Empowering Women Through the Design of Domestic Violence Shelters

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EMPOWERING WOMEN

Through the design of domestic violence shelters

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ABSTRACT

According to a report published by The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey in 2015, one in four women are sexually assaulted, physically assaulted and/or stalked by an intimate partner. As context to these findings, women feel fearful, unsafe and at risk of being attacked by their intimate partner. In the face of sexual violence, provide women with a physical environment to combat their isolation and to promote their future independence (Palais, 2016). A research survey was conducted to understand the design strategies for designing for a sense of security (Valentine, 1990; Rutledge, n.d.; ArchDaily, 2018), but there is little literature that examines what is meant by an environment that allows women to have a sense of community or separation from public life and their ability to have a sense of community (Hoffman, 2001; Nemiroff, Aubrey, & Klodawsky, 2011, p. 1004).

The environment also plays a role in the perception of connection or separation from public life and their ability to have a sense of community (Hoffman, 2001; Nemiroff, Aubrey, & Klodawsky, 2011, p. 1004). There are noted strategies for designing for a sense of security (Valentine, 1990; Rutledge, n.d.; ArchDaily, 2018, p. 9), but there is limited documented evidence how these strategies improve their effectiveness. This paper is articulated through a current research project that includes an in-depth literature review and focused interviews with staff members associated with these centers as well as professionals in related fields to determine environmental factors and their effectiveness. The intention of this literature review and the qualitative method of research is to better inform designers of issues associated with intimate partner violence (IPV).

The proposed design integrates spaces for visiting professionals. One advocate mentioned that counselors do not come onto their site due to the overwhelming nature of their work and their personal boundaries. This advocate also suggested that limited group financial learning sessions take place, but support groups are common for women and their children. While the multi-purpose was originally designed for the intent of group learning, it should be reconsidered to be better accommodate the needs of residents and/or provide opportunities for group financial learning.

The women also feel best in a corner where they can be in privacy, a safe place, and feel less stress. This can also be achieved in the design. The proposed design integrates spaces for visiting professionals to accommodate women of all financial and social circumstances.

The primary findings of this project included a literature review and structured interviews with experts who serve or are familiar with services for victims of intimate partner violence. Literature review revealed that services provided a conceptual framework for understanding issues related to IPV and the effects of the environment. Based on the findings of these sources, a proposed project design was developed that achieved desired factors through design features of the built environment. These sources provide a framework for the environments proposed. The proposed project design was developed with input from both staff and residents (Valentine, 1990).

The proposed design integrates spaces for visiting professionals. This design will provide a space for residents to meet with advocates, lawyers, and other professionals.

The courtyard presents opportunities for both community and privacy. An interior courtyard only accessible from the shelter as precedented by Amos Goldreich (ArchDaily, 2018). This space will have access to natural light and views which are suggested to improve the learning process.

The women should be able to feel proud of their ‘home’ (Nemiroff, Aubrey & Klodawsky, 2011). It is essential to the residential wellness and empowerment of women in crisis (Valentine, 1990; Rutledge, n.d.). The proposed design integrates spaces for visiting professionals.

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