

**MORE THAN A HOUSE:
A GENDER ANALYSIS OF LAHSA'S *THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)*
HOUSING POLICY**

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ABSTRACT

Homelessness is a chronic problem worldwide, including in the United States. The country's biggest homeless population occupies major cities like New York and Los Angeles. The fight against homelessness in L.A. has been going on for years, with the homeless population flooding places like Venice Beach, Echo Park, Hollywood, and its most famous homeless encampment, Skid Row. One of the groups constantly vulnerable to the threat of homelessness are women, and the intersection between women's homelessness and domestic violence remains to be a challenging subject. Enriching previous scholarship, this paper critically analyzes housing programs targeting female domestic violence survivors in Los Angeles. In order to get an in-depth examination, the focus is directed to the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Housing Policy* managed by the *Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)*. The paper employs gender theory to examine the program's shortcomings. Using Jeff Hearn's conception of the 'public men,' this paper proposes that the program's limitations stem from the prevailing patriarchy, which cultivates from home and extends to public policy through the domination of men. Furthermore, the policy is insufficient in combatting women's homelessness due to the absence of programs such as trauma centers, financial security & education program, and childcare unit that are vital to address the unique experience of domestic violence survivors. Thus, evaluation of the housing policy is immediately needed to overcome the problem of homelessness due to domestic violence.

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INTRODUCTION

A housing facility is one of the basic needs of every human. Homelessness, however, remains a chronic problem globally, including in the United States. *The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development* detailed in a 2021 report that, at the beginning of 2020, more than 580,000 people were homeless nationally, increasing by 2.2% from 2019 (Thrush, para. 1-3). The problem is also even more prevalent in states with major populations. For example, approximately 28% of the homeless cases—a staggering number of 161,548 people—were reported from California. Additionally, the number represented more than half of all unsheltered homeless people in the country at 51% or 113,660 (McCarthy, 2021, para. 2)—increasing by around 17% from 2018 (Levin and Botts, 2019, para. 5). Meanwhile, one in every four homeless populations recorded resides in either New York City or Los Angeles (McCarthy, 2021, para. 2). In Los Angeles alone, there are 66,436 homeless people in the city, creating huge slum areas (LAHSA, 2020). Homeless encampments are concentrated in several places such as Skid Row, Venice Beach, Echo Park, and Hollywood.

Homelessness is also a multi-faceted issue. It involves underlying economic and social factors, such as poverty, unaffordable housing, undetermined mental and physical health, substance addiction, and the breakdown of community and family (Mago, Morden, et al., 2013, p. 2). In addition, homelessness creates numerous social problems such as shantytowns, the destruction of public facilities, and high crime rates within a community. On a personal level, it deprives individuals of safety, health, hygiene, and

dignity. Meanwhile, efforts to house the population are constantly met with challenges, ranging from ineffective policies, lack of funding and space, even the sheer number of unsheltered individuals. Therefore, homeless prevention and re-housing programs remain to be a tough challenge.

One of the groups constantly vulnerable to the threat of homelessness is females. Despite the reported lower number of female homelessness compared to males—30% to 70% (*State of Homelessness: 2020 Edition*, 2020), women's homelessness remains a critical issue due to its inherently distinctive nature. For example, women frequently face issues such as childcare, feminine hygiene, and physical as well as sexual abuse. In addition, the presumption that women have equal pathways through homelessness as men is indefensible as women experience homelessness because of domestic or gender-based violence at a far higher incidence than males (Bretherton, 2017, p.6). Looking at these realities, research on homelessness continues to be an interesting facet of American Studies. Research covering current issues of homelessness, focusing particularly on women's homelessness, therefore, would add new insights into the conversation.

