

AN EXPLORATION OF RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS WITHIN  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS

By

Nkiru Nnawulezi

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **An Exploration of Racial Microaggressions within Domestic Violence Shelters**

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To date, there are limited studies that address the presence of subtle racism within domestic violence shelters (Gillum, 2009), and no one has defined these subtle forms of racism as racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions are often unintentional, subtle, insulting communications or behaviors directed toward a racially oppressed person or group (Sue, 2010). The aim of this study was to explore the presence of racial microaggressions within domestic violence shelters, to understand how women responded to them, and to determine if women would return to shelter based on these experiences. Using a phenomenological approach, 14 Black women from three domestic violence shelters across a Midwestern state were interviewed. Results showed that twelve of the fourteen survivors in the study experienced at least one racial microaggression. Microaggressions were either environmental or non-environmental (microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations). Survivors generally responded non-confrontationally to their experiences, and, interestingly, few identified the experience as racist. Belief that staff were just and fair, blaming women for bad presentation, believing that certain women were undeserving clients, and internalized oppression were examined for how they may have influenced the denial of racial microaggressions. Future implications for research, policy and practice related to the research findings are discussed.

*Keywords:* domestic violence shelter, Black, African American women, racial microaggressions, racism.

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## An Exploration of Racial Microaggressions within Domestic Violence Shelters

### **Introduction**

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a widespread and devastating calamity. Approximately 25% of women have experienced IPV at some point in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Although commonly thought of as physical abuse, IPV can also encompass emotional abuse (DeKeseredy, 2000), sexual abuse (Miller, 2006), and economic abuse (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008). These abusive behaviors often occur concurrently with various forms of physical violence. Findings from one community sample showed 14% of women in heterosexual and same-sex relationships reported IPV in the last five years (Thompson et al., 2006). Forty-five percent of these women experienced multiple forms of abuse (e.g., sexual, emotional, and physical) during their relationship. According to Adams and colleagues (2008), women in domestic violence shelters not only reported high rates of physical abuse, but also sexual, psychological, and economic abuse at some point during their relationship. Women experiencing IPV tend to have poorer physical and mental health outcomes and are at higher risk for acute and chronic health conditions than are women who have not experienced IPV (Coker et al., 2002).

In a national study of IPV, 26% of Black women reported physical assault, 7% were raped, and 4% were stalked in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Some evidence suggests that Black women experience higher rates of IPV than do other racial groups (Peralta & Fleming, 2003). Sullivan and Rumptz (1994) found that Black women recruited from a domestic violence shelter endured more severe abuse within six months than did other racial groups. In 2007, national homicide rates were higher among Black women than among White women. Results from a national study showed that acquaintances were seven times more likely than was

a male stranger to murder Black women. Fifty-eight percent of Black women were or had been a spouse or girlfriend of their killer (Langley, 2009).

However, some evidence suggested that racial differences among IPV prevalence rates become non-significant when social class indicators like income and the absence of health insurance are controlled (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002; Vest, Catlin, Chen, & Brownson, 2002). For example, Rennison and Planty (2003) used data from the National Crime Victimization Survey to study the effects of class and race on the experiences of IPV. Results showed that people with income levels less than \$7,500, not race, were indicative of higher IPV experience. Yet, an earlier study showed that even after controlling for class, middle-class Black women experienced higher rates of IPV than did middle class White women (Lockhart, 1987). Unfortunately, many assertions about the relationships among race, class, and IPV rest on equivocal data. Regardless, IPV is a serious and pervasive problem across all racial and class groups.

### **Help Seeking Behaviors of Black Women**

There were stark racial differences between Black and White women's propensity to seek help from formal sources (e.g., general mental health services, counseling). Black women generally sought less support from formal helping systems than did White women (El-Khoury, Dutton, Goodman, Engel, & Belamaric, 2004; Kaukinen, 2004). This was especially true with mental health services. Even after controlling for education and distress, Black college-educated women frequented medical and religious services more often than mental health agencies (Ayalon & Young, 2005). The reasons for lowered help seeking existed at the individual, cultural/community, and societal levels (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Gillum, 2009). On an individual level, many Black women adhered to the "strong Black woman" archetype. The internalization

of this archetype by Black women enhanced their need to be self-reliant and therefore minimized the need to seek formal support.

Specific community/cultural level reasons also affected Black women's decisions to seek help. For example, many Black survivors did not disclose abuse to police, hoping to protect Black men from the racist criminal justice system (Nash, 2005). Cultural mistrust directed towards formal services was also a cultural/community barrier (Alvidrez, 1999; Gary, 2005; Snowden, 2001). Some evidence showed that Black people have high levels of cultural mistrust towards mental health services (Whaley, 2001), stemming from the mental health field's history of pathologizing Blacks (Rollock & Gordon, 2000). However, other evidence nuanced this assertion. In a Black-White racial comparison study, Black participants initially had a more positive attitude towards seeking help from a mental health professional than did Whites. Blacks also felt more comfortable than their White counterparts telling their friends they were getting mental health services. Blacks who received mental health services, however, later stated a less favorable attitude about them. They were also less likely than Whites were to continue treatment (Diala et al., 2000).

Larger societal deterrents for Black women included experiences of systemic oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, and classism). Institutionalized oppression either excluded or makes it more laborious for target groups to obtain helpful resources readily attainable to those in dominant groups. Therefore, Black women lack equal access to resources including healthcare, safe housing, domestic violence shelters, and employment opportunities that could help them leave their abusive situation safely (Hampton, Oliver, & Magarian, 2003; Kasturirangan, Krishan, & Riger, 2004). Poverty is also intricately tied to race and heavily affects IPV prevalence and help-seeking efforts within the Black community (Hampton et al., 2003; Taft, Bryant-Davis,

Woodward, Tillamn, & Torres, 2009). For example, Cunradi and colleagues (2000) studied the effects of neighborhood poverty on IPV. Results revealed that Black couples were significantly more likely than were White and Hispanic couples to live in impoverished areas. They also found that neighborhood poverty significantly predicted male to female IPV among Black couples. The correlation for neighborhood poverty and IPV was also high for White and Hispanic couples, but not statistically significant. Poor Black women who resided in impoverished neighborhoods are socially and geographically isolated from resources, making it difficult to get to formal help (Hampton et al., 2003).

### **Racism as a Barrier to Formal Help Seeking**

Black women not only deal with multiple individual, cultural/community, and societal barriers to seeking help, but also are likely to encounter racism from service providers after they reach out to formal sources of help. Racism is the systematic privileging of one racial group over another. Racial discrimination can manifest in subtle forms, such as social distancing, or in overt forms, like race-based hate crimes. Racism can be either intentional or unintentional (Brondolo et al., 2005). “Ethnicity-related social distancing”, for example, typically happens unbeknownst to the perpetrator. To perpetuate racism, an individual or racial group “has to believe itself to be superior” and have enough social power to enforce this belief in society (Solorzano, 1998, p. 124). Landrine and Klonoff (1996) measured lifetime racial discrimination among Blacks and 100% of the sample ( $n=153$ ) reported experiencing at least one act of racial discrimination in their lifetime. Racial discrimination was defined as: “being called racist names; being discriminated against by people in various professions; being discriminated against by strangers; being accused or suspected of wrongdoing (e.g., stealing, cheating); being discriminated against by institutions such as banks and school in loans, scholarships, and admittance, and so on” (p.

147). Using similar criteria, Brondolo and colleagues (2005) found that at least 85% of Blacks reported being exposed to racial discrimination during their lifetime. “About 78% of people reported at least one incident of racial discrimination in the past week, while 59% experienced three or more incidents of racism in the past week” (Brondolo et al., 2005, p.348).

Blacks have reported multiple types of racial discrimination ranging from physical harm, threats, and name-calling to feelings of exclusion or rejection, work discrimination, and stigma (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). Respondents in one study reported, “being looked at in a mean way (57%), being ignored (51%), having something mean said to you (47%), and being treated in an unfair manner (47%)” (Brondolo et al, 2005; p. 348). Most participants experienced ethnicity-related social distancing and subtle work discrimination rather than overt aggression or threats (Brondolo et al, 2005).

Blacks have reported discrimination occurring in multiple formal settings. Some of these settings included banks and universities (64%) or were perpetrated by people in helping professions (55%)—social workers, doctors, and therapists (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996).

Brondolo and colleagues (2005) also found 85% of Blacks experienced some discrimination in formal settings. These settings included “the criminal justice system, looking for housing, in medical services, in school, at work, at a religious institution, in public places, on a street or at a park, and at private functions” (Brondolo et al., 2005, p. 348).

### **Racial Microaggressions**

Subtle or covert forms of racism at the individual, community, and societal levels are called microaggressions (Solorzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions are often inconspicuous (Harrell, 2000; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson,

2003) and have the power to normalize discrimination in society (Bent-Goodley, 2005). Sue and colleagues (2007) defined racial microaggressions as:

...brief everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group...These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous. (p. 273)

In addition, racial microaggressions include “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273).

There are three types of microaggressions according to Sue and colleagues (2007): microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations. Microassaults are “explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (Sue, 2010,. p. 29). They may or may not be overt forms of racism. Calling a person an offensive name because of their racial background would be a microassault. Microinsults are unintentional, callous communications that disparage an individual’s racial identity. An example would be if a white person insinuates to a person of color that she or he is not like (better than) other people in their racial group. Microinvalidations manifest in non-verbal and verbal communications that “exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thought, feeling, or experiential reality of a person or color” (Sue et al., 2007, p.274). Any endorsement of a “post-racial” America, color-blindness, or denial of the differences among racial groups exemplifies this form of microaggressions. Invalidation and discrimination can occur within settings, regardless of individual behavior, and this was referred to as environmental microaggressions. When domestic violence shelters do not

include pictures or reflect the experiences of women of color, for example, this would be an environmental microaggression.

Microaggressions can be difficult to assess because they are not always easily identifiable by either the victim or the perpetrator. The victim may question whether a microaggression has occurred within a social interaction, even though they are experiencing feelings of invalidation or discontentment. At the same time, the perpetrator may not recognize they are being discriminatory (Rowe, 1990). Given that racial discrimination was typically defined as *overt* acts of oppression, many Whites may attribute acts that are racial microaggressions to other causes, such as a person of color being too sensitive (Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens, 2008; Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera, et al., 2008). Studying the subtle types of racial microaggressions, such as microinsults, microinvalidations, and environmental microaggressions, was also difficult because the term “micro-” suggests that the experience, and its impact, is small. Yet, subtleness made them more pervasive and powerful (Sue et al., 2008). Racial microaggressions, similar to stereotypes, are also racially specific, which makes it difficult to study across racial groups.

### **Taxonomy of Racial Microaggressions**

Despite the difficulties inherent in studying microaggressions, Sue and colleagues (2008) developed a taxonomy of racial microaggressions encompassing nine themes. First, “alien in own land” occurs when an individual has his or her nationality challenged by a member of the dominant group. This microaggression conveys to an individual that, despite their citizenship status, they are outsiders to American society. Second, “ascription of intelligence” describes a microaggression where an individual expresses that a person of color is less intelligent because of their race. “Color-blindness” is the third theme. Those who perpetuate these types of



microaggressions suggest that race is unimportant by invalidating the experiences of people of color. Fourth, “criminality/assumption of criminal status” is perpetuated by characterizing certain racial groups as more dangerous or prone to violent behaviors than others. “Denial of individual racism” is the fifth theme in this taxonomy. Whites who ignore or deny their privilege and its role in maintaining oppression against people of color typically perpetuate these microaggressions. Sixth, the “myth of meritocracy” describes endorsing the belief that all people have equal access to societal resources and view racism as an excuse for people of color to avoid hard work. “Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles,” the seventh theme, characterizes microaggressions that force non-dominant racial groups to assimilate to dominant cultural values and ideologies. Eighth, “second-class citizenship” describes situations or contexts where whites are preferred over people of color. The final theme, “environmental microaggression,” is defined as a “macro-level” microaggression often seen within a social system. An example of environmental microaggression would be “a college or university with buildings that are all named after White heterosexual upper-class males” (Sue et al., 2008, p. 277).

### **Racial Microaggressions in Domestic Violence Programs**

Microaggressions are common, and occur even within supportive service contexts such as domestic violence programs (Donnelly, Cook, Ausdale, & Foley, 2005; Gillum, 2009). Although often unintentional, some organizational practices and attitudes within domestic violence agencies contribute to the prevalence of racial microaggressions. Examples of these practices include hiring a racially homogenous staff, residential segregation, and implementing biased policies and procedures (Coley & Beckett, 1988; Donnelly et al., 2005; Donnelly, Cook, & Wilson, 1999; Gillum, 2009). For example, in one study, only two domestic violence shelter

directors, out of 44, primarily served women of color and had a shelter located in diverse, urban neighborhoods. The other 42 directors stated that their shelters were located in White neighborhoods and were operated primarily by White staff (Donnelly et al., 1999). These practices subtly marginalized and isolated Black women from seeking services. Further, many of the domestic violence agencies participating in their study did little outreach in communities of color. Directors stated that they did little outreach to these communities because there was no money for special programs and some women “just weren’t interested” (p. 734). Bent-Goodley (2004) found that Black women survivors of IPV could name more substance abuse programs and child welfare agencies than domestic violence services. This lack of information about domestic violence programs could lead many Black women to perceive that few to no services are available to them. Some evidence shows that other helping professionals do not tell Black women about domestic violence programs as well. For example, Few (2005) in one sample of shelter women, the police who arrived on a scene of a domestic dispute at the women’s home had told the vast majority of White women about a local domestic violence shelter. Yet, only 20% of the Black women in the sample said the police told them about domestic violence services. However, this was a very small study that needs to be replicated.

The endorsement of racial stereotypes about Black women, White privilege, and color-blind service delivery all contributed to the prevalence of racism within domestic violence programs. Service providers displayed to survivors the same prejudicial behaviors demonstrated in larger society (Bograd, 1999). There are three racial archetypes of Black women: the strong, indestructible woman, the sexually uninhibited Jezebel, and the emasculating Sapphire. Consciously or unconsciously, many domestic violence service providers retained these images, which influenced their interactions with Black women (Bell & Mattis, 2000; Bent-Goodley,

2001; Bent-Goodley, 2004; Taft et al., 2009). For example, Donnelly and colleagues (2005) asked shelter directors to discuss racial differences among Black and White women who utilized their shelter. Many shelter directors endorsed the strong Black women archetype by stating that Black women were strong enough to withstand violence. Some shelter directors stated that Black women were probably more reluctant to call the police because they wanted to handle the situation themselves. One shelter director believed that Black women dealt with things within their own communities and, therefore, needed fewer services. Another shelter director described formal domestic violence services as an option for Black women survivors rather than a necessity because the Black community “is close-knit” (p. 24).

White privilege perpetuates subtle racism because it privileges Whites over other racial groups in our society. White privilege blinds Whites to other experiences of racial discrimination and maintains their dominant status (Sue et al, 2008). Evidence from one study showed that, although shelter directors adopted the rhetoric of inclusivity, diversity, and being allies, they spent little time implementing this into daily practice at their domestic violence program (Donnelly et al., 2005). In turn, this maintained whiteness within their organizations. For example, one shelter director described why a shelter had to be shut down in the inner-city “...right now, we’re about 50-50, thank goodness. If we could keep it at that, I would be so happy, because what happened in [neighboring city] was it [referring to the DV shelter] became totally Black, and the White women would not go...we had to close the shelter and move it to another community [so White women would use it]” (Donnelly et al., 2005, p.28).

Color-blind service delivery also contributed to the sustainability of oppression within formal domestic violence programs despite its attempt to provide equal services amongst women (Hovane, 2006; Kastuirangan, Krishan, & Riger, 2004). In theory, color-blindness refers to equal

service provision regardless of women's social location (Hovane, 2006). While the idea is attractive on the surface, color-blind practice fails to meet the needs of women of color because it created an identical approach to service delivery that is based on Eurocentric norms, ignores cultural diversity, and suppresses the unique needs of women of color (Donnelly et al., 2005). It is also impractical to believe that service providers can attend to and support all survivors in similar ways. Endorsing color-blind service delivery means that one believes if women are treated the same, the outcomes will be similar. This is harmful because the unique needs of Black women (and expenses that might go along with it) go unacknowledged.

Research shows that Black women feel the negative effects of racism or racial microaggressions within formal domestic violence service programs (Few, 2005; Gillum, 2009). For example, Gillum (2009) conducted individual interviews with Black women who had received services at a mainstream and at an Afrocentric domestic violence agency. Women identified many barriers at the mainstream domestic violence agency. Some reported that staff took a lackadaisical, narrow approach to service delivery and were intolerant if women chose to stay with their abusive partners. Some Black women felt betrayed, unwelcome, unsupported, and that they had to prove that they were abused to mainstream staff members more frequently than did White women. Black women were also uncomfortably aware that they were a minority within the organization. In contrast, within the Afrocentric domestic violence agency, Black women felt staff were accepting, supportive, and less judgmental of their relationship decisions. Overall, Black women felt that helping professionals at the Afrocentric agency were more supportive because they wholly accepted women and their decisions. Many Black women felt especially comfortable with this agency because the staff were the same race and had similar experiences of IPV. The Afrocentric agency also endorsed the tenets of Afrocentrism within their

organizational culture, making Black women feel that the services were designed for them. In another sample of Black women staying in a rural, White domestic violence agency, women reported feeling isolated from staff members and other White survivors at times (Few, 2005). Black survivors formed amicable relationships with White women, but did not feel comfortable discussing their experiences of abuse by Black men.

### **Effects of Racism on Black Women's Well-Being**

Microaggressions, along with overt forms of racism, are culturally-specific stressors that have numerous mental and physical health consequences (Utsey, 1998). Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson (2003) addressed these relationships in an empirical literature review. Results showed 20 out of 25 articles reported a positive association between psychological distress and perceived discrimination. Of these articles, four studies found a positive association specifically between depression and perceived discrimination. Perceived racism was also positively correlated to physical consequences such as poorer health status, hypertension, higher blood pressure, and lower birth rate. Despite this evidence, the “dose-response relationship” between discrimination and health status is unclear.

### **Rationale for Current Study**

Overall, racism has deleterious effects on Black people (Williams et al., 2003) and occurs frequently when Blacks are reaching out for formal support (Brondolo et al, 2005). More specifically, Black women survivors of IPV who choose to seek help for domestic violence have been found to experience racist responses from formal helping sources, including domestic violence shelters (Bent-Goodley, 2001; Donnelly et al., 2005; Gillum, 2009; Hovane, 2006; Sharma, 2005; Taft et al., 2009). Many of these incidents can be classified as racial microaggressions.

To date, there are limited studies that address the presence of racism within domestic violence shelters (Gillum, 2009), and no one has defined these subtle forms of racism as racial microaggressions. The purpose of this study was to understand Black women's perceptions and experiences of racial microaggressions within domestic violence shelters. The specific goals of this study were two-fold: to learn about the dynamics of racial microaggressions within domestic violence shelters and to understand how racial microaggressions contributed to Black women's overall well-being and their future help seeking from domestic violence shelters.

To understand Black women's experiences with racial discrimination within domestic violence shelters, I used a framework that captured subtle forms of racism. Sue and colleagues (2007) framework of racial microaggressions supported the study of subtle racism within the context of domestic violence shelters. The framework was initially conceptualized with a focus on mental health professionals and their relationships with clients of color. This type of helping relationship was often replicated within domestic violence shelters in one-on-one counseling sessions, advocacy, and support groups. Ideally, all survivors who seek help from domestic violence agencies should receive comprehensive, equal and empathetic support despite their racial background. To this end, understanding the unintentional manifestation of subtle racism within this environment could support domestic violence agencies' goals of inclusivity and lead to important improvements in practice.

I designed this study to provide clearer examples of how racism subtly manifested in domestic violence shelters. I conducted this study to provide insight into Black women's reluctance to seek help from formal sources, and to offer direction for domestic violence programs looking to improve their practices. The overall research question this study addressed

was: how do Black women perceive, experience, and respond to racial microaggressions experienced at a domestic violence shelter? Specifically:

1. What do microaggressions in DV shelters look like?
2. How do Black women think about and understand this experience?
3. How do they respond to this experience immediately?
4. What are their next steps? How do racial microaggressions influence future help seeking from domestic violence shelters?

A qualitative methods approach to data collection and analysis supported the complexity of this project. Qualitative methods were used to understand how individuals processed and made meaning of external or internal happenings and/or gained an in-depth understanding of how individuals experienced a social problem (Creswell, 2007). I chose Black feminist theory as my theoretical orientation. This theory emphasizes Black women's unique relationship with racism compared to other racial groups and acknowledges that Black women occupy a unique social identity that informs and influences their experiences. Through their experiential realities, scholars can begin to understand Black women's plight as a collective and also understand how they operate as individuals within their unique standpoints (Collins, 2000). Sue and colleagues' (2007) conceptual model of racial microaggressions was the orientating concept for the definition and classification of racial microaggressions during data analysis. It is the most comprehensive model of racial microaggressions to date and translates well to this select population.

## **Methods**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how Black women survivors experienced racial microaggressions within domestic violence shelters. I used a

phenomenological approach for study conceptualization, to collect data, and to conduct data analysis. Women discussed their beliefs and experiences of race and racism in shelter, comfort at shelter, and whether they would return to shelter.

### **Research Setting**

Domestic violence shelter programs serve as a safe haven for survivors and their children. Many shelters and domestic violence programs provide a variety of services and resources to keep women safe from their abusive partners. These services included a 24-hour emergency shelter, case management, individual and group counseling, children's programming, and legal advocacy. I purposively selected three different shelters throughout Michigan to participate in this research study. The shelters were selected for their diverse geographic locations (urban, rural, and mid-city) and because my advisor had previous working relationships with each shelter. Choosing shelters with diverse geographic locations gave an opportunity for findings to be representative of the phenomenon under investigation rather than the dynamics within a particular program. Choosing multiple shelters also protected the confidentiality of each domestic violence shelter.

I gained entry into each shelter by using my advisor's personal connections with each shelter CEO or program director. I presented my research plan to each director and explained how my project would support the organization's goals of inclusivity in service delivery. I recruited and interviewed women from one large shelter, one medium-sized shelter, and one small shelter. Size was an important variable in choosing research sites because it increased the likelihood that I would be able to interview different Black women over an extended period. However, a previous connection with shelter was also important because of the sensitive, revealing nature of the study.



Located in the southeastern part of Michigan, the largest shelter offered various support services to women including counseling, legal advocacy, and support groups. The 42-bed facility was currently housing fifteen women when I recruited participants for my study, three of whom were Black. The shelter director identified as a woman of color and the shelter staff were racially mixed. Pictures that were situated throughout the shelter included women and men of color. Women could cook and eat any food available in the refrigerator as long as they cooked it themselves. Outside organizations donated food to the shelter. Staff assigned women chores and every woman had to abide by a shelter curfew. There was a 30-day limit at shelter, although extensions were possible.

The medium-sized shelter was located in the central part of the state. It offered women a 30-bed emergency shelter, support groups, and counseling. Ten women lived in the shelter when I started recruitment, four of whom identified as Black. The shelter coordinator was a woman of color and the staff, based on visual appearance, were racially diverse. While I was walking through the shelter, there were limited pictures on the walls, and I only saw one picture on the wall that showed a person of color. Residents requested, but could not bring food into the shelter. Residents had specific meal times every day, chores to complete, and a curfew. Women were allowed to stay at shelter for a maximum of 30 days but could request extensions.

The smallest shelter, located in the western part of the state, had two emergency shelters and various support services for women. There were 18 beds available at this shelter. During the month I recruited women, staff were currently serving 10 women, five of whom were Black. Residents could stay as long as necessary to maintain safety. The shelter director at this location was a woman of color, although the majority of the shelter staff that I saw were White. Many

brochures and magazines in the waiting area had faces of people of color. Kitchen staff cooked and served food daily to women. Women abided by a curfew.

### **Participant Characteristics**

Five women came from the small and medium-sized shelters and four women were recruited from the large shelter. I recruited a fifth participant from the large shelter; however she left shelter before her interview was completed. Women's ages ranged from 18 to 49 years old, with an average age of 31. Many women that I interviewed were at shelter for an extended period. As shown in Table 1, eleven women had been at the shelter for at least three weeks. Three women had been at shelter for two weeks or less. Nine women were mothers and five of those women had children at the shelter with them during the time of the interview. Six women had been to a domestic violence shelter prior to their current shelter stay. Of those women, four women had been to their current shelter prior to their current stay.

Table 1

*Participant Demographic Table*

Participant	Age	Length in Shelter	Previous Stay at Shelter
1	22	4 weeks +	No, First Time
2	42	4 weeks +	Yes, different shelter
3	25	4 weeks +	Yes, same shelter
4	43	4 weeks +	Yes, different shelter
5	25	4 weeks +	No, First time
6	23	3 weeks	No, First time
7	28	2 weeks	Yes, same shelter
8	37	5 – 7 days	Yes, same shelter

Table 1 (cont'd)

9	32	2 weeks	No, First time
10	49	2 – 3 weeks	No, First time
11	18	3 weeks	No, First time
12	24	3 weeks	No, First time
13	29	2 – 3 weeks	Yes, same shelter
14	40	2 – 3 weeks	No, First time

**Eligibility and procedures.** Women selected to participate in this study met the following criteria: were English speaking, identified as Black or African American, were 18 years of age or older, and had been at the domestic violence shelter for at least 5 days. The selected length of time in the shelter allowed women to experience numerous interactions with staff and residents, but also was short enough that I would not lose women who left shelter after only a few days.

**Recruitment and interview process.** The Michigan State University Institutional Review Board approved the study in April 2010. I recruited and interviewed women from May 2010 through July 2010. Recruitment took place at the three domestic violence shelters. I determined recruitment times with each shelter director based on their assessment of the best availability of women. During these allotted recruitment times, I approached all visibly Black women by introducing myself as a researcher interested in understanding the experiences of Black women at shelter. I handed them a flyer and told them to contact me if they wanted to participate in a study. I also asked them to share the information with other Black women whom they thought might be interested. I told each woman that they could be interviewed on or off site. Twelve of the fourteen women preferred to be interviewed at the shelter. I conducted audio-

recorded interviews in private rooms in shelter or, when requested, at a local coffee shop. Sample size was based on theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is commonly referred to as the point in data collection when no new concepts are being collected (Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009). I reached saturation after I interviewed fourteen women. This was evident in the minimal variation in themes addressing the main research questions. I initially intended to recruit and interview five women from each shelter. Then, if necessary, interviews would continue at each shelter.

Moustakas (1994) described the phenomenological interview as an “informal, interactive” process between the participant and the investigator. He recommended that the investigator use various techniques such as beginning a light conversation or a meditative exercise in order to create a comfortable, calm atmosphere. This encourages “honest and comprehensive” dialogue with the participant (p. 115). I attempted to create a comfortable environment for every woman. I informed each woman that the interview was confidential, voluntary, and would not influence the services they received from the domestic violence agency. The participant and I read the informed consent form together. If women agreed to participate, they signed the consent form. Interviews lasted for an average of forty-eight minutes (range = 30 to 74 minutes). I gave each woman a copy of her signed consent form. All participants were compensated \$20 for their participation in the study. I started each interview with light conversation about their day or other general events. I asked every woman if she had any questions about the recruitment or interview process and if she had ever been tape-recorded. These conversations were not included in the original transcripts but some were discussed in the audit trail.

## Measures

**Interview guide.** I collected data using a semi-structured interview guide covering the following topics: women's experiences of microaggressions at the domestic violence shelter, the effects of these experiences on help seeking, and demographics. I created the interview guide by having routine discussions with my advisor about the focus and goals of the study. Some questions from a previous qualitative study about microaggressions were modified to fit the sample of this study (Constantine & Sue, 2007). All questions were followed with impromptu probes to gain further context about women's experiences.

I started the interview guide with questions about the shelter environment. This section also included questions about participants' length of stay and level of comfort at the shelter. The second section of the interview contained questions about women's experiences with overt and subtle racism at the shelter and their responses to it. I initially phrased the questions very broadly, asking if they had experienced unfair treatment or had been uncomfortable because of their race in the domestic violence shelter. I later asked more specifically if they would define this experience as racist. If women did experience racism, I probed about the specific details of that particular experience. If a woman disclosed that she had never experienced any issues related to race, I asked about what made them feel particularly comfortable in this shelter. Of the women with children, one question specifically focused on how women felt that their children might be treated differently because of their race. In the last two questions of the section, I inquired about challenges that Black women faced at shelter and how they responded to them.

In the third part of the interview guide, I raised questions about the likelihood that women would return to the domestic violence shelter, or seek help from other shelters if they needed

further support once they left shelter. A short list of demographic questions concluded the interview. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

## **Research Design**

A phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis uniquely focuses on understanding a phenomenon and its relationship to a group of people (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1995). Phenomenology emphasizes the lived experiences among a collective group of people which allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of how Black women experienced racial microaggressions during their stay at shelter. Emerging data provided information about individual experiences, and the phenomenological approach to data analysis revealed the collective experiences of participants. In order to fully capture each women's experiences with racial microaggressions, every interview was transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. This transcriptionist signed a confidentiality form that stated she would not disclose any data.

**Overview of Stevick-Colazzi-Keen method.** I used Moustakas' modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (1994) as my phenomenological approach to data reduction and analysis. Moustakas (1994) describes the analytic process in multiple steps. First, I wrote an epoche, where I bracketed my personal experiences. Next, I read each transcript and selected specific statements that related to the phenomenon of interest. Once the statements have been selected, I created a formulated meaning for each significant statement. These formulated meanings are based on my interpretation of the participant's words, while still attempting to remain close to how participants defined their own experience. This data reduction process is called horizontalization. Horizontalization ensured that every statement is equally valued when describing the phenomenon of interest. I organized these formulated meanings and statements

into themes. A textual and structural description emerged from the collected relevant themes. Moustakas (1994) describes the textual description as the “what” of the experience. It is the descriptive understanding of the sensory experiences of participants. The structural description provides the “how” of the experience. Moustakas (1994) describes this description as answering the question, “how did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?” (p. 98) The structural description is created using imaginative variation. These steps include:

*Systematic varying of the structural meanings that underlie textual meanings by;*

- 1. Recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon;*
- 2. Considering the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon, such as the structures of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others;*
- 3. Searching for exemplifications that vividly illustrate the invariant structural themes and facilitate the development of a structural description of the phenomenon (p. 99).*

Once the structural description is written, it is combined with the textual description to create one composite description describing the essence of the phenomenon.

