

IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND PARTNER VIOLENCE

Societal Risk Factors in Canada

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Violence against women is a global problem, which can be recognized in every society and culture. Both in Canada and Finland the research about violence against immigrant women has begun quite recently and therefore, there is still a lot we do not know about this phenomenon and thus a demand for research. Immigrant women face unique circumstances and are in a vulnerable position of being abused. They are not a homogeneous group, on the contrary, they have individual life experiences but they all have been born outside the country of immigration and are so part of the minority. Family violence is a gendered issue even though many researchers tend to use neutral terms and so to let the readers understand that both men and women can be equally violent. The reality is, nonetheless, unbalanced and it has been suggested that "family violence" should be called "male violence" since males are largely responsible for most of the domestic violence. This is the reason why in this thesis I focus only in the abuse against women, and especially against immigrant women.

My main question for this thesis is: what are the societal risk factors which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence. I believe that knowing an answer to this question might make it possible to help abused immigrant women in better way and gives information about what kind of changes should be done in the society so that immigrant women could free themselves from violence. To get more information about the topic I interviewed abused immigrant women and the workers who meet these women every day. I have used four major themes: racism, immigration status, social welfare and legal systems and collision of the cultures and built a semi-structured interview around them. The interviews were done in Canada but I write from a Finnish perspective so that the gained information could be used in Finland.

The literature review and interview data describe quite similar risk factors and reasons for abuse. A big difference between Canada and Finland is that the education and knowledge of those workers who work with immigrant women: in Canada there is a lot more experience and training about immigration issues. Finland has less immigrants and the awareness of the special needs of immigrants is quite new. There is a lack of culturally sensitive services and in my opinion, to improve the situation culturally sensitive work should be taught already during the social work university studies.

KEYWORDS: partner abuse, immigrant women, Canada, society, risk factors

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Naisiin kohdistuva väkivalta on maailmanlaajuinen ongelma, jota esiintyy kaikissa yhteiskunnissa ja kulttuureissa. Sekä Kanadassa että Suomessa maahanmuuttajanaisiin kohdistuvan väkivallan tutkiminen on alkanut vasta hiljattain ja siksi onkin vielä paljon, mitä emme tiedä tästä ilmiöstä. Maahanmuuttajanaiset elävät ainutlaatuisissa olosuhteissa ja he ovat erityisen haavoittuvaisia väkivallalle. Maahanmuuttajanaiset eivät ole homogeeninen ryhmä, vaan heillä voi olla hyvinkin yksilöllisiä elämäkokemuksia, mutta yhdistävänä tekijänä he kaikki asuvat synnyinmaansa ulkopuolella ja kuuluvat siksi asuinmaansa vähemmistöön. Perheväkivalta on hyvin sukupuolittunut asia, vaikka monet tutkijat suosivatkin neutraalien termien käyttämistä, mikä voi aiheuttaa vääristyneen käsityksen siitä, että sekä naiset ja miehet olisivat yhtä väkivaltaisia. Todellisuus on kuitenkin hyvinkin painottunut ja siksi perheväkivaltaa pitäisikin kutsua “miesten tekemäksi väkivallaksi”, koska miehet ovat vastuussa suurimmasta osasta kotona tapahtuvasta väkivallasta. Tästä syystä keskityn pro gradussani vain naisten ja erityisesti vielä maahanmuuttajanaisten kokemaan väkivaltaan.

Tutkimukseni tärkein kysymys on: mitkä yhteiskunnalliset tekijät altistavat maahanmuuttajanaiset parisuhdeväkivallalle. Tietäessäni vastauksen tähän kysymykseen voin miettiä, miten väkivaltaa kokeneita maahanmuuttajanaisia voisi parhaiten auttaa ja mitä yhteiskunnallisia muutoksia olisi tehtävä, jotta maahanmuuttajanaiset voisivat elää vapaina väkivallasta. Saadakseni lisätietoa aiheesta haastattelin väkivaltaa kokeneita maahanmuuttajanaisilta ja heidän kanssaan päivittäin työtä tekeviä työntekijöiltä. Rasismi, maahanmuuttajastatus, sosiaaliturva- ja oikeusjärjestelmä ja kulttuurien yhteentörmäys ovat valitsemani neljä pääteemaa, joiden pohjalta tein teemahaastattelun. Toteutin haastattelut Kanadassa, mutta kirjoitan suomalaisesta näkökulmasta, jotta saamastani tiedosta voisi olla hyötyä Suomessa.

Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa ja haastatteluissa esiin nousevat väkivallan syyt ja riskitekijät ovat melko samankaltaisia. Kanadan ja Suomen välinen suuri ero on maahanmuuttajien kanssa työskentelevien työntekijöiden koulutuksessa ja kokemuksissa: kanadalaisilla työntekijöillä on paljon enemmän kokemusta ja koulutusta maahanmuuttoasioista. Suomessa on vähemmän maahanmuuttajia ja tietoisuus maahanmuuttajien erityistarpeista on melko uutta. Kulttuurisensitiivisiä palveluita ei juurikaan ole ja mielestäni tilanteen parantamiseksi kulttuurisensitiivisyyttä pitäisi opettaa jo sosiaalityön yliopisto-opinnoissa.

AVAINSANAT: parisuhdeväkivalta, maahanmuuttajanaiset, Kanada, yhteiskunta, riskitekijät

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1 Introduction

I became interested in immigration issues while I was doing an internship in Canada in the fall 2007. I worked there in two non-governmental organizations and part of my tasks was to help those immigrant women who were living in an abusive relationship or were fleeing an abusive partner. I found my internship really interesting, and I learned a lot during my time in Canada. During those four months I was also a foreigner in a new country what made me think of all those variable problems which immigrant women face when immigrating from a totally new perspective. Many times the partner is the only person an immigrant woman knows in whole country and when that only person is abusive it makes that woman's life extremely hard.

When I was writing my bachelor thesis in the spring 2008 I got the idea of going back to Canada to do the interviews for my master thesis there. For a long time it felt like an impossible mission until I met a Finnish-Canadian teacher Tuula Heinonen from the University of Manitoba when she was giving lectures in the University of Tampere in April 2008. She and my bachelor thesis supervisor Anna Metteri encouraged me to go to Canada and make my dream come true. I took the challenge in the fall 2008 and with the help of Heinonen I got in touch with two non-governmental agencies working with abused immigrant women in Canada. I requested to do qualitative interviews in the agency during my three-week trip there, and the agencies agreed to that. I applied and got funding from the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies and the University of Tampere to cover my flying and rent costs. On the request of the agencies I will not be telling the agencies' names or cities in this thesis in order to protect the anonymity of the immigrant women I interviewed.

International learning and exchange of ideas have been my motives to do international research: I believe Finland has a lot to learn from Canada and vice versa. While I was still writing my master thesis I got a job in a little city in Pirkanmaa as an immigration social worker. I was the only social worker in that city working directly with refugees and immigrants and that emphasized my feeling that my subject is really important in order to do better social work in Finland. It seemed to me that there are still only few people who are experts in immigration issues, and in the majority of the cities there are not enough workers who are aware of the special problems of the immigrants. Knowing more about the societal risk factors, which expose immigrant women to partner violence,

makes it possible to develop new working methods to integrate immigrants into the society so that their lives could be free from violence. This phenomenon is societally important since for example in Finland all the violence against women costs to state, municipality and employers ca. 50 million euros a year (see for ex. Kyllönen-Saarnio & Nurmi 2005, Piispa 2000). That number does not even include all the costs caused by the lost of health and welfare.

Going to another country and culture always brings unknown factors and demands even more reflective approach to the topic from the researcher. From my previous experiences abroad I have learned that when you go to other country you need to be able to adjust and not to expect that everything will go in the same way as in your home country. I have been born, raised and educated in Finland so I cannot say I would know that much about Canada than the Canadians. I do not even try to write my thesis like I was a Canadian, but since my aim is to do reliable research in Canada I have to have quite good basic understanding of Canadian policies and social system, and I think I gained that during my internship there at the fall 2007. All the data I collected, the analysis and the results are explained from a Finnish perspective. This thesis is written for a Finnish university and most of the readers will probably be Finns as well, therefore, I wanted to do my research so that the results could be useful in Finland. That is why I have added some basic information what is the situation of immigrant women in Finland and what kind of abuse they face in the Finnish context.

To understand the societal differences between Canada and Finland and the context in which immigrant women live in these countries I describe the some typical characters of these countries. I go through some facts about the social policies as well, in order to explain the different kinds of social welfare systems. According to Harvey (2005) the Canadian population is dominantly white and British and French by descent even though a small percentage are aboriginal Canadians. (Op.cit., 539-540) Canada is divided into ten provinces and three territories, which have their own government beneath the federal government. Therefore, many important laws are formulated in the provincial level, for example laws considering health care, education and marriage. Thus the laws may vary widely across the country. Canada is liberal welfare state by its nature, similar to Australia and New Zealand. Families are supported only when they have proved not to be able to survive on their own and have depleted all their own resources. (Baker 2001; ref. Harvey 2005, 540.) In general, Canada relies on both means-tested forms of welfare and private market-based insurances. Thus the national share of the social welfare is smaller. The most important means-tested assistance is social assistance, and compared to the United States the benefit levels are higher and there occurs less poverty in Canada. However, the only benefit entitled by the citizenship is free

health care. (Myles 1996, 116-140.)