Another noteworthy aspect of women's homelessness is its intersection with domestic violence. *Neighborhood Data for Social Change* reported in 2019 that more than half (56%) of homeless women in Los Angeles were survivors of domestic violence. Social circumstances, such as the breakdown of a relationship or domestic abuse, are primary push factors for around 44% of unsheltered homeless women (2020, para. 10-12). Similarly, *LAist* reported that about 40% of homeless women in Los Angeles claim they

had been abused in the recent year (2021, para. 2). In 2017, 8,350 homeless women in Los Angeles were reported to be survivors of domestic violence, and only 2,295 of them were sheltered. In October 2018, a report disclosed that 1,788 women specifically became homeless for fleeing abuse, while 6,213 homeless women experienced domestic violence in the past but did not necessarily become homeless due to it—most also remain unhoused. In 2019, while the number of homeless from fleeing domestic violence decreased to 1,480, the number of women who experienced domestic violence rose to 7,865 people, and most are still unsheltered in both categories—1,330 and 6,436, respectively (LAHSA, 2020).

Many scholars have conducted research to find out the connection between women's homelessness and domestic violence. Joan Zorza (1991) wrote that 42% of families became homeless in Philadelphia because of domestic violence. Meanwhile, a report for Ford Foundation claimed that domestic violence had forced 50% of homeless women and children to flee from their houses (Schneider in Zorza, 1991, p. 421). Many studies are also concerned with homeless policies and programs. Although it seems to help the survivors, many still require more reviews, observations, and even renewal (Baker, 2010; Mullins, 1994; Thomas et al., 2020). Baker et al. (2010), for example, concluded that there is a lack of coordination between the systems of homeless housing programs and domestic violence programs. While housing programs focused on sheltering, domestic violence programs focused on advocacy and emotional support. Likewise, Botein and Hetling (2010) argued that the vital point of housing programs for domestic violence survivors is not only about

providing a shelter or a house but also making sure the survivors gain an independent life.

Enriching previous scholarship, this paper will critically analyze housing programs targeted for domestic violence survivors in Los Angeles, which is chosen for its huge homeless population. In order to get an in-depth examination, the focus will mainly be directed to the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Housing Policy* managed by the *Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)*, one of the key players in the city's fight against homelessness. Established in 1993, it is the primary agency of the *Los Angeles Continuum of Care*, which is responsible for managing \$243 million funding for different homeless-focused organizations around the county. In addition, LAHSA organizes homeless count, outreach programs, and others aimed at providing homeless people with housing stability and self-sufficiency. Due to the organization's vital role in homeless prevention efforts in Los Angeles, LAHSA's policy can best illustrate the encompassing approach to the housing crisis in the city. A critical analysis of LAHSA's approach to homelessness, therefore, becomes essential. This article argues that despite its aims to ensure the non-discriminatory treatment of survivors across the board—including those of domestic violence—the housing program remains unsatisfactory in several ways.

Taking a step further, the paper will also employ gender theory to examine the root of the program's shortcomings, more specifically focusing on the unequal power relations between males and females in society. Using Jeff Hearn's conception of the 'public men,'—*Men in The Public Eye*, 1992—this paper proposes that the program's

inadequacies and setbacks stem from the prevailing patriarchy, which cultivates from home and extends to public policy through the historical domination of men. His theory of hegemony of men also helps make sense of the persisting problems by looking at how patriarchy operates both at the personal and public levels.

The primary data are taken from LAHSA Female Persons Data Summary from 2017-2019, which details the Housing Protections Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) policy. The research begins by listing regulations addressing issues related to domestic violence, both in the past and present moments, within the policy’s scope. From there, the program’s shortcomings are closely identified. Lastly, these shortcomings are critically examined using gender theory, more specifically Jeff Hearn’s conception of public men and hegemony of men in public.

DISCUSSION

As a response to the growing problem of women’s homelessness, LAHSA initiated a housing program under the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)* authorization in 2018. The program is aimed to establish safe housing, both permanent and transitional, based on the procedure and protections of VAWA. LAHSA also collaborated with National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH) and National Housing Law Project (NHLP) to implement an emergency transfer policy for participants when necessary (LAHSA, 2018, para. 4). While this housing program comprehensively deals with those who experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and human trafficking, this research primarily centers around how the program manages survivors of domestic violence.