**Epoche.** Epoche, or bracketing, is a first-person account of the phenomenon of interest. Moustakas (1994) described the epoche as the “preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (p. 85). The phenomenon of interest in this research project was racial microaggressions. I defined them as the subtle forms of racism experienced either through environments or behavior. Before beginning coding and other data reduction tasks, I initially

wrote down my personal experiences with and assumptions about racism, racial microaggressions and violence against women and bracketed them on a separate word document. This process allowed me to differentiate my voice from the voices of the participants during the data analysis process.

I believe that racism currently exists in our society and influences the lives of all people in America, whether White or any other racial groups. Black women have to confront structural oppressions that impact individual perceptions of self-worth and overall well being. I also assume that most, if not all, White people perpetuate racism and/or benefit from white privilege. Many domestic violence agencies typically understand intersecting oppressions like sexism and poverty, but racism tends to be more difficult for agencies to recognize. This is likely due to the idea of a post-racial America and endorsement of colorblindness that negatively impacts how people understand racism in our society. Both concepts make it more difficult to have honest dialogue around race and racism without unwanted backlash or denial.

I have been an advocate in the field of violence against women for the past five years. I have encountered individual or structural racism through my experiences in the movement. Outside of this, I have also heard the perspectives of many women of color and white women advocates about the racism that occurs within their organizations. Due to my past experiences, I expected to hear that Black women at shelter also experience some degree of subtle racism during their stay at their respective shelters.

**Horizontalization.** I read each transcript numerous times to gain an in-depth understanding of women's experiences with race at shelter. Several readings through the transcripts also allowed me to clean the transcripts. Initially, to help organize the data, I conducted a broad brush coding of the interviews by organizing significant statements into



topics. Though this was not included in the initial Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, organizing the data into broad content areas helped me focus on those that generally related to my research question. After sorting the data into broad topics, I used deductive coding approach to answer the predetermined research questions. Then, I used inductive coding to pull out emergent trends in the data. In total, there were 43 initial codes. Some of these codes were predetermined based on the research questions, while others were emergent. Some examples of broad brush coding are include:

- Endorsements of Negative Traits about Black Women
- General Experiences at Shelter
- Perceptions about Residents
- Perceptions about Staff
- Do Not Pay Attention To Race
- Racial Incidents
- Ways Shelter was Helpful

Once the broad topics were identified, I selected significant statements under each topic that related to the research questions. I initially identified 441 significant statements. I created formulated meanings based on each significant statement. An initial list of the thematic clustering with the significant statements and formulated meanings can be found in Appendix S - BB. Each statement held equal worth compared to another statement.

**Participant privacy.** I assigned each participant a unique identifier at the beginning of the interview. This unique identifier was a number that will appear meaningless to an outsider. All identifying information about the recruitment source and the participants themselves was removed from the study. Any time the data were in transport, the interviewer placed all written

field notes and the tape recorder into a locked case. Shortly after the interview, I uploaded the data onto a secure website where the transcriptionist retrieved them. Once transcribed, I placed the transcriptions onto a password-protected external hard drive. When not in use, I locked the external hard drive in a secure cabinet in a research office in the Psychology building.

**Audit trail.** I created a project audit guide to document all of the steps in the data analysis process. The purpose of the audit trail was to keep records of the decision making processes that occurred throughout the project conceptualization, recruitment, collection, and analysis process. Notes from the audit trail were reviewed to inform the methods section and write the composite description. Nvivo 8 (QSR, 2008) was used to track all project records. All data analysis was completed using Nvivo 8 (QSR, 2008) software and Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

## **Data Analysis**

**Emergent themes.** Once every significant statement had a formulated meaning, I employed three different techniques identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) in order to find commonalities among significant statements/formulated meanings: clustering, counting, and noting patterns and themes. Clustering involved “inductively forming categories and the iterative sorting of things” (p. 249). For example, statements and meanings related to participants’ experiences of racism or women’s perceptions of residents were broadly grouped together. Counting how many women responded to specific questions or held a certain quality allowed me to determine the prevalence of the variable in the data. I also created themes and their relevant subthemes based on counting. I considered something a main theme if at least four women endorsed the theme (29% of the sample) and a subtheme if at least two people endorsed it. Using both clustering and counting, I then noted specific patterns or themes that I found in the data.

While ten themes emerged from the data, only five emergent themes were directly relevant to my research question. All themes were considered in data analysis and addressed in the proceeding result section (Table 2).

Table 2

*Emergent Themes*

1. Negative Traits about Black Women (7)
2. Negative traits about women (4)
3. Positive Components of Shelter (14)
4. Viewing women as undeserving clients (5)
5. Negative Components of Shelter (11)
6. Experiences of Racial Microaggressions (12)
7. Non-confrontational response to racial microaggressions (7)
8. Confrontational responses to racial microaggression (3)
9. Denial of racism (10)
10. Reasons to come back to shelter (10)

*Note.* The (#) signifies the number of women in the sample who endorsed this theme.

**Textual description.** The textual description was based on the themes. The textual description discussed how women experienced racial microaggressions and included participants' verbatim explanations. The textual description only provided me with a topical understanding of the data. Specifically, women did not mention microaggressions as frequently as I had originally assumed, women endorsed emergent themes (e.g., internalized oppression, women are undeserving clients) that were not considered in my original conceptualization of the study, and many women believed that racism did not exist in shelter.

**Testing assumptions.** In order to explore initial findings, I created some assumptions to test to explain the unexpected findings. I chose specific themes from the data (e.g., negative traits about black women, positive components of shelter, negative components of shelter, and negative traits about women) that I felt might have influenced the denial of racism in the shelter. Negative traits about women and negative traits about Black women were combined together and called “internalized oppression.” Positive and negative components of shelter were tested separately but in the final discussion are called “women’s perceptions of their interactions with shelter staff and residents.”

**Step 1: Nvivo matrix query.** I ran a matrix query in Nvivo 8 (QSR International, 2010) with a variety of different themes and demographic variables to get a broad picture about themes that might influence how women define and respond to microaggressions. This helped me refine some assumptions and determine which were worthy of further testing.

**Step 2: Context charts, case-ordered effects meta-matrices, and variable-by-variable matrices.** I developed context charts to see if the hypothesized variables influenced appraisal of and response to microaggressions (see Appendix D -R). Context charts are best utilized when a researcher would like to see how other environmental factors and various themes are influencing a participant (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The context charts revealed several patterns that I decided to test further using a case-ordered meta-matrix and a variable-by-variable matrix. The case-ordered meta-matrix orders participants or cases based on one variable and then compares it with another variable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It allowed me to look at patterns and themes across two major variables in the data by case. I used the case-ordered meta-matrix to understand patterns among the following variables:

- non-environmental racial microaggression (cases ordered from least ambiguous microaggression to most ambiguous microaggression) by internalized racism
- non-environmental microaggressions (cases ordered from least ambiguous to most ambiguous) by response to racism

The variable-by-variable matrix “has two main variables in its rows and columns; specific indicators of each variable are ordered by intensity” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 220). I used this matrix to understand the relationship between the following variables:

- Internalized oppression by denial of racism
- Denial of racism by racial microaggressions
- Positive components of shelter by denial of racism
- Negative components of shelter by denial of racism
- Positive components of shelter by internalized oppression
- Negative components of shelter by internalized oppression

I used the following tactics from Miles & Huberman (1994) to help me test my conclusions: (1) looking at contrasting cases, (2) identifying researcher bias, (3) creating if-then relationships, and (4) understanding outliers.

**Structural description.** Once my assumptions were tested and checked, I wrote the structural description. The structural description included my interpretations of the underlying processes and structural elements that contributed to women’s experience of racial microaggressions based on what arose from the matrices. The narrative summary shown in the results represents a composite of the textual and structural descriptions.

**Trustworthiness.** I engaged in a number of tasks in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. To start, I took notes on the location of the agency and the perceived racial background

of the workers to help inform later analyses and develop a more personalized understanding of the context. Throughout the recruitment process, I maintained an audit trail of the decisions and the general flow of the project. Throughout the data analytic process, my interpretations were discussed with my chair and other experts on violence against women and racism.

## **Results**

### **Research Question 1: What Do Microaggressions in Domestic Violence Shelters Look Like?**

Twelve participants reported an experience that could be classified as an environmental or non-environmental racial microaggression at some point during their shelter stay. Environmental microaggressions were the most commonly reported microaggressions by participants.

**Women's experiences of environmental microaggressions.** As noted earlier, environmental microaggressions are “demeaning and threatening social educational, political, or economic cues that are communicated individually, institutionally, or societally to marginalized groups” (Sue, 2010, p. 25). I asked women about the environment of the shelter and the extent to which it was racially diverse. I also introduced examples that described elements of the environment. Examples included pictures on the walls, food in the refrigerator, and hair products. Eleven of the fourteen women mentioned an incident or experience that I classified as an environmental microaggression. These experiences were organized into three different subthemes: lack of culturally-specific foods, lack of culturally-specific hair products, and staff composition.

***Lack of culturally-specific foods.*** Five women noted an absence of food at shelter that fit Black culture:

*I don't, we don't get no fried chicken. (laughs) No, it's good sometimes and sometimes tacos or, we eat tacos all the time. But, and they have the little pasta stuff all the time. But they don't never have no real food, food...Soul food. Black people food. African-American food. (Participant #9)*

One woman initially felt unfamiliar with the food given to her at shelter. She said:

*... when I first got here, I'm like, Well, what the heck is this? I'm like... they made shepherd's pie. I'm like, I've never heard of this in my life. (laughs) And I guess, you know, it's a white people thing. (Participant #1)*

At one shelter, women could request to have culturally-specific food prepared for them in the kitchen, while at another shelter women had the option to cook themselves. If women cooked for themselves, they could prepare foods that were appealing to their cultural group:

*Um (laughs), that's somethin' we do, 'cause we eat different as well, is um... African-American or black [people], Um, there are times um, where um, we're able to um, you know, go in there and cook something we usually cook at home. (Participant #5)*

Allowing women to cook their own food increased their ability to make things that were common and cultural to them. Across all three shelters, culturally-specific foods were not available to women unless they exerted a special effort to make or request their own foods in the kitchen.

***Lack of culturally-specific hair products.*** Ten women each described feeling that the hair products available in shelter were meant primarily for White women. Some participants were either surprised or disappointed at the lack of Black hair products, while others did not expect the shelter to carry these items. One participant felt that the main purpose of the shelter was to provide a safe place for women; all other things, such as hair products, were considered

extra or a bonus. Two shelters provided limited choices for Black women, but most products were targeted toward White women. A shelter counselor told one resident that the shelter did not have hair products for Black women: *“Um, my counselor... actually [counselor name]. She told me before that they don’t have any[black hair products], anything like that so if I was to want somethin’ like that I would have to get it”* (Participant #6).

Most women acknowledged the lack of Black hair products at their shelter, but no one classified it as a problem. They attempted to deal with the absence in different ways. Some women just bought some products on their own. Other women requested hair care products from staff, while a few women pooled their money together to buy hair products to share among the group: *“Somebody’ll buy it and share. Buy enough to share with everybody else, you know. ‘Cause you’re not gonna get it here. You know, they’re not gonna go outta their way to try and get you a hair product”* (Participant #6).

The lack of hair care and food products revealed the white cultural norms that manifested in the organizational structure. No participant who discussed an environmental microaggression believed that staff members were being intentionally exclusionary. However, staff members adhered to larger cultural norms that catered to the needs of White women. In other words, the lack of culturally-specific hair care products was a consequence of structural racism. Across all three shelters hair care products were donated goods from mainstream stores or community members. Black residents viewed donations as a valid reason why shelters did not have adequate products for them, despite the fact that shelter staff could and did also purchase food and personal needs items for shelter residents.



**Staff composition.** Three women discussed aspects of the shelter environment that they felt either overrepresented or underrepresented Black women. Two participants described the lack of Black women workers at shelter. For example, one participant noted:

*I've only seen one um, African-American staff that works up front and she's African-American, so. The rest of 'em that's in here is... we have, I've seen one um, intern that's African-American, but everybody else is white. I haven't seen any Afri--, I haven't seen any other than those two. (Participant 9)*

Another participant (Participant 6) stated that there were *no* Black people that worked at shelter<sup>1</sup>. The third participant reported being bothered that most of the women entering shelter were Black. This was noteworthy because, based on the average reported numbers from shelter administration, most women that came into the shelter were not Black. It is possible that the participant perceived an overrepresentation of Black women clients in comparison to the paucity of Black shelter staff. The participant shared:

*Mmm. Um, well, first, let me say this. One thing it, it, it doesn't really... it doesn't really make me feel uncomfortable or it um... I don't even want to say uncomfortable really. That's the wrong word. Like, I have noticed since I've been here that a lot of the women that have come here, most, most of the women – I've been here since January, so I've seen a lot of women come and go. Most of the women that have come through this door and left are African-American women. (Participant 5)*

It is also possible that the “come and go,” could also be reflective of the idea that Black women are asked to leave more quickly in comparison to other White women. Another explanation for a perceived overrepresentation would be that women were in an environment

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<sup>1</sup> In the shelter where the participant was residing, the shelter director was a woman of color.

where they did not expect to see a lot of Black women. Therefore, the presence of even a few Black women coming into a shelter would appear substantial if the residents assumed the shelter mostly assisted White women.

**Women's experiences of microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations, and microinsensitivities.** Non-environmental racial microaggressions include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Six women mentioned an incident or experience that was identified as a non-environmental microaggression. In total, there were two microassaults, three microinsults, five microinvalidations, and four microinsensitivities. These microaggressions ranged from relatively unambiguous (microassaults) to more ambiguous (microinsensitivities).

**Microassaults.** Microassaults are “explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions” (Sue, 2010; p. 29). In this sample, a participant experienced two microassaults perpetrated by the same woman. The participant heard a Pakistani woman tell someone to stop acting like “a Black b\*tch.” The interviewee was a roommate and good friend of the Pakistani woman. The Pakistani woman tried to justify her statement by saying that she saw Black women behaving in stereotypical ways. The participant explained:

*She tried her best to explain it, but still the fact of the matter is... I mean, you know, I guess she called her a black bitch because her head got this... doin' like this [moves head side to side]. You know, how some sisters can't, when they cussin' you out and...you know, get to shakin' they neck and um, I guess she called her a Black bitch, 'stop actin' like a 'Black bitch.'* (Participant #5)

In another situation, the Pakistani woman called someone on television the n-word and justified it by saying that she heard the word used previously in a different context. These examples were the most overt and identifiable of all of the racial microaggressions noted by study participants.

**Microinsults.** Microinsults are “interpersonal or environmental communications that convey stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivity that demean a person’s racial, gender or sexual orientation, heritage, or identity” (Sue, 2010, p. 31). Three different women reported experiencing one microinsult each while at shelter. The first microinsult occurred when a White female resident referred to a Black woman as colored:

*Um, well, there is a resident here who address black people as colored people instead of addressin’ us by our name. And we were told to just, to talk to her. Like, you know, ‘This is 2010.’ You know, ‘We don’t call Black people colored people anymore and it’s offensive to, you know, some people.’* (Participant 3)

The White woman, intentionally or not, insinuated a second-class citizenship of Black women by calling her colored.

The second microinsult was perpetrated based on a stereotypical assumption about how Black women should behave. A White resident insisted that a Black participant did not behave “Black enough.” Nearly every day the woman asked the participant why she did not sound, talk, or act Black. The participant said: *“It irks me as... when someone tells me um, “Why don’t you act black? And I always say to them (laughs), ‘What is acting black? I get that almost daily from one particular person.’”* (Participant #5)

The White woman held stereotypical beliefs about Black women's behavior. She was unaware that questioning a person's cultural identity, if it does not fit cultural stereotypes, was not only rude, but also racist.

The third microinsult was important because it was the only staff-perpetrated racial microaggression identified in the sample. The microinsult occurred when a staff member refused to give a participant the same allergy medicine that was previously given to a White woman. The participant had numerous conversations with the White woman about their shared allergies. When the White woman informed her that shelter staff carried allergy medicine that could help her, the Black woman asked a staff member for the medication. However, the staff member informed her that the shelter did not have medicine. Overhearing the request, another staff member told the participant to get some allergy medicine at the store:

*So I go in the, in the office – right after she just came outta the office [white lady with similar allergies] – and I said um, 'You guys got any allergy medicine?' She's like, 'No, all we have is aspirin.' And then the other lady (another staff member) who was sittin' in a chair was like, 'Well, they're only \$4.95 at Walmart.' (Participant #6)*

The Black woman felt the staff members did not want to give her medication. The participant rationalized that the only reason staff disregarded her request was because she was Black:

*She [the White woman] was like, 'I took it. It helped, but it made me go to sleep.' You know, so I know that she's went and got it before. And then I'm like, Well, when I go...and I, I mean, the only difference is color, you know. We're both here. We both have allergies. But I'm Black and she's White. You know? (Participant #6)*

**Microinvalidations.** Microinvalidations are “communications or environmental cues that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups” (Sue, 2010; p. 37). Three Black participants each mentioned incidents that were considered microinvalidations. In the first example, a group of White residents perpetrated two microinvalidations against a Black participant. First, white residents laughed at her experience with a racist service provider and then, second, gave her money to “get over” the situation. Another woman experienced two microinvalidations on two different occasions. One White resident described her preference for White men to the participant. Another White resident told the same participant about her family’s previous history with the KKK. The fifth microinvalidation was perpetrated by a White resident who explained to a Black woman that she had Black friends.

The first participant needed money to obtain a state identification card. While attempting to obtain charitable funds from a local organization, the participant found that she was dealing with a racist service provider. The entire experience left her feeling infuriated and in need of emotional support. She tried to seek support from a shelter staff member who had recommended the organization, but the staff member did not provide emotional support beyond saying “I’m sorry.” She then explained to a few White shelter residents about her racist experience. When she finished explaining her story, all of the women laughed at her. Even though she was sad about the response, the participant was not surprised the White women laughed at her. *“And I’m like, ‘Y’all is not gon believe this,’ and I told ‘em everything that happened, everything on the phone. Of course, they thought it was funny.”* (Participant #14) When they finished laughing, the White women explained to the participant that her situation was *“no big deal.”* The participant

explained: *“And they laughed. And they was like, ‘Well, it’s no big deal. Hell, I’ll give you \$10 tomorrow to go get your ID.’”* (Participant #14)

The participant left the conversation angry. Later on in the interview, she told me that she had made too big of a deal of her experience with the racist service provider since she received the money she needed for an ID anyway. The White residents invalidated the participant by laughing at her and used their power to redefine her experience by telling her that the discrimination was “no big deal.” They solidified the invalidation by giving her ten dollars to get her state identification card.

Another participant experienced two microinvalidations during casual conversations. A White resident explained that she preferred to date White men. The same participant had another encounter when a White woman who described her family’s involvement in white supremacy groups. The participant shared:

*And... or then there was another lady, ‘Well, my dad and my grandfather were in the KKK. But, I like Black people.’ And that’s just weird. (laughs) Like, they just made it known that, you know, their family did not accept Black people.* (Participant #1)

A different participant explained when a White woman informed the participant that she had Black friends. The participant explained: *“So (laughs) um, it... you know how they say, ‘I got a lotta Black friends.’ Now what did you say that for?”* (Participant #10) The disclosure felt unprompted and unnecessary, and annoyed the participant. She felt that any White woman, who says that she has Black friends, probably does not have many Black friends.

***Microinsensitivities: very ambiguous microaggressions.*** Microaggressions, like microinsults, microinvalidations, microassaults, and environmental microaggressions fit easily into Sue and colleagues’ (2007, 2010) conceptual model of racial microaggressions. However,

some women experienced annoying or frustrating incidents that could not readily be classified as a microassault, microinsult, or microinvalidation. Yet, these incidents made Black women noticeably uncomfortable. Due to their closeness to microinvalidations, I labeled these experiences *microinsensitivities* to acknowledge their role within the larger concept of microaggressions, but as a proposed separate subcategory within the microaggression framework. These experiences elicited a subtle level of discomfort similar to those who experienced microinvalidations and microinsults.

Microaggressions often occur within an ambiguous situation, making it difficult to discern whether the statement was actually racist. Sue (2010) described this situation as attributional ambiguity. Ambiguous situations require that “psychological energy must be expended to (1) discern the truth, (2) protect oneself from insults and invalidations, and (3) try to ascertain what actions should be taken” (p. 54).

In the case of these microinsensitivities, the participants described particular racial situations where they expended cognitive energy determining how to appraise the incident and whether they should respond (similar to other microaggressions). These microinsensitivities were activated when the interviewer asked the following question: “How many times, if any, did you get angry, or want to tell someone off, for being racist, but chose not to say anything?”

Four women had such experiences, and they all chose to ignore the situations for different reasons. One participant mentioned feeling annoyed that Black women at her shelter were seen as dangerous by staff and residents at shelter. She felt that this belief created a tension between staff and residents. For example, when a Black and White woman got into a verbal altercation, the Black woman was perceived as scarier even though she was enacting the same behaviors as the White woman. She explained:

*Well, I've seen arguments of, between um, a White girl and a Black girl...the White girl is [saying] like, 'Well, I'm not scared'a you.' And, you know? Nobody said anything about you bein' scared, you know. And then a lotta people here don't even come off that way, like they're tryin' to intimidate anybody or anything. (Participant #6)*

In another example, a Black woman made a joke about the skin color of a participant who was of mixed racial heritage:

*So, I don't know. ...I Like last night, someone had told me, like – I don't think she was being funny but I kinda felt like she was bein' funny – 'cause she called me a White... White anklets 'cause I have, you know, 'cause my skin color's more White than it is Black. (Participant 12)*

Two women felt that certain White staff members used nonverbal expressions to let women know that they were not wanted at shelter. The participants did not really know *why* they felt this way, but believed that the nonverbal cues communicated to them by staff were unwelcoming. One participant shared:

*It could just be an expression on a person's face. You be like, "Well, they look like they don't want me here," or somethin' like that. And I done felt like that a couple times, but I don't look at it. I look over stuff like that. (Participant #7)*

Similar to how microinsults and microinvalidations are propagated, the perpetrators of microinsensitivities were likely not aware that they made participants uncomfortable or uneasy. In turn, participants did not know how or if to respond.



## **Research Questions 2 and 3: How Do Black women Think About and Understand Microaggressions? How Do They Respond to These Experiences Immediately?**

Women's responses to microaggressions were examined for commonalities and differences, and were classified as either "non-confrontational" or "confrontational" responses. Non-confrontational responses were defined as *not* directly reprimanding or responding to a perpetrator or confrontationally doing something to change the structure of the environment. According to Sue (2010), microaggressions affect people on three different levels: cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. On a cognitive level, people first wonder if they actually even experienced a microaggression. People of color spend considerable time questioning whether an incident they experienced was racist, and how they should respond to it. Sue (2010) posits that microaggressions are the most detrimental to one's emotional level because of their long-term impact on people's psychological well-being. Behaviorally, Sue (2010) explains that people might choose to respond non-confrontationally in different ways to microaggressions. Individuals respond confrontationally by "attempting to educate the perpetrator while maintaining a relationship" or when they "confront and attack" (p. 83). Non-confrontationally, individuals either laugh the event off or dismiss it. Manifestations of all of these behavioral responses emerged from the data.

**Confrontational responses to non-environmental microaggressions.** Three Black women confrontationally responded to microaggressions. Three women each experienced overt microassaults and a microinsult such as name-calling (e.g., overhearing someone use the word n\*\*\*er, black bitch, or colored) and decided to address the perpetrators.

The participant who overheard her roommate call someone a Black bitch decided to educate the roommate immediately about her language. She said:

*Okay, me. I'm Black. (laughs) So, of course, I'm sittin' there and, I mean, I'm not gon pretend like I didn't hear it. I mean, this is somethin' that needs to be addressed with or without staff here or not. We can talk about this. (Participant #5)*

The insult was so offensive to her, no one needed to validate her experience, nor did she feel like she had to decide whether the statement was racist. She simply took action. She explained thoroughly to the Pakistani woman why it was inappropriate to call someone a Black bitch:

*Okay? So... and me, I ask, 'What do you mean a Black bitch? Why don't you... why cain't you just say bitch'? You know. 'Cause when females are bitches, we just bitches. You don't gotta be a White bitch or a Black bitch, you just a bitch. (Participant #5)*

She continued to use this situation to further break down stereotypes about Black women:

*Um, and I know she tried her best to... what did she say. It was somethin' like um, 'Well, she's actin' like a Black bitch and I say that because Black women do the... you know, the head thing when they're mad or, you know.' I'm like, 'No.' I'm like, 'No. 'Cause not all of us do that.' And it's...what I had to...really get her to understand that. (Participant #5)*

The goal of this confrontation was to educate and inform the perpetrator. The Black woman was angry, but she also viewed her roommate as a friend, and she was invested enough in their relationship to attempt to correct the ignorance. She continued this educative approach when the same woman also used the n-word to describe a Black woman. The participant explained the history of the insult and described why it was inappropriate to use the word today. The participant acknowledged that her approach to the woman was more compassionate compared to how other Black women might have responded. She explained: *"Clueless. And (laughs) this might sound crazy to you, but I was...I was happy that she said it in front of*

*me... [Instead of] sayin' it in front of, you know, somebody else. She woulda got that ass whupped"* (Participant #5).

This same participant also experienced a microinsult where a White woman asked her why she was not “*acting*” black. The participant responded by directly asking, “*What is acting Black?*” She understood the stereotype underlying the White woman’s comment. Yet, instead of berating the woman about the stereotypes associated with Black womanhood, she chose to respond in a manner that forced the White woman to think more deeply about her own bias.

Another participant recalled a White woman in shelter referring to Black women as “*colored.*” It is important to note that even though the participant responded confrontationally, she pitied the White woman. She stated that the White woman was probably not used to being around Black people, but still needed her behavior corrected. She and other Black women in shelter planned carefully what they wanted to say to the White woman. Before acting, the group asked shelter staff whether they could carry out the planned confrontation. The participant carefully emphasized that they did not want to intimidate the woman, but instead wanted to approach her using collective support. The participant noted: “*But we all talked to her together. It wasn’t like we were gangin’ up on her or anything like that*” (Participant #3).

Participant six was insulted when a staff member refused to give her allergy medicine. Unlike the previous two participants, she was not interested in educating staff members or pushing them to think about their conceptualizations of bias, but rather she responded to them out of anger: “*Well, why don’t you go to Walmart and get some for me?*” Once she said this, she left the office without saying another word.

All of these microaggressions were perceived to be overt enough to justify a confrontational response without much processing about whether the event was racist. Two of

the three women who experienced relatively overt microaggressions confronted the perpetrator immediately after the racist event occurred. Their motivations appeared to be to either educate the perpetrator about what they experienced, or to release negative feelings.

**Non-confrontational responses to racism.** Eight women, who each experienced a microinvalidation or microinsensitivity, non-confrontationally responded to the racial microaggressions they had experienced. They each mentioned that the microaggressions did not directly impact them, yet there was some evidence that they were shocked, disappointed, or annoyed with the perpetrator and then chose to respond non-confrontationally. This minimization of their own experiences could be related to what Sue (2010) identifies as “denial of the experiential reality,” (p. 56) which is an individual’s attempt to minimize the microaggression in order to avoid negative consequences.

One participant described having a general conversation with a White resident who uncomfortably brought race into their conversation. She thought about the incident briefly, recognized it was unnecessary, and then chose to leave the situation. She explained:

*I mean, it's like we will...we can be talking about something totally different. And I say things to myself like, 'Why was this even brought up?' ....Or most of the time I just will sit there or I will come back inside or go elsewhere. I usually do that, regardless of the conversation if I don't feel like talkin' about it. But some--...I...it's never really made me angry, but it just like, you know, it sticks me wrong. Like, why was that a big issue.*

(Participant #1)

The participant identified an uncomfortable interaction she had with a White women who explained that her family was in the KKK. The participant later discussed that she probably would not share this experience with staff nor talk about it with other residents. She felt that the

situation had not affected her directly and therefore, there was not a need to talk to staff. She did not debrief with other residents about this uncomfortable interaction. She acknowledged that it was an awkward incident. Her preference was to walk away and “*go about her business*” when residents said things that were offensive:

*You know, you go inside or disperse from the area. And I’m like, ‘That was weird.’ (laughs) But it’s not like a lingering thing where people just keep bringin’ it up all the time, so. I mean, people...some people might get offended, some people might not.*  
(Participant 1)

When White residents minimized another participant’s experience with racism, she decided to take a similar approach of “*brushing it off*.”

*Cause it... you know, and I guess when you think about it, it’s no big deal. And then [name], you know, she was like, ‘[participant name], it’s no big... you know what, don’t even worry about it. I’ll give you \$10. So now you don’t even have to go to her.’ You know, so kinda made everything okay (laughs).* (Participant 14)

A participant reported that a Black woman had insulted her light complexion. Even though she was insulted by the remark, she “*laughed it off*” and explained that the perpetrator might have just been in a bad mood.

**Motivational appraisals underlying women’s responses to racism.** Overall, the data suggested that non-confrontational strategies derived from women’s motivational framing of the perpetrator’s behavior. Sue (2010) introduced multifaceted reactions people have when they experience microaggressions. These reactions include: healthy paranoia, sanity checking, empowering and validating self, and rescuing offenders. Examples in the data confirm some of the issues that Sue (2010) introduced, such as: belief that perpetrator racist behavior was typical

of White people (healthy paranoia), perpetrators lacked awareness about diverse people or practices (rescuing the offender), and perpetrators were envious of Black women.

For some Black women, the existence of racism was not surprising and therefore did not require special attention. One participant expressed her apathy:

*See, she didn't have to say that. Because that didn't sound right. But I didn't say any... it didn't anger me. I've heard it so much from different people when they talkin'. I just let 'em go ahead and talk. (Participant #10)*

This desensitization to and minimization of the microaggression seemed to be the impetus for non-confrontational responses. Direct or confrontational responses would require something surprising or outside of the realm of the types of racism that women experience everyday: “*So I, I've been through some racist stuff. Uh, I mean, even today, it's just a thing, you know. I don't let it get to me too much. I mean... no, it didn't surprise me. (laughs)*” (Participant #2).

Some participants responded non-confrontationally because they simply believed that perpetrators were not used to different cultures and did not mean to be offensive. Women took pity on perpetrators whom they felt were truly ignorant or unaware of their own ignorance: “*Um, some residents here that are racist, that aren't used to bein' around black people*” (Participant #3). Some women believed the combination of forced communal living and inexperience with people from different cultures inevitably led to increased tension and, in turn, negative racial experiences.

Sometimes a racial experience was shocking enough to require more confrontational processing about how to respond. The participant who experienced a microinsult, who was told that she was not Black enough, thought very deeply about her experience. During the interview, the participant asked me whether I thought the microinsult was racist and something she should

respond to. By asking how I interpreted the event, the participant was actually engaging in a “sanity check” (Sue, 2010) to validate the feelings that she had about the situation. The perpetrator’s insulting comments initially caused her to question her cultural identity. She pondered her situation in its entirety and concluded that the White woman probably wanted to be Black: *“Cause I’ve... after finally puttin’ it all together, I’m just like, ‘Wow! She wants to be like me!’”* (Participant #5).