It is common in Canada that children grow up in families where both parents are working. These dual-earner families make 62 % of all the households. In 21 % of families only other one of the parents is working. In Canada parents are forced to work to provide economic necessities because even dual-earner families with children may encounter economic hardship. (Lero 2003; ref. Harvey 2005, 543.) Canadians are able to get transfer payments if they are unemployed and qualify for Employment Insurance (EI). Parental leave is possible up to one year after the birth at EI rates and pension is also offered for those who are qualified for it. In addition for these social welfare assistances there is also provincial or territorial assistance for low-income families including monetary transfers and tax credits. Child welfare is controlled by the provinces for the needs of those families who are unable to take care of their children. In Canada corporal punishment is still allowed to be used by the parents and teachers since Canadian Criminal Code allows "reasonable force" to be used to control the children. (Harvey 2005, 543-546.)

The Scandinavian welfare states including Finland have a reputation of having generous welfare state entitlements and high levels of particularly women participating into labor force. High-income replacement rates and citizenship benefits are characteristic for the Scandinavian countries. The coverage is universal and it has been criticized that the citizenship not the market participation forms the basis for entitlement to income, goods and services. (Stephens 1996, 32-35.) Also high taxation is often seen as a burden instead of a mean for equality (look for ex. Anttonen & Sipilä 2000.) However, according to Forsberg (2005) Finland is considered to be one of the most equal countries in the world, for example Finnish women were the first ones in Europe to get the right to vote in elections. Finland is also pioneering country when concerning the rights of the children. (Op.cit., 262-265.) Any corporal punishing of a child is strictly forbidden in Finland, which does not mean that it does not happen but at least it is criminalized.

Canada is way a head of Finland in immigration policies since it has such a long history of immigration and the number of immigrants coming to Canada every year is huge compared to Finland. According to my own experiences in Canada, you can hear and see the multiculturalism all the time as well as in for example Toronto or Montreal. In Finland the capital region is the most multicultural region although, even there the scenery is still quite homogeneous. However, the social system in Finland is totally different than in Canada. In Finland immigrants are financially supported and taken care of and there are benefits for people who cannot make their living on their

own. In Canada health care is the only subjective right and even that is forbidden from the legal immigrants during the first three months. Roughly saying Canada is so called "night guard" state like USA and people are supposed to support themselves without benefits from the state.

The differences in social welfare system may be vital in immigrant woman's life. If she wishes to leave her partner she must be able to support herself in Canada. In Finland even an immigrant woman can usually survive alone just by receiving the universal benefits. For example an unemployed woman can get housing allowance and unemployment benefit here so she probably would not end up homeless. If she has children she would also get child benefit and maintenance allowance for taking care of the children. In Canada an immigrant woman can only apply for the social assistance, and get tax benefits if she has children but the amounts are low. There is subsidized housing available but the application process can take years if you do not have a reference letter stating that you are a victim of domestic violence - then you might get housing faster.

In Canada the so-called third sector has an important role in offering social services, which in Finland are usually offered, by the municipality. For this master thesis I visited two Canadian non-governmental agencies, which probably get some of their funding from the government, but they also have to do some fundraising on their own. This kind of agencies may have a huge variety of services depending on the size and funding. For example legal services and counseling services are commonly offered even though most of the social work might be quite the same what social workers do in Finland. The agency may offer its services to a part of the city or the whole city, or the whole province. Sometimes the services are only for women, sometimes only for men, or only for immigrants, or only for immigrant women. In Finland the services are usually for everybody who lives in the area of that municipality. However, there are also specialized non-governmental agencies, which complement the services of the municipality.

2 The Research Question and the Objective of the Research

Violence against women is a global problem, which can be recognized in every society and culture. Both in Canada and Finland the research about violence against immigrant women has begun quite recently and the first studies are from 1990s (see for ex. Korhonen & Ellonen 2007, Migliardi & Blum & Heinonen 2004). Therefore, there is still a lot we do not know about this phenomenon and thus a demand for research. Immigrant women face unique circumstances and are in a vulnerable position of being abused. They are not a homogeneous group, on the contrary, they have individual life experiences but they all have been born outside the country of immigration and are so part of the minority.