There are several policy items included in the Housing Protections Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which specifically address possible cases related to domestic violence survivors:

No.	Policy Item	Notes
1	The housing providers are not allowed to deny admission or assistance if the applicant is qualified for the program (LAHSA, 2018, p. 4).	
2	The housing providers may not threaten, deny assistance, terminate, or evict the participant of this program for being a domestic violence survivor (LAHSA, 2018, p. 4).	
3	The housing providers are not allowed to make direct interpretations of any criminal action as the cause of denying housing assistance for the participants who had experienced domestic violence (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	
4	The housing providers shall conduct a bifurcation or an eviction for abusers or perpetrators who participate in this program without taking the benefit of the other participants. However, the housing providers should assist those who are not eligible for the program to enroll for the other program under VAWA. The participant has to establish eligibility in 12 months. (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	If participants are unable to do so, providers must provide assistance or direct participants to appropriate programs.

5	The housing providers may not subject survivors currently affiliated with or victims of domestic violence to a higher standard in determining assistance eligibility, termination, or eviction during the program (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	
6	The housing providers are not allowed to terminate the program for the participant/s who leave or move to another housing unit with or without prior notice if the participant/s is endangered, threatened, or traumatized by residing at the provided housing unit (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	
7	The housing providers must not terminate the participant from the program whenever there is any property damage or destruction caused by the abuser or perpetrator in the dwelling unit (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	
8	The housing providers shall not terminate their housing program assistance whenever the participant does not meet the lease obligations due to the direct effect of coercive control by the abuser or the perpetrator, such as unauthorized occupancy or unreported income (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5).	
9	The housing providers shall take any economic claim to recover the cost regarding the property damage caused by any domestic violence action. The claim will be against the abuser or the perpetrator (LAHSA, 2018, p. 6)	

Table 1. Housing Protections Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Policy Items

The policy necessitates housing providers involved in this program to ensure that the housing environment is safe for those who experienced domestic violence (LAHSA, 2018, p. 1). The housing provider is defined as an entity or an individual which has the responsibility to establish a housing program under the administration of VAWA, including sponsors, Public Housing Agencies (PHA), mortgagors, owners, local and state governments, both profit and non-profit organizations (LAHSA, 2018, p. 2). On the other hand, under the VAWA policy, survivors of domestic violence are required to prove that they are eligible to receive housing assistance. There are two options offered, first, by submitting self-certification provided by the housing providers—if participants had communicated to the housing providers directly. Secondly, by enclosing notes or records from the officials or professionals such as medical record, police report, court

records, counselor statements, lists of documentation of the violation by a mental health professional, and other trusted document which is substantially credible to validate the domestic abuse (LAHSA, 2018, pp. 6-7). In addition, whenever there is conflicting documentation between two participants claiming as the victims of domestic violence, the housing providers shall require the third-party documents within 30 calendar days (LAHSA, 2018, p. 8).

Under this policy, it is also possible for LAHSA to conduct an emergency transfer plan as needed by participants depending on their safety in the housing unit. To request a transfer, participants must write to the housing providers and affirm the existence of threat or further abuse if the participant stays. The housing providers may not ask for another requirement to fulfill if a participant is eligible through the evidence from the third party.

However, the housing providers cannot guarantee the approval of the transfer request as well as the duration of the transfer process (LAHSA, 2018, pp. 8-9).

The bifurcation of a lease is also maintained in this housing policy. The housing providers were allowed to separate the lease by evicting or terminating the assistance and housing rights whenever a participant engages in domestic violence crimes. Other household members may inherit the housing lease as long as they are eligible; otherwise, housing providers should help them fulfill the housing eligibility or assist them in finding a suitable housing program (LAHSA, 2018, p. 11).

Furthermore, the 2018 LAHSA housing policy under VAWA helps arrange needed assistance for domestic violence survivors. For example, the housing providers shall change the lock upon a written request by the participants as a matter of protection. It is provided after a copy of the court order, or police report is given to the housing providers by the protected participants. In addition, the housing providers shall also help the eligible participant to look for another secure housing unit if there were no available units under their ownership or to assist the participant in contacting any organization which focuses on domestic violence cases to make sure that the participants would get supportive services (LAHSA, 2018, p. 11).