She concluded this after watching the White woman interact with other Black women. The participant conceptualized Blackness as a coveted social position that implied some type of strength or status that was unattainable to those in outside groups. This was confirmed when she saw how excited the White woman got after other Black women legitimized her:

*Well, I mean, she’s...she’s just your average girl. She’s a sweet girl. Um, and I know—I know this for sure—she’s doin’ this playfully...Mmm hmmm. And at the same time, I know she wants credit. She likes hearing....she likes other people telling her how much she sounds Black...So that...you know, that pumps her up. It really does, I can see it in her eyes. I’m like, ‘Wow, you like hearing that, don’t you?’* (Participant 5)

The White woman insulted her primarily because she wanted to “*be Black*.” This conceptualization seemed to lessen the negative impact of the insulting comments, especially because the participant initially saw the offending woman as young and well intentioned: *“I mean, it doesn’t bother me, but at the same time it’s like I know she wants to be somethin’ that she’ll never be somethin’ she’s not, somethin’ she’ll never be regardless.”* (Participant #5)

Differing from the above participant, participant six did not see the staff as well intentioned. She was also the only woman who identified a staff-perpetrated microaggression and believed that racism existed at shelter. She initially responded to the microinsult with a

combative comment, yet once she left the situation, she did not choose to speak to anyone further about getting allergy medication. She felt that any other type of response would lead her nowhere. Sue (2010) described this non-confrontational response as “impotency of actions” (p. 56). It occurs when an individual has assessed the situation and decided that any action that they engage in will not result in the change that they desire:

*You know, like I said, other than just to walk away and let it just be up in the air. I mean, I could go and talk to my counselor about it who prob’ly would speak to the staff about it. But then where would that go?* (Participant #6)

She realized that any further efforts of confrontational response would not result in a change due to power differential between shelter staff and her. An understanding of this power differential influenced her belief that staff would not generally respond in a helpful manner when she needed support: *“I just, I really just walked away. I mean, because a... I feel like, with staff, you’re not gonna win.”* (Participant #6)

Non-confrontational responses did not necessarily indicate an acceptance of a microaggression, but in some cases were based on a conscious decision to de-escalate the negative emotions that arose once women experienced microaggressions.

#### **Research Question 4: How Do Racial Microaggressions Influence Future Help Seeking from the Domestic Violence Shelter?**

No matter their positive or negative interactions with shelter staff or residents, everyone in the sample noted that they would return to shelter if they needed help or support in the future. Participants discussed four aspects of the shelter that contributed to their desire to return to shelter in the future: their perceptions of shelter staff and residents, feeling loved and supported



as shelter, feeling familiar with staff members and the shelter rules, and having access to sufficient tangible and human resources that enhance their sense of safety.

**Women's perceptions of their interactions with shelter staff and residents.** Women tended to have both negative and positive experiences in shelter. The negative aspects of being at shelter related to issues with community living such as arguing over chores, sharing spaces, and generally having to get along with people who hold different values. While almost every woman had positive views about staff, two women described not liking how shelter staff treated them. One of the women stated that staff showed their apathy through negative subtle behaviors: *"I mean, short answers or 'Are you doin' this or are you gonna do this?' Like, you know, the tones in their voice, the attitude...I mean, just really shows you that they just really don't care, you know"* (Participant 6). One woman, who had a favorable view of staff overall, did notice that some White staff and residents believed that Black women were not *"real"* survivors. She explained:

*You know what I'm sayin'? To them, they feel like, my... this is my personal opinion. That, you know what I'm sayin', Black women, you know, aren't always here for a domestic violence. Like, 'cause they're, like, uh, one of the Black girls had about h--, you know what I'm sayin', huntin' her down about gettin' a PPO order against her assailant. So, you know what I'm sayin', where as they not huntin' no white girls down about gettin' [no] assailant.* (Participant 9)

Overall, many residents reported good experiences with staying at shelter and specifically described emotional and practical assistance that they received from shelter which influenced their desire to return. Participants frequently described shelter as a *comfortable* place to return to if they ever needed to escape from an abusive partner. Women defined comfort in three different

ways: comfort as love and emotional support, comfort as familiarity, and comfort as having sufficient tangible and human resources to enhance their safety. This comfort influenced women's desire to return to a domestic violence shelter in the future.

**Comfort as love and emotional support.** Survivors seeking help from abusive partners are leaving a past life of turmoil, chaos, and fearful uncertainty. Abusers typically force women to disengage from the love and care that positive social support systems provide in order to maintain physical and emotional control over women. Women liked that staff provided both emotional and practical assistance. Women would want to return to shelter because it provided a sense of love and support. They also felt that the shelter provided a safe, comfortable environment where they could relax, share stories, and feel connected with shelter staff and other residents. One participant really appreciated how a staff member listened to her in a non-judgmental manner.

*Mmm, you know, just by talkin' to me and, you know, just...just understandin' me and just bein' upfront and honest and real with me. You know, I can go and talk to 'em about anything. I don't have to worry about are they gonna judge me, are they gonna look at me different.* (Participant 3)

Another woman described her experience at shelter as being in a safe, violence-free home. She shared: *"And it was like home without drama. Like what it would feel like if I was in my own home, so. I would, I would go back there anytime if I needed it. I would"* (Participant #11).

Participant 13 appreciated the little things that staff did to make her life easier:

*...today, my laundry basket was so full and I was tryin' to carry it up the stairs. She was like, 'No, stay right here. I'm gon have to go get somebody.' So she'll, carried it all the*

*way up there to my room for me. So, you know, that is, it'd be the little stuff.* (Participant 13)

**Comfort as familiarity.** The familiar shelter environment also ensured that women would return for help. For one participant, having a connection with staff members increased her comfort and would facilitate her return to the shelter. She said: “...*because I'm comfortable. I've got fa--, you know, kinda familiar with a couple'a staff, you know what I'm sayin'. They know my situation, you know. So I wouldn't mind comin' back*” (Participant #9). Women built connections with staff at their respective shelters. Ten women stated that they would go to other shelters if they needed to leave an abuser; however, their preference would be the shelter program from which they were currently receiving services. Three women specifically stated they would *only* return to the shelter program they were currently at if they needed support. They felt that getting to know staff at other agencies and new shelter rules would be uncomfortable.

**Comfort as having sufficient tangible and human resources to enhance safety.** The shelter environment provided a safe haven and shelter staff provided tangible and emotional resources that enhanced the level of comfort for women. The safe environment allowed women a violence-free atmosphere and some time to get in control of their own lives. One woman explained that leaving a relationship could be incredibly difficult, so being able to go to a safe haven to recuperate was helpful. She said:

*Because I feel like peo--, some people could be in, in a domestic violence relationship and it'd be so hard for that person to leave that relationship alone. They be needing somewhere to go that they can get theirselves back together.* (Participant #7)

Seven women liked that shelter provided tangible resources like physical safety and community resources. These resources made women feel like staff cared about them on an individual level.

Participants appreciated services that would help them support themselves in the future. Women enjoyed the access they had to the multiple social supports available at shelter. These support systems encouraged autonomy, offered helpful advice, and increased self-confidence. They also provided women with useful information about domestic violence. One woman appreciated the practical knowledge that staff provided to them in order to cope with distress and anger. By learning practical and useful coping skills, the participant was able to think about her previous responses to highly stressful situations:

*And um, she's a beautiful woman. Very intelligent. You know? She broke me all the way down to where it brought me down. Because my i--, my, my levels was up so high to where I was ready to snap. So sh--, actually what she did, she did me a favor. She brought me back down to reality. Violence on top'a violence gets you nowhere. And I keep repeatin' this over and over and over and over in my head. (Participant 2)*

Even the participant who stated that the shelter was subtly racist and experienced a staff-perpetrated microaggression explained that she would return to shelter because, “*if it's help, it's help.*” Even though she described her overall shelter experience as disappointing, she had a safe place to sleep and time to take control of her life. She acknowledged her experiences of racism as difficult but still not worth sacrificing the support that she needs as a survivor:

*Because, like I said, some things you have to overlook, you know? And despite all that, it's like... you can deal with it, you know? If it's, if it's gonna help you just a tad bit, you can deal with that. You know? (Participant #6)*

She overlooked racism in order to get necessary services to stay safe. The “catch-22” of staying at shelters, for her, was the need to deal with subtle racism in exchange: “*As far as the little comments or what's gonna be said or done, you know? Just don't feed off into it. But if you can't*

*handle it, then I wouldn't recommend it."* (Participant #6) She believed women must have strength and willpower to deal with being in a shelter: *"Willpower (laughs) to just do what you gotta do to just get outta here, you know?"*

### **Additional Findings That Emerged from the Data**

This study intended to illuminate women's experiences of racial microaggressions in shelter, and how these microaggressions later influenced a desire to return to shelter. Although twelve women described events that fit the definition of racial microaggressions (as seen in Table 3), few identified them as such. When women did acknowledge some of their experiences as racist, they often minimized the incident. The data were examined for any patterns that might explain why women either did not classify incidents as racist or minimized the severity of the incidents. Four themes emerged from the data. Specifically, thirteen women believed potential perpetrators were just and fair, nine women endorsed negative stereotypes about their racial and/or gender group (i.e., internalized oppression), five women thought that other residents were undeserving clients, and five women believed Black residents presented themselves poorly to staff. As seen in Figure 1, I examined whether these four themes influenced the denial of racism.

Table 3

*Incidents of Racial Microaggressions and Potential Contributors to Denial of Racism*

	Environmental	Micro-insult	Micro-invalida- tion	Micro-assault	Micro-insensitivity	Fair Staff	Bad Self Presentation	Undeserving Clients	Internalized Oppression
1	X*		X(R)			X	X	X	X
2						X	X	X	X
3		X(R)				X			X
4	X*					X			
5	X*	X (R)		X (R)		X			X
6	X*	X (S)			X (R)			X	X
7	X*				X (S)	X			
8	X*				X (S)	X			
9	X*					X			X
10	X*		X (R)			X	X		X
11	X*					X		X	
12	X*				X (R)	X	X	X	X

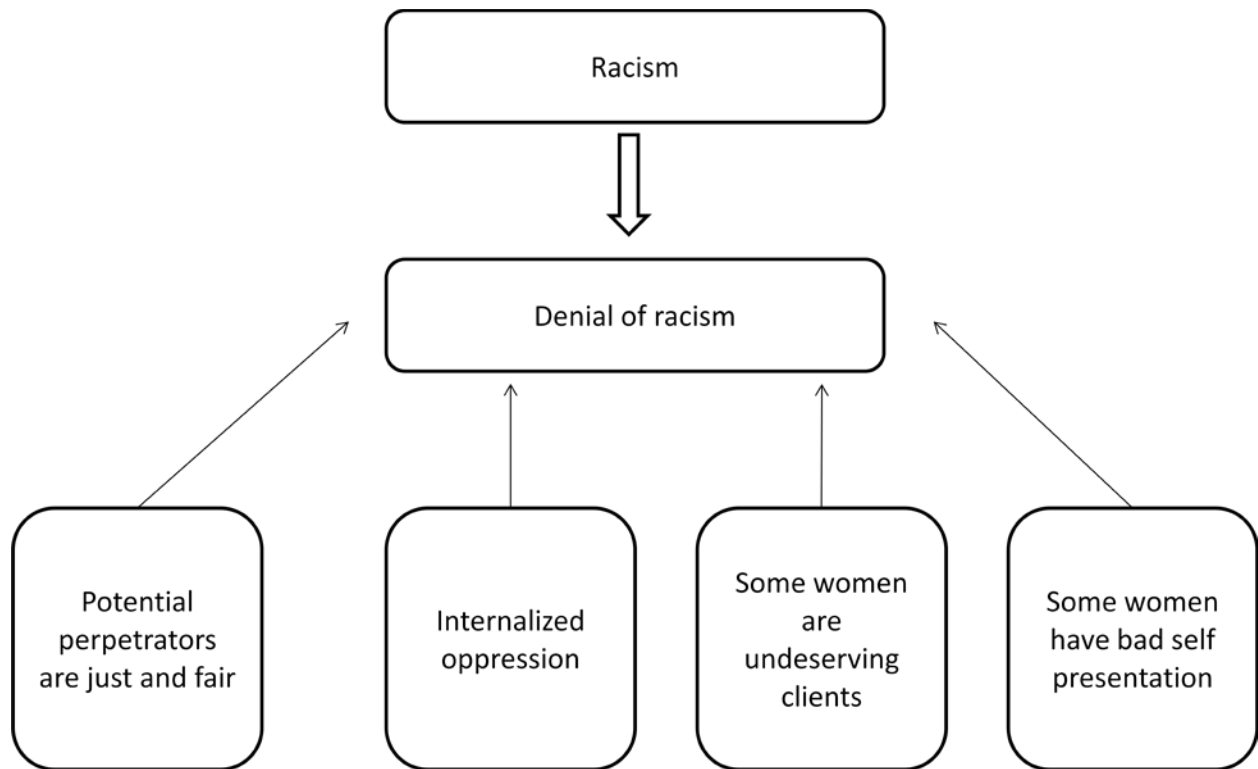
Table 3 (cont'd)

13	X*					X	X		
14			X (R)*			X			X

*Notes.* \* indicates the microaggressions that the researcher identified. S= Staff-perpetrated microaggression; R= Resident-perpetrated microaggression

Figure 1

*The Proposed Relationship Between Racial Microaggressions and Denial of Racism*



**View of potential perpetrators as just and fair.** Overall, thirteen participants in the study explained that shelter staff were equitable in all aspects of their interactions with residents. If women witnessed or experienced a racist incident, they therefore might have concluded that they had misinterpreted the incident because they believed that shelter workers were nonracist. The woman who reported a staff-perpetrated microinsult was the only woman who did not identify staff as fair and equitable. Participants believed White staff members allowed equal access to shelter, gave clients equal resources, and did not bend the rules at the shelter for any particular racial group. Some participants discussed:



*Like, we all get the same treatment, that I've seen with my eyes. That we all have to do the same things. Like, we all have to do chores. We all, you know, have to be in at a certain time. There's no, like...we're all treated the same basically. There's no favoritism.* (Participant 3)

*Regardless, White or Black. Like, my counselor, she's White. And I needed to go to [city] to pick up some mail. They didn't have any transfers. She gave me bus tickets plus she gave me \$6 for the transfers. Just so, you know, I can go and get my stuff 'cause I had to take all the kids with me....And so, no, they...it doesn't matter. I don't think no one here really cares about color.* (Participant 13)

**Women's internalized oppression.** Internalized oppression was an emergent meta-theme that arose out of two themes: “negative traits about Black women” and “negative traits of women.” It also was a potential contributor to why women might not have identified racism in shelter. Nine women endorsed a mixture of racist, sexist, and classist stereotypes about women. This included the belief that Black women, specifically, were loud, illogical, aggressive, and instigators in confrontations. This endorsement of negative stereotypes about Black women might preclude a woman from acknowledging a racist incident as well. For example, one woman described a racial microinsult that she had encountered by another resident. The perpetrator of this microinsult clearly held negative stereotypical views of Black women. The participant rationalized the White perpetrator's racist behavior by explaining: “*So I guess she expects for, truth be told, yes, a lotta Black folks...you know, I mean, come on now. A lot of us or... yeah, a lot of us, be actin' ignorant and stupid.*” (Participant 5). Another Black woman explained her preference for being around White women. She felt that White women were less negative than Black women:

Participant: *So, I don't like to be around a lot of 'em, I'm tellin' you... That's my experience.*

Interviewer: *You don't like to be around other Black women?*

Participant: *Mmm, not in no, no. 'Cause it always somethin' goin' on... ...that's negative. I find myself more comfortable around White women.* (Participant 10)

Along with internalized racism, four participants discussed other women as being the impetus to drama. They believed that women started problems for residents in shelter and preferred not to form relationships with other clients:

*But even then I try to stay out of everybody's way. Because there's so many problems around, you know, as far as cleaning and 'Who did this?' and 'Somebody took this...' you know? Just like I try to avoid all'a that by kinda just stayin' in my own area.*(Participant 6)

One women described not wanting to form close relationships with other women in shelter:

“Interviewer: *How come you wouldn't want to get too comfortable?* Participant: *Well, for one, it's in a houseful of women. Okay? Um...(laughs) And you know how devious we can be*” (Participant 5).

**Some women are undeserving clients.** Five participants discussed that some women were undeserving of shelter services. They felt that women were just using the shelter as a place to sleep, like a homeless shelter, rather than as a place to get back on their feet, and, in turn, were not making the necessary changes in their life. This view of woman as lazy people could impact whether they actually believed that a racist incident occurred. This was evident when one participant explained that misuse of the services would result in negative repercussions for residents. She explained: *“This ain't no hotel. This ain't Holiday Inn. This, this is a domestic*

*violence shelter. And if you don't respect it and treat it like the domestic violence shelter, it's gonna cost you"* (Participant 2). In this sense, women were viewed as responsible for their successes as well as failures. The women who endorsed this theme believed that shelter services were intended to be reciprocal: *"I mean, it's like a give-and-take situation. You can't take, take, take and not give anything back"* (Participant 1).

**Bad self presentation.** The belief that shelter staff members were fair and that other residents could be devious, lazy or untruthful could have made it difficult for participants to identify microaggressions either occurring within their own lives or the lives of other residents. This was evident in five participants' answers about how they would respond to another resident if she said she experienced a racist incident in shelter. Five women stated that they would not believe the resident because she probably approached the staff member with a bad attitude. In other words, the resident was probably presenting herself in an inappropriate way to staff. Therefore, they explained that the "racist" response from the staff member would have actually been due to the resident's inappropriate behavior rather than the staff member being racist. A woman explained what she would say to a Black woman who might disclose that she experienced racism:

*That it's prob'ly not because you're Black. It's probably because of the way that you're going about things...to try to get whatever you're tryin' to accomplish. It's the way you goin' about it probably. I would, I would say. And maybe you have to change the way you're, you're um, the way you're talkin'. You know? (laughs) It's the way you presentin' yourself.* (Participant #10)

One participant stated that claims of racism were actually an impetus to unnecessary stress. She believed unmotivated women used racism as an excuse to become even more unmotivated. She suggested:

*I just...I don't know. Like, the peo--, the staff are more willing to help people that are willin' to help themselves. So I just feel like if you...if you feel that way [Like staff are racist now obviously you're putting a burden on yourself. So...and that'll make like...if you feel that way, then you...like, if you putting a burden on yourself and then you don't want to do stuff because you feel like no one's gonna help you. (Participant #1)*

Emergent patterns in the data such as views of staff as just and fair, internalized oppression, women are undeserving clients, and bad self presentation possibly contributed to women's inability to state that racism existed at shelter. To test this, I created a case-ordered effects meta-matrix to examine relationships among internalized oppression, bad self-presentation, and denial of racism.

**The relationship among internalized oppression, bad self presentation, and denial of racism.** I first examined patterns between internalized oppression and denial of racism, using a case-ordered effects meta-matrix, because participants commonly endorsed these two themes. Although qualitatively important, believing that the shelter had undeserving clients overlapped with believing that women were bad victims (3 of the 5 women), and this overlap made it difficult to discuss any unique trends. Also, many participants endorsed that staff were fair. Therefore, there was not enough variation in the data to attribute results to a noticeable trend.

As evidenced by the many participants who believed racism did not exist at the shelter, there was a significant overlap between participants who endorsed negative stereotypes about their identity group (internalized oppression) and who denied or minimized racist events. Six

women endorsed at least one negative trait about Black women, with three of these women endorsing two or more traits.

Interestingly, as illustrated in Table 3, the data also revealed that, of the four women who blamed clients for bad self-presentation, three of them also specifically endorsed negative traits about Black women. This provided some evidence that internalized oppression might inhibit women's ability to see staff-perpetrated racial microaggressions at shelter. Alternatively, participants' denial of racism in the shelter could have produced negative feelings about one's own identity group. Future research could look at the role of internalized oppression in the denial of racism.

The data supported that internalized oppression could influence women's denial of racism. The direction of influence between internalized oppression and experiences at shelter requires further study, but the results introduced the potential relationship among the variables. Other variables such as length of stay, age, and previous stay at shelter did not appear to influence whether women denied that racism existed at shelter.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore the presence of racial microaggressions within domestic violence shelters, to understand how women responded to them, and to determine if women would return to shelter based on their experiences at shelter. Twelve of the 14 women in the sample experienced at least one microaggression. These included non-environmental microaggressions (microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations, or microinsensitivities), environmental microaggressions, or both. All women, no matter what their experience at shelter, stated that they would return to a domestic violence shelter if they ever needed help again. Other

themes, such as denial of racism and internalized oppression, were unexpected but interesting, and may have influenced the major findings, laying the groundwork for future studies.

### **Experiences of Microaggressions among Black Women**

Microaggressions are subtle forms of racism that commonly arise in the lived experiences of Black people (Sue, 2010). In this sample, women reported at least one environmental or non-environmental microaggression in the data, with nearly half of the women reporting more than one microaggression. The prevalence of microaggressions within this sample was not surprising, as other small, qualitative studies have also found a high prevalence of microaggressions within the lives of people of color (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al, 2008). The most commonly reported forms of microaggressions were also the most subtle. Women reported more ambiguous racial microaggressions like microinvalidations, and environmental microinvalidations as opposed to microassaults. Only one woman discussed experiencing a microassault from a participant, the most “overt” within the classification of microaggressions. A majority of women discussed incidents that would be classified as environmental microinvalidations. These incidents included a lack of hair care products and food. Participants in Gillum’s (2008) study similarly discussed the lack of culturally-specific hair products and foods at shelter.

Findings from this study revealed an extremely subtle form of microaggression, which I defined as microinsensitivities. Microinsensitivities were very subtle race-related incidents that women identified as rude and insensitive, but were not clearly assaultive, insulting, or invalidating. People who perpetrated these awkward, uncomfortable incidents made race inappropriately salient. Yet, these experiences did not fit into previous categorizations of microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations (Sue et al, 2007; Sue, 2010). Four women

identified these incidents as “race-related” and expended emotional or cognitive energy determining how to respond to the incident. Women did not feel attacked, insulted, or invalidated, but instead felt uncomfortable, slightly shocked (if only for a minute), and often discussed a need to change or physically leave the conversation. Future research should continue to advance the categorization of microaggressions and determine where microinsensitivities fit.

There are two possible explanations about the nature and frequency of non-environmental and environmental microaggressions in Black lives. First, microaggressions are derived from implicit, negative, cultural stereotypes about Blacks that are easy to activate in an interracial interaction if not regulated. Second, environmental microaggressions are consequences of a historical structure of racism and therefore, inevitably influence the everyday lives of Blacks. First, if perpetrators already endorse negative cultural stereotypes about Blacks then this belief will influence their interactions with Blacks. Sekaquaptea, Espinoza, Thompson, Vargas, and von Hippel (2003) reported that having implicit stereotypes about someone from a particular race predicted how a person would behave in interracial interactions. Negative cultural stereotypes about Black women underpin the perpetuation of some microaggressions in this sample. For example, the use of the word n\*\*\*er and colored, insinuating that a Black woman was being “oversensitive,” and even the belief that a participant was not behaving “Black enough” were all rooted in stereotypical ideas about the roles and perceptions of Black women and Black people in general. Themes that arose from Sue and colleagues’ (2008) study also mirrored the societal stereotypes about Black people’s intelligence, criminal status, and place in society. Black college students reported experiencing a wide range of racial microaggressions that were classified into six different themes: “assumption of intellectual inferiority, second class citizenship, assumption of criminality, assumption of inferior status, assumed universality of the Black American

experience, and assumed superiority of white cultural values/communication styles” (Sue et al, 2008, p. 335). Based on these data, it seems that addressing stereotypical thinking about various racial groups would be an important step to eradicating racial microaggressions.

Framing environmental microaggressions as a consequence of structural racism could also explain the frequency of environmental microaggressions within organizations. Structural racism acknowledges that systems of domination, hierarchy, and inequity are built into the everyday patterns of normative society. Therefore, “individual prejudice and discrimination are but symptoms of larger structural problems” (Doane, 2006, p. 268). According to Sue (2010), environmental microaggressions refer to the “numerous demeaning and threatening social, educational, political, or economic cues that are communicated individually, institutionally, or societally to marginalized groups” (p. 25). In both definitions of structural and environmental microaggressions, racism in larger social systems affects the presence of racism on an interpersonal level through the environment. In this sample, the lack of hair products for Black women reflects a larger focus on Black women’s hair care needs as deviant from “standard” White hair care products. Black women in the current study did not see themselves being *intentionally* excluded from the shelter, yet they were still unintentional recipients of structural racism.

### **The Role of Intention When Identifying a Microaggression**

When a microaggression is perpetrated, researchers who study microaggressions are often interested in the interactions between the target and the perpetrator (Sue, 2010). Findings in this study revealed that the intention of the perpetrator was important to the woman when defining something as inappropriate or racist. In this study, women’s perceptions of the perpetrator’s intention influenced whether they identified an incident as a form of racism and a



perpetrator as racist. For example, one woman described that hearing a resident say Black b\*tch was not necessarily racist because she did not think the perpetrator *intended* to be racist.

Believing that perpetrators are well-intentioned might have also influenced why so few women identified staff as perpetrating microaggressions. Many women saw the staff as helpful and well intentioned. On the one hand, it could very well be that staff did not perpetrate any microaggressions against any of the participants, other than the few noted in this study. On the other hand, the belief in staff's fairness might have made it difficult for the women to identify microaggressions. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that people are often times motivated to change their own attitudes when they are presented with information inconsistent to their own beliefs. This inconsistent information causes people psychological discomfort and they often search for a method to relieve it (Starzyk, Fabrigar, Soryal, & Fanning, 2009). Simply stated, not identifying that racism existed in the shelter could be a consequence of dissonance created if someone experienced a racist incident from a perceived non-racist staff member.

### **The “Catch-22” of Responding to Microaggressions**

Determining how to respond to a racial microaggression can be complicated for a woman who appraises an incident as racially inappropriate (even if she does not say it is racist) but believes her perpetrator is well-intentioned, as evidenced in this study (Sue, 2010). Women in this sample chose to respond to microaggressions either confrontationally or non-confrontationally. Those who used confrontational responses sought to immediately correct or combat the perpetrator about their behavior. Non-confrontational responses were identified as not directly reprimanding or responding to a perpetrator. Some non-confrontational responses included walking away from, brushing off, or laughing at a microaggression. For women who were non-confrontational when responding to environmental microaggressions (not directly

speaking with another to change the culture of the shelter), they actively addressed the situation in other ways. For example, some women chose to make food with other Black women, or they jointly bought hair care products that Black women could share.

Sue (2010) creatively described the process of responding to microaggressions as a “catch-22” (p. 52). He asserted that once a person experiences a microaggression, they expend cognitive energy determining whether they experienced a microaggression and what they should do about it. It then becomes difficult to display confrontational responses for different reasons. Sometimes, a microaggression happens so quickly that by the time a person decides to respond, the moment has passed (Sue, 2010). In this study, overt forms of microaggressions such as microinsults did not require as much cognitive processing, and therefore, women did not worry about time-limited responding. For example, after overhearing two microassaults—the n\*word and Black bitch—a participant immediately addressed her roommate about how inappropriate the comments were.

Sue (2010) also explained that people might not confrontationally respond because they concluded that a microaggression did not occur. Others might not respond because they believe their actions will not result in the change they want. One participant in this study chose not to talk about her microinsult with other shelter staff members, because she did not believe that anything could be done about it. Due to implied power dynamics between staff and residents, people might also be fearful of the consequences of responding to microaggressions. For example, in this study, a group of women first sought approval from shelter staff before addressing a racist resident. Since staff held authority and control of needed resources, staff approval, not the emotional impact of the microaggression, was important for women in deciding whether to respond to a racist incident perpetrated by another resident. Fear of repercussion is

particularly salient with this sample because women rely on shelter staff to meet their basic needs. In sum, the nature of the relationship between the target and perpetrator influenced how people chose to respond to racism. Future studies could look at the use of corrective, confrontational response versus combative, confrontational response and their consequences.

It is important to note that women who responded non-confrontationally and/or did not address a racial microaggression often minimized their experiences and the impact that it had on their lives. The reasons for this minimization could be attributed to a sense of immunity to racism or not wanting to be labeled as paranoid or oversensitive. Evidence of immunity arose when a few women stated that racist things did not bother them because they had been through it so much. Also, the belief in a post-racial America—the idea that we have overcome racism and its detrimental impact on people of color—promotes the societal rhetoric of black paranoia. However, some research shows that Blacks who acknowledge racism, and even have just cause, will still be seen as oversensitive and as complainers. Using an experimental design, Kaiser and Miller (2001) presented scenarios to college students about a male who just received a failing grade in a course. The experimenters manipulated whether the Black male attributed his bad grade to discrimination or another cause. Results showed that when the Black male felt he was discriminated against, participants viewed the male as a complainer and, in general, had a less favorable view of him. They continued to rate him less favorably even if his failing grade was clearly a consequence of discrimination.

### **Denial of Racism**

A majority of Black women in the sample experienced at least one microaggression; 11 noted an environmental microaggression and 9 noted a non-environmental microaggression. Surprisingly, however, almost every Black women ( $n=13$ ) believed that racism did not exist in

shelter. Many women believed that racism did not exist at shelter particularly because they had the same access to support and practical resources as did White women. Participants asserted that because all clients had equal access to resources, received equal treatment by staff, and all had to follow the same rules, racism did not exist in shelter. In contrast, women asserted that racism would be present if there were not equity in these particular factors. Across the three shelter programs, women felt staff provided them with emotional and practical support. Women described the shelter as comfortable, familiar, and consistent. Many survivors valued these qualities after leaving an abusive relationship. Shelter resources kept women physically safe and attended to their basic needs. Similar to women in this study, Black women in Gillum's (2008) study appreciated the safety of the shelter and the resources provided to them. The basic goals of domestic violence shelters (i.e. keeping women safe and providing support during crisis) tended to be what survivors valued and remembered. In addition to hearing women's experiences with equitable treatment from staff, I noticed that the organizations made concerted efforts to promote diversity. For example, all three shelter directors were women of color. Shelters had magazines or pictures on the wall of women of color and/or allowed women to cook or request their own food.