Previously, in my bachelor thesis I did a literature review in which I looked for those risk factors, which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence in Finland and Canada. I searched through all the literature I could get in to my hands concerning specifically partner violence against immigrant women. It was not easy to find any literature about immigrant women in Finland and most of my literature from Canada was in electronic form. I summarized the results in two categories: personal and societal factors. Below these two categories I added seven subclasses: personal history, language problems, social network, collision of the cultures, racism, immigration status and social security and legal systems (see tables 5 and 6).

There are a lot of same kind of risk factors in Finland and Canada. Especially, the personal factors are really similar in both countries. In the societal risk factors the differences between countries are more visible, and when I analyzed the results I came to the conclusion that the social security and legal systems play an in important role when we compare Finland and Canada. The Finnish constitution gives everybody in Finland the right to minimum welfare and care (Constitution Law 19§). In Canada everybody should make their living on their own. This is huge ideological difference, which is one of the causes, for example more broad homelessness. In Canada the nature of legal processes is different and they are more common than in Finland, which makes the system look more bureaucratic and complicated to an immigrant woman. For example in Finland you

usually do not need a lawyer to get a divorce or custody of your child unlike in Canada.

Now I look deeper in the societal risk factors and get more information about the topic from the real source: abused immigrant women and the workers who meet these women every day. I chose to use the same themes as in my bachelor thesis and build a semi-structured interview around them. My main research question is: what are the societal risk factors which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence. When I know the answer to this question it may be possible to look for better ways of helping abused immigrant women and make some suggestions about what should be changed in the society.

Already when I was doing my internship in Canada I faced the complexity of working with immigrants in a foreign cultural context. When I was planning my thesis I had to consider the fact that I will be doing the interviews in three-dimensional way: I have to consider my own cultural background, the Canadian cultural context and the cultural background of the person being interviewed. I know I might face both language and cultural barriers and I have to keep them in mind in order to avoid misinterpreting the interviewee. Both my interviewee and me are using English, which is neither her first language nor mine. In addition, the topic is really sensitive and I do not want to pressure the interviewee to tell me any further information than she feels comfortable telling. I had to keep all these challenges in my mind when I did the interviews and analyzed the data.

While doing the interviews in Canada I used the opportunity to do also some literature research to complete my literature review. Therefore, I also scheduled some time to read and write during my trip and not only to do interviews. This was really helpful because I was able to find a lot of literature on the subject from the Canadian university libraries. After the trip the real work really began when I started to transcribe the interviews: it took a lot of time and energy to get all the data in a written form especially because of the variety of the accents of the interviewees. I used theme interview so I thought it would be logical to also use theme analysis: I organized all the data according to the themes and so I get to my results.

3 Concepts and Theories

3.1 Who Is an Immigrant?

There are a lot of concepts and terms related to immigrants which are easily mixed up with each other, and I think it is also necessary to have some understanding what different permits mean in order to gain a proper understanding of the immigrant woman's situation. In Canada "immigrant" is usually a person who is legally eligible to stay in Canada either as a permanent resident, a visitor, a student or a refugee (Smith 2004, 4-5). The term "refugee" means a person who has been forced to flee from his own country because of the fear of persecution. "Asylum seeker" is a person who has applied for asylum as well as the refugee status but has not yet got any decision on the matter. The term "refugee claimant" is used in the same way as asylum seeker but it usually refers to other than the refugees of the UN's refugee agency UNHCR (The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (Canadian Council for Refugees 2004.) In Canada the commonly used term "visible minority" refers to people who belong to other minorities than to aboriginal people and whose skin color is not white. Basically, visible minority means those people who are not white. The term "non-visible minorities" means those people who belong neither to the visible minority nor to the aboriginal people of Canada. (Smith 2004, 5.) Usually, the aboriginal people do not have white skin either.

In Finland the Aliens Act defines a foreigner as somebody without the citizenship of Finland (Aliens Act 3§). According to Martikainen and Tiilikainen (2007) immigrant usually means somebody who has been born abroad and a returnee is a person whose family is originally from Finland and who moves back to Finland after living or being born abroad. Refugees come to Finland either as convention refugees through UN's refugee agency UNHCR or as independent asylum seekers. (Aliens Act 90§: Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, 18.) Asylum means a residence permit given to an asylum seeker. Furthermore, residence permit means a permit given to a foreigner to visit the country frequently and stay in the country for a longer time. Work permit means permit to work in Finland or in a Finnish ship. Family-reunificater is a person living in Finland whose family members are also allowed to apply for residence permit while they may still

be abroad. (Aliens Act 3§.) Migrant usually means a person who moves to Finland because of his work (Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2007, 18).