LAHSA's housing policy under VAWA principally ensures that housing providers create a safe environment for participants who survived domestic violence by providing preventive precautions from abusers or perpetrators (LAHSA, 2018, p. 12). Ultimately, this policy is non-discriminatory:

everyone eligible should not be differentiated, denied, subjected, or discriminated against in accessing or receiving this program (LAHSA, 2018, p. 12).

Lack of Focus on Women in LAHSA's VAWA Program

One of the main reasons for establishing a housing policy is to reduce homelessness by providing domestic violence survivors with housing protection. However, as previous research discussed, secure housing alone is not sufficient. Another critical aspect of housing programs is helping survivors gain independence to reduce the risk of falling back into the cycle of violence. Moreover, the complex nature of domestic violence also complicates the process. Generally, abuse within the home can be categorized into physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and economic abuse (Slabbert & Green, 2013, p. 236). Each of them generates different complications, and very rarely does a survivor only experiences one aspect of abuse. For example, many survivors were reported to suffer from mental health issues, such as PTSD and depression, as consequences of domestic violence (Baker, 2010, p. 162). Overcoming homelessness caused by domestic violence, therefore, requires more thorough treatment.

Although Housing Protection under VAWA sufficiently aids in secure housing, it still lacks a comprehensive program that can effectively target women homelessness, particularly domestic violence survivors. Bleiweis and Ahmed (2020) suggested that housing policy under VAWA should build support infrastructure to heal the survivors. The support infrastructures ought to stop at its earliest sign of violence, such as: minimizing

the economic barriers and all economic costs of the survivors; create a solid support system on health and safety; block the root causes of violence; and strengthen the network of trained professionals to handle the survivors (Bleiweis and Ahmed, 2020, para. 6). Examined from this angle, there are several gender-specific problems overlooked by the housing policy established under VAWA by LAHSA, such as:

a. Trauma Center or Site-Based Trauma Healing

Trauma is a significant part of domestic violence survivors' experience, and its debilitating effects often hinder their progress. For women who survived domestic violence, becoming homeless is overwhelmingly traumatic (Hopper, Bassuk, Olivet, 2010, p. 80), and they are at a higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bassuk in DeCandia, et al., n.d, p. 3). The responses to trauma such as depression, PTSD, or immobility linger even after housing is secured. Sullivan and Olsen argued that without getting assistance to overcome their violence trauma, the effort to secure housing could be meaningless (2017, p. 188). In addition, in their 2019-released survey to L.A.'s homeless women population, Downtown Women's Center reported that around 20% of respondents cited lack of mental health services as an obstacle to being permanently housed (p. 16). DWC further emphasized the urgent need to have trauma-informed services that help women battle the mental health issues stemming from violence—including of domestic nature, as experienced by 50.7% of women surveyed (p. 30). Regrettably, in LAHSA's housing program, there is no specific trauma-healing

program for the survivors of domestic violence, either integrated or site-based.

In assisting homeless women survivors of domestic violence, the policymakers should also consider the long-term trauma recovery, which is often overlooked (Hopper, Bassuk, Olivet, 2010, p. 81). For instance, in the DWC report, 40% of respondents felt that housing resources often misunderstood their history of trauma (p. 40). Another recent research on domestic violence and homelessness in L.A.—whose 74% of research subjects are women survivors—also reported that trauma both from domestic violence and housing instability are deeply felt by survivors (People's Health Solution, 2020, p. 3). When homeless service providers do not integrate trauma-healing programs, survivors can find it difficult to seek help outside, as many might still be shadowed by fear or are on the run from their abusers. Logan, for example, noted that between 50% and 60% of partner violence victims reported stalking by their abusers (2010, p. 8) Milaney et al. also noted in their research that despite already leaving their partners, fear for safety from abusers continues to linger in survivors (2017, p. 8). Many movements from different locations, for instance, can create additional risk of them being discovered. In addition, PTSD and depression can also result in the inability to move forward and actively seek help. When trauma-healing is integrated into the housing system and help is offered actively, survivors can receive the push to take the first step toward healing. Moreover, trauma centers can also be beneficial for staff. Without proper knowledge of trauma and its signs, housing participants can easily be misunderstood. Traces of PTSD, for example, can be misconstrued as violence or non-cooperative behaviors.