Although women mostly discussed positive perceptions of shelter staff, sometimes these perceptions were not extended to other shelter residents. Results showed that two emergent themes faulted other women for inappropriate behaviors while in shelter: bad self-presentation and undeserving clients. Bad self-presentation was a theme that described participants' beliefs that some women had bad attitudes and presented themselves in ways that were inappropriate to staff. Therefore, when asked hypothetically how they would respond to another resident who complained of staff being racist, participants said that it was probably the woman's inappropriate

behavior, not a staff member's racial bias, that prompted bad interactions with staff. The belief that women were undeserving clients was the second theme that arose from the data about other residents' behavior. In this theme, women blamed other residents for not using shelter resources that could better their lives. Women also mentioned their disappointment with residents who were using the resources when they did not "really need them." For example, some participants felt women at shelter were undeserving because they were homeless and not actually domestic violence survivors.

Both themes insinuated that there are good and bad ways to behave as shelter residents. Shelter residents who were perceived as unfriendly, aggressive or manipulating the shelter resources were described in unfavorable ways. The belief in an "undeserving" client was reminiscent of a study by VanNatta (2005) who interviewed workers at a domestic violence shelter. She found that shelter workers believed that certain women manipulated and used domestic violence shelter resources. Shelter workers discussed being able to tell who actually deserved to be at a shelter and who just was there for housing. "A staff member will generally base her opinion of whether a resident is 'really in need of safe housing' on how that resident interacts with shelter staff, how dedicated she appears to be to shelter meetings and programs, and how confrontationally she appears to be searching for permanent housing" (p. 425). Findings from the VanNatta (2005) study about the "ideal" survivor embodied what women identified as a deserving client in this study. When Black women characterized someone as undeserving, they simultaneously lessened the "undeserving" client's credibility. It was possible that the "undeserving client" and women who had bad self-presentation played a unique role in the denial of racism. Future research should identify how attitudes among shelter staff members about clients influence people's perceptions of other residents.

## Internalized Oppression

Women had negative thoughts about residents specifically, but also endorsed negative stereotypes about Black women in general. Findings showed that nine women in the current sample exhibited internalized oppression. They did so in two ways. Women either endorsed negative stereotypes about Black women and/or endorsed negative stereotypes about women in general. The extent of internalized oppression was an unexpected finding in this study, and may have been an influential contributor to the denial of racism at shelter. Internalized racism occurs when “the target group members believe the dominant group’s version of reality, in turn, ceasing to independently define themselves” (Speight, 2007, p. 130). Internalized racism is a manifestation of the Black self within White people’s reality. When defining internalized oppression, Bearman, Korobov, and Thorne (2009) argued that “internalized oppression consists of oppressive practices that continue to make the rounds even when members of the oppressor group are not present” (pg. 13).

In this sample, the endorsement of negative stereotypes proved to be the most alarming because they were reminiscent of the Sapphire stereotype. According to Campbell, Gianna, China, and Harris (2002), the Sapphire is “loud, overbearing, shrewd, and aggressive. She is ambitious, educated and seems to relish conflict” (p. 22). Participants in the sample specifically stated that Black women were loud, aggressive, stubborn, and instigators of negative encounters. Some participants felt Black women were generally negative and difficult to get along with. A negative assessment *of* Black women *by* Black women could result in an inability to see how racism subtly manifests. The internalization of negative stereotypes about your own group allows dominant groups to obtain psychological control and continues to perpetuate systems of

domination and oppression. The dominant group is able to define reality for those in target groups (Speight, 2007; Sue, 2010).

Speight (2007) stated that the impetus for internalized oppression is incidents of discrimination and prejudice. Internalized oppression could be an *outcome* of the presence of microaggressions in the organization. If women internalized racism instead of acknowledging something as a microaggression, then the misappropriation of blame could lead to having negative feelings about other members of your own race. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) argued that internalized oppression is a product of living in a society with dominating and oppressive forces against members of your own group. “Following exposure to innumerable devaluing encounters, people internalize the negative images projected onto them by dominating forces” (p. 132).

I propose that there are links between experiencing racial microaggressions, interacting with helping professionals, and internalizing negative stereotypes that influence how women identify racial microaggressions and choose to respond to them. It is as follows: when women first experience or witness a racial microaggression within a context that they appraise as helpful, they consider a number of factors to help them determine if the event was indeed racist. They take into account their past experiences or relationship with the perpetrator, and they consider the consequences to themselves of viewing the event negatively. In other words, they take into account not only what is currently happening, but what has happened in the past, and how their appraisal might affect them in the future. Once women deny the microaggression as racist, they still need some explanation to cope with the experience. Women then negatively internalize the experience and blame themselves or others. In turn, women inevitably end up “denying their experiential reality” (Sue, 2010; p.56). In this context, racist experiences become the victim’s

fault. This is exacerbated if the target already has negative dispositional characteristics associated with women or with Blacks.

### **Study Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to consider in this study. First, interviewing women while they were at shelter about oppressive practices could have influenced what women chose to share with me. For example, I told women during recruitment and in the consent process that I was not associated with the shelters. I also explained I would not share their responses with shelter staff. Yet, it is possible that women would have shared less because they were still utilizing shelter resources. Also, discussing racism and race is a very sensitive topic that requires significant amounts of rapport building with an interviewer. If the women did not trust me or did not believe that I would not share the information, they would have shared less with me. Second, interviewing women while they were currently at shelter might have also affected study results. Women currently at a shelter might not realize or acknowledge racism until they are out of the environment and have had time to process their experience. Gillum (2008, 2009) interviewed women while they were staying in a culturally-specific domestic violence shelter. Women in her study had utilized services from a mainstream shelter and a culturally-specific shelter. They were able to explain and compare experiences between both shelters. Being at both shelters provided women with a frame of reference that residents in the current study did not have. Third, it was possible that the sample was naturally self-selecting, meaning that women who already felt that shelter staff were racist had left. For example, some participants in the sample alluded to a few Black women who left shelter after only a few days because they felt that shelter staff were unfair. Another participant mentioned that a few Black women had been asked to leave because they were not cooperating with staff. It might be possible for future studies to use sampling



techniques that also include women who leave or were asked to leave. Fourth, this was a small, qualitative sample that based results on the perceptions of 14 Black women. These results are not generalizable to a larger population; however, given that this study was exploratory, generalizing to larger populations was not the goal.

Despite the limitations, this study provides directions for future research and has implications for organizational policy, and recommendations for shelter practice. Future shelters should integrate more critical consciousness raising and stereotyping curricula into domestic violence shelters for both residents and for staff members. As a result, anyone who leaves the shelter becomes a better ally for all women. Shelter directors should continue to work on hiring representative staff within the agency (not just one token minority) as well as purchasing or requesting products that are made for women of color.

Future researchers should continue to incorporate multiple methods of studying racial microaggressions. This research would greatly benefit by the creation of a quantitative scale of racial microaggressions. A quantitative scale would allow us to understand the prevalence and consequences of racial microaggressions in the everyday lives of people of color. Quantitative methodologies also allow for generalizability that qualitative methodologies are not designed to assess. Researchers should also conduct qualitative and quantitative research with non-college samples. Diverse sampling within different populations would allow researchers to understand the nature of microaggressions within less privileged settings. It would also be useful to look at how different groups of people make decisions around appraisal and responses to microaggressions. Future researchers should also consider studying racial microaggressions from the perspective of the perpetrator. This would allow researchers to obtain a more complete

understanding of how people might view the same situation differently and leave the interaction with different outcomes. This would greatly influence trainings on diversity and inclusion.

Racial microaggression studies would greatly benefit by looking at microaggressions through an ecological perspective. Specifically, researchers could study how microaggressions influence organizational level policy within helping agencies. Future research should also focus on the contexts in which people are more or less likely to identify or respond to microaggressions. Understanding the perceived consequences of responding to microaggressions might guide researchers to addressing barriers within oppressive helping systems. Lastly, it would be important to identify other manifestations of microaggressions within the conceptual framework, such as microinsensitivities.

Racial microaggressions are difficult to identify and appraise as forms of subtle racism. Yet this does not mean that they do not exist. The impact of racial microaggressions among Black women in this study, and probably other racial minority groups, negatively affects women and deserves further attention from researchers and practitioners. Both target and dominant groups should continue to make strides to build and maintain strong ties to end oppressive practices within domestic violence organizations, and other formal helping organizations. Not identifying microaggressions could potentially be a consequence of other individual, contextual, and situational influences. However subtle and unnoticed, racism continues to pervade the lives and minds of Black women.

## Appendices

## APPENDIX A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

**INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWER:** Everything that you say out loud to the participant will be in **BOLD, BLACK** print. All instructions that you are to follow but not mention to the participant will be in **RED PRINT**.

**Participant #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Shelter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### STUDY INTRODUCTION and CONSENT script:

Hi, my name is Nkiru. I am a student at MSU conducting a research study on what Black women think about their experiences at domestic violence shelters in Michigan. Before we begin this interview, there are a few things that I would like to go over with you.

First, this is a consent form to confirm your participation in this interview. Let us go through this together.

- ➔ Read over the major points on the consent form and have willing participants sign first line.

Secondly, I would like to ask your permission to tape our conversation today. Again, everything that you tell me will be kept completely confidential. A transcriber from a different state and I will be the only ones listening to the tapes. They will be destroyed promptly after they have been transcribed. Is tape recording ok with you? If not, it is ok to continue the interview without being taped.

- ➔ **IF YES**, have respondent sign second line of the consent form.
- ➔ **IF NO**, proceed through interview just taking written notes.

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

Great, so let's get started! I will be asking you a few questions about your experiences at this domestic violence shelter. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers; I am just looking for your honest opinion.

#### Section 1: Introduction

1. Tell me what it is like being at this domestic violence shelter.
  - a. Talk to me a little about the staff and the residents.
  - b. How long have you been at this shelter?
  - c. Do you feel comfortable here? Why or why not?

## **Section 2: Experience of Racial Microaggressions**

2. Have you ever felt like you were treated differently or unfairly at **[DV SHELTER]** because of your race?  
**IF YES, GO TO Q3.**  
**IF NO, GO TO Q10.**
3. Could you give me an example of when you felt you were treated differently, unfairly, or even just felt uncomfortable at **[DV shelter]** because of your race?
4. Who was treated you unfairly and/or made you feel comfortable?
  - a. **[IF A STAFF MEMBER]** Can you describe your relationship with her before this happened? Can you describe your relationship after this happened?
  - b. **[IF ANOTHER SURVIVOR]** Can you describe how staff responded to this incident. Do you feel the situation was handled appropriately?
5. Why did you feel that it was because of your race?
6. What about this situation did you feel was unfair?
7. Would you classify this experience as racism/racial discrimination? Why or why not? Do you think others might define this experience as racist?
8. How did you deal with this particular situation? Can you describe to me the impact this experience had on you personally? On your relationship with helping professionals at the agency?
9. Do you have other examples of a time here at (dv agency) you felt you were treated differently, unfairly, or just felt uncomfortable because of your race?  
**IF YES, RETURN TO Q4 AND CONTINUE THROUGH QUESTION 9.**  
**IF NO, CONTINUE TO Q11.**
10. Some Black women say that their experiences are harder to deal with at domestic violence shelters because of their race, what do you think about that?
  - a. What makes you particularly comfortable at this shelter?
  - b. Does anything make you particularly uncomfortable?
11. Overall, what specific challenges, if any, do you face as a Black woman at this agency pertaining to race and racism?
  - a. How do you deal with these challenges? Who do you discuss these challenges with, if anyone?
  - b. Tell me about the environment of the shelter and the extent that you feel it is racially diverse (For example things like the pictures on the wall, food in the refrigerator, hair products, etc)?
12. Do you have children?
  - a. **IF YES:** Do you feel that your children are treating differently by staff or other residents in the shelter because of their race?
13. How many times, if any, did you get angry, or want to tell someone off, for being racist but chose not to say anything?
  - a. **IF YES:** What happened and why?
14. Did any of your experiences of racism or discrimination here surprise you? Did you expect to be treated this way before you arrived? What were your expectations before you came?

## **Section 3: Effects of Racism on Help Seeking**

15. Would you come back to this domestic violence agency for support if you needed to?  
Why or why not? Would you recommend this agency to another Black woman survivor?  
Why or why not?
16. What would you do to make this current shelter more comfortable for Black women?
17. Would you go to another domestic violence shelter in the future if you needed help? If not, where would you go?
18. Is there anything else you would like to talk to me about related to any of the topics we discussed today?

**Section 4: Demographics:**

19. Can you tell me how old you are?
20. Have you been to a domestic violence shelter before?

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. This has been incredibly helpful. If you have any questions or want to add anything to this interview, please feel free to contact me via email at [nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com](mailto:nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com).

## **APPENDIX B: Consent Form**

### **Research Participant Information and Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

**Study Title:**

Racial Microaggressions Experienced by Black Female Survivors Within Domestic Violence Shelters

**Researcher and Title:**

Nkiru Nnawulezi, BA  
Cris Sullivan, PhD

**Department and Institution:**

Department of Psychology  
Michigan State University

**Address and Contact Information:**

Nkiru Nnawulezi  
231 Psychology Building  
East Lansing, MI 48824

### **1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by researchers at Michigan State University. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because of your expressed interest in the study and because you met the following selection criteria: (1) identify as Black or African American, (2) English-speaking, (3) 18 years of age or older, and (4) are currently receiving shelter services from a domestic violence agency. From this study, the researchers hope to gain a deeper understanding of Black women's experiences at domestic violence shelters. About 20 women from three different domestic violence shelters across the state of Michigan are being asked to participate. Your total participation will take approximately one hour.

### **2. WHAT WILL YOU DO:**

All participants are being asked to participate in a voluntary, one-on-one confidential interview that will last for about an hour. The interviewer has found locations available both on (private shelter room) and off shelter premises (e.g. coffee houses, libraries) for interviewing, however, location of the interview is the participant's choice. If you give permission, the interview will be tape recorded. The interview will not begin until the consent form has been signed. All participants will be compensated for their involvement in this research study and can be provided

with a short synopsis of the research findings if requested. Choosing to participate in this study will not directly affect the services that you are currently receiving from the domestic violence shelter.

### **3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation may contribute to advancing the scientific knowledge on Black women's experiences during their stay at domestic violence shelters. Having a more in-depth understanding of these experiences will help create a more comfortable and supportive environment for all women who are planning to seek help from domestic violence shelters.

### **4. POTENTIAL RISKS:**

The potential risks of participating in this study include feeling a slight emotional discomfort when discussing the challenges associated with receiving services from a domestic violence shelter. Although rare, there is also a possibility that the interview data provided today could be stolen or lost in transport. In this case, participants will be notified immediately.

### **5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:**

The data for this project will be kept confidential. All identifiable information about you and the location of the shelter will be decoded to ensure confidentiality. All participants and domestic violence shelters have been assigned an identification number that only the study investigators will be able to link to participants identifying information. A list of names and recruitment places will be kept separately from the interviews. Both pieces of unique identifying information and the list of ID numbers will be kept in locked filing cabinets in a locked office.

All Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Once the interview has been complete, raw audiotapes will be emailed to an outside company to be transcribed. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality contract before beginning the transcription process. Once data has been emailed back to the researchers, audio recording from the interviews will be destroyed immediately. Transcripts will then be de-identified of all names or other identifying personal information such as geographic location (city names), names of family members or friends, personal physical characteristics, and any other information that might be identifiable. The original transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for five years and then will be destroyed. Only the researchers, research staff and IRB will have access to the transcripts. The results of this study may be published and presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants and shelters will remain anonymous.

### **6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW:**

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw without any consequences. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. You may indicate this to the



interviewer by saying “pass.” Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any differences in the quality of any services you may receive and the benefits to which you are otherwise entitled from this research study or from the domestic violence agency. You will be told of any significant findings that develop during the course of the study that may influence your willingness to continue to participate in the research.

## **7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:**

There will be no direct costs to you for participating in this study. You will be compensated \$20 for your participation in this study.

## **8. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the investigators:

Nkiru Nnawulezi  
231 Psychology Building  
East Lansing, MI, 48824  
[nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com](mailto:nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com)  
402.598.6383

Cris M. Sullivan, Ph.D.  
130 Psychology Building  
Michigan State University  
E. Lansing, MI 48824-1116  
[sulliv@msu.edu](mailto:sulliv@msu.edu)  
517-353-8867

If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University’s Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax, 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

## **9. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

Investigator

Date

I agree to allow audio taping of the interview.

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ No

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

All audiotapes will be placed in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office. All tapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

## **APPENDIX C: Recruitment Flyer**

Are you a Black woman interested in discussing your experiences at a domestic violence shelter?

Figure 2

“For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.”



A new research study from Michigan State University is interested in hearing about Black women's experiences during their stay at domestic violence shelters.

### **What does participation in this research study require?**

- Willingness to participate in an one hour private and confidential\* interview

### **Women who meet all of the following criteria are strongly encouraged to participate:**

- Identify as Black or African American
- 18 years of age or older
- Currently receiving shelter services from a domestic violence agency
- Have been at shelter at least 5 days

### **Compensation:**

- All women will be compensated \$20 for their participation in this study

For more information or to schedule an appt, please contact Nkiru Nnawulezi at [nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com](mailto:nkirunnawulezi@gmail.com) or 402.598.6383.

For information about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Cris Sullivan at (517) 353-8867 or [sulliv22@msu.edu](mailto:sulliv22@msu.edu)

\*interviews will not affect the services that women are currently receiving

\*location of interview to be determined by women

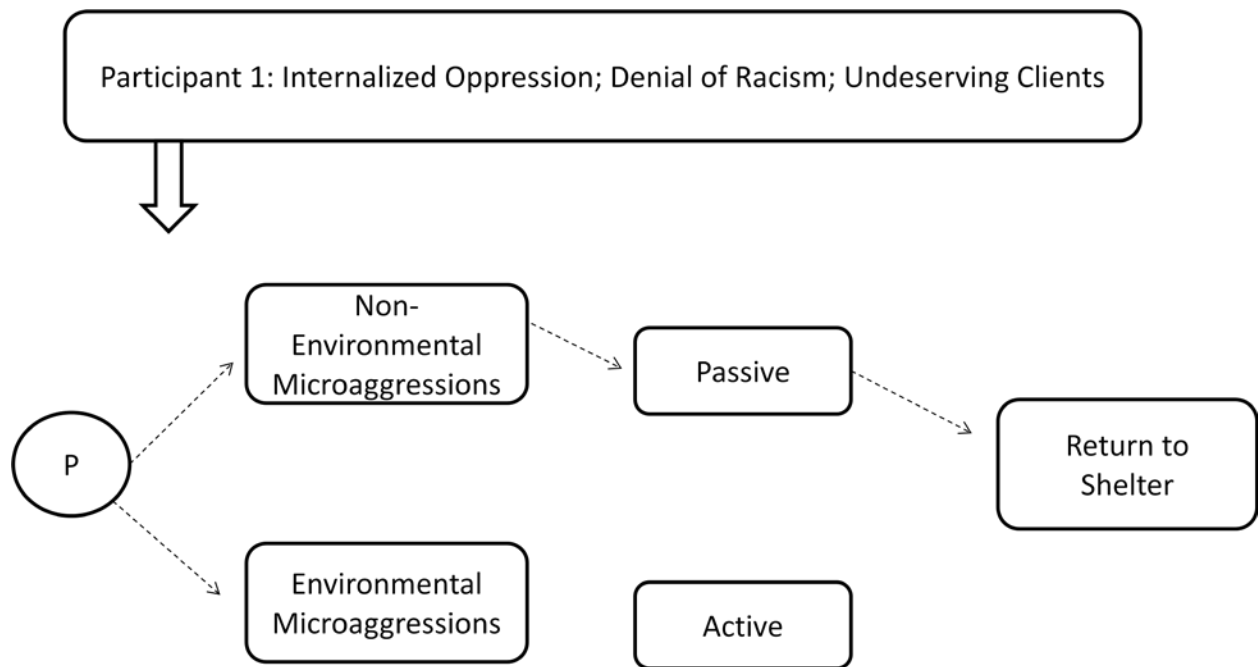
## **APPENDIX D: Initial Thematic Clustering of Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings**

1. Negative Traits about Black women
  - a. Black women are instigators to negative encounters
  - b. Black women start fights for no legitimate reasons
  - c. Black women are stubborn and illogical
  - d. Black women are dominant, aggressive, and loud
  - e. Black women are not interested in social service positions
2. Positive Components of Shelter
  - a. Personal connection and relationships with other woman residents
  - b. Individual connection to Staff
  - c. Shared stories
  - d. Staff show that they care by listening
  - e. Provides emotional support
  - f. Provides practical assistance
  - g. Security
3. Negative Components of the Shelter Environment
  - a. Negative opinions about other women
  - b. Control of resources
  - c. Staff show that do not care
  - d. Housing Time limits
  - e. Community living/Other residents
4. Experiences of Racial Microaggressions and race-related incidents
  - a. Microinsult
  - b. Uncomfortable Race-related incident
  - c. Environmental Microaggressions: Food
  - d. Environmental Microaggressions: Physical Environment
  - e. Environmental Microaggressions: Hair Products
5. Women are undeserving clients
  - a. Women are actually homeless and not domestic violence/lie about abuse
  - b. Choose to stay with ex-partners
  - c. Do not work on things while in shelter
  - d. Women are lazy/Do not help themselves
6. Silent response to Racism/Racial Microaggressions/Racially insensitive Comments
  - a. Pity the perp
  - b. Brush off the incident
  - c. People not use to being around different people

7. Confrontational Responses to Actual or Anticipated Racism/Racial Microaggressions
  - a. Take to a higher authority
  - b. Collective response
8. Denial of the existence of negative differential treatment according to race
  - a. Have not personally witnessed microaggressions (this includes staff giving equal resources)
  - b. Everyone is treated the same
  - c. Individual is to blame
  - d. Differential treatment is justified by bad individual behavior
9. Negative Traits of About Women in General
  - a. Women start drama
  - b. Women are sneaky
10. Reasons to come back to Shelter
  - a. Supportive, comfortable environment
  - b. Familiar environment
  - c. Shelter will provide necessary resources

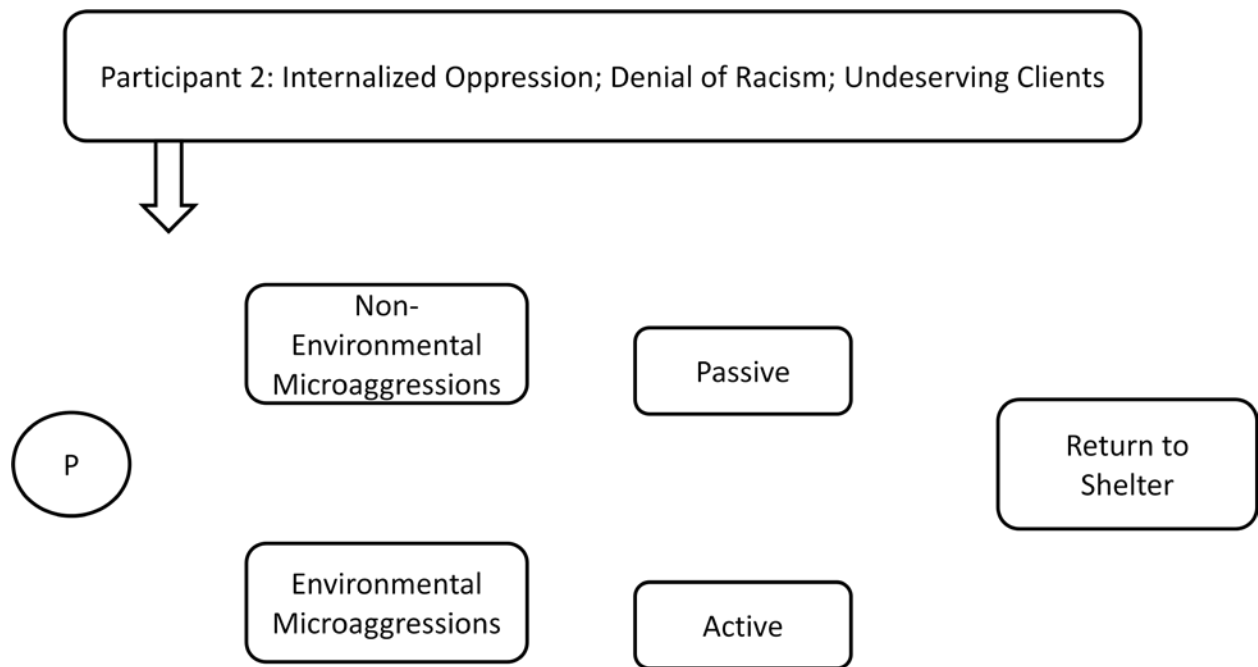
## APPENDIX E: Participant 1 Context Chart

Figure 3



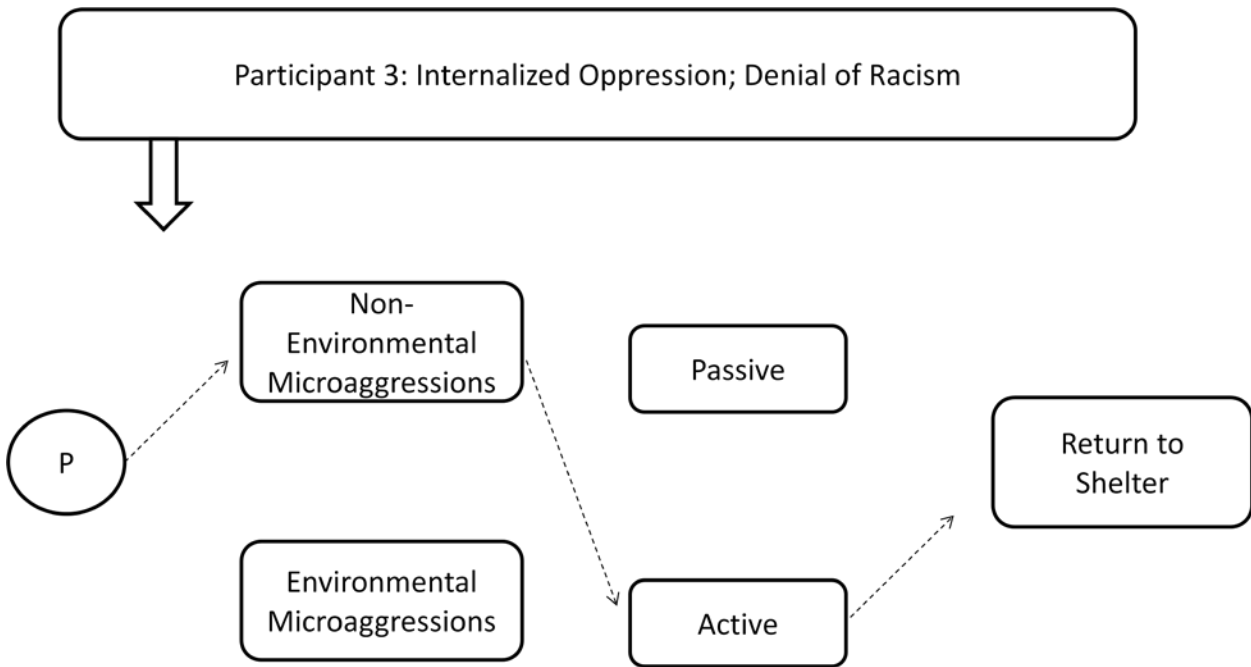
## APPENDIX F: Participant 2 Context Chart

Figure 4



**APPENDIX G: Participant 3 Context Chart**

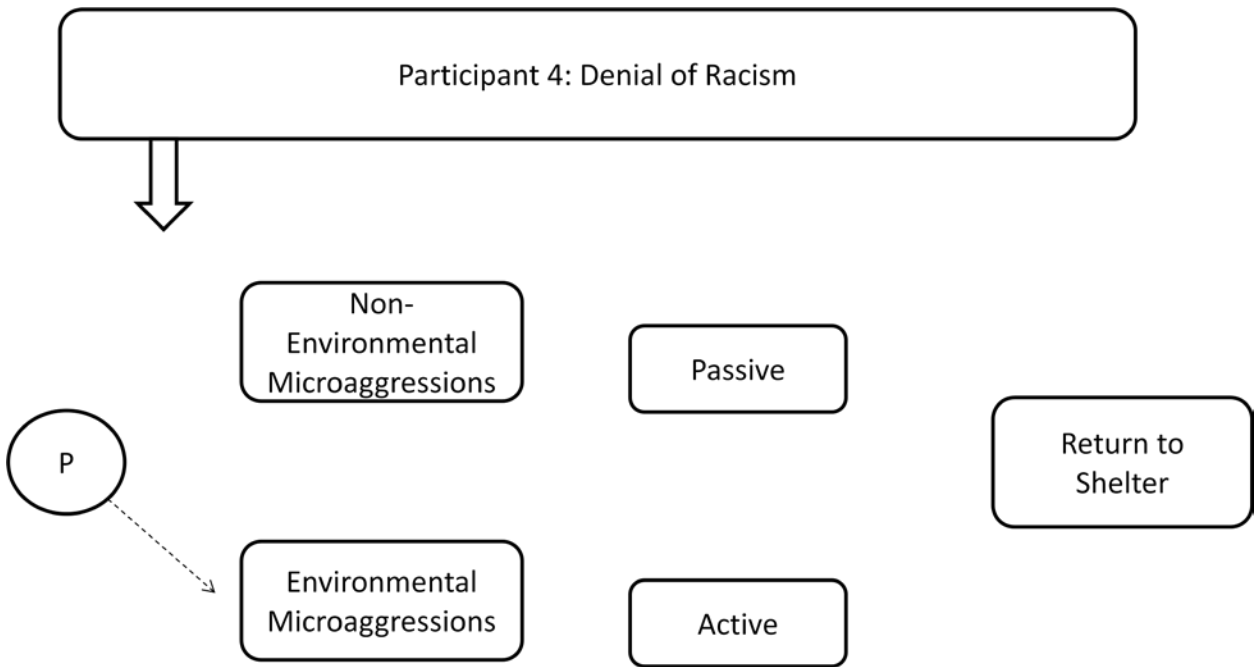
Figure 5





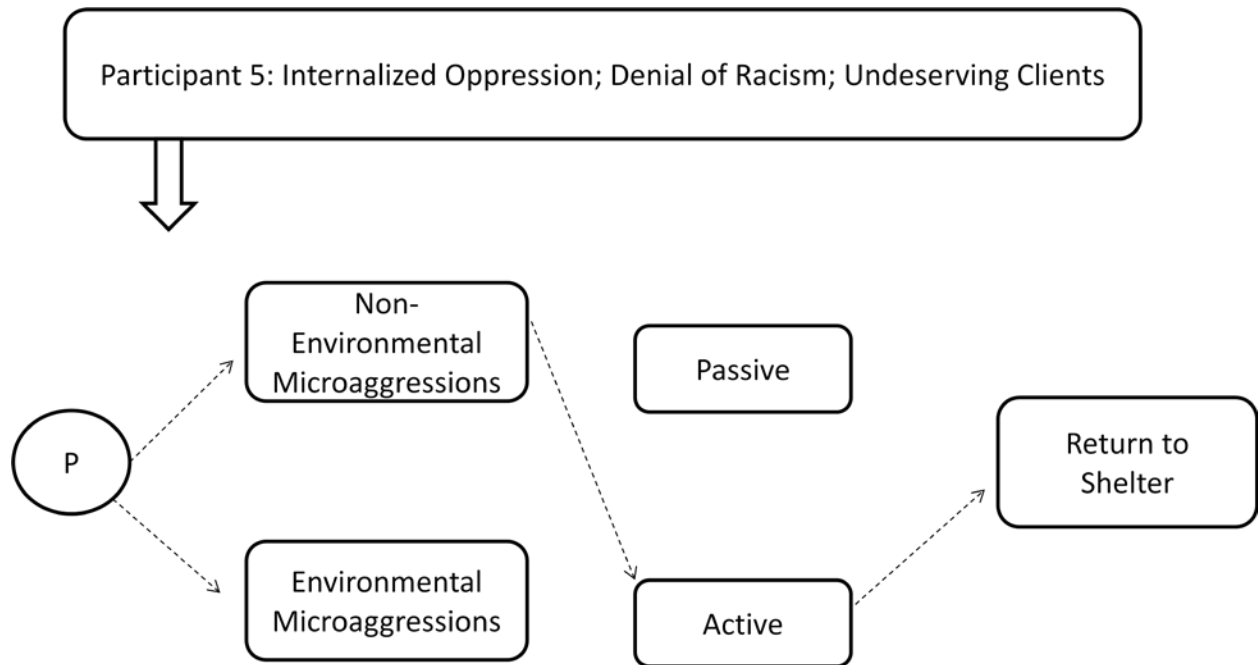
**APPENDIX H: Participant 4 Context Chart**