In this thesis I use the word immigrant in its broader meaning referring to everybody who has been born outside the country where he or she is currently living. This broad term makes it possible to focus to those people who have immigrated into another country and therefore, they are facing the problems of adjusting into a new environment. I acknowledge that convention refugees, asylum seekers and for example, those who immigrate because of a new job may have really different kind of experiences but what is common is that they are all living outside their country of origin.

3.2 Immigration and the Sponsorship Program

During the years of 1991-2001 most of the immigrants came to Canada from East Asia (432 235), South Asia (295 110) and South-East Asia (185 665). There were also more than 100 000 immigrants coming from East Europe, West Asia, Middle East, Africa, Middle and South America. Overall almost two million people came to Canada during the ten-year period. After the year 1961 almost five million people have immigrated to Canada. (Statistics Canada 2001.)

The official languages of Canada are English and French but there are over six million inhabitants who do not speak either of these two. Five most common unofficial languages are Chinese, Italian, German, Punjabi (India and Pakistan) and Spanish. In 2006 19 % of the total population of about 32,8 million people spoke some other than official languages. In comparison, only 21 % of the population spoke French. (Statistics Canada 2006.)

Table 1. Population by mother tongue 2006.

Language	Speakers
English	19 328 545
French	6 857 425
Non-official languages	6 194 960
Chinese	1 016 705
Italian	456 195
German	455 545
Polish	212 930
Spanish	347 540
Portuguese	219 995
Punjabi	368 045
Ukrainian	135 020
Arabic	266 755
Dutch	132 505
Tagalog (Pilipino)	236 225
Greek	118 420
Vietnamese	142 155
Cree	78 890
Inuktitut (Eskimo)	33 005
Other non-official languages	1 975 030
Total population	32 778 935

Source: Statistics Canada 2006. (Modified)

Every year the government of Canada decides how many foreigners they will take in to the country that year. During last ten years Canada has accepted on an average 220 778 immigrants and refugees a year. Those people coming into the country have been either skilled workers, business people, refugees, relatives of Canadian citizens, foreign students, temporary workers or something else. Almost 60 % of the immigrants have been skilled workers and business people.

To understand the different scale of immigration in Canada I will shortly introduce some of the main numbers and facts of immigration in Finland. At the end of the year 2006 there were 5,2 million inhabitants in Finland and about 97,7 % of them were citizens. Thus 2,3 % of people (121 739 persons) living in Finland were foreigners. Most of the foreigners were citizens of Russia (25

326), Estonia (17 599), Sweden (8 265) or Somalia (4 623). From the population 91,5 % spoke Finnish. After Finnish, Swedish and Sami the most spoken languages in Finland were Russian, Estonian, English, Somali and Arabic which were spoken by 3,0 % population. (Statistics Finland 2006b.) According to the Finnish Aliens Act a foreigner can get either a permanent or a temporary residence permit. Without a residence permit it is legal to stay in Finland for a total of three months during six months period if a foreigner comes from a country whose citizens are allowed to stay in Finland without permit, for example the citizens of EU countries. (Aliens Act 33, 34, 40 §.) In 2007 there were given about five thousand work permits, four thousand student permits, five thousand permits to stay for family reasons and about three thousand other permits Total number of permits was 17 204. (Finnish Immigration Service 2008.) The citizens of Nordic countries, EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland do not need a permit to stay, work or study in Finland (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2008).

Canadian foreign policy allows people to sponsor family members including spouse, children, parents or grandparents in to the country. During the period of 2000-2002 there were 26 800 convention refugees brought in, and private Canadians can sponsor refugees as well if they want to. Every year 68 800 foreign students come in to the country. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008a.) In the context of my research it is essential to know more about what the sponsorship program means to an immigrant woman so I go through more specifically the sponsorship of a partner. Canadian citizen or permanent resident can sponsor a spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner so that he or she can come to Canada and get permanent resident -status. The sponsor must be 18 years of age or older, reside in Canada and able to provide for the basic requirements of the person being sponsored (food, clothing, shelter etc.). Canadian government publishes every year the amount of minimum necessary income, which one needs to have in order to be allowed to be a sponsor. The sponsor will be responsible for the sponsored person for the next three years after the person becomes a permanent resident. If the sponsored person needs any federal, provincial or municipal social assistance it is seen as the default of the sponsor's obligations and the sponsor may have to repay the benefits and will not be allowed to sponsor others in the future before all the payments are made. In the application process the applicants have to authenticate their relationship and the sponsored person must meet all the applicable requirements to become a permanent resident. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2008b.)