Thus, integrating site-based trauma healing is significant for any housing policy. In addition to helping survivors get appropriate treatment, it can ensure that the housing unit staff are adequately trained to handle cases of domestic violence-centered homelessness. It should be ensured that assistance is available to help women overcome their trauma and prepare them to rebuild their lives and escape homelessness.

b. Financial Security & Education Program

It is essential for housing unit providers to provide access to higher education and a financial security program through employment or entrepreneurship mentoring. It is reported that 78% to 99% of female domestic violence survivors become homeless due to financial dependency or financial abuse (Johnston and Subrahmanyam, 2018, p. 1). As a direct consequence, financial abuse disempowers the ability of domestic violence survivors to have a stable life after leaving the perpetrators (Johnston and Subrahmanyam, 2018, p. 1). For example, a study found that 29% out of 434 homeless women were trapped in survival sex—using sex as a trading commodity for food, a place to stay overnight, money, drugs, or alcohol, or other needs to survive (Young and Fredericksen, 2017, p. 15). Additionally, lack of access to high-wage jobs is the associated factor that puts women in housing insecurity, making them vulnerable to homelessness (Lakam, 2020, para. 6).

Women often went through financial abuse before escaping from domestic violence. *LAist*, for example, reported that domestic violence cases experienced by women are almost always accompanied by financial abuse (2021, para. 18). In addition,

National Network to End Domestic Violence noted that financial abuse occurs in 99% of domestic violence cases (para. 2). Around 83% of survivors also reported that their ability to work was interrupted by abusive partners (Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Fact Sheet, 2021, p. 2). Substantively, financial dependency is the top reason survivors choose to stay with abusers (Sanders and Schnabel, Strube; in Postmus et al., 2018, p. 2). Financial abuse can include but is not limited to controlling how money is spent, prohibiting women from opening or accessing a bank account, banning survivors from working and or attending job training, sabotaging employment opportunities, excluding victims in investments or banking decisions, and withholding money (National Network to End Domestic Violence, 2017, Forms of Financial Abuse, para. 2). Due to this abuse, many women escape while untrained and without job experience. Downtown Women's Center (2019) reported that 21% of homeless women in L.A. considered a lack of employment training as a hurdle in obtaining permanent housing (p. 16). Approximately 94% of survivors of domestic violence interviewed also experienced stress due to the inability to purchase basic necessities (p. 28). Providing working skills and job opportunities, therefore, are significant aspects of helping women be financially independent and be able to continue their life purposefully, so they can truly escape from homelessness physically and mentally. However, the housing policy under VAWA by LAHSA turned domestic violence survivors away by not accommodating this financial vulnerability.

Job training and employment programs aim to maintain good jobs so they can get paid a living wage and advance their career

(Correia, 2000, p. 10). The job training and employment program would help survivors who were financially abused and developed no other skill aside from being housewives during their abusive relationship. Through these programs, survivors are trained for the workplace and given a chance to pursue a career. Another option is providing entrepreneurship programs for survivors, so they are able to create their own income opportunities. *The Women Business Opportunity Program*, run by Elizabeth Stone House in Boston, for example, has a complete entrepreneurship program for women who want to be self-employed by starting a micro business. The program is designed for those who have completed the economic literacy course, which gives women the knowledge of economics and finances (Correia, 2000, p. 20). It also provides 24 training weeks, business consultation, and facilitating new business establishments. Later, the graduates would open businesses such as hair and nail salons, catering services, translation, and interpreting services (Correia, 2000, p. 16). By establishing job training and employment programs and or entrepreneurship programs, the women have the option to choose which one is more suitable for them—to be employed or self-employed. Most importantly, the program they pick can help them become financially independent so they will not be trapped in financial abuse in the future.