Figure 6



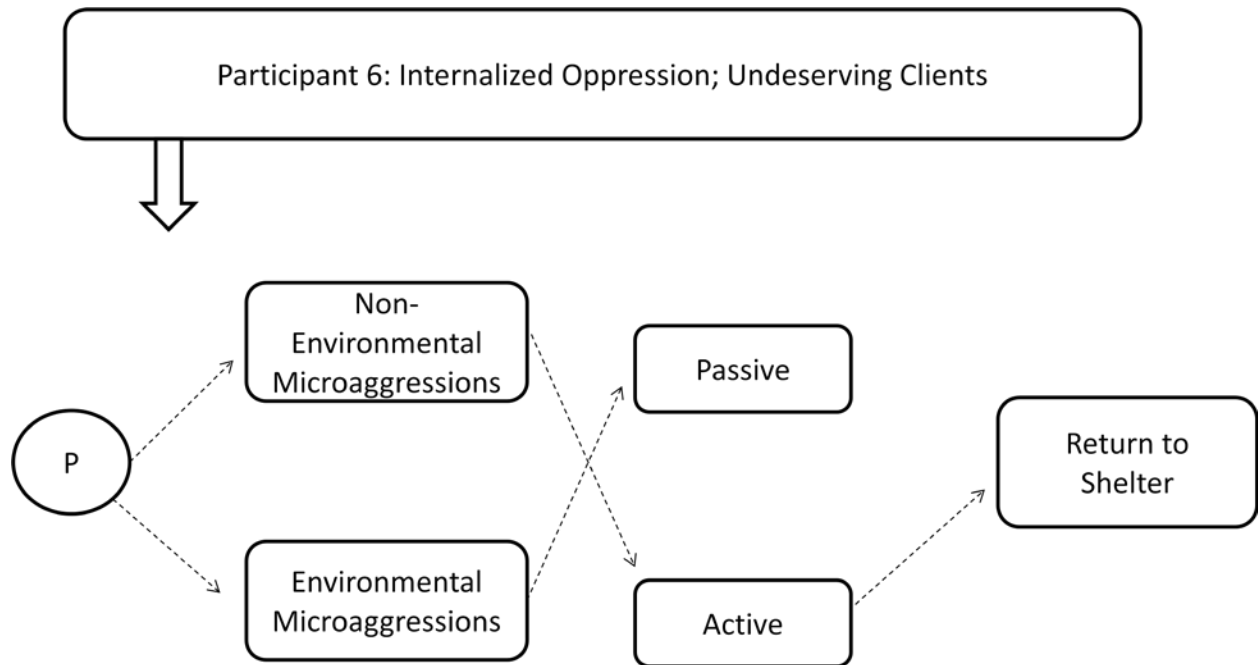
## APPENDIX I: Participant 5 Context Chart

Figure 7



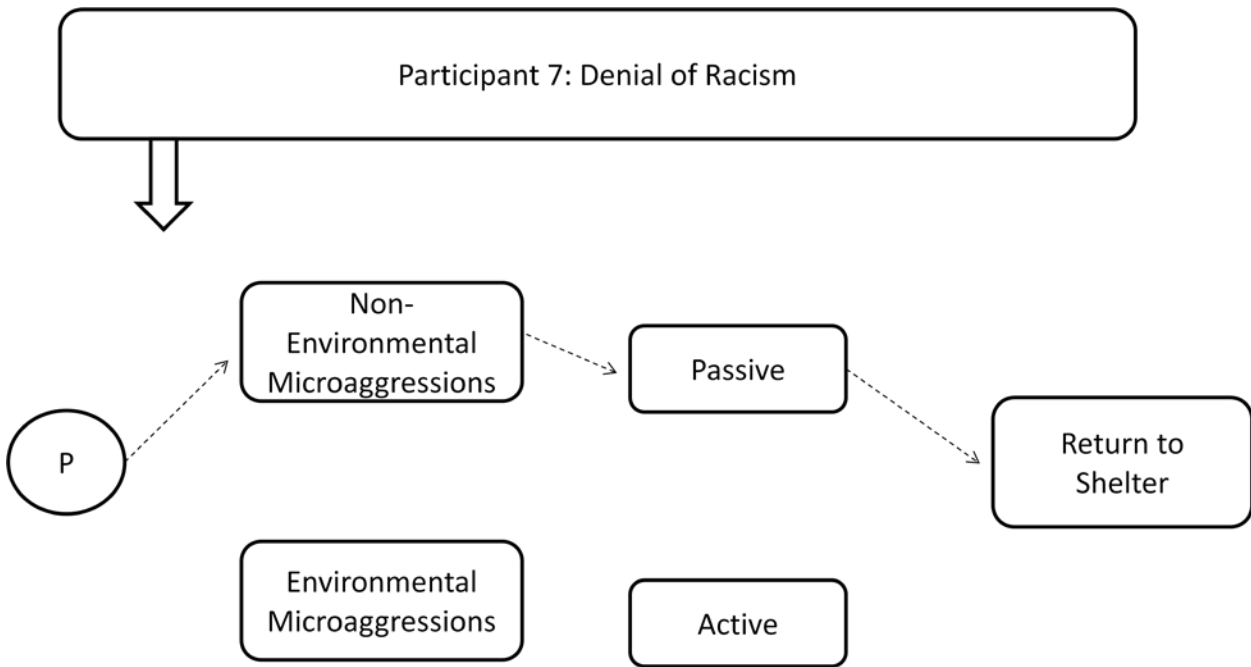
## APPENDIX J: Participant 6 Context Chart

Figure 8



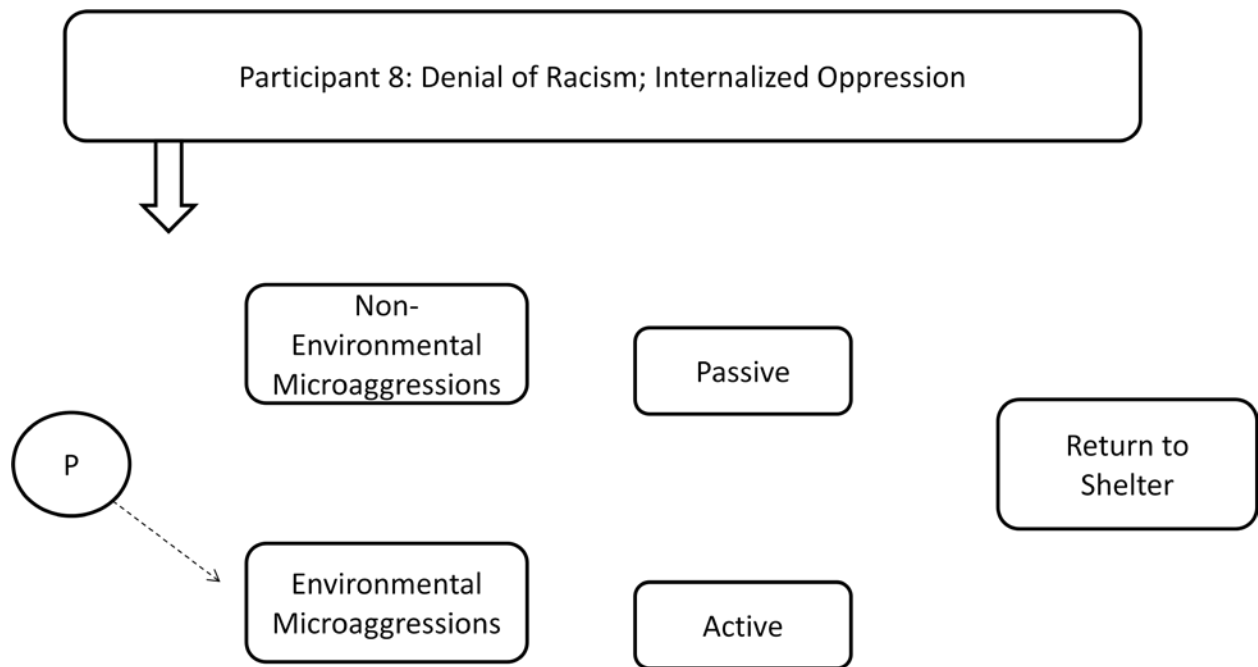
**APPENDIX K: Participant 7 Context Chart**

Figure 9



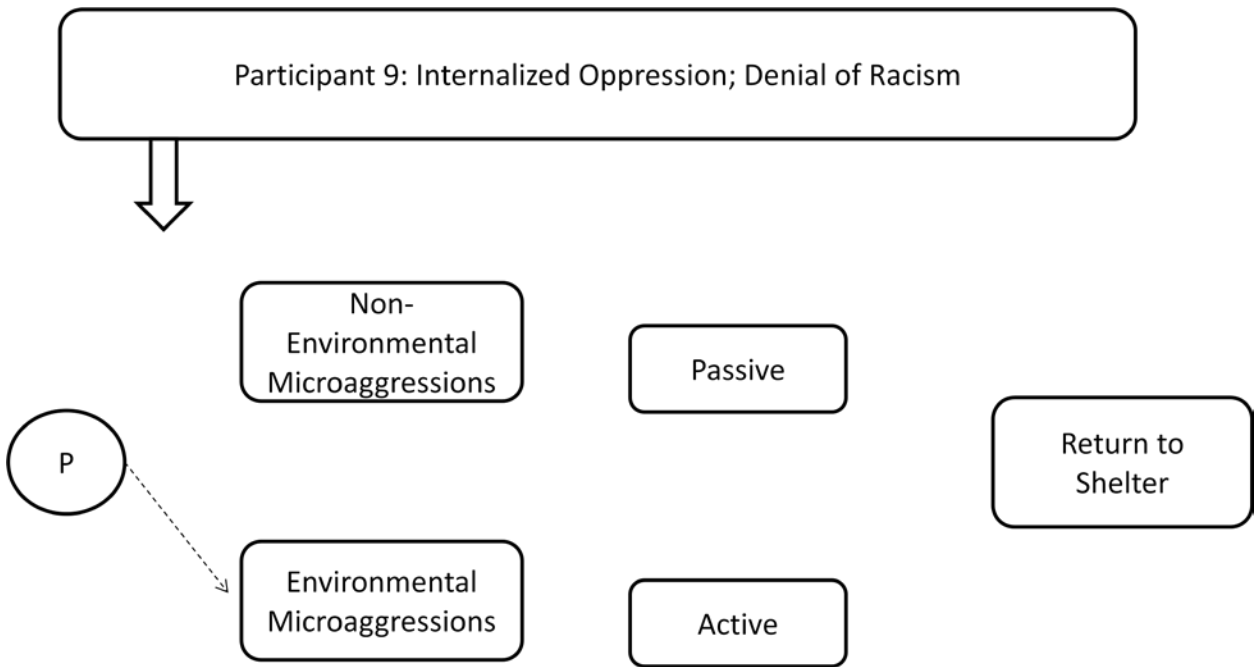
## APPENDIX L: Participant 8 Context Chart

Figure 10



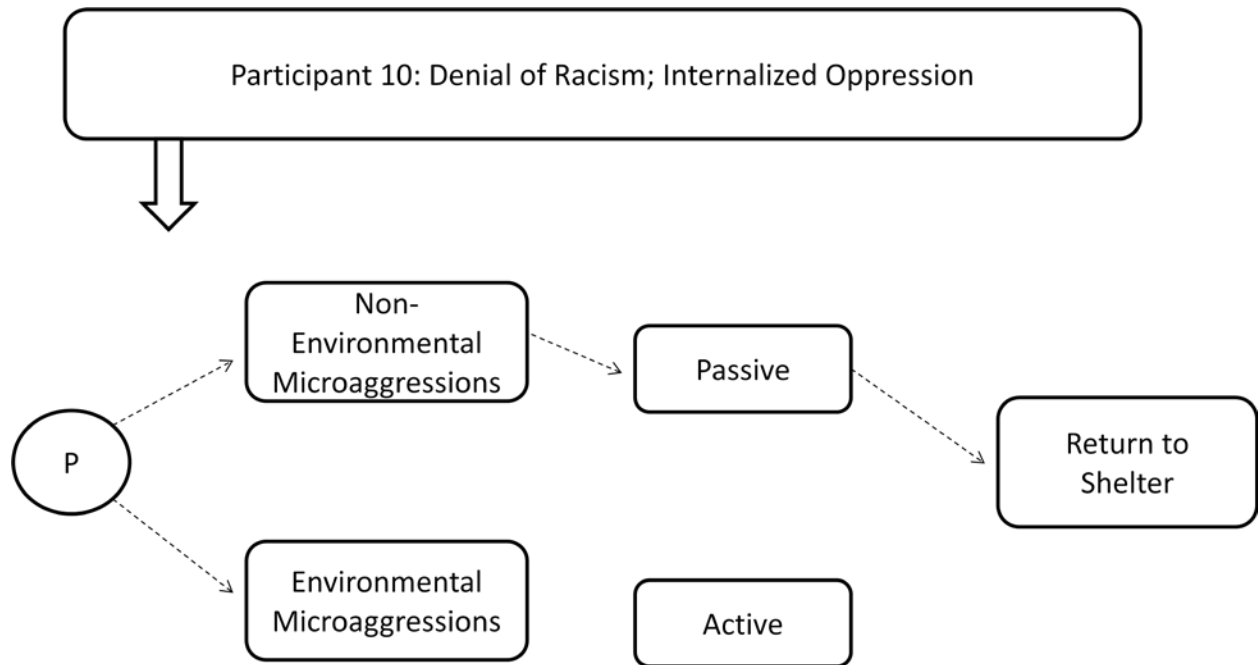
**APPENDIX M: Participant 9 Context Chart**

Figure 11



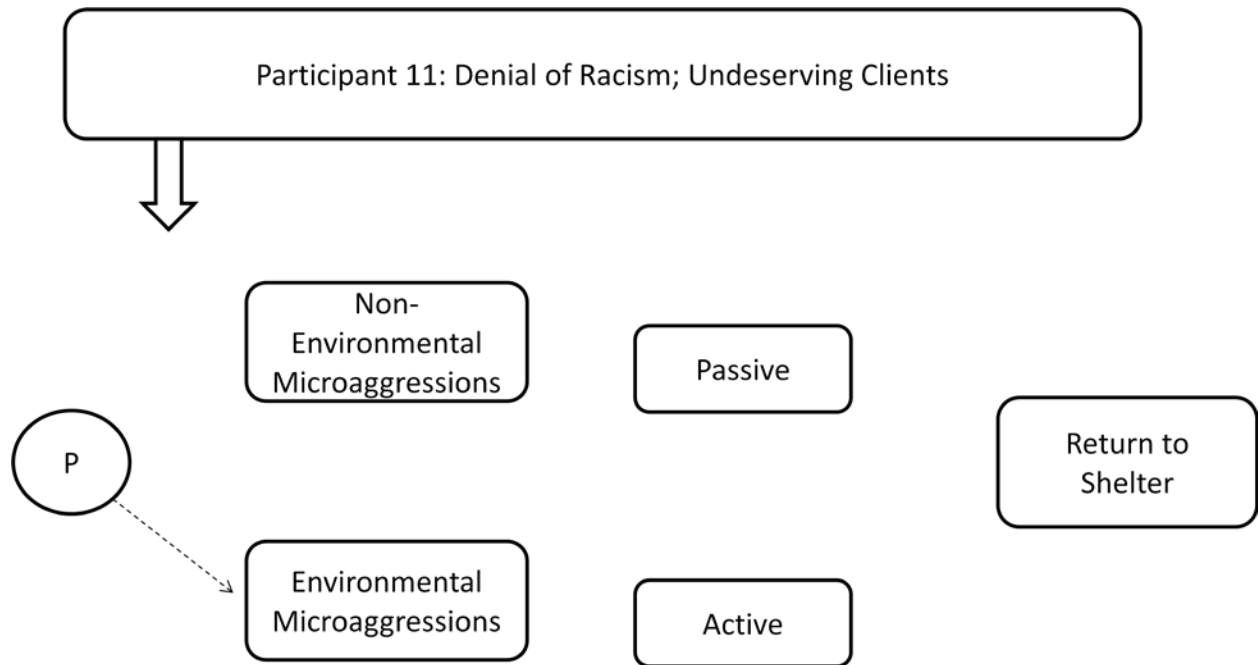
## APPENDIX N: Participant 10 Context Chart

Figure 12



## APPENDIX O: Participant 11 Context Chart

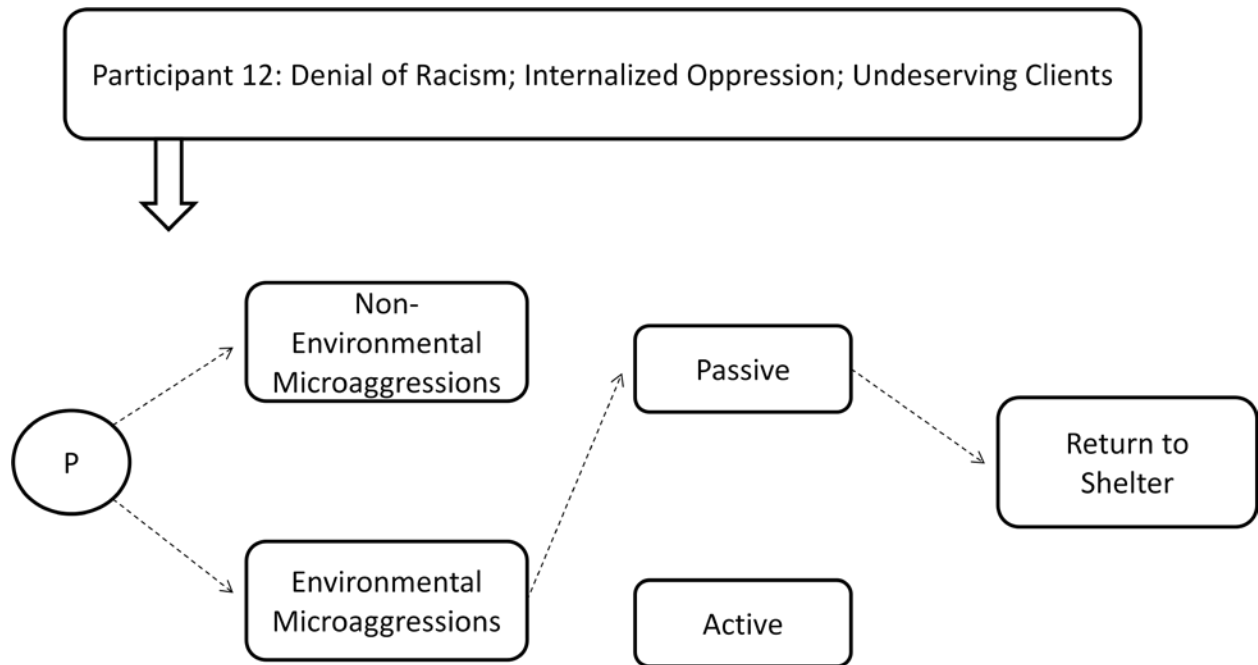
Figure 13





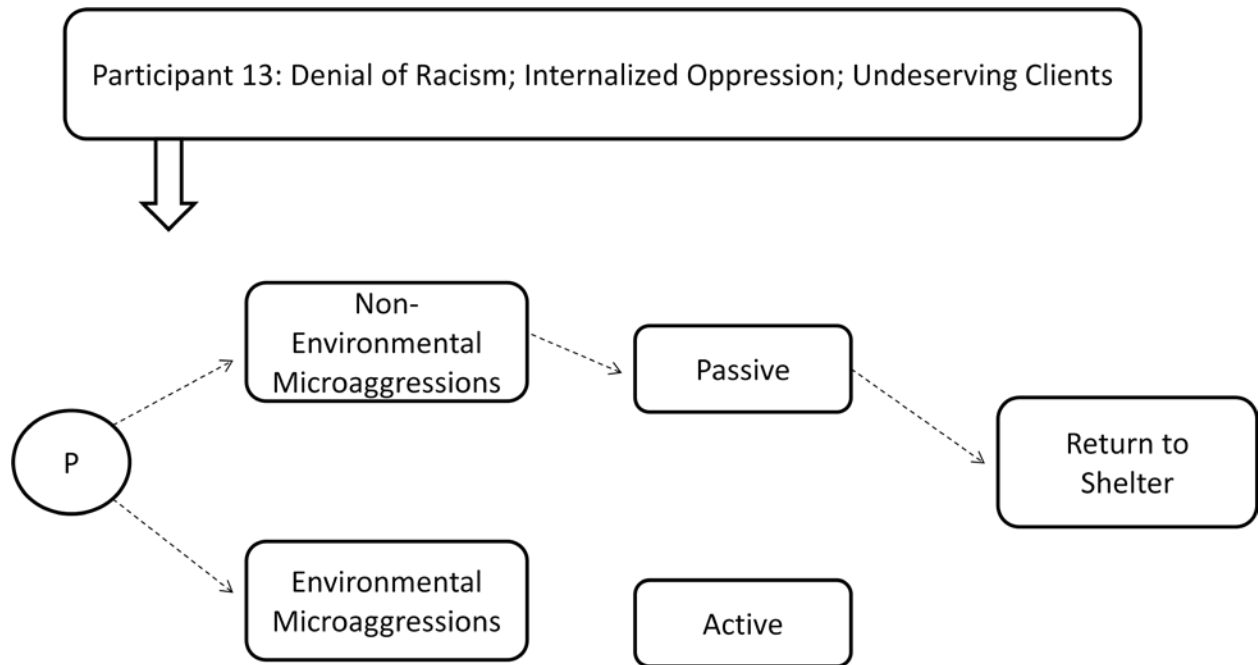
## APPENDIX P: Participant 12 Context Chart

Figure 14



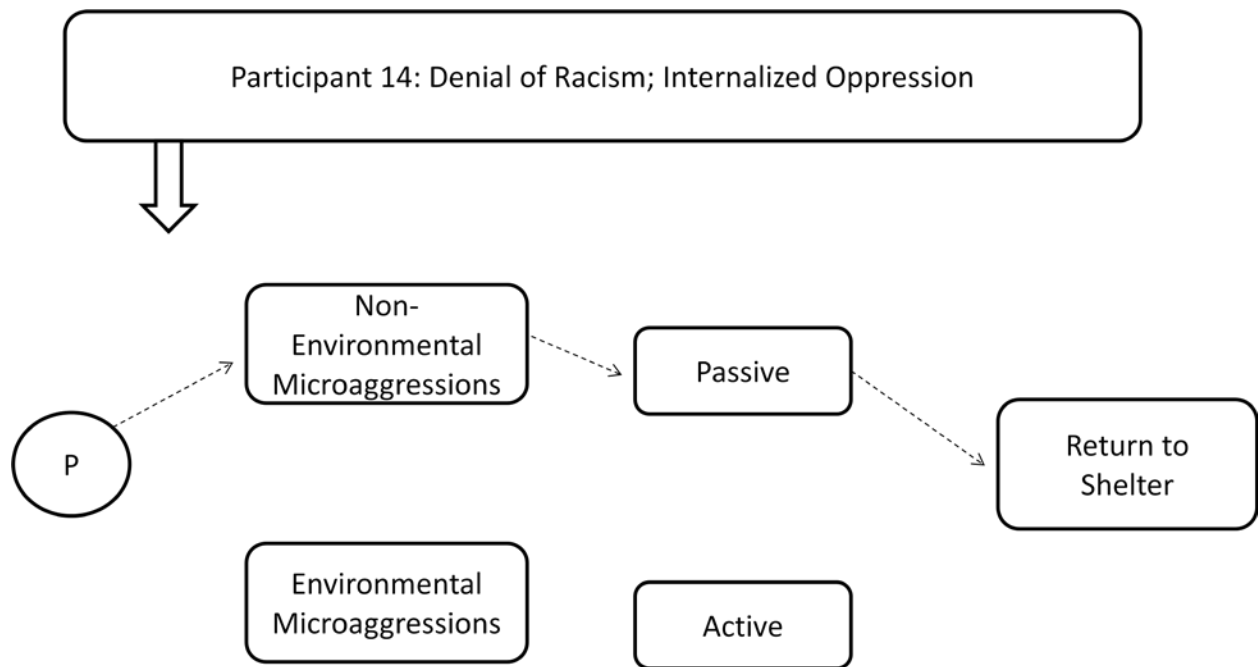
## APPENDIX Q: Participant 13 Context Chart

Figure 15



## APPENDIX R: Participant 14 Context Chart

Figure 16



## APPENDIX S: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 1

Table 4

Theme 1: Negative Traits About Black women (n=7)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Black women are instigators and/or initiators to many negative encounters.	“Or they [ <i>Black women</i> ] would just be like drama starters.” P1	Black women are the instigators to negative encounters with others.
	“Start a lot of problems. And then they [ <i>Black women</i> ] would ask for, you know, they ask for overnight and they got turned down.” P1	Black women deserve the punishments they receive because they are instigators to many negative encounters.
	“Don’t get me wrong. I don’t... not... no, I love the African-American, you know, race. But they have a attitude problems.” P9	Black women have problems controlling their (negative) attitudes.
	“Their black women don’t stay around each other too well. You know, you get a black woman in a house with [for too long] they bound to argue.” P9	Black women do not get along well with other Black women. They are prone to have disagreements.
	“Just people should just try to... if you, if you can help someone, help ‘em. But if you can’t, don’t talk about ‘em bad.. And put ‘em down. We all in the s--, in the shelter. So. I don’t like that kinda stuff either. That’s, all that’s kinda on the negative... I mean, that is very negative about black women. ‘Cause they do it mostly.” P10	Black women at the shelter are unsupportive of other people because they are often the ones most involved in verbally degrading other women. Talking badly about someone instead of trying to help them get through hardships is inappropriate because all of the women are in the shelter for similar purposes.
	“Keepin’ stuff. That’s not good. And that’s black women. Now, that’s black women. Doin’ that. White ones might do it, too, but they don’t do it where you can hear. ( <i>laughs</i> ) So. It’s crazy like that sometimes.” P10	White women might speak badly about other women, but not as publicly as Black women do.

Table 4 (cont'd)

	<p>“R; So, I don’t like to be around a lot of ‘em, I’m tellin’ you...That’s my experience. I: you don’t like to be around other black women? R: Mmm, not in no , no. ‘Cause it always somethin’ goin’ on... ..that’s negative. I find myself more comfortable around white women.” P10</p>	<p>Black women at shelter are so negative, it is more comfortable and preferable to be around white women.</p>
	<p>I: Mm hmm. Why? R: Because. They don’t keep the stuff goin’ like that. Black women do. They really do.” P10</p>	<p>Black women prolong negativity or negative encounters.</p>
	<p>“[Black women] Like, argue with people for... over nothin’.” P1</p>	<p>Black women start fights without legitimate concerns.</p>
	<p>“Well, white women they do comment about it, but they don’t ever get jealous, like tell me, “Oh, I wish I had hair like that. But black women... I don’t know. Some people want to cut it off and.....you know, they just don’t like ‘cause I have curly locks, I think. It’s not my fault.” P12</p>	<p>Black women are prone to jealousy when compared to white women about physical attributes such as having curly hair. They enact this jealousy by becoming threatening.</p>
<p>Black women are stubborn and illogical.</p>	<p>“Like, “Hello?” You try to explain stuff to ‘em and it just, like, goes over their head. They just don’t want to listen.” P1</p>	<p>Black women are stubborn and illogical.</p>
	<p>“ And... I don’t know. There was peop--, there were black people that said stuff that would make me angry. Like, “Why are you being so stupid?” Like, I guess it’s just like stereotype and... I don’t know. Sometimes people say stuff and I’m like, “That was uncalled for” or “You didn’t have to say that.” P1</p>	<p>Black women say things that offensive, stupid, and uncalled for.</p>

Table 4 (cont'd)

	<p>“So. I guess she expects for, truth be told, yes, a lotta black folks... you know, I mean, come on now. A lot of us or... yeah, a lot of us, be actin’ ignorant and stupid...” P5</p>	<p>Many Black women act ignorant or stupid.</p>
	<p>“We can be some ignorant people. I mean, but (<i>laughs</i>) you can’t expect all black people to be, you know, act... out there, loud.” P5</p> <p>“[Im’ like] don’t you ever get tired of listenin’ to yourself complain. (<i>laughs</i>) But that’s, like, how you would hear stuff. And then some people would, like, you know, go to staff and try to tell them that they didn’t think it was fair. Then when staff tries to explain it, then they get a attitude and like, “Whatever. Whatever.”: P1</p> <p>“ And people were mad that, like, they couldn’t go to the store and get stuff and put it in the refrigerator like this other lady could. And they just weren’t understandin’ that, you know, if... because of her religion. And they were just like, “Not fair. They’re treating her better. And the only people that were really complainin’ were, like, black people.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Not all Black women are ignorant. An example of ignorant behavior might be how verbose a Black woman is.</p> <p>Black women are constantly complaining and when given a reasonable explanation or solution to their complaints, they respond illogically or inappropriately.</p> <p>Black women were the only ones complaining when a Muslim woman required special foods and did not understand why the Muslim woman got special treatment. They thought that it was unfair.</p>

Table 4 (cont'd)

Black women are dominant, aggressive, and loud.	<p>“You know, I think that sometimes black women are more dominant than other races. ‘Cause I know I’m very outspoken. I really don’t bite my tongue. But, you know, sometimes some people might get offended or some people are not used to bein’ around black people or used to just certain things...”P3</p>	Black women are dominant and outspoken and outside group can misinterpret their behaviors if they have not had contact with Black women before.
	<p>“ ‘Cause I know a lot of the black women around here are loud. But still they’re the nicest people, women you could... seriously. But I think that’s where she’s, that’s where she’s gettin’ at.” P5</p>	Black women at shelter display some of those stereotypical behaviors, but they are still nice women. Yet, the white woman at the shelter see examples of these stereotypical behaviors, and judge all Black women by these standards.
	<p>“I: Yeah. And black women are competitive. (<i>laughs</i>) [We..]. So it’s just different. I don’t, I don’t know. I, I just feel like that. I don’t know. I, maybe that’s just because of where I’m, where I’m from or... you know, the neighborhoods I done been in, that all black women are competitive. Not all black women are like that, but a lot of black women.” P9</p>	Many, but not all, Black women are constantly in competition with one another
	<p>“R: You know. (<i>laughs</i>). It prob’ly woulda had a ri--, it prob’ly woulda escalated bigger. I: Yeah, it would have. R: Why do you say that? I: Because black women are more aggressive. And it... I like to think it woulda escalated a little bit bigger. I think if I had shared this with a group of black people, they would have probably made me bring it to staff.” P14</p>	Black women tend to be aggressive and blow things out of proportion. If someone had a negative experience, Black women would encourage the person to advocate for themselves.

