of the housing facility, makes the women even more vulnerable in the patriarchal social system.

7.3 How are the social workers handling the issue of violence against housed women?

The social workers explain how they handle the situations of housed women subjected to violence, by focusing on establishing relationships to the women. This is considered to be one of the most important factors in order to provide social support. The social workers explain that their ability to help the woman is limited because of the normalising process of violence, that the women can be considered to be in. It is hard to support the women but sometimes, because of the relationship built on trust and by repeatedly addressing the violence and their concern, the women are able to accept the emotional and informational support they are offered. The social workers emphasise the dilemma, that if they discharge men that have been abusive to their partner, also the women will leave. When the women leave, they are no longer able to provide social support and help them. In order to keep the women and the established relationship, the social workers have in some cases, let the violent men stay, even though the men know they have subjected the women to violence. It is explained that they engage in support and counselling also for the perpetrators, in order to support the women.

The social workers also explain how they try to minimise the violence by controlling the physical room of the housing facilities and intervene between housed individuals to stop potential violent situations. However, the protective power of the social workers seems to be limited. It is explained to be a challenge to help the women when the women, society and sometimes also the social workers tend to normalise the violence. As a result of these pre-

conditions, the way the social workers handle VAW at the housing facilities seem to be focused on helping the women on an individual level by reducing the harm, rather than engaging in structural changes and radical interventions.

7.4 Reflections along the way

Conducting the interviews and analysing the data has been very interesting for me. Even though I have been working at these kind of housing facilities and have prior knowledge, I have not been deeply involved in processes or been able to take part in meetings where cases have been discussed. Because of this, I have not been given explanations or motivations for why they use certain working methods or deal with issues in certain ways. As explained in Acknowledgements I have had a desire, since I first started working in this area, to get a deeper understanding of the issue and to understand what the social workers take into consideration regarding the issue as well as what pre-conditions they have to help the women subjected to violence. I feel that I have reached some understanding about this and I have learned a lot. However, there are still things that I would like to know more about. I was surprised over the described approach to give support to the perpetrator in order to support the woman. It would be interesting to further investigate opportunities and difficulties with this approach. It would also be interesting to study what possible external services there are to refer the women to and how the women are treated at these services. During the interviews the social workers explained that they as protective measures often suggest women to move to gender specific housing facilities, but the women often do not want to do that. One of the social workers explained that he thought the women did not want to identify themselves with women living there. He explained that it is like a division between homeless people and homeless women and some women rather want to identify themselves as parts of the homeless group. As discussed in Results and Analysis the environment of homelessness and substance abuse can be considered as a masculine space and maybe it gives more advantages, in this environment not to be connected to female attributes. That being said, it would be very interesting to further study the environment of housing facilities with a gender perspective.

7.5 Final conclusion

To conclude this study, previous research demonstrates that women in substance abuse and homelessness are in higher of risk being subjected to violence. It is harder for this group of

women to get help in regard to the violence they are subjected to. Women in homelessness and substance abuse might live at housing facilities and because of the risk of them being subjected to violence it is crucial that professionals working here have knowledge of how to treat and support the women. The study aimed to, from a Swedish point of view, investigate and analyse how social workers at housing facilities for people in homelessness and substance abuse perceive and act upon violence against women.

After conducting semi-structure interviews and analysing the data through a theoretical framework, the results was as follows. The social workers experience that women at the housing facilities are at risk to be subjected to violence by intimate partners and a range of other perpetrators. All of the social workers have experiences of housed women being subjected to violence at the housing facilities. The social workers both used structural and individual focused explanations as well as explanations based on the normalising process of violence when they were talking about the issue. Individual factors such as homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness as well as the masculine environment of the housing facility is described to make the women even more vulnerable in the patriarchal social system. The social workers emphasise the importance of the relationship to the women, to be able to provide support and address concerns about violence. In order to keep the relationship with the women, support is also given to the perpetrators. The social workers describe that they try to protect the women by controlling the physical room and intervene in potentially violent situations between housed individuals. However, their power to protect the women seems to be limited. It is explained to be a challenge to help the women when the women, society and sometimes also the social workers tend to normalise the violence. Helping the women on an individual level by reducing the harm seem to be the approach, rather than structural changes and radical interventions.

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Appendix 1 – Intervjuguide

Bakgrundsinformation:

Hur länge har du arbetat med denna målgrupp?