Another important program is providing access to higher education. From the same research conducted by DWC, 14% of homeless women interviewed stated that educational opportunities contributed to the difficulty of accessing permanent housing (2019). Additionally, women who can access a higher education level can potentially earn higher income (Correia, 2000, p. 22). *Parents*

as Scholars program, run by the Maine Department of Human Resources, is a good example. The state-funded program offered eligible parents who wanted to join a two- or four-year college a financial aid up to \$3500 for each academic year, with additional support services like childcare, dental care, books, supplies, clothing, and uniforms (Correia, 2000, p. 22). Thus, after finishing the program, participants, especially women, are expected to have a long-term and stable career path. A similar program can be a significant stepping stone for homeless women who need to independently secure their daily needs after leaving abusive partners.

c. **Child Care Support**

Another aspect often overlooked in homeless prevention programs is childcare. Many women escape domestic violence with children as dependents, which adds to their already vulnerable condition. To facilitate their needs, especially for women with small kids, childcare support must be integrated into the housing facility. In addition, women with children, especially small ones, often find it difficult to access other empowerment programs. Without friends or relatives to look after their small children, it is hard to attend classes and work full-time—or take care of their own mental health issues. For instance, Milaney et al. (2017, p. 8) identified in their research that women who were victims of domestic abuse often face anxiety on employment due to the need to care for their children, which has now become an aspect they are independently responsible for. Meanwhile, National Coalition for the Homeless noted the importance of affordable childcare to end homelessness in families, stating that “in order to work, families with

children need access to quality childcare that they can afford, and adequate transportation” (Homeless Families with Children, 2009, para. 17). National Alliance to End Homelessness expressed the same sentiment, believing that supports such as childcare and early childhood services are crucial in helping family units—including single mothers—end homelessness (2021, para. 6). Unfortunately, in LAHSA’s VAWA housing policy, childcare support is largely unregulated.

Childcare support can help homeless women in two different ways. First, it gives more room for mothers to join other empowerment programs. Taking care of children’s emotional and physical well-being requires dedication and time. It is almost impossible for women to concentrate on working full-time or studying while caring for their small children all day. With the childcare unit integrated into the housing facility, mothers are given the time to develop as trained professionals or volunteers to safely nurture their kids. In addition, childcare can be extremely costly. Most women escape from domestic violence with no financial resources, and without proper assistance, they are forced to neglect their children’s comfort and health. Even small support such as shared toys and a safe playing room can create a difference in their life.

It is also necessary for housing units to provide childcare support to help parents deal with their children’s trauma in order to end the vicious cycle of violence at home. Children are emotionally vulnerable due to the impact of domestic violence. For example, a national survey in 2001 indicated that in 50% out of 6000 American families, men who violated their wives were potentially abusive to their children (Edleson in Bragg, 2003, p. 7).

Moreover, even though the children indirectly experience the violence, the memories and exposure of the traumatic events would influence their social and emotional behavior (Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Their Children, 2010, para. 6).

According to National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2010), there are short-term and long-term responses from children who experienced domestic violence. Short-term responses include children withdrawing from other people, becoming easily nervous or startled, having nightmares or insomnia, and having sudden tantrums. Whereas the long-term effects are self-destructive behavior, substance abuse, impulsive acts through risky sex behavior, depression and anxiety, low self-esteem, chronic health abuse, and violent and criminal behavior (pp. 2-3). Childcare support, therefore, can help children get proper psychological assistance from professionals. It aids their recovery from trauma and helps them grow as emotionally healthy individuals. It will also give mothers more opportunity to deal with their own trauma, eventually cutting the cycle of violence.

Integrating childcare support in housing units helps ensure that survivors with children have the means to participate in empowerment programs, both by providing them with time to self-develop and professional help for their children.