Table 4 (cont'd)

	<p>“ I mean, a lotta people they judge – you know, when they see a black wo-- , or think of a black woman – they think we’re loud...We talk loud. We’re just loud. We’re ghetto. We’re, you know, from the streets and, you know, they expect so much... ...all on, you know, all that. And I guess that’s what she’s kinda tryin’ to say.” P5</p>	<p>There are societal stereotypes about Black women being loud, acting “ghetto”, and coming from low-income areas. Many people endorse those beliefs about Black women and expect for them to act accordingly.</p>
	<p>“So I’m kinda glad I didn’t (<i>laughs</i>) share it with a buncha black people. ‘Cause I didn’t want all’a that. No, all I wanted was my ID.” P14</p>	<p>There is some relief that Black women were not involved with dealing with an issue the women had because Black women have extreme ways of getting things.</p>
Other	<p>“More... black people. ‘Cause the white people work on, on areas like this, black people. Not too many black people like sittin’ up just talkin’ and talkin’ and talkin’ and talkin’. They tryin’ to make some real money somewhere that’s like... you know...” P9</p>	<p>Black women would not be interested in social service positions because they are more interested in making money. White people are more likely to be in these situations.</p>
	<p>“I: So do you think... well. So you don’t think black, more black women should work here? R: Not in... not up here. Prob’ly downstairs in the little business area. This isn’t... it’d be attitudes [floating].” P9</p>	<p>Black women would work better in more business-orientated positions versus social service positions. Black women would have to much attitude to support women in need.</p>
	<p>“R: And I would tell ‘em, I’ll say, like, “Well, if you do your chores (<i>laughs</i>) and do what you’re supposed to do...and stop arguin’ all the time, then maybe they [<i>staff</i>] would.” P1</p>	<p>Black women do not contribute to the overall maintenance and well-being of the shelter and therefore means that they do not get the “extras” that are given to more deserving individuals.</p>



Table 4 (cont'd)

	<p>“That’s just, like... I don’t con--, think that way about, like, all black women. Just the ones from what they showed here.” P1</p>	<p>Black women at the shelter are different from Black women in everyday world.</p>
	<p>“and we come from different cultures and, you know, different ways of living that are different from different races that’s here.” P3</p>	<p>Black women are a distinct cultural group whose ways of living differ from the people that are at shelter.</p>
	<p>“I: Do you think these groups of women are viewed as women who don’t want to help themselves? R: Mm hmm. I mean, not just by staff, but even by, like, other residents. They don’t do anything.” P1</p>	<p>Black women that do not do anything are perceived by both staff and residents as being undeserving of support.</p>
	<p>“Tryin’ to get that person just to better understand, “Hey,” you know. ‘Cause most of us is that way. Don’t mean all of us.” P5</p>	<p>Not all (but most) Black women behave in a stereotypic manner, but some women are different.</p>

## APPENDIX T: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 2

Table 5

Theme 2: Positive Components of Shelter (n=14)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Personal connection and relationships with other woman residents	“They’re all really nice people. The c--, the r--, residents are really cool now. Like, there’s some people that, you know, you talk to more than others. And there’s some people that, like, I can exchange my phone number with. Like, I feel comfortable ( <i>laughs</i> ) doin’ that.” P1	There are various gradients of being comfortable. There are women at the shelter that you share personal information with, such as a cell phone number, and those that you do not.
	“Um, just, like, comfort each other. Just, you know, comfort each other. Like, if one havin’ a problem, then everybody’s, “It’s okay,” or “Let’s talk” or “Let’s go do somethin’, get your mind off it.” That’s, that’s how it is. And they’re like, like, “Let’s go out.” Like, we’ll all go in a group and just go somewhere, just walk and talk. And we come back and leave. Like, “Okay.” That’s how it is. Like, we just comfort each other and whenever one feel like they don’t have enough strength to do whatever, we always there to pick ‘em up and give ‘em the strength, like, “It’s okay. Just get up and do it. Just believin’ in God and you will be all right.” P11	There is a support system as shelter with the women. Women are able to support one another, speak encouraging words, and give each other strength when it seems like someone is having an extremely difficult time.

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“ And, you know, if I don’t have no cigarettes some of ‘em will loan me some cigarettes until tomorrow or somethin’ like that. You know, we just try to, you know, come together and try to comfort one another. But not everyone here is like that though. But some of ‘em are.” P3</p>	<p>Sharing resources, even small things like cigarettes, is an example of caring for one another or offering comfort. This is not about most women, but some of them are like this.</p>
	<p>“So I couldn’t, I couldn’t even tell ya what... I assume they’re okay. I mean, uh, we see each other. You know, we speak and that’s, like, far as it go. But um, I r--, I haven’t had any problems with no residents here.” P13</p>	<p>By only connecting with women on an acquaintance level, there are very little issues with people.</p>
	<p>Very. It’s, it’s helpful for me because I’m able to relate to other women.” P7</p>	<p>Being able to relate to other women makes the shelter environment more comfortable.</p>
	<p>“‘Cause when we come in, they’d be so stressed from the situation that we came from, a break from the kids really did me n--, do n--, be nice. So they take ‘em places or they keep ‘em for a few hours in the playroom, keep ‘em occupied.” P13</p>	<p>Staff support mothers by taking the children places in order to keep them occupied and give the mother a break.</p>
	<p>You know, I’m startin’ to uh, be more involved with the shelter. The ladies here in the shelter. We, you know, we take turns. Or sometimes we get together, we cook together. Um, we sit and we hold conversations together. We um, discuss some of our domestic issues with each other.” P2</p>	<p>Being involved with the shelter means getting involved with the swomen.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“You know, we, we help ‘em, you know. I mean, if something goes wrong (<i>clears throat</i>), we are required to go to staff. I, personally, will just go to that person...you know. And, and then if we hear one of the parents havin’ a really hard time with the, one of the kids, you know, you know, we’ll say, “You know what? Hey,” you know, “come on. Come go with me for a little while.” You know, “Give mommy a break.” You know, and then that’s what I see here.” P14</p>	<p>When there are issues, they solve things among each other rather than reporting the issue to staff.</p>
Women have shared stories	<p>“Um, what I like about them is that we can all sit and talk and just tell our stories of what we’ve been through and then, and abused.” P3</p>	<p>Women connect by sharing stories about their abuse.</p>
	<p>“It’s, it’s actually kinda comfortable because everybody’s here bein’ in the same situation, gettin’ out of the same situation and tryin’ to overcome it, you know.” P6</p>	<p>Women are fighting through the same situations which adds to what makes the shelter comfortable.</p>
	<p>“And that’s the good thing about it. There’s people that have been in my position. That know where I’m comin’ from.” P7</p>	<p>Being around people who have been in similar situations is a good thing about being at shelter.</p>
	<p>“Awesome. You know, we’re all... the, the key thing is we’re all here for the same reason. You know, we’re runnin’ away... well, not runnin’ away, but we’re tryin’ to keep safe from something or someone. So that’s the key. And I think that’s where we all bond together.” P14</p>	<p>There is a belief that they are all at the shelter for the same reasons which is trying to stay safe from their abusive partners. This is something that bonds women together.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“Because we all have been through the same thing. Some haven’t, but some have. So we just stick together like one big family and just help each other out. With the kids and each other and our needs and all. Stuff like that.” P11</p>	<p>There shared experiences with domestic violence allow for an in-depth connection with other women, which in turn means that there is a unit or group of people that they can rely on.</p>
	<p>“You can sit down and talk to ‘em. It’s, like, quite a few... well, a majority’ a all the staff I can sit down, just... if I have a problem, you know, or if I’m goin’, havin’ a bad day, I can sit down and I can talk to ‘em and they listen.” P8</p>	<p>Staff that take the time to listen to women’s problems shows that they care.</p>
<p>Staff show that they care by providing social support</p>	<p>“And you can talk to ‘em about your personal problems and then you can talk to ‘em about what happened on your, during your day. And, like, they listen, they laugh with you, they talk with you. I mean, they can’t, like, share – because of, like, confidentiality – they can’t tell you about their personal life. But, you know, they listen.” P1</p>	<p>Staff that ask and listen to personal issues and will talk and laugh with clients, are helpful.</p>
	<p>“Because I feel a lotta family support here. And love and comfort here.” P3</p>	<p>The shelter staff and residents offered her a family that provided love and comfort.</p>
	<p>“But other than that, I talk to ‘em. We talk. We laugh. We tell jokes. All kinda stuff. You know, we talk about the certain amount of respect that people have. We talk about all that stuff. I think the pr--, the staff are pretty...pretty decent.” P9</p>	<p>Decent staff take the time to connect with women informally by laughing, having conversation, and joking.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“So I don’t think they need to change nothin’. I really don’t. Like, for black women. Because it’s like we would get treated by our own kind. That’s how it is. Like our own kind would treat us like that, so. I don’t think they need to change anything.” P11</p>	<p>Staff at the shelter treat women like family.</p>
	<p>“Mmm, you know, just by talkin’ to me and, you know, just... just understandin’ me and just bein’ upfront and honest and real with me. You know, I can go and talk to ‘em about anything. I don’t have to worry about are they gonna judge me, are they gonna look at me different.” P3</p>	<p>Staff that offer a non-judgmental open ear and are honest were the best ways to show that they were supportive of women.</p>
	<p>“...you know, they just be tryin’ to talk to me and help me when I, I’m stressed out and I have issues, they always make time for me to, you know, always make time. They always want to listen, you know.” P3</p>	<p>Staff that make time to speak with women about their issues and show a willingness to listen to problems that women are having.</p>
	<p>“That makes... they, they, they, they good at listenin’. Which they’re supposed to be because that’s what the job, you know.” P8</p>	<p>A part of a staff member’s job is to be able to listen to women.</p>
	<p>“The staff is awesome. Like, they were so nice. And they help you and they listen. [mumbles] (<i>laughs</i>)” P1</p>	<p>Awesome staff listen.</p>
	<p>“You know, I come, I speak with the um, staff, who’s ever, you know, on duty at that time. We do... you know, we do one-on-one. They try to... whoever’s workin’, try to relax me, try to get my mind offa things.” P2</p>	<p>One-on-one personal sessions with staff help to calm women and get refocused.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“ was so torn and so broke down in my first few days, comin’ to my first week, they took the time to listen. My conversations was private. I got the right kinda feedback that I needed... ..to help me regain my self-esteem. Um, they, they have really, really worked with me since I’ve been here.” P2</p>	<p>When first entering the shelter, staff took the time to have private conversations and offered useful advice. Staff also really worked with her during her stay. She felt that the shelter helped her regain self-esteem.</p>
	<p>“And it didn’t matter who was workin’ at that desk, I was so torn and so broke down in my first few days, comin’ to my first week, they took the time to listen. My conversations was private. I got the right kinda feedback that I needed...to help me regain my self-esteem. Um, they, they have really, really worked with me since I’ve been here....” P2</p>	<p>When coming into shelter, the impact of domestic violence was detrimental. Staff that engaged in ongoing private conversation and offered supportive feedback was helpful.</p>
	<p>“Because I was able to really pour out what I wanted to pour out. And it wasn’t no pointin’ no fingers. And it wasn’t uh, shootin’ me down or havin’ the type’a feedback, “Well, why did you choose to stay?” and wh--... you know, questionin’ me. They always have been a earpiece for me.” P2</p>	<p>Staff provide the space for women to say what is on their mind with judgment or questioning.</p>
	<p>“And in places like this you get some people who actually work in places like this who look down on you because you’re homeless. And, you know, “Hey, I’m not homeless,” and I just work here.” They’re not like that here is pretty much what I’m sayin’.” P5</p>	<p>Shelter staff are less judgmental than staff at other helping organizations.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“Yeah, there’s a couple people that, I mean, you can sit down... they actually try to converse with you. Like I said, I’m usually in and out, but you, I have... there’s maybe, like, two, two or three ladies that in the time of the going or signing in, they’ll kinda stop me, like, “Well, so what do you plan on doing today?” You know, “Are you feelin’ okay? Everything okay?” You know, they, they seem like they’re concerned, you know?” P6</p>	<p>Staff show concern by periodically doing an emotional check-in with women. They ask them what how they are doing and how they are feeling.</p>
	<p>“Well, if you got anything you need to talk about or anything, you can go to ‘em and talk to ‘em. And um, they’re very helpful with, you know, givin’ you ideas on stuff. If you, whatever your problems might be or somethin’. And all, like, the ones that I talk to um, they just... it’s just like they are really concerned about you.” P10</p>	<p>Staff show concern by offering helpful solutions to problems.</p>
	<p>“Even though they don’t always have the stuff around (<i>laughs</i>) when you need it. But, I mean, they try to help and get what you want.” P1</p>	<p>Staff who support women make conscious efforts to help get women the things they need.</p>
	<p>“You know, so I don’t care what you went through yesterday, you are here today ‘cause we are all still in the same boat and we’ll all help each other.” P14</p>	<p>Staff are non judgmental about women’s past and understand that women coming into the shelter are in the same boat.</p>



Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“And um, she’s a beautiful woman. Very intelligent. You know? She broke me all the way down to where it brought me down. Because my i--, my, my levels was up so high to where I was ready to snap. So sh--, actually what she did, she did me a favor. She brought me back down to reality. Violence on top’a violence gets you nowhere. And I keep repeatin’ this over and over and over and over in my head.” <b>P2</b></p>	<p>A staff member provider her with very useful advice that calms her down and helped her understand her behavior.</p>
	<p>“Some of ‘em. Make you feel like you’re... you know, it’s not somethin’ that you did so bad, but things just happen sometimes” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>Shelter allows women to shift the blame from internal to external.</p>
	<p>“And I’m in my turnin’ point. And I’m learnin’, like being here at [shelter], that you don’t put violence with violence. You try to diffuse it as much as you can.” <b>P2</b></p>	<p>The shelter taught her how to diffuse her anger and that she did not have to match violence with violence.</p>
	<p>“A lot of ‘em... well, not a lot of ‘em (<i>laughs</i>) but, most of ‘em are, like, around my age. And I don’t know. It’s just easier to talk to ‘em.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Staff that are closer to a woman’s age are easier to speak with.</p>
	<p>“It’s, it’s nice. And you feel like somebody actually care about you and, like, you’re bein’ loved. Because that’s how it is. They, like... they really take they time with you and they really help you...” <b>P11</b></p>	<p>It is nice to be able to be around people that love you, spend the time to talk with you, and really want to help you.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

Staff provides practical assistance	And they try to help. Like, if I can't find somethin' on the computer, you know, when I'm, she's like, "Well," such-and-such, "she's good at that and she'll do it." So I wrote down what I needed and later on that day I had a stack of all kinds of information, so. They're great. They help out as much as they can. Especially when they're not busy on the phone, so. They help a lot." P13	Staff are helpful when gather information from the computer that a woman was not able to find on her own.
	"Because the way the staff is and the way they help you out, you know. Like I said, they don't just hand it over to you. But, you know, they'll give you a place to stay." P12	Shelter staff might not directly give you resources, but they do offer you a place to stay.
	"So she literally, you know, went on the, went online for me and she helped me out, you know, as far as the phone went. Um, you know, they, they do want us to do our details and our chores but, you know, they don't just make it seem like, you know, it's a chore" P14	Staff supported women by helping her navigate the internet to get the resources she needed.
	"You know, mostly you just gotta get there yourself and really tend to your business, but they do give you resources and stuff. So... ..it's really okay" P13	Shelter provide some resources, but mostly women have to take initiative in order to get the things that they need.
	"...today, my laundry basket was so full and I was tryin' to carry it up the stairs. She was like, "No, stay right here. I'm gon have to go get somebody." So she'll, carried it all the way up there to my room for me. So, you know, that is, it'd be the little stuff..." P13	Small things like helping take a laundry basked up a flight a stairs shows that staff are helpful.

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“Um, even though I don’t have a doctor, they uh, show... they, their concern about, like, if I can’t eat certain foods there, they’ll give me food” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff show they care by offering food.</p>
	<p>“But they do care. As a, like a matter of fact, they have paid for my um, visits to the hospital.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff show they care by paying for hospital visits.</p>
	<p>“I, I don’t think so. I mean, they have provided me with protection orders and everything that I needed.” <b>P9</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff provide women with PPOs.</p>
	<p>“Just everyday stuff. Like, if you walkin’ past ‘em like, “I need” such-and-such, such-and-such. “Well, I don’t have no money to get here.” Well, you know they comin’ out they pockets to help you” <b>P13</b></p>	<p>Staff are gracious and extremely helpful, they will take from their own wallets to give to women.</p>
	<p>“Well, uh, you know, anytime I need to go anywhere, you know, they do provide bus tickets. You know, ‘cause they understand that, you know, I wasn’t able to grab my purse.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff provide bus tickets and understand why she does not have much money. They understand her situation clearly.</p>
	<p>“Like, if you come in and you need, you know, like, your hygiene stuff.....and stuff for the kids as far as Pampers and wipes and stuff like that, if they got it, they help us with it.” <b>P7</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff show they care by providers resources for the children like pampers, wipes and clothing.</p>
	<p>“And so, like, they’ll go to stores that she shops at and get stuff that she [Muslim women] needs.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>The shelter purchases special food for the Muslim woman at shelter.</p>
Shelter provides security	<p>“I’m locked in a building, for one, at night. So that made me feel really, really secure at night.” <b>P2</b></p>	<p>Being locked in the shelter provides a sense of security.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“I like that. You know? [Back there we] have keys to our room. Um, I don’t know. The securedness that they have for us. They care. They do show that.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff show they care by offering a secure environment for women.</p>
	<p>Because, I just, I feel safe. The doors are locked, so you had a, the buzzer, the camera. You know, police constantly goin’ up and down the street. I feel that that’s why I feel safe.” <b>P8</b></p>	<p>Having things such as a locked door and intercom systems helps her feel safe.</p>
	<p>“And I feel comfortable ‘cause I know I can wake up to my baby and ain’t nothin’ gon be wrong with me or her.” <b>P11</b></p>	<p>Shelter environment offers women an opportunity to wake up without fear that something will be wrong with herself or her child.</p>
	<p>“just, it’s, like I said, it’s a safe house, you know. And when people come pick you up, they have to pick you up offsite” <b>P12</b></p>	<p>The fact that people have to pick up women off site helps confirm that the shelter is a safe place.</p>
	<p>“Pretty much. I’m comfortable, feel comfortable here in this buildin’. Um, for one reason, can’t nobody just come in and walk in.” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>The fact that no one is allowed to walk in the building make her feel comfortable.</p>
	<p>“Yeah. Just to feel safe to go to bed at night and not have to worry about people knockin’ on your door. You know, it’s just, it’s... they make you feel safe. Especially with the security that they have. You can’t get in, you know, unless they see you on the camera. <b>P14</b></p>	<p>She feels safe because there is a video camera that monitors whether people are able to come in or not.</p>
	<p>“That, you know, somewhere their kids are safe and they can lay they head and don’t have to worry about, like, is he gonna come in at any time.” <b>P13</b></p>	<p>It is nice to not have to worry about the abuser showing up at any time.</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

Shelter provides a lax environment	<p>“ I just do. I feel like I can get a peace’a mind. But long as you gotta peace’a mind and somebody is not always, it’s not always bull crap in the area or drama goin’ on, you can always get a peace’a mind. And that’s what I been gettin’. That’s what I been needin’ for a long time, too.” <b>P9</b></p>	Shelter provides an environment where women can get a peace of mind.
	<p>“You know, without uh, you know, pourin’ it down your throat like, “Oh, you gotta do this.” You know, even though it is one of the requirements. <i>(clears throat)</i> So, they’re real good in, in uh, you know, in helpin’ us to, to, to be responsible.” <b>P14</b></p>	Shelter staff promote responsibility without women feeling like they are being forced to do things.
	<p>“ And I’m here and I ain’t none’a that and I still get to leave when I want to, come back and all this. I couldn’t do that then.” <b>P11</b></p>	Being able to choose when she comes and goes was not available to her when she was in an abusive relationship.
	<p>“So when I came and I asked and I was like, “So,” you know what I’m sayin’, “am I assigned to any chores? How do I find out?” She was like, “You don’t have any chores.” I was like, “What time do I have to be to bed?” “You don’t have to be to bed at no time.” I was like, you know what I’m sayin’? And it was just like I wasn’t feelin’ the confinement, you know what I’m sayin’. I felt like, “Okay, I can be comfortable,” and just, you know, just be safe and be able to lay back and get a peace’a mind.” <b>P9</b></p>	Being at a shelter that did not require that women do chores also allowed women to feel peaceful and comfortable without worrying about other responsibilities.

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“ I mean, we do have a curfew, but, like, you can go and come as you please, like, before curfew. You can take showers. It’s not, it’s not like a really strict environment.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Even though there is a curfew, the environment is not that strict and women can leave and come as they please.</p>
Other	<p>“I don’t have no problem with nobody because I understand what everyone is goin’ through.” P7</p>	<p>Recognizing what women are going through makes it easier to be more forgiving and accept people as they are.</p>
	<p>“You don’t want to get too comfortable. I mean, you know, but the longer you’re here, the more people...the more you open up. And it’s kinda like just one big ol’ family.” P5</p>	<p>The longer a woman stays at shelter, the more open a woman becomes, and the more connected women feel at the shelter with one another. Extended period of time impact how comfortable a woman feels at shelter.</p>
	<p>“They don’t wanna throw me in the streets – excuse me – so they would rather work with you than to throw you out there.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>The shelter staff wanted women to succeed rather than be homeless. They would rather help than hurt.</p>
	<p>“Most people not like that. They just take they time and... but, they take they job very seriously and they do what they have to do.” P11</p>	<p>Staff are carful and the conscious about their job.</p>
	<p>“But yet... and staff, they don’t show it. Like, I feel they could be trying to, not to show it. But they don’t show any frustration.” P14</p>	<p>Staff do not show that they are frustrated.</p>
	<p>“And I know they get pissed off. But they don’t show it. I don’t see it. I don’t see it. I have not yet seen one staff member go off or lose their temper or fly off the handle. But I know they want to.” P14</p>	<p>Staff are able to keep their composure in situations that are stressful</p>

Table 5 (cont'd)

	<p>“Because I know this is only gonna last for a certain amount’a time. So you not... I mean, maybe you should... they’ll, they want you to be comfortable, you know, but I don’t want to get comfortable. ‘Cause I know this is not where I’m supposed to be. You know, this is just a pass-through. This is helpin’ me to get where I’m supposed to be.” P13</p>	<p>Shelter is temporary. Getting comfortable insinuates that this is long term commitment.</p>
	<p>“And a lot of the people – they’re not here anymore but, they were kinda not open to, like, me coming. They weren’t talk--, they wouldn’t talk to me. And then they left. And there’s new people. And then there’s people here that um, they were here when I got here that... I mean there’s nice people and there was not nice people. (<i>laughs</i>) I won’t call ‘em mean, but... it’s a lot easier now ‘cause I’ve been here for a while and know what to expect and stuff. So, it’s easier.” P1</p>	<p>The longer you are at a shelter, the easier to be at shelter and get along with residents because you have a better idea of what to expect.</p>

## APPENDIX U: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 3

Table 6

Theme 3: Negative Components of Shelter (n=11)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Staff show that do not care/Housing Time limits (setting)	Um, not bein' accepted by the residents. I don't know if the staff accepts me, you know. Sometimes I feel they do and sometimes I feel they don't. Maybe it could just be me, but I doubt it." P4	The uncertainty about whether staff value the resident can result in feelings of self-doubt and disconnectedness from the shelter.
	"The only problem I had is what I said easier when they were tryin' to push me out, "Go over there. Go do this." I'm not ready to do that yet. And I sat there and talked to one of the uh, the ladies that's uh... I told her I wasn't ready to do that. But now she has to talk to me now about what I said, so. Because I told 'em I still need time to heal, you know? "If I feel that I'm bein' pushed, y'all gon push me right on out the door, right back home.'" P8	Staff can be pushy and want things for a woman that she does not want herself which in turn, and push her back to her abuser.
	"I mean, short answers or "Are you doin' this or are you gonna do this?" Like, you know, the tones in their voice, the attitude...I mean, just really shows you that they just really don't care, you know." P6	Staff can subtly and overtly show that they care or do not care. The tone of the voice, the attitude that they have when serving women all connote to the woman that she is cared about or not cared about.



Table 6 (cont'd)

	<p>“So I, I just, I won’t go in there and ask for anything. You know, bein’ that I know that it’s there. Either you just don’t want to give it to me or you’re too lazy to look. So I just don’t ask, you know.” P6</p>	<p>Staff do things on their own accord. They choose whether they want to provide resources to women or not. The dependency that women have on staff to have access to resources something leads to then not wanting to ask at all.</p>
	<p>“Mmm, I don’t know. Like I said, it’s just... it just makes me not want to just have anything to do with the staff as far as anything that I need. I mean, I know who I can talk to and who I can ask and who won’t have a problem with it.” P6</p>	<p>Resident only engages with a designated shelter staff will be supportive with resident’s needs and does not talk with anyone else.</p>
	<p>“Um, I think they need to reach out more. They need to ask more questions about our staying here. You know? They need to focus more on how we feel as far as bein’ here instead of um, “Well, this is what you’re here for,” you know. “Do” this and “do” this and “then that’ll be okay.” You know? When it’s... sometimes it’s not even that, you know?” P6</p>	<p>Reaching out and asking about feelings and emotional states of residents instead of providing uninformed advice.</p>
	<p>“Oh, my goodness, the staff just don’t care. Like, they’re like, this is their job. No, you have a few of ‘em that are willin’ to listen and help as much as they can and then you have some who just like, this is their job and that’s really all that matters. So.” P6</p>	<p>Some shelter staff view working at the shelter as a job, while other staff view the position as a way to support women by listening and helping out whenever possible.</p>

Table 6 (cont'd)

	<p>“Because, you know, I speak to the other residents. Like if I’m outside smokin’ and they out there. But other than that, no, I don’t have time. I’m tryin’ to find me a house so I really don’t be here.” P13</p>	<p>There is no time to go beyond being acquaintances with women. These require time that is needed toward finding housing and other activities that promote leaving the shelter.</p>
	<p>“I wish it was, the program was lo--, you know, with a longer stay ‘cause 30 days just go by so quick. It’s kinda hard to find a house in 30 days. But, it’ll do.” P13</p>	<p>It is difficult and can feel unsettling to meet housing needs in the required time frame.</p>
	<p>“Yeah. Um, but, you know, I assume they’re... you know, they pretty cool. And everybody that’s, like, here right now, it’s like they either on the computer or they walkin’ out the door. ‘Cause, you know, everybody’s tryin’. You know, 30 days go quick.” P13</p>	<p>Women are working hard to find housing so that they can leave shelter before their time at the shelter is up.</p>
	<p>“You know what I’m sayin’? To them, they feel like, my... this is my personal opinion. That, you know what I’m sayin’, black women, you know, aren’t always here for a domestic violence. Like, ‘cause they’re, like, uh, one of the black girls had about h--, you know what I’m sayin’, huntin’ her down about gettin’ a PPO order against her assailant. So, you know what I’m sayin’, where as they not huntin’ no white girls down about gettin’ [no] assailant.” P9</p>	<p>Shelter staff assume that Black women are not there for domestic violence.</p>

Table 6 (cont'd)

Community living/Other residents	"Hardly ever get conversation out of 'em [shelter residents]. I feel like I'm the weakest link, period. Period. I guess" P4	The lack of communication with other shelter residents indicates that they are not valued within the shelter.
	"R: Bein' around arguments. And if people [stealing], that makes me uncomfortable. I: Why do arguments make you uncomfortable? R: Um, 'cause I have backflashes." <b>P3</b>	The arguments that occur at shelter elicit back flashes to the abusive relationship.
	"That would make, be... Probably the most uncomfortable thing about a shelter is the people that are comin' in." <b>P5</b>	The people that come into shelters are the most uncomfortable part of shelter.
	"They have a room there and we supposed to eat in there, too. But it's like, some of the single women, they get mad when we come in there with our kids to eat. They'll walk out like we are bein' mean to them. Like... and that kinda make me feel uncomfortable because it make me feel like you don't want me and my kids around you." <b>P7</b>	Single women treat women with children as if they do not want their children around which makes mothers feel uncomfortable.
	"Not really. Maybe just 'cause we have to share the rooms" <b>P12</b>	It is uncomfortable to share rooms while in shelter.
	"Well, I'm not used to bein' around so many people...But, I mean, it's really something you get used to. Sharin' showers and bathrooms and..." <b>P6</b>	Women have to get use to community living and sharing resource.