K. Ekuwa Smith describes in her article "Implications for Service Delivery for Immigrant and Refugee Women" (2007) a study done about homelessness rates of abused immigrant and refugee women and explains some of the main reasons for them. Most of the women interviewed for this the study had immigrated under sponsorship program. Their knowledge of the immigration system was poor and they felt that their sponsor had all the power over them. "I had no idea about what my status was. All I knew was that that my status depended on him." He kept saying that bringing me over had cost 10, 000 that I had to re-pay before I left him." "I thought I had a status, only to find out that he had never filed the sponsorship papers."(Smith 2007, 173-175.)

In her article Smith (2007) concludes that the sponsorship program creates imbalance between man and women and with the lack of language skills the women is in vulnerable position and so the abuse can easily occur. The abuse and the breakdown of the sponsorship may lead immigrant and refugee women to homelessness. The sponsor can have the total control of the women and the sponsorship also impacts the way the other family members see the situation: the woman is often blamed for not acting thankful enough and can be excluded from the family if she leaves her partner. Especially in the arranged marriages even the family in the country of origin thinks the woman is acting indecently. (Op.cit.)

3.3 What is Partner Violence Against Women?

Duffy and Momirov (1997) argue that their book "Family Violence: A Canadian Introduction" is the first time when Canadian material on family violence has been brought together. Before there have been only textbooks from USA about the issue. The study of family violence has begun in Canada with the arose of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Social scientists addressed violence in the family for the first time in the 1980s, which is relatively late in contrast to general family studies, which have quite a long history. According to Duffy and Momirov (1997) argue that family violence does not occur outside the context: it is not inherent in individuals or families, but in the nature of relationships. Family violence is a gendered issue even though many researchers tend to use neutral terms and so to let the readers understand that both men and women can be equally violent. The reality is, nonetheless, unbalanced and it has been suggested that "family violence" should be called "male violence" since males are largely responsible for most of the domestic violence. The terms used vary widely in the research literature. The terms rarely tell the

exact truth about what was done by whom to whom which makes the violence difficult to define and understand. Some terms include all violence and not just physical one and some include only the "severe" physical violence. What is severe might be then hard to define. Is severe only when at least 25 % of the body is covered with bruises or what is it? Is one punch on the face acceptable but two punches is abuse? Without specific terms even the victim cannot define her experiences and does not know how to call it what happened to her. She knows that she was been treated in a wrong way but was she abused? (Op.cit., 10-16, 26-29.)

In this thesis I chose to use terms partner violence, or similarly partner abuse to name the phenomenon. The terms "partner violence" and "partner abuse" are gender neutral but with the help of the statistics I will show that reality of partner violence is strongly gendered, and a woman is typically the victim. I refuse to use the term "family violence" since its too wide in nature including also, for example child abuse and elder abuse, which are not in the focus of my interest. I define partner violence as all the violence done by a man or a woman against his or her partner who is living or has been living with him or her. I narrow partner violence in to the violence done only in the heterosexual relationships and I specifically focus on the partner violence done against women. I do not go through violence done by a woman or violence done in the homosexual relationships.

In the United Nations' Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) the term "violence against women" is described in a very international and accurate way.

113. The term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational

institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

114. Other acts of violence against women include violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.

115. Acts of violence against women also include forced sterilization and forced abortion, coercive/forced use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection. (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, paragraphs 113-115.)

After Lehtonen and Perttu (1999) the typical forms of partner violence are physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse. Violence can also be invisible and occur in the forms of neglect or discrimination. Physical abuse includes for example beating, kicking, strangling, physical forcing to make the woman to do something and keeping in captivity. Thus physical abuse is easiest form of partner violence to recognize even though usually different forms of violence exist together at the same time. (Op.cit., 36-45.)

Emotional abuse is probably the most common form of partner violence. It can be verbal or non-verbal and occur for example as enslaving, humiliating, controlling, threatening, name-calling and shouting. Often, partner violence begins with emotional abuse and when time pasts it continues as physical abuse. In this kind of relationship a woman confronts many negative feelings: shame, guilt, fear, depression and loneliness. Especially shame and depression can have significant consequences in a woman's life and at worst case the woman can even end up taking her own life. (Lehtonen & Perttu 1999.)