All the points above illustrate the different points not explicitly regulated by LAHSA in its 2018 housing policy under VAWA. The Housing Protections Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is inadequate in that it only focuses on one component in addressing women’s

homelessness despite the inherent complexity of the issue. Women's homelessness is unique, even more so for survivors of domestic violence, as it involves a cycle of violence and abuse. If it fails to accommodate those gender-specific vulnerabilities, such as financial dependence and child-rearing, the policy will put women at risk of returning to homelessness and abuse.

The Hegemony of Men in Public

LAHSA's failure to see the loopholes in their VAWA housing program raises a bigger question in homeless prevention measures aimed specifically at women. Despite claiming to accommodate domestic violence survivors, the underlying problem with the program is that it seems to completely disregard their specific needs, such as help for financial independence and trauma healing. It also fails to meet women's particular essentials, specifically concerning children they brought with during escape. We believe that gender theory can provide a valuable lens for examining this gap in policymaking and how patriarchy operates both at the personal and public levels.

Jeff Hearn's notion of public patriarchy and public men are essential concepts to use in analyzing how patriarchy bleeds into governmental policies, in this case, in how women's homelessness is inadequately approached. Hearn's conception of 'public men' (1992) is instrumental. He argues that historically, men have extended their domination to the public sphere, and they "... have come to dominate women in 'modern,' 'patriarchal' ways, over and above, in part replacing the ways of familial, privately based patriarchy..." (Hearn, 2004, p. 6). While patriarchy often creates violence in private

relationships—such as between father and daughter, husband and wife, Hearn argues that those private ideas that are nurtured at home eventually extend to how males approach their relationship in public. A patriarchal male in a teaching position, for example, will show his gender bias in the classroom. Likewise, an employer with deep-seated patriarchal values will likely reflect those ideas in the workplace, resulting in possible discrimination against female employees. In addition, decision-making that involves multiple individuals with similar thought processes results in highly biased choices. Eventually, as the patriarchy is collectively brought from home by individuals in influential positions, it culminates into misogynistic policies.

Men's domination extends outside of the home and into society through control in vital sectors. Many aspects of the public domain, such as law, media, state, economy, and many other institutions, are mostly dominated by men as they occupy central and leading positions. This extension of patriarchy continuously shapes societal values around women, including in government policymaking—including that which aims to tackle domestic violence cases and homelessness. For decades, individual patriarchal values were internalized and culminated into 'public patriarchy,' affecting how government policies are made (Hearn, 2004, p. 51). As the legacy and discrimination continue, the patriarchal values, welfare operating system, and responses to domestic violence cases have resulted in the removal of the agency from homeless women survivors of domestic violence (Neale; Casey, et al.; McNaughton-Nicolls; in Bretherton, 2017, p. 6).

The concept of “hegemony of men” could also be used to approach the question of unequal power in policy making. Hegemony can be understood as “the pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just set role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). As Hearn (2004) argues:

Men’s power and dominance can be structural and interpersonal, public and/or private, accepted and taken-for-granted and/or recognized and resisted, obvious or subtle. It also includes violations and violences of all the various kinds (p. 51).

As the domination over women penetrates the public spheres, men have the power to collectively create policies that regulate women’s actions based exclusively on their lens. It leads to the ignorance of the complex and specific dimensions of women’s homelessness in homeless policies. Although women in recent years have been more welcomed in prominent positions, historically, the presence of women in policymaking is widely underrepresented, and it results in a deep-rooted, complex web of patriarchy in governmental policies. Women’s fights in changing this reality are far from done.

The housing policy under VAWA by LAHSA was created in collaboration with the National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH) and National Housing Law Project (NHLP). In LAHSA, the committee members are responsible for creating budgetary, funding, planning, and program policies, including housing under VAWA. It is important to note that between 2017 and 2018, three out of four of LAHSA’s Policy and Planning Committee members were male. It was also identical in the Programs and Evaluation committee. Male members also chaired both committees.

During the same period, on a higher organizational level, the executive director of LAHSA was also a male. In addition, six out of ten administration members were also men (Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority, 2017-2018). It shows that male dominance was still quite apparent in LAHSA’s organizational management at the time of the policy development. Therefore, the housing policy under VAWA by LAHSA’s dismissal of problems commonly experienced by women can be explained through the perspective of male hegemony.