Table 6 (cont'd)

	<p>“We just, like, sittin’ up waitin’ to see if I’m, I’m finna to come in. Like, or if I’m gonna come in. So, they nosy. And then, yeah, uh, as soon as I come in, they just nosy. They just wanna tell me about what all happened. Who got kicked out.....and who gettin’ a write-up and... just nosy. That’s women though. <i>(laughs)</i> That’s women.” P9</p>	<p>Shelter residents gossip and spy on residents. They are interested in sharing information about the happenings of other shelter residents with one another. They are nosy, but that is common of women.</p>
	<p>“There’s like people... I don’t know how to explain the cliques. There’s... like I said, there’s the people that are crazy, and it seems like they all hang together.” P1</p>	<p>The shelter environment has cliques of women. There are some women</p>
	<p>“When I first came here, I felt like they was bein’ rude ‘cause we have chores here and I did my chore. And my chore was to clean off the table, it wasn’t to take care of the dishes...So I wiped around the dishes and they got a little upset with me and so I kinda got a attitude back with ‘em. But I’ve adjusted to ‘em now...” <b>P12</b></p>	<p>Shelter requires adjustment to the rules related to community living such as doing chores.</p>
<p>Women come from different places</p>	<p>Um, there are a couple’a residents that I really like here. But, you know, everyone here comes from different backgrounds and has different issues.” P3</p>	<p>People coming into the shelter have very different backgrounds. Since they come from such different places, they also have different problems that they bring into the shelter.</p>
	<p>“So, you know, it’ just a lotta... sometimes a lotta tension when it’s a whole buncha women in the same house.” P3</p>	<p>The shelter environment is tense because there are a lot of women staying in the same place at once.</p>

Table 6 (cont'd)

	<p>“Uh, but, I mean, really, yeah, that’s why. So. And everybody’s different. Everybody, everyone here is different. There’s a different way to approach this person, a different way to approach the other person.” P5</p>	<p>Women require different kinds of support and approaches because everyone is different.</p>
	<p>“They’re all right. I mean, you see different people come in. It’s, you know, different situations and sometimes you can see it on their face, what they’ve been through. And some people, you know... I don’t know, like different situations. Like, I came in here without any bruises.” P12</p>	<p>Different women have different situations, sometimes the abuse is physically apparent and sometimes it is not.</p>
	<p>“You can kinda tell that from the women that are here. That everybody is just... just goin’ through their own little things in themselves. That’s what I think.” P3</p>	<p>It is possible to tell by watching women, they are they having a difficult time.</p>
Other	<p>“I wish I wouldn’t be treated like that, but... and that’s like um, like when they wa--, ask you for somethin’... I mean, like, when you come down there and you need somethin’... because that’s what we have to do. We have to always go to the staff. Sometimes they take their lovely time gettin’ it for me...and sometimes they don’t.” P4</p>	<p>Staff controls all of the resources at the shelter. When women want something they must ask for it and staff make the decision about whether to get it for them or not.</p>

## APPENDIX V: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 4

Table 7

Theme 4: Experiences of Racial Microaggressions and Race-Related Incidents (n=13)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Microinsult	<p>“Um, well, there is a resident here who address black people as colored people instead of addressin’ us by our name. And we were told to just, to talk to her. Like, you know, “This is 2010.” You know, “We don’t call black people colored people anymore and it’s offensive to,” you know, “some people.” Or, you know, some people wait and they go in they room and they tell their roommate, you know, “Black people” this, and “White people” that.” <b>P3</b></p>	<p>One person experienced a White women called Black people ‘colored’ rather than Black or even calling them by names.</p>
	<p>“I mean, I think things don’t work like that. <i>(laughs)</i> So. <i>(laughs)</i> But<i>(laughs)</i> that’s prob’ly the only, you know, thing as far as race is. I don’t even really want to say it’s racist, but it was racial profiling.” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>She considers someone asking you why you do not act Black as racial profiling, but not necessarily racism.</p>
	<p>“So I go in the, in the office – right after she just came outta the office [<i>white lady with similar allergies</i>] – and I said um, “You guys got any allergy medicine?” She’s like, “No, all we have is aspirin.” And then the other lady who was sittin’ in a chair was like, “Well, they’re only \$4.95 at Walmart.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>A Black woman goes to the office to request allergy medicine but it told that they do not have any and she could go purchase some from Walmart. However, the Black women saw a White women go and get medicine earlier.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>"It irks me as... when someone tells me um, "Why don't you act black? And I always say to them (<i>laughs</i>), "What is acting black? I get that almost daily from one particular person." <b>P5</b></p>	<p>A White women asks a Black woman also constantly why she is not acting Black.</p>
	<p>"Because I wasn't talkin' to her to begin with, you know. And then, I know that you guys have allergy medicine 'cause this lady comes in here just about every night, get allergy medicine. But I mean, not only me, but other people here. That's all they said, "All we have is aspirin." <b>P6</b></p>	<p>The women does not know whether the staff are lying about the medicine that they have and just do not want to give it to her because people have come in before to get allergy medicine. And, she has seen them.</p>
	<p>"But you can send one of the white girls in there and they go, "Gimme a allergy pill" or "Go get me somethin'," you know, some cough medicine or somethin'...and boom, there it is. You know, and I don't think that's fair at all. Like, why wouldn't you wanna give me medicine?" <b>P6</b></p>	<p>White women are able to get what they need such as allergy or cough medicine regularly without trouble, but it is not that easy for her. She perceives that staff just does not want to give her medicine.</p>
	<p>"Then she's like, "Oh, you should go get one of those allergy medicines from the um, from the office." She was like, "I took it. It helped, but it made me go to sleep. You know, so I know that she's went and got it before. And then I'm like, "Well, when I go..." and I, I mean, the only difference is color, you know. "We're both here. We both have allergies. But I'm black and she's white. You know?" <b>P6</b></p>	<p>The only difference between the white woman who gets allergy medicine regularly and the Black woman who wants allergy medicine is race.</p>
Microinsensitivity	<p>"So, I don't know. I do, like... I don't know. Like last night, someone had told me, like – I don't think she was being funny but I kinda felt like she was bein' funny – 'cause she called me a white... white somethin'. [I don't..] white anklets 'cause I have, you know, 'cause my skin color's more white than it is black." <b>P12</b></p>	<p>A Black women is told by another Black woman that she is has white ankles connoting that her skin is more white than Black.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>"It could just be a expression on a person's face. You be like, "Well, they look like they don't want me here," or somethin' like that. And I done felt like that a couple times, but I don't look at it. I look over stuff like that." <b>P7</b></p>	<p>Some staff subtly tell women that they are not welcome at shelter simply by the looks that staff give them.</p>
	<p>"I know, but some, some of 'em, like... it's, like, one or two of 'em. Some of 'em you could just, got that feelin'. Like, I have the disternin' spirit where I can tell if a person don't like you...because, you know, the color-wise or whatever." <b>P8</b></p>	<p>You can just tell whether a person does not like you or want you there because of your race.</p>
	<p>" Well, what do they do or what do they say that you're, like, "Yeah, they're waitin' for me to blow up"?" <b>P6</b></p>	<p>A Black woman felt that the White women were just waiting for her to get angry.</p>
	<p>" Well, I've seen arguments of, between um, a white girl and a black girl. And the black, the white girl is [saying] like, "Well, I'm not scared'a you." And, you know? Nobody said anything about you bein' scared, you know. And then a lotta people here don't even come off that way, like they're tryin' to intimidate anybody or anything." <b>P6</b></p>	<p>Black women described that Black women are unnecessarily perceived as dangerous and scary. When a white woman was in an argument with another Black women, the white women told her that she was not afraid of her.</p>
	<p>"You know, you're just, "I'm not scared'a you. You don't scare me." I mean, just... it's just small stuff." <b>P6</b></p>	<p>Things like being perceived as scary or always ready to fight are small but impactful.</p>
Microinvalidation	<p>"Well, sh-- uh, well, one'a the staff members actually gave me the information. (<i>clears throat</i>) And then she was like, "I am so sorry." <b>P14</b></p>	<p>When the Black woman told the staff member that recommend the agency to the women, the staff member just said I'm sorry.</p>



Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“And when I told her what happened to me, she could not believe it. So I think she also knew. And it was a white church. St. Peters. I think she [also] only thing she could do was, she was like, “I am so terribly sorry.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>The only thing the surprised staff member could do was say “I’m sorry.”</p>
	<p>“..like, you know, when you’re out in the smokers’ thing or whatever and people are talking, you know, and there’s this one white lady, she was like, “Well, I only date white guys.” And... or then there was another lady, “Well, my dad and my grandfather were in the KKK.” But, I like white people. And that’s just weird. (<i>laughs</i>) Like, they just made it known that, you know, their family did not accept black people. <b>P1</b></p>	<p>White women explained out of the blue that she only dates white men. A white woman said that her dad and grandfather were apart of the KKK, however she while telling the story she also said that she like Black people.</p>
	<p>“ But then they went, “Well, but I...” I’m like, “I don’t care.” (<i>laughs</i>) And it just seemed like they... I don’t know. There was all... there’s, like, a lotta... there were a lot of people that were white. They’ll say that their family didn’t do, like, interracial friends dating, anything. And they’re like, “But I’m not like that.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>White women discuss that they come from families where people are prejudice against Blacks, however, the white woman themselves say that they are not the same as their families.</p>
	<p>R: That was my roommate. Um, she said (<i>laughs</i>), oh, we were talkin’ about uh, I forget what, what she was talkin’ about. Well, we were talkin’, but she talk more than me. So (<i>laughs</i>) um, it... you know how they say, “I got a lotta black friends. Now what did you say that for?” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>A White women tells a Black woman unprompted and unnecessarily that she has a lot of black friends.</p>
	<p>“You know. But, she (staff member) looked like she was surprised. Because when she gave me that information, she was, like, 100% for sure that they would help me.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>The Black women felt the staff member was surprised that the women felt the social service provider was prejudice because she was sure that they would be helpful.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

Microassault	“Um, someone... I don't know, she just kind of said stuff to, you know, someone else, “Stop acting like a black bitch.” <b>P5</b>	A Muslim woman says to a Black women to stop acting like a Black bitch.
	“I know she said the <i>n</i> word one time.” <b>P5</b>	The Muslim woman used the N-word.
	“Um, and I didn't... she tried her best to explain it, but still the fact of the matter is... I mean, you know, I guess she called her a black bitch because her head got this... doin' like this. You know, how some sisters can't, when they cussin' you out and...you know, get to shakin' they neck and um, I guess she called her a black bitch, “Stop actin' like a black bitch.” <b>P5</b>	The muslim woman tried to explain that why she called the women a Black bitch. She defined a “Black bitch” connotes a woman who moves her head and neck around in a sassy manner and cusses people out.
Environmental Microaggressions: Food	“No, clients, like the residents. It's like the food and the personal needs products. I would just... I mean, but we've talked about the menu and stuff, and to serve foods that, you know, I guess black women would want to eat.” <b>P1</b>	Black women are not typically offered things they would like to eat on the menu and it must be requested or discussed.
	“And then, like, with food, they ask us all the time, like, “What do you want on the menu?” So, like, it... when I first got here, I'm like, “Well, what the heck is this?” I'm like... they made shepherd's pie. I'm like, “I've never heard of this in my life.” ( <i>laughs</i> ) And I guess, you know, it's a white people thing. “ <b>P1</b>	Women are given the option to choose the food from the menu. Typically, the food is normative to the white culture that is unfamiliar to Black women.
	“Um( <i>laughs</i> ), that's somethin' we do, 'cause we eat different as well, is um... African-American or black [people]. Um, there are times um, where um, we're able to um, you know, go in there and cook something we usually cook at home.” <b>P5</b>	Black women are sometimes able to cook food that is more fitting to their culture and reminds them of home.
	“I think that the food we eat, they try to make it like it's soul food and it's not. You know, it's all canned and not seasoned and it's just like... that's just what it is. They try to make it like it's supposed to be a certain type of food and it's just not.” <b>P6</b>	There is some attempt to make the food ethnically diverse, but it fails.

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“So they prob’ly, you know, don’t cook it because they would think that the people that are not black won’t eat it.” <b>P8</b></p>	<p>Food from Black culture is probably not provided because non-Blacks will not eat it.</p>
	<p>“ I don’t, we don’t get no fried chicken. (<i>laughs</i>) No, it’s good sometimes and sometimes tacos or, we eat tacos all the time. But, and they have the little pasta stuff all the time. But they don’t never have no real food, food...Soul food. Black people food. African-American food” <b>P9</b></p>	<p>Soul food and other foods normative in the Black community are not available at shelter.</p>
Environmental Microaggressions: Physical Environment	<p>“And then not to mention, like, there’s no... there is... the staff is just, like, all Caucasian ladies. There’s no black staff, nothing.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>There are no Black staff at the agency.</p>
	<p>“I’ve only seen one um, African-American staff that works up front and she’s African-American, so. The rest of ‘em that’s in here is... we have, I’ve seen one um, intern that’s African-American, but everybody else is white. I haven’t seen any Afri--, I haven’t seen any other than those two.” <b>P9</b></p>	<p>Most of the staff is white and there are one or two Black women that work there.</p>
	<p>“ There are no black movies. Then the girl, one of the girls was, brought a movie called <i>Lady Sang the Blues</i>...She... I mean, it... she was upstairs, I mean, she was downstairs and I came in and she was like, “What are you upstairs watchin’?” “<i>Lady Sang the Blues</i>.” “I’m not interested.” I mean, “The movie don’t interest me.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>There are not Black movies available at shelter. A white women explained to the Black woman that she is not interested in watching a movie, that was mostly Black, with the group of women.</p>
	<p>“Mmm. Um, well, first, let me say this. One thing it, it doesn’t really... it doesn’t really make me feel uncomfortable or it um... I don’t even want to say uncomfortable really. That’s the wrong word. Like, I have noticed since I’ve been here that a lot of the women that have come here, most, most of the women – I’ve been here since January, so I’ve seen a lot of women come and go. Most of the women that have come through this door and left are African-American women.” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>It is a bit unsettling to watch many women that walk through the door of the shelter are Black women.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

Environmental Microaggressions: Hair Products	<p>“I mean, I don’t even know how to feel. I feel like, “Okay.” I felt like it was okay because this is a shelter and some way, shape or form I really wouldn’t expect for them to have perms or anything like that, you know?” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>Shelter would be not have the hair products that black women used.</p>
	<p>“And I asked for hair products. I’m like, “I can’t use this.” <i>(laughs)</i> And she was like, “Well,” you know, “I can put in a request.” Like if... I mean, like, [yeah] they didn’t have a lotta stuff for black women.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Products for Black hair are not available at shelter, instead she has to put in a request.</p>
	<p>“They brought in a whole buncha perms. Well, relaxers. <i>(laughs)</i> And, like, there were some white people that said, “Well, we don’t use relaxing, we use perms.” She was like, “Well, we have perms here.” “Well, you didn’t have relaxers here.” <i>(laughs)</i> And they were like, “Oh, well, I didn’t know.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>White women residents did not understand why women wanted relaxers.</p>
	<p>“R: Not for hairspray I: Not hairspray? R: No. <i>(laughs)</i> It’s always [for]. The w people.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Some products, such as hairspray, were meant for white women.</p>
	<p>“But anything I’ve needed, I just ask ‘em for it and, you know, I’ve never had an issue on, you know, not havin’ somethin’, you know, bein’ at a... I mean, our hair’s different.” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>Black women can ask for the products they need for their hair because it is different than white women’s hair.</p>
	<p>“Right. It’s like you don’t, “This is all you have?” Like, “We don’t use, like...” I don’t, I can’t even tell you. Certain products we just don’t use.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>The shelter only had products that women could not use in their own hair.</p>
	<p>“Somebody’ll buy it and share. Buy enough to share with everybody else, you know. ‘Cause you’re not gonna get it here. You know, they’re not gonna go outta their way to try and get you a hair product.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>Black hair care products are not available at shelter, and therefore, women spend money to get hair products and share with other Black residents</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“‘Cause they have, they have um, like, and like, in their um, room where they store all, like, shampoos and that. They have both. They have white and black... You know? It'd prob'ly be a little bit more on the white.” <b>P7</b></p>	<p>There are more White hair care products than Black, however, both products are available.</p>
	<p>“I will go [that way..] we would have to go to the store. They got stuff for white women. But they ain't got nothin' for us.” <b>P8</b></p>	<p>Black women have to go to the store to purchase hair care products because the products at the shelter are not for Black women.</p>
	<p>“They're more... make... when you get stuff like that, when they have stuff like that, it's mostly, like, white people stuff really. Uh huh. But I don't know why is that, because that's what they get from whoever they get it from, but maybe they get more donations or somethin' from those people?” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>The things that they have available for hair products are mainly for white women but this could be because the donations that they get are mainly products for white women.</p>
	<p>I: Mm hmm. How about hair products? Do they have hair products for black women? R: Mm hmm. Shampoo and conditioner. Combs and brushes. I: Perms? Relaxers? No? R: Mm mm. I don't think they have that 'cause I woulda done got one, but (<i>laughs</i>) I don't think the have those.” <b>P11</b></p>	<p>The shelter does have some products available for Black women, and some things that are not available like perms and relaxers.</p>
	<p>“No, I've asked for some gel and they didn't have none. All they had was hair spray... Which, my kinda texture of hair, it's gonna break my hair right off, so I passed on that.” <b>P12</b></p>	<p>The only available products that they have for Black women would be detrimental to the hair, and therefore she decided not to use their products.</p>
	<p>“White. It's like, bleah, Caucasian. All they are. (<i>laughs</i>)” <b>P9</b></p>	<p>Every hair product available is for white women.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“Um, my counselor... actually [name]. She want, she told me before that they don’t have any, anything like that so if I was to want somethin’ like that I would have to get it.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>Counselor made it upfront that Black hair care products were not available.</p>
	<p>R: Because the majority of the stuff they have, you know, black people really don’t use. I: Like, what do you mean? Is it, what, what about it? Or, what products are they and then... R: Just like hygiene products. You know, everyday necessities like shampoo (sighs) um, conditioner um, hair spray. Stuff like that. <b>P13</b></p>	
	<p>R:Mm hmm. Shampoo and conditioner. Combs and brushes. I: Perms? Relaxers? No? R: Mm mm. I don’t think they have that ‘cause I woulda done got one, but (laughs) I don’t think they have those. <b>P11</b></p>	
Other	<p>“R: Um, once, one time I went in one of my ragin’ moments and I called one of the ladies there uh... can I say the word? I: Sure. R: A cracker.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>A Black woman called a white woman a cracker when she was mad. She expressed her anger as having a “raging” moment”</p>
	<p>“But, like, I could... you know, now if there was... if there was a picture, okay, of – let’s just say – Michelle Obama...on the wall. Now, any black woman that walks past or sees that picture, I mean, she’s just gonna kinda feel “Ahhh,” at peace or... I don’t know. They wouldn’t make you feel uncomfortable or... I don’t know. Our chest gets stickin’ out and our heads go up and like, “Yeah!”” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>Pictures of powerful black women would incite feelings of pride and peacefulness.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“It’s just a lotta small things that makes it one big issue.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>It is the small race-related or racist incidents that build up to be one impactful problem.</p>
	<p>“ I shouldn’ta said that. I’m not racist, but um, at the time, this made it look like I was.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Black women did not feel like she was racist, but saying the word cracker actually made it seem as if she was.</p>
	<p>“But I, I explained to them (staff) and I apologized to ‘em, that it was nothin’, just somethin’ that came outta my mouth. I didn’t think before I spoke. And I was in the midst of anger...and um, I’m sorry. Don’t use that against me...you know, in the near future of me bein’ here.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>After her racial incident, she was afraid that saying something overtly offensive would get her kicked out of the shelter.</p>
	<p>“But um, it was just somethin’... it’s just a word. But it’s not a word that you [strongly] should use a lot like that. Especially in a community livin’ and especially [such] like that. So.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>Cracker should not be something that is used frequently within a community setting, but it is just a word that is used.</p>
	<p>“So she said what she said and that and before I know it I was like, “you cracker ass bitch.” Excuse me, but that’s what I said.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>A black women calls a white woman a “cracker ass bitch.”</p>
	<p>“And... but I apologized to her a buncha times and staff. I don’t think I apologized enough, you know. I know I think, I know I apologized enough.” <b>P4</b></p>	<p>The Black woman responded to calling the white woman a bitch by apologizing profusely, but then stopped when she felt that she apologized enough.</p>
	<p>“You know, the white ones here, are feelin’ that she’s gettin’ more leave than they are. “Because we can’t stay out all night. And they let you stay out all night.” <b>P8</b></p>	<p>White women are jealous of the special treatment that a particular Black woman gets. She is able to stay out later than other people because of her job.</p>

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<p>“Yeah, it was um, let me see. K- was out there. D-- was out there, my roommate. Um, L-- was out there. As soon as the incident happened, as soon as I hung up the phone, I went out there and I was hot. And that’s the first time they seen me go off.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>The phone call made the black woman so upset that she immediately had to talk to someone after she got off of the phone with the prejudiced women, so she went to process with two women, one was her roommate. She got so mad that she “went off” for the first time with these women.</p>
	<p>“And they could not believe it. They was like, “[Name], are you okay?” And I’m like, “Y’all is not gon believe this,” and I told ‘em everything that happened, everything on the phone. Of course, they thought it was funny. I: Are they black or white women? <b>P14</b></p>	<p>The White women initially asked the Black women was wrong when they saw that she was upset, but eventually laughed at her situation.</p>
	<p>“And they laughed. And they was like, “Well, it’s no big deal. Hell, I’ll give you \$10 tomorrow to go get your ID.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>The White women told the Black women that the service provider incident was no big deal and then gave her money to get the ID that she needed.</p>
	<p>“You know, and that, that’s how they, you know, took it. But I was mad as hell. (<i>laughs</i>)” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>Despite the White women’s disregard of the situation, the Black woman still felt angry.</p>



## APPENDIX W: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 5

Table 8

Theme 5: Women are undeserving clients (n=5-did not count #7,8,14)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Women are not survivors	“And, like, if I would talk to somebody about what was goin’ on, then they, “Who cares? Like, “Well, obviously you don’t because you don’t know what it’s like.” <i>(laughs)</i> ” P1	Non dv-women at shelter are apparent because they do not show support when hearing about another person’s situation.
	“..some people said that um, I felt like my situation was worse than other people’s or just some people said that um, some people are not like... it’s kinda bad to say this, but they’re not here because of domestic vi--, like, violence reasons” P1	Women are not at shelter for domestic violence reasons.
	“R: I’m... I mean, sorry your man don’t wantcha. Hey, mine don’t want me. Who wants a man that beats her? I: Right? R: Make me think that you wanted to be with him. Or are you really there because uh, [you’ve been battered you been beat]. Maybe you could just be there because you’re homeless.” P4	Women that go back to their partners while in the shelter are probably not abuse victims but homeless instead.
	“A really good... and we’ve all... I mean, it... black, white, the majority of all females have been through some kind of... I don’t know, it’s [hard to say] I’m sayin’. I don’t want to say domestic violence, ‘cause not all of us have” P5	Women at shelter have encountered something, though not all of it is domestic violence.

Table 8 (cont'd)

	<p>"[I don't know]. I'm gonna just say most women can relate to some kind of abuse. Whether it's mentally, physically, verbal abuse. Some kind of it. Some kind." P5</p>	<p>All women at shelter can relate to some kind of abuse, even if it is not always physical abuse.</p>
	<p>"You know what I'm sayin'? To them, they feel like, my... this is my personal opinion. That, you know what I'm sayin', black women, you know, aren't always here for a domestic violence. Like, 'cause they're, like, uh, one of the black girls had about h--, you know what I'm sayin', huntin' her down about gettin' a PPO order against her assailant. So, you know what I'm sayin', where as they not huntin' no white girls down about gettin' [no] assailant." P9</p>	<p>Shelter staff assume that Black women are not there for domestic violence.</p>
	<p>"Mmm, it's just the way people act. I mean, if you're... I don't know. I, this is the way I feel. If you're um, just bold enough to do some of the things that people do, it just don't seem like you just really scared to be...out there. (<i>laughs</i>)" P10</p>	<p>It is possible to tell when some women are not survivors because they do not show behaviors that show fear of being in the world, as some other survivors might. Their actions are too bold to be survivors.</p>
<p>Women do not work hard enough/lazy</p>	<p>"Unfortunately, some of the women here ain't learnt nothin'. Only thing they do is layin' they head, got a place to lay, place to eat, place to clean themselves up, and hit that door." P2</p>	<p>Some women in shelter treat the shelter as a home where they receive the basic necessities, but do not do the work to heal from domestic violence.</p>
	<p>"This ain't no hotel. This ain't Holiday Inn. This, this is a domestic violence shelter. And if you don't respect it and treat it like the domestic violence shelter, it's gonna cost you." P2</p>	<p>There are repercussions to treating a shelter as a hotel instead of as a place to get support.</p>

Table 8 (cont'd)

	<p>“You choose to come here and just lay around, don’t do nothin’, keep whinin’ and cryin’ and carryin’ on, ain’t tryin’ to help yourself outta the situation, it’s gon remain and be the same. So. I choose not to be in that position. I... you know, me, I want better for myself. So instead’a the program, the domestic violent program workin’ me, I work the program.” P2</p>	<p>Complaining and crying about the situation without action means that the situation will stay the same. “Working” or utilizing the programs and its resources is the way to change situations.</p>
	<p>“I was about to say some of the white girls that’s there, they be like, “Well, they not doin’ this for me,” and then I was like, “Well, they did it for me.” And they be like, “Now it’s the other way around,” and I’m like, “No, it’s not.” I mean, it’s just that if you want help, they’ll give it to you. But if you don’t want it and they see that you don’t want it, they’re not gonna do nothin’ for you.” P11</p>	<p>You show that you want help by helping yourself. Staff watch women and do not have to support those that are not supporting themselves.</p>
	<p>“And then there’s the people that just don’t care. And they don’t do anything. They don’t care. They’re not trying to progress. They just don’t care.” P1</p>	<p>Some women at shelter are not trying to progress out of their current situation because they do not care about doing so.</p>
	<p>“[Shelter director] see that. That’s why when them 30 days is up they don’t get no extension. ‘Cause they ain’t doin’ nothing with theyself.” P2</p>	<p>Women that do not work to do better for themselves while in shelter do not deserve an extension in shelter.</p>
	<p>“You know. And I didn’t see this girl at all. That’s why I kinda just, like, left her alone because I didn’t see her at all tryin’. I seen her on computer just playin’ games all the time. So it was like she was really not tryin’.” P12</p>	<p>Women that do not show that they are working towards meeting their goals are not women that are ideal to associate with.</p>
	<p>“You know, so sometimes it’s hard um... and then you have some people who’re just here...for nothin’. They’re just here. And, I mean, they don’t help at all.” P6</p>	<p>Some unhelpful women at the shelter do not have a real reason to be at shelter, they are just utilizing resources.</p>
	<p>“I mean, it’s like a give-and-take situation. You can’t take, take, take and not give anything back.” P1</p>	<p>Getting support at shelter is a reciprocal relationship.</p>

Table 8 (cont'd)

	<p>“And has taught me a lot. On the other hand, this girl here, only thing she wanna do is jump in her... sleep, eat, jump in her car, ride Lansing all day every day, go meet up with her boyfriend after he is the cause in her bein’ here. Then come back up here at night, lay down for an hour ‘til it’s time for her to go to work. And repeats the same thing the next day. She’s so comfortable with it, she just lay in the... and talk about it. This is the life that she wants to live. Only thing I can do is pray for her.” P2</p>	<p>Women that continue to stay be involved with their ex-boyfriends are beyond help.</p>
Other	<p>“And you do have the one-on-one, you know, with your case manager. You know, I know they are trained, you know, to see through a person. So they pretty much know who, who they can count on to help themselves...and then the ones that are just here for some other odd reason. (clears throat” P14</p>	<p>Staff are able to tell the difference between women that are survivors and those using the shelter to meet other needs.</p>
	<p>“And then uh, I have noticed that... you know, in, in this particular situation, they were right. It was one girl who, me and her’d have conversations and I just knew she wasn’t here for the right reason. And show and behold, she left and she left with uh, an item that belonged to the place. And she didn’t come back.” P14</p>	<p>It is possible to just talk to a person and tell whether or not they are a survivor.</p>
	<p>“And then some people feel like, you know, some others come in here for the wrong reason, that we don’t come in here for domestic violence.” P7</p>	<p>Other people at the shelter are not at shelter for domestic violence.</p>

Table 8 (cont'd)

	<p>“You know, somebody’s like, “Girl, what you in here for?” You know, and...And then and you tell ‘em like, “No, you ain’t. You ain’t in here for that. You in here ‘cause you need...” housing or somethin’ like that.” P7</p>	<p>Others assume that Black women have come to shelter for homelessness reasons, not domestic violence.</p>
	<p>“Because a lotta women in the past done did that. Done um, came in here. Just for shelter. Because they like it better here. They treat you better here than they would at a, at a um, homeless shelter.” P7</p>	<p>Homeless Black women have come to shelter in the past because there is better treatment at dv shelters. Therefore, the assumption is that Black women are there for homelessness reasons.</p>
	<p>“Mm hmm. She [Shelter Director] came out and told me that I kinda contradicted myself because I said that day, when I came in, he choked me and he scratched me up here. I said about four days before that he stabbed me three places with a screwdriver. And um, she goes, “Yeah, because we have women that’s comin’ up here that’s not homeless.” And um, that, that, that... not dome--, with domestic violence but they just homeless. And I told her, I said, “Why would I wanna be here? I have a place...that I’m rentin’ with my name on it.”” P8</p>	<p>Black women are accused of being at shelter because she was homeless, instead of domestic violence because there was a contradiction in her story.</p>

## APPENDIX X: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 6

Table 9

Theme 6: Non-confrontational response to racism/racial microaggressions and other racially insensitive comments (n=9)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Brush off the incident/pity the perp	“Black!” But she’ll never make it in my shoes. Not one day bein’ a sister. Never. She wouldn’t... no. She couldn’t. She couldn’t. Truth be told, no. ( <i>laughs</i> )” P5	White women would not be able to go through the world being Black. Being black is difficult.
	“I laugh at her. I’m just like, “Ohh. Poor thing.” What... I mean, what do I say? Really?” P5	White people who say insensitive things are pitied. This connects to the idea that white women actually envy women of color.
	“‘Cause I’ve... after finally puttin’ it all together, I’m just like, “Wow! She wants to be like me!”” P5	White women envy Black women.
	“With the one I just told you about, that was, that’s more like... I just felt more like teaching her like, “Hey, this is...” you know, with, you know, that . But with her. Then with the other one, that... that little thing don’t bother me because there’s so many girls like that that wants to be like you and I.” P5	White women are envious of Black women and therefore, when they say racial slurs it is based on this envy.