There are three main theoretical explanations used to explain the partner violence against women: social learning theory, theories of gender and masculinity and feminist theories. In social learning theory it is believed that violent behavior is learned by modeling others. This kind of modeling usually happens in a context where violence is seen to result in positive consequences. Man can learn his way of acting from his family members if he has seen or experienced violence in his childhood or from the wider society. Violent childhood experiences increase the risk of later violent behavior and provide the opportunity to learn how to use violence. Theories of gender and

masculinity see violence as the outcome of social training when man is considered as a dominant and controlling over woman. Violence is, thereby, the natural way for a man to express his masculinity. Feminist theories explain violence to be caused by those social structures, which sustain the power inequality between man and woman. (Johnson & Ollus & Nevala 2008, 79-82.)

According to Wiehe (1998) even though partner violence is understood as a personal problem since it has the most severe impact on individuals, it is truly a societal problem. This kind of problems occur when the institutions created to carry out the basic functions in society do not exist or fail to do their task and end up discriminating and oppressing the least powerful members of the society. Partner abuse can be seen as a reflection of the failure of society to provide protection and opportunities for growth, development and enhancement for all its members. Therefore, partner abuse has to be prevented in all levels: personal, community and societal. (Op.cit., 124-125.)

According to Johnson et al. (2008) it is beneficial to prevent child abuse since that may also reduce the violence done against the female partner later in life. Interventions to partner abuse brings down the number of children who are witnessing violence and who so learn that violence is the right way to solve problems in a intimate relationship. Women who were abused or witnessed abuse in their childhood have a significant risk of being victims of partner violence in adulthood. Other well-known risk factors for violence against women include following characters of the male partner: controlling behavior, alcohol abuse and violent behavior outside home. Reduction of public violence by men may also reduce domestic violence against women. (Op.cit., 79-82.)

Johnson et al. (2008) describe five recommendations how to end violence against women: promote gender equality, improve service delivery, hold offenders accountable, prevention, and monitoring and evaluation. There is a need for societal changes to improve the status of women and to break down the inequalities between genders so that it would be possible to create a climate where violence is discouraged and not tolerated. The strict gender roles may be damaging to women, as well as many societal norms and attitudes. Johnson et al. demand countries and communities to take more active role to ensure that women are not discriminated against their rights and that they have access to education, employment and health care. There should be legislation to protect women and the criminal code should specify that partner violence is a criminal act and not a private issue. There should be a wide variety of data collected including statistical and descriptive information for

monitoring and evaluation of the available services and policies. (Op.cit., 168-174.)

3.4 Partner Violence Against Majority Women

Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence – yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned. "Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, 8th of March 2007" (Unifem 2008.)

About 7 % of the over 15 years old Canadian women have experienced intimate partner violence in the present or previous relationship during the last five years before the research in 2005 (this includes only physical violence). Serious forms of violence including being beaten, choked, or threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them, had experienced 23 % of the abused women. A fear for their life had been reality for 34 % of the abused women. Those women who belong to the aboriginal people are three times more likely to be victims of partner violence than other women. Emotional abuse was reported by 18 % of women and financial abuse by 3 % during the last five years. In 2003 64 women were killed by their partners as victims of partner violence. (Statistics Canada 2005.)

According to Statistics Finland in the year 2000 about 19 % of the Canadian women have experienced violence or have been threat by it during the last five years. In Finland the same rate was about 16 %. (Heiskanen 2001.) The rates vary depending on the source because the term partner violence is used in such variable ways and sometimes the term violence only means physical violence and sometimes it covers all the other forms of abuse too. Since it is really difficult to find reliable reference values for the countries I have used this quite old statistic from Statistics Finland since it has researched the same phenomenon in both countries in the same year. Thus we can make the conclusion that there is slightly more partner violence in Canada than in Finland.

As can be seen from the table 2 more women were killed in Finland as victims of partner violence than in any other developed country except United States: there are 1,9 women of killed per every

100 000 inhabitants a year. The same rate in Canada is 0,9, which is less than half compared to Finland. The role and meaning of family have being brought up in the discussion as explanatory factors since in the Nordic countries family is in less important role than in the southern Europe. (Heiskanen 2001.) However, this does not explain why there were two times more women killed in Finland compared to other Nordic countries.

Table 2. Women killed as victims of violence per 100 000 inhabitants.

Country	Year	Value
Russia	1997	10,1
Kazakhstan	1997	8,6
Moldova	1996	7,2
Estonia	1998	6,3
Latvia	1998	6,2
Lithuania	1997	4,6
Brazil	1995	4,5
USA	1997	3,2
Cuba	1996	2,8
Finland	1996	1,9
Belgium	1994	1,4
Poland	1996	1,4
Australia	1995	1,2
Austria	1998	0,9
Canada	1997	0,9
Denmark	1996	0,8
Ireland	1996	0,8
Norway	1995	0,8
Sweden	1996	0,8
France	1996	0,7
Germany	1997	0,7
Italy	1995	0,5
Spain	1995	0,4
Iceland	1995	0

Source: Finland Statistics 2001 (modified).