Historically, the role of caregiver has been relegated exclusively to women. Patriarchy strictly divides gender roles, presuming women to take care of all domestic work, including managing children’s educational, health, and emotional needs. Males, therefore, are often absent in the process except for matters concerning money. It can be expected then that the policy, significantly controlled by the male perspective in its making, falls short of considering childcare as a vital aspect of one’s life. As males are seldom inhibited by child-caring in pursuing a professional career, they fail to see how it is increasingly difficult to pursue financial stability without proper help in looking after one’s kid, which is vital to escaping homelessness.

Lack of working skills and job experience is also an attribute greatly dismissed by the policy. While women today have great access to employment, there are still those who are—either forced through abuse or entirely by choice—never worked outside of the domestic sphere. On the contrary, again, due to the strict male vs. female gender roles, working skills and experiences are almost always expected of

men. Therefore, the concept of an individual walking through adulthood without proper skillset might be foreign from a male-dominated perspective. In policymaking, this is reflected in the expectation that female domestic violence survivors can directly jump into job-seeking without needing proper assistance. It exhibits insensitivity to problems experienced by most women in abusive relationships. Therefore, it can be argued that women's specific needs are not accommodated in this housing policy due to the internalization of patriarchy and male perspective in the public sphere, which results in government policymaking failing to use the proper approach to examine the underlying problem in women homelessness.

When women flee from domestic violence, many find it impossible to achieve immediate economic stability, which eventually traps them into homelessness. Due to the inherent violence in abusive relationships, the experience of these homeless women is vastly different in nature from men. Homeless women, for example, are at high risk of stigmatization, marginalization, and alienation by society (Barrow and Laborde; Connolly; Gustafson; in Savage, 2016, p. 45). Consequently, policymaking related to homeless women, specifically survivors of domestic violence, should also be approached from a gendered perspective sensitive to women's needs. It is possible that due to the ingrained public patriarchy, and the hegemony of men in public, a policy fails to adequately assess the target's needs and create regulations that are ineffective or even perpetuate further violence. Therefore, it is imperative that we actively map out areas where patriarchy lives on in homeless prevention and re-housing policies to create a

successful approach to eradicate women's homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Although providing shelter remains a priority for homeless prevention and rehabilitation programs, a safe house alone is insufficient to truly stop the cycle of homelessness, particularly in women homelessness cases from domestic abuse. While housing can offer cushions, without proper complementary measures, women are at risk of falling back into life on the street—and, in extension, abuse and violence. Housing policy for domestic violence survivors in the Housing Protections Under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) by LAHSA is inadequate due to its inability to meet the specific needs of women survivors. Furthermore, it is dismissive of essential necessities, such as childcare, trauma center, and employment training, inhibiting women from gaining financial independence. Therefore, many women who flee from domestic violence could not overcome their homelessness thoroughly, and the number of homeless women in Los Angeles remains high. A year after the policy was established, the number of women who lived unsheltered due to domestic violence reached a thousand people, precisely 1,480. Furthermore, the number of women who experienced domestic violence rose to 7,865 people, and most are still unsheltered, which indicates that the housing policy is ineffective in solving women's homelessness due to domestic violence in the county of Los Angeles.

The lack of prioritizing women's needs signifies persisting patriarchal values in Los Angeles policymaking. Examined from the perspective of gender theory, the program fails

to facilitate women survivors who need to heal from the trauma, access education and financial independence, and or require child care assistance due to policy making being influenced by a historically male-dominated perspective. Thus, the absence of a female perspective is deeply felt in the program. The housing policy needs to be evaluated thoroughly, both by the stakeholders or the women participants in the program, as it still fails to assist homeless women to empower themselves. Through various gender-conscious measures, it is hoped that upcoming housing policies for domestic violence survivors can accommodate the needs of women. Thus, not only simply providing housing for survivors of domestic violence, but the program can also systematically empower them to rebuild their life again without falling into the trap of domestic violence and homelessness.

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