Hur många år har du generellt arbetat inom människobehandlande yrken?

Vad har du för utbildning?

Definition:

Vad är våld mot kvinnor för dig?

Förekommer det eller har det förekommit våld eller hot om våld mot kvinnor på boendet?

Om ja: hur har det våldet gestaltat sig?

Faktiska händelser:

Kan du berätta om en händelse som du upplevt, där en kvinna har blivit utsatt för våld eller hot om våld, där situationen kunnat utvecklas på ett bra sätt?

Vad hände? Vem utsatte eller hotade kvinnan för våld?

Varför tror du att situationen kunde utvecklas på ett bra sätt?

Vilket stöd kunde du ge i situationen?

Vad fick dig att välja just detta fall?

Kan du berätta om en händelse, som du upplevt, där en kvinna har blivit utsatt för våld eller hot om våld, där situationen inte har kunnat utvecklas på ett bra sätt?

Vad hände? Vem utsatte eller hotade kvinnan för våld?

Varför tror du att situationen inte utvecklades på ett bra sätt?

Vilket stöd kunde du ge i situationen?

Vad fick dig att välja just detta fall?

Organisatorisk utformning

Anser du att det finns utarbetade riktlinjer på boendet för att hantera/förebygga situationer av våld mot kvinnor?

Anser du att det finns utarbetade metoder på boendet för att hantera/förebygga situationer av våld mot kvinnor?

Anser du att ni får tillräckligt med utbildning i ämnet?

Får ni vägledning av chefer i frågor rörande detta ämne?

Får ni extern handledning i frågor rörande detta ämne?

Hur har samarbetet med socialtjänsten fungerat i situationer av våld mot kvinnor?

När en kvinna utsätts för våld, brukar ni hjälpa henne att komma i kontakt med yttre hjälpinstanser? Vilka?

I vilka fall anmäler ni till polisen?

Brukar du och dina kollegor fråga boende kvinnor om våldsutsatthet?

Använder ni något bedömningsinstrument för att fråga om våld och bedöma våldsutsattheten?

Förebyggande arbete

Kan du ge något exempel där du anser att du eller någon kollega har arbetat för att förebygga att våld mot kvinnor sker på boendet?

Visioner

Om du fick ändra på något som rör denna frågan, vad som helst, som här på boendet eller mer strukturellt, vad hade du då ändrat?

Avslutande fråga

Finns det något annat som du tycker jag borde ha frågat dig om?

Appendix 2 – Interview guide (Translated version)

Background information

For how long have you worked with this target group?

How many years have you worked in the field of social work?

What is your educational background?

Definitions

How would you define violence against women?

Has there been instances of violence or violent threats against women in the supported accommodation?

If yes: how would you describe it?

Actual situations

Could you tell me about a situation you have experienced, where a woman has been exposed to violence or threats, where the situation could evolve in a positive way?

What happened? Who was subjecting the woman to the violence or threat?

What do you think made it possible for the situation to unfold in a positive way?

What type of support could you offer in that situation?

What made you choose this incident?

Could you tell me about a situation you have experienced, where a woman has been exposed to violence or threats, where the situation could not evolve in a positive way?

What happened? Who was subjecting the woman to the violence or threat?

What do you believe are the reasons why the situation could not evolve in a positive way?

What type of support could you offer in that situation?

What made you choose this incident?

The organisation

Are there any guidelines on how to handle or prevent instances of violence against women in the housing facility?

Do you use any specific methods to handle or prevent instances of violence against women?

Do you think you have been offered enough education on the subject?

Are you offered guidance from your bosses in matters concerning this subject?

Do you get any professional coaching in matters concerning this subject?

How is the collaboration with the social service when it comes to matters concerning this subject?

When a woman is exposed to violence, do you help the woman get in contact with external organisations do you help her get in contact with for support?

If yes: Which?

In which cases do you report to the police?

Do you and your colleagues usually ask the women in the housing facility, about their exposure to violence?

Do you use any assessment tool to ask about violence and assess the exposure to violence?

Preventative measures

Could you give me an example of an instance/instances where you or your colleague has used any measures to prevent violence against women in the housing facility?

Visions

If you had the power to change anything concerning this matter, in this particular housing facility or more on a structural level, what would it be?

Final question

Is there anything else you think I should have asked you about?