Table 9 (cont'd)

	<p>“Is what I call it. Um, but I am the way I am. But I will always be blacker than you. Period. Okay? I don’t care how many babies you pop out that’s half black or whatever, okay? (<i>laughs</i>) So um (<i>laughs</i>), I mean, it is what it is. I don’t know” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>The black women reasons that the White woman might believe that is “Acts more Black” than the Black woman herself. But, she later states that no matter how this white woman acts, she will never be able to be Black. White women are envious of Black women.</p>
	<p>“My [roommate], yeah , she did. [I was the only person there] um... and she so didn’t... she was clueless. Cluuueless...about what that word and where it, it, it come from.” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>The Muslim woman did not understand the origin of the n-word even though she used it.</p>
	<p>“So (<i>laughs</i>), you know, I never can get an answer. It’s just like, “Oh, okay. So you playin’.” Right. Okay. You know, it is what it is. I mean, it doesn’t bother me, but at the same time it’s like I know she wants to be somethin’ that she’ll never be somethin’ she’s not, somethin’ she’ll never be regardless’a how many niggers you... never mind. I’m not gonna say that.” <b>P5</b></p>	<p>When people say something that is racially insensitive, they cannot offer a reason why they said it. The whites that were saying racially insensitive things are saying these things because they want to achieve the status as Black.</p>
	<p>“Or most of the time I just will sit there or I will come back inside or go elsewhere. I usually do that, regardless of the conversation if I don’t feel like talkin’ about it.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>The response to a racially insensitive remark is to be silent or leave the situation</p>
	<p>And I found out that she was makin’ a racial slur or somethin’ ...about me bein’ so white or whatever, but I just blew it off like she was bein’ funny, so.” <b>P12</b></p>	<p>The Black women laughed off the comment about her having White skin from the other Black woman.</p>

Table 9 (cont'd)

	<p>"It tells me that you don't have to... you, why did you identi--, why did you say they were black? If you got black friends. You got a lotta black friends um, then it makes me think that you really... no, you really don't have no lotta black friends." <b>P10</b></p>	<p>When a white woman tells the Black women that she has a lot of Black friends, it actually means that she doesn't. Because if she did, she would not have to say anything.</p>
	<p>"See, she didn't have to say that. Because that didn't sound right. But I didn't say any... it didn't anger me. I've heard it so much from different people when they talkin'. I just let 'em go ahead and talk." <b>P10</b></p>	<p>Telling a Black women that you have a lot of Black friends is unnecessary but is not bothersome or make the person angry. Black women just ignore it.</p>
	<p>"I: Do you ever talk to staff about that kinda stuff? R: No. Not really. (laughs. I mean, unless it's, like, affecting me directly.....then... I don't know. I just, "Whatever." P1</p>	<p>When small things happen that are race related, it does not have a direct impact and therefore does not require outside support.</p>
	<p>"I just, I really just walked away. I mean, because'a... I feel like, with staff, you're not gonna win." P6</p>	<p>Staff hold power and therefore fighting for your rights will not be helpful.</p>
	<p>"You know, like I said, other than just to walk away and let it just be up in the air. I mean, I could go and talk to my counselor about it who prob'ly would speak to the staff about it. But then where would that go?" P6</p>	<p>When responding to a racial incident women have to either walk away and/or having to just let things go. There is no consequence, either positive or negative, that will come of telling someone about a racial incident.</p>
	<p>"Nowhere. I don't think that it would go anywhere. Um, I don't think it would go anywhere. Like I said, I personally think that they, the staff breaks more rules than they enforce." P6</p>	<p>Staff are able to go against the rules of shelter. They would not care about the racial incidents that women experience.</p>
	<p>" So, you know, we talked about it. You know, you go inside or disperse from the area. And I'm like, "That was weird." (laughs) But it's not like a lingering thing where people just keep bringin' it up all the time, so. I mean, people... some people might get offended, some people might not." <b>P1</b></p>	<p>With some race-related incidents people get offended or not but either way there is not an extended discussion about people feelings about it. The response to someone that is offensive is to walk away.</p>



Table 9 (cont'd)

	But some--... I... it's, it's never really made me angry, but it's just like, you know, it sticks me wrong. Like, why was that a big issue. So." P1	If someone says something negative and race-related, it does not engender anger, but instead is uncomfortable and leads resident to question why the comment was made in the first place.
	"I: Mm hmm. And how do you decide? R: I just like, "Whatever." ( <i>laughs</i> ) And just go on about my business." P1	She chooses to respond to racial incidents passively and ignore what was said.
	"Clueless. And ( <i>laughs</i> ) this might sound crazy to you, but I was... I was happy that she said it in front of me... [Instead of] sayin' it in front of, you know, somebody else. She [woulda got that] ass whupped." P5	The Muslim woman was so clueless and the Black woman was happy that the woman used the n-word in front of her instead of other Black women because they might not have been as understanding. Black women might have responded more violently to the Muslim woman's mistake.
	" 'Cause it... you know, and I guess when you think about it, it's no big deal. And then Danielle, you know, she was like, "De, it's no big... you know what, don't even worry about it. I'll give you \$10. So now you don't even have to go to her. You know, so kinda made everything okay. ( <i>laughs</i> )" P14	The white women told the Black women that it was not that big a deal and then gave her resources to get it right. Actually getting the money that she needed made things fine again.
	"Um, but, yeah, I was happy she said it in front of me. You know, and I knew she didn't know." P5	The Black women was fine with the Muslim women's ignorance and excused the behavior.
Excuse the perp (not use to difference, items are donated)	Um, residents I have. Um, some residents here that are racist, that aren't used to bein' around black people." P3	White people are not use to being around Black people, the unfamiliarity makes White people racist.

Table 9 (cont'd)

	It mighta been just her mood last night. You know, maybe she was kinda upset about somethin'. <b>P12</b>	
	"I mean... I guess with it being a shelter there's always gonna be the problem with, you know, different people being around. And that's always... it's always gonna be that issue with... when there's people you don't know and you guys are all living together." <b>P1</b>	Differences among individuals means that there will be tension because people are exposed to people that they have never been exposed to before.
	"But they, everything is donated, so. You know, [you just..you] what's in there basically." <b>P7</b>	Since the products that are available are donated, then she is stuck with what is available.
	"So, you know, but the, the food is donated. So it's not like they have a choice on what they get." <b>P14</b>	There is no choice with what to get when the food is donated.
	"They're more... make... when you get stuff like that, when they have stuff like that, it's mostly, like, white people stuff really. Uh huh. But I don't know why is that, because that's what they get from whoever they get it from, but maybe they get more donations or somethin' from those people?" <b>P10</b>	The things that they have available for hair products are mainly for white women but this could be because the donations that they get are mainly products for white women.
	And so, you know, sometimes they... like, stuff that's donated, whatever's donated they [say like] you know [we] have these kinda people, too. And so usually whenever the next times something's donated, then there's something in there for everyone. <b>P1</b>	
	So I was like, "Forget that." And they didn't have a lot. But they, they had said tha they take donations...So, yeah. Some people are not, donate that kinda stuff. <b>P12</b>	
Other	"Because I, I'm lookin' at the area that this shelter is in which is like... to me this is considered the 'hood, so how could you be racist when they just look around where you're at" <b>P3</b>	People that work at a shelter location in the "hood" cannot be racist.

Table 9 (cont'd)

	<p>“So I, I’ve been through some racist stuff. Uh, I mean, even today, it’s just a thing, you know. I don’t let it get to me too much. I mean... no, it didn’t surprise me. <i>(laughs)</i>” P5</p>	<p>It is not out of the ordinary to experience racism, it is something that happens and is not a surprise when it does occur.</p>
	<p>“R: Hmm, I’m not really sure. Maybe if they had African-American meetings? I don’t know. <i>(laughs)</i> I: What do you mean by that? R: Um, like when a whole bunch of women sit in a group and talk...about things. I mean, we do have domestic violence uh, group meetings here. I’ve never been to one yet but, you know, I’m sure that’s really helpful.” P12</p>	<p>There would be groups targeted toward only Black women.</p>
	<p>“You know, and that, that’s how they, you know, took it. But I was mad as hell. <i>(laughs)</i>” P14</p>	<p>Despite the White women’s disregard of the situation, the Black woman still felt angry.</p>
	<p>“ ‘Cause I’m tryin’ to tell ‘em, like, “Y’all, this woman totally disrespected me.” I mean, she talked to me like this, she talked to me like that. And they just laughed it off.” P14</p>	<p>The Black women explained to the women that she felt disrespected during her experience, but the White women just laughed it off.</p>
	<p>“Strength would have to be one. Um, oh, my goodness. Willpower <i>(laughs)</i> to just do what you gotta do to just get outta here, you know?” P6</p>	<p>Women have to stick through the racist things that people say by being strong and exacting will power because you need to have the resources to leave.</p>

## APPENDIX Y: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 7

Table 10

Theme 7: Confrontational Responses to Actual or Potential Racism/Racial microaggressions (n=7)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Take to a higher authority	“I’ll go to the head person and talk to her. Even if she was white or black. I’ll still go to the head.....and let her know what her employees are doin’.” P8	It would be important to talk to the person in charge of programs and informing them of what they are experiencing.
	“Yeah, that would be the first thing that comes off my mind. I will tell her that... and then I would wanna know who did it. To see, like, well, have I ever encountered this person, you know. Mmm. But that would be the first thing that would come off my mind, you know, come outta my mouth. I would be like, “You know, you need to talk to [ <i>the director</i> ].””P13	Hearing about an experience of racism would cause internal assessment of about interactions with the alleged perpetrator. The external action would be to talk to a person in power.
	“You know, talk to your case manager. And if it’s the case manager who’s doin’ it, then you go over her head. You know, you have to go to the top dog...you know, to get to the bottom of it. That’s what I would do.” P14	To deal with racism, you have to have power. Those in power have power to deal with racism.
	“Yeah. So, and then if, then if that’s a problem then, you know, I, I don’t know. I guess I’d have to go to the head facilitator, you know, who’s over this whole place and file a complaint.” P14	Racism requires action and the buy-in of those in power. It is necessary to ensure that they are aware of racism.
Address the individual	“And basically that’s what we said. Just in our own way. But we all talked to her together. It wasn’t like we were gangin’ up on her or anything like that.” P3	Group response to racist behavior is helpful although it is not the same as ganging up on people.
	“And I wouldn’t re--, I mean, I would really address that issue to the person who is treatin’ me unfairly. Unfairly.” P3	Unfair treatment requires that a person address the perpetrator upfront.

Table 10 (cont'd)

	<p>“But I mean, still it bothered me. You know, I had to let her know, “Hey,” you know.....she’s not actin’ like a black bitch. Just say she’s actin’ like a bitch. Not a black bitch.” P5</p>	<p>Overt racial slurs like Black bitch were bothersome and require immediate attention and correction.</p>
	<p>“Okay, me. I’m black. <i>(laughs)</i> So, of course, I’m sittin’ there and, I mean, I’m not gon pretend like I didn’t hear it. I mean, this is somethin’ that needs to be addressed with or without staff here or not. We can talk about this.” P5</p>	<p>Some examples of overt racism have to be addressed immediately and it is unable to be left unattended.</p>
	<p>“ Okay? So... and me, I ask, “What do you mean ‘a black bitch’? Why don’t you... why cain’t you just say ‘bitch’? You know. ‘Cause when females are bitches, we just bitches. You don’t gotta be a white bitch or a black bitch, you just a bitch.” P5</p>	<p>The Black woman addressed the Muslim woman calling someone a Black bitch by explaining that all woman can be bitches. She is normalizing the behavior to all women and trying to not just focus on Black women as having the specific “bitch” trait.</p>
	<p>“Um, and I know she tried her best to... what did she say. It was somethin’ like um, “Well, she’s actin’ like a black bitch and I say that because black women do the...” you know, the head thing when they’re mad or, you know. I’m like, “No.” I’m like, “No.” ‘Cause not all of us do that. And it’s... what I had to really get her, say, to get, really get her to understand that” P5</p>	<p>The Black women focused on breaking down stereotypes about Black women and understand that not all Black women act in the way the muslim woman had originally perceived.</p>
	<p>“ I don’t know if it’s a bad thing that I used this as an example – was, you know, “Now, if I...” you know, and this is what I said to her, was um...If I called the police on you because I thought you had a bomb under your, your dress, now would that be wrong or would it be right?” She said, “That would, that would be wrong.” P5</p>	<p>She explained to the women they detriment of stereotypes by describing a stereotype about Muslim people.</p>

Table 10 (cont'd)

	I s--, I, I aks her all the time and she never... "What is actin' black?" She doesn't want to give an answer to that because she knows she'll slip and get caught up and say the wrong thing.	She immediately responses to a women asking her whether she is Black by asking her a challenging question.
Other	"And I'm like, wow. I said, "Well, why don't you go to Walmart and get some for me," you know?" <b>P6</b>	The Black women responded to the incident immediately by asking the women to go to Walmart and get her medicine.
	"So I don't even know what that would...you know, what that would feel like or ( <i>clears throat</i> ) how that would make me feel or how that would make me react. I don't know, I think I prob'ly would end up in jail or somethin'. Because I would be ( <i>laughs</i> ), I would be really upset. But that's sad if, you know, if they went and do that." <b>P13</b>	A racist experience would be unsettling and cause aversive, unexpected rage in women.
	"Nothin' really. I, I don't even remember what I said. I said, I think I said somethin' about her color, too, but You know, it was like... I think we were just kinda playin' around, but I'm, I'm not really sure." <b>P12</b>	Resident responds to a racial incident with humor, yet apprehension.
	"Yeah, it was um, let me see. K- was out there. D-- was out there, my roommate. Um, L-- was out there. As soon as the incident happened, as soon as I hung up the phone, I went out there and I was hot. And that's the first time they seen me go off." <b>P14</b>	The phone call made the black woman so upset that she immediately had to talk to someone after she got off of the phone with the prejudiced women, so she went to process with two women, one was her roommate. She got so mad that she "went off" for the first time with these women.

## APPENDIX Z: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme 8

Table 11

Theme 8: Denial of the existence of negative differential treatment according to race (n=13)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Have not personally witnessed microaggressions (this includes staff giving equal resources)	“You know, and it’s like I haven’t seen no one get treat--... I haven’t seen no one get treated differently up in here. Not to me, you know. And they, you know, the staff, they pretty good of givin’, tryin’ to help you get what you need. They even got, like, a little clothin’ closet next door if you don’t have nothin’.” P7	She physically witness people getting similar treatment. An example of this is having access to personal clothes when a shelter resident is in need.
	“Uh, I’d, I’d just tell her I don’t see no light in it. At all. Because it’s beautiful staff here and I don’t see no staff takin’ no sides.” P2	Resident does not see staff taking sides and treat everyone appropriately and therefore could not exhibit racist behavior.
	“I: So if a black woman told you, “I feel uncomfortable here because I’m black. I don’t think they’re treatin’ me fairly,” what would you say to her? R: That’s not true. I: Yeah? R: They’re not racist in here. I haven’t seen it.” P9	It someone has not designated or seen racism, then claims of racism have no merit. You have witnessed or seen racism themselves in order to validate someone else’s experience.
	“Because the people I talk to, they’re like white, black, people from Afghanistan. ( <i>laughs</i> ) But it’s like all different types of people. So I never felt like I was treated [different] because of my race. ‘Cause the staff there, like... I said they’re [I think]like cool people.” P1	There are people from different races visible around the shelter which shows that the shelter is diverse.
	“I haven’t seen one staff do more than white person than a black person.” P2	Residents have not visually witnessed preferential treatment of whites over Blacks.

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“Like, we all get the same treatment, that I’ve seen with my eyes. That we all have to do the same things. Like, we all have to do chore. We all, you know, have to be in at a certain time. There’s no, like... we’re all treated the same basically. There’s no favoritism” P3</p>	<p>The division of chores among all shelter residents is an example of equal treatment among members.</p>
	<p>“Regardless white or black. Like, my counselor, she’s white. And I needed to go to [city] to pick up some mail. They didn’t have any transfers. She gave me bus tickets plus she gave me \$6 for the transfers. Just so, you know, I can go and get my stuff ‘cause I had to take all the kids with me....And so, no, they... it doesn’t matter. I don’t think no one here really cares about color.” P13</p>	<p>Staff that provide physical resources and do not care about color.</p>
	<p>“You don’t, you don’t see any funniness in ‘em when they’re here, when they’re helpin’ you.” P14</p>	<p>When the resident watches the staff, they do not see them treating anyone differently.</p>
	<p>“ And she can’t eat that. So they... and they, they were, like, really helpful. They.. I mean, like like... if you have, like, religious views or, like because of your, I guess, religion..you can’t do certain things so you try to, like, help compensate.” P1</p>	<p>The shelter is very helpful in accommodating a woman with her religious and dietary needs and therefore, it is reflective of how they would treat anyone with different beliefs.</p>
Everyone is treated the same	<p>“Because I think that it’s a comfortable environment. I don’t think that she... she won’t have any issues here as far as racism or what color you are. I believe that they will take you in and they will help you get on your feet regardless of what color you are.” P1</p>	<p>Shelter staff will support women to get back on their feet regardless of race.</p>



Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“They just don’t stand you. Like, the FIA org... they don’t want to give you nothin’. Like it’s comin’ outta their pocket. I’m like, “Okay.” So that’s how I feel ‘em are. And I just think, like, if you move out here they’ll be more than willing to help you because they look at it as themselves. Like, they don’t look at it like, “Oh, you this color” and “You” this, this, and that. No.” <b>P11</b></p>	<p>Staff are willing to offer up personal resources to help women, unlike other social service agencies. This offer this support regardless of race.</p>
	<p>“So that’s why I would just think that everyone’s treated the same. Like, if you’re working to establish your own and get on your own and start over, the new life, then they’ll help you.” P1</p>	<p>They will support anyone that wants help starting their own life over.</p>
	<p>“So I don’t think they need to change nothin’. I really don’t. Like, for black women. Because it’s like we would get treated by our own kind. That’s how it is. Like our own kind would treat us like that, so.” <b>P11</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff treat women equally.</p>
	<p>“Yeah. I can’t say that they do, they treat everybody the same. If you wrong, you’re wrong. But if you right, if you right, if you need help, what we can do we gon do it.” P13</p>	<p>Staff treat and support women the same and punish women the same way.</p>
	<p>“Um, because um, again, they, they treat me with caring, concern. So I figured if they do me like that, they’ll do someone else like that.”<b>P4</b></p>	<p>If staff treat residents well and show concern, then it is likely they will treat other people well.</p>

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“and the staff here, they... they’re not gonna go out their way to help someone that doesn’t wanna be helped and doesn’t want to help themselves. So that’s why I would just think that everyone’s treated the same. Like, if you’re working to establish your own and get on your own and start over, the new life, then they’ll help you. But if you’re not, then they’re not gonna keep offering, offering, offering, and you’re not doing anything.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Everyone is given equal opportunity at shelter. Staff will support deserving women who want to start a new life, but those who do not actively engaging in bettering themselves do not deserve the same treatment.</p>
	<p>“I mean, I... I don’t know. I just, I feel like everybody treated the same. I, that’s how I see it. You know, if, if you break a rule, you break a rule.” <b>P7</b></p>	<p>Everyone is disciplined the same.</p>
	<p>“R: [<i>Shelter director</i>] is really (<i>laughs</i>) hard, so she don’t care. Everything is equal with her, so. I think, you know. I: What do you mean “she’s hard”? R: She don’t let nothin’, if you do somethin’ wrong, you gonna um, you know, it’s points that you have to go through.” <b>P8</b></p>	<p>Everyone receives the same punishment when they do something wrong.</p>
	<p>“I never felt, I never felt like I was treated differently than others, no” <b>P7</b></p>	<p>Women do not feel like they are treated differently.</p>
	<p>“I felt like... no. No, no, no, not because’a my race. I do feel like I was treated differently, but not in a negative way.” <b>P9</b></p>	<p>Women experience differential treatment that is positive.</p>
	<p>“You know, so I don’t care what you went through yesterday, you are here today ‘cause we are all still in the same boat and we’ll all help each other.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>Staff are non judgmental about women’s past and understand that women coming into the shelter are in the same boat.</p>

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“And that’s what gave me the idea she was thinkin’ like that, ‘cause the way she said it was like, “Oh, they’ll help you, but they won’t help me.” <i>(laughs)</i> I’m like, wow. But, yeah. They all treat us the same though. But if you don’t want to change and you don’t want nothin’, they not gonna give you nothin’.” <b>P11 (talking about White women)</b></p>	<p>Shelter staff treat everyone similarly and therefore unfair treatment is based on the individual behavior of the resident. Specifically, women that are not showing improvement do not deserve support.</p>
	<p>I never felt that way. Trust me, if I did I’d tell ya. <i>(laughs)</i> But I’ve never felt that way. <b>P8</b></p>	
	<p>“Nope. I haven’t, haven’t been treated bad because of my race or... I think I’m, been gettin’ um, treated pretty good[ according] my race because... I might be gettin’ treated better. I don’t know. <i>(laughs)</i>” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>Being Black is a benefit rather than a hindrance in getting support. Women get treated better because they are Black.</p>
	<p>I: O--, okay. Um, have you ever felt like you were treated differently because of your race here, at Eve? R: Not at all. <b>P5</b></p>	
<p>Individuals are to blame/Bad self presentation</p>	<p>“For things to be right and happen for you right. It’s not gonna just be handed out to you because you’re black.” <b>P10</b></p>	<p>Black people should not expect to be given things because they are Black.</p>

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“I just... I don’t know. Like, the peo--, the staff are more willing to help people that are willin’ to help themselves. So I just feel like if you... if you feel that way [<i>Like staff is racist</i>], now obviously you’re putting a burden on yourself. So... and that’ll make like... if you feel that way, then you... like, if you putting a burden on yourself and then you don’t want to do stuff because you feel like no one’s gonna help you...” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>Staff will help those who actively look as though they are support their own efforts. Women that describe experiencing racism are actually creating their own burdens and hurting their chances of getting support.</p>
	<p>“It’d be ‘cause that person did act out in a domestic violent way that they are not supposed to” [response why women would be treated differently] <b>P2</b></p>	<p>Women that respond in violent ways to other survivors receive differential treatment.</p>
	<p>“That it’s prob’ly not because you’re black. It’s probably because of the way that you’re going about things.....to try to get whatever you’re tryin’ to accomplish. It’s the way you goin’ about it probably. I would, I would say. And maybe you have to change the way you’re, you’re um, the way you’re talkin’. You know? (<i>laughs</i>) It’s the way you presentin’ yourself.”<b>P10</b></p>	<p>Attributions to perceived negative racial treatment does not occur because a person is Black but because of a dispositional trait such as self-presentation or the ways that you seek to obtain support.</p>

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“ I don’t know. Everybody’s situation is different. Um, I mean... I can’t even say that. I was gonna say maybe, you know, how they present theirself but I c-- ... I’ve never had that problem. And this is th--, I’ve been here before.” <b>P13</b></p>	<p>Women’s presentation of self influenced the behavior perceived a racist since it is not something that women have noticed before.</p>
	<p>“I would prob’ly tell her maybe she’s havin’ a bad day or it may be your attitude, you know.” P12</p>	<p>Residents who feel that they were discriminated against have a bad attitude. Staff members are not racist but probably just having a bad day.</p>
	<p>“So far as the staff, I think is um, I think they pretty much treatin’ ... treatin’ us all the same. Until one get outta hand. And whichever one that is that get outta hand, they deal with it. Immediately. “ P2</p>	<p>Differential treatment is only given if someone does something that is inappropriate within the shelter. It is usually deserved, immediate, and in response to an action that a resident instigated.</p>
Other	<p>“But I’ve never had that problem. I’ve been in the suburbs all my life so I never had that problem.” P13</p>	<p>Racism is not an issue that you need to encounter in the suburbs.</p>
	<p>“I don’t think anybody here is like that, is racist. At all.” <b>P13</b></p>	<p>Nobody at the shelter is racist.</p>
	<p>“...and I’m here with all y’all white people and I’m fittin’ in and you got a problem with that? You know, and we make it all fun and games and I just keep ‘em laughin’. (<i>laughs</i>) I just keep ‘em laughin’. And they don’t make me... you know, when I first got here, no, I did not feel like an outcast.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>Many people at the shelter are white, but they do not make women feel like an outcast. Instead, a resident feels comfortable enough to laugh and joke with people.</p>

Table 11 (cont'd)

	<p>“Hm mm. Absolutely not. Because, you know, I make sure that they know I’m black.” <b>P14</b></p>	<p>Racism does not happen at the shelter because the residents make it clear that she is Black.</p>
	<p>“You know, to me it ain’t about the race because if it was, it would be just that one particular race here.” P2</p>	<p>Race is not an issue because there are multiple races present at one shelter.</p>
	<p>“we all the same color, the same person. Nobody’s different because of they color. They just... we all here for the same reason and they all there to help us. So they don’t discriminate.” P11</p>	<p>Racial discrimination does not exist because everyone is at shelter for the same reasons.</p>

## APPENDIX AA: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme

9

Table 12

Theme 9: Negative Traits About women in General (p=4)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Women are devious/problem starters	I: How come you wouldn't want to get too comfortable? R: Well, for one, it's in a houseful of women. Okay? Um... (laughs) And you know how devious we can be..." P5	Women are devious.
	"Tryin' to regain my interest on what I need to do to better myself and to get relocated and things like that. I don't have time for no, no drama. Keep away from me. 'Cause I done been there and done that." P2	Having relationships with women brings drama and inhibits being about to reach personal goals.
	"But even then I try to stay out of everybody's way. Because there's so many problems around, you know, as far as cleaning and "Who did this?" and "Somebody took this..." you know. Just like I try to avoid all'a that by kinda just stayin' in my own area." P6	Avoiding women's drama inevitably means keeping to oneself.
	"You know, you just stay to yourself. I came in here knowin' that I wasn't gonna make no friends, I was gonna stay to myself. And that's kinda how I am. Even though I talk to people here, you know. And just try to have a good time. But, you know, people are funny. So once you get close to 'em, you know, they might stab ya in the back, so you just kinda keep your distance." P12	Women are sneaky and backstabbers. It is necessary to keep women as acquaintances and have casual conversations but do not keep them as close friends.

## APPENDIX BB: Subthemes, Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings for Theme

10

Table 13

Theme 10: Reasons to Come Back to Shelter (n=10)

Subtheme	Significant Statement	Formulated Meanings
Supportive, comfortable, and familiar environment	“Yeah. And I would definitely recommend that to any female, any woman. I really would. Um, I really would. It’s safe. I mean... I don’t know. I mean, you know, you have other women around you that, that uplift you and it’s a really – like here – it’s a really good support group.” P5	Shelter environment serve as a support system because it involves a place where women can be physically safe and emotional support.
	“cause I feel comfortable and loved there. And it was like home without drama. Like what it would feel like if I was in my own home, so. I would, I would go back there anytime if I needed it. I would.” P11	The shelter space offered a drama-free environment that was safe and comfortable.
	“Because I’m comfortable. I’ve got fa--, you know, kinda familiar with a couple’ a staff, you know what I’m sayin’. They know my situation, you know. So I wouldn’t mind comin’ back.” P9	She would return to shelter because she became comfortable with shelter staff.
	“Probably not. ( <i>laughs</i> ) Just because I’ve been here.....and know what to expect. I don’t want to go through the whole not knowin’ what to expect thing all over again. I’d rather just come back here if I really needed to.” P1	She would come back to shelter because it is familiar.
	“Because I know it would be a different there. I won’t feel like or be treated like I was at TP, so. No.” P11	She would not go to another shelter because she is not familiar with the staff.
	“We get comfortable. And once we’re comfortable with somethin’, you know, we tend to not want to change or, you know. So I would definitely come back here for support if I needed it.” P5	She would come back to the shelter because it is familiar and comfortable for her.



Table 13 (cont'd)

Shelter will provide needed resources	“Yes, and when they will help a person. Like if they comin’ outta domestic violence, you know, home, they’ll help them, place them into a, you know, their own home, you know? Somethin’ with that. Or if they can’t help with it, they’ll give ‘em to, you know, show you, give you a list of different agencies that will help you.” P8	When women are brought into the agency, it is like they are being taken into someone’s home and given support. Staff provide resources and access to things that are helpful to women’s situations.
	“Because’a safety and gettin’ able to be able to stand on your own two feet again.” P10	The shelter provides a safe opportunity for women to become stable.
	“I mean, if it’s help, it’s help.” P9	Wherever she can find help, she will utilize it.
	“Because they have a good support system. They have counselors here and they... and if not, they can refer you out to other counselors and uh, psychiatrists, psychologists and things like that. So I would use it” P2	The shelter offers a good support system by offering counseling that are useful.
	“ And then, then I have been to the support groups, the parenting groups here, and they have helped me raise my kids. They have helped me um, when past relationships [what..to..con] um, cont--, what I’m tryin’, the word I’m tryin’ to say. Detect if he’s... you know, what, how I can detect it before it happens, you know, the domestic violence.” P8	The groups shelter offered were good for supporting the resident and their children. The shelter staff help teach her the warning signs of domestic violence and now she is able to detect it better.
	“R: Yes. I: Okay. Why? R: Um, because with resources, they help us. Um, they show helpfulness when I’m there; I figure they would help me when I, when I do successfully, you know, find my own place. And um, they give input.” P4	Staff give input, provide resources, and help out when women need it. This is why women would come back to the shelter because they appreciate this work.
	“R: Yes. T: Yeah? Why do you say that? R:Because I’m gettin’ the help that I need. I’m getting what, you know, help... if it, if it’s not here, they’re givin’ me a different resource that I can go out to...” P7	She would return because the shelter is providing resources.

Table 13 (cont'd)

	<p>“Because I feel like peo--, some people could be in, in a domestic violence relationship and it'd be so hard for that person to leave that relationship alone. They [be] needing somewhere to go that they can get theirselves back together.” <b>P7</b></p>	<p>When you are a survivor, you need someplace to get support and rebuild a life. The shelter supports this mission.</p>
Other	<p>“Yeah, I would have to. Because, like I said, some things you have to overlook, you know? And despite all that, it's like... you can deal with it, you know? If it's, if it's gonna help you just a tad bit, you can deal with that. You know?” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>There are small things at shelter that can be difficult to handle, but if the help they provide support is minimally helpful, then it is ok being at shelter is worthwhile.</p>
	<p>“As far as the little comments or what's gonna be said or done, you know? Just don't feed off into it. But if you can't handle it, then I wouldn't recommend it.” <b>P6</b></p>	<p>As a part of being at shelter, women will experience small hurtful comments. If these are bothersome in everyday life, then women should not come to shelter.</p>
	<p>“I mean, I still... like, when I leave, I still plan on comin' back to, like... like I said with the non-residential advocate. You know, just like to get help with, like, being on my own and just counseling.....and like group meetings and stuff. But I would come back for that. I just hope I don't have to ever come back for another domestic situation.” <b>P1</b></p>	<p>She plans to come back for counseling to continue to get support for this past relationship, but she does not want to come back because she was in another abusive relationship.</p>

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