3.5 Partner Violence Against Immigrant Women

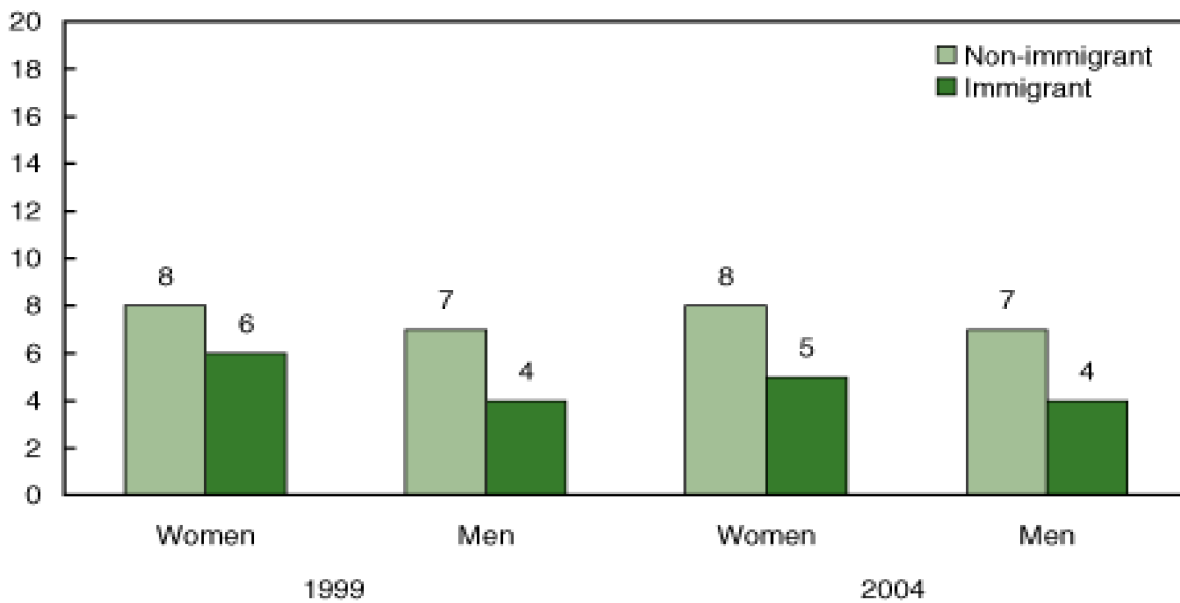
United Nations' Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) defines some women more vulnerable to violence than others. These women are for example women who belong to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women migrants and displaced women. (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995.) The forms of partner violence against immigrant women are quite the same as against majority women. However, adjusting to a new country and having difficult life experiences in the past can make the situation initially a lot harder to an immigrant woman. In a new country man may also have new means to control and use power over woman. (Kyllönen-Saarnio & Nurmi 2005, 28-29.) Immigration background affects the likelihood of admitting the existence of violence in the ethnic community. There is a tendency to hide and deny violence not to attract negative attention to the community. The whole issue may be insisted to be just a "Western" issue, which does not exist or belong to their families or traditions. The denial of the violence makes it even more difficult to access services or to be supported as an abused immigrant woman. (Narayan 1995; ref. Erez & Britz 2006, 201.)

Partner violence against immigrant women is almost as common as violence against majority women in Canada. There are some difficulties to interpret the reliability of studies done among immigrant population since all wider studies have been done only in English and French. There has been no translation or explanation of concepts available for immigrant women. Therefore, even the Statistics Canada admits that the rates might be too low when concerning immigrant women knowing that there are about 2,6 million women in Canada who speak neither of the official languages. (Statistics Canada 2004c.) About 10 % of the immigrant women have reported emotional or financial abuse in their relationship (from the majority women 14 %). Physical abuse was reported by 4 % of the immigrant women (from the majority women 6 %) and every tenth abused woman had been in contact with the police, which is almost as rare as in the majority (12 %). (Smith 2004, 18-19.)

According to Statistics Canada (2004c) immigrant women face slightly less partner violence than majority women as can be seen from the table 3 and 4. Most common forms of emotional abuse in this research are put-downs and name-calling, jealousy and checking where the woman is going. (Statistics Canada 2004c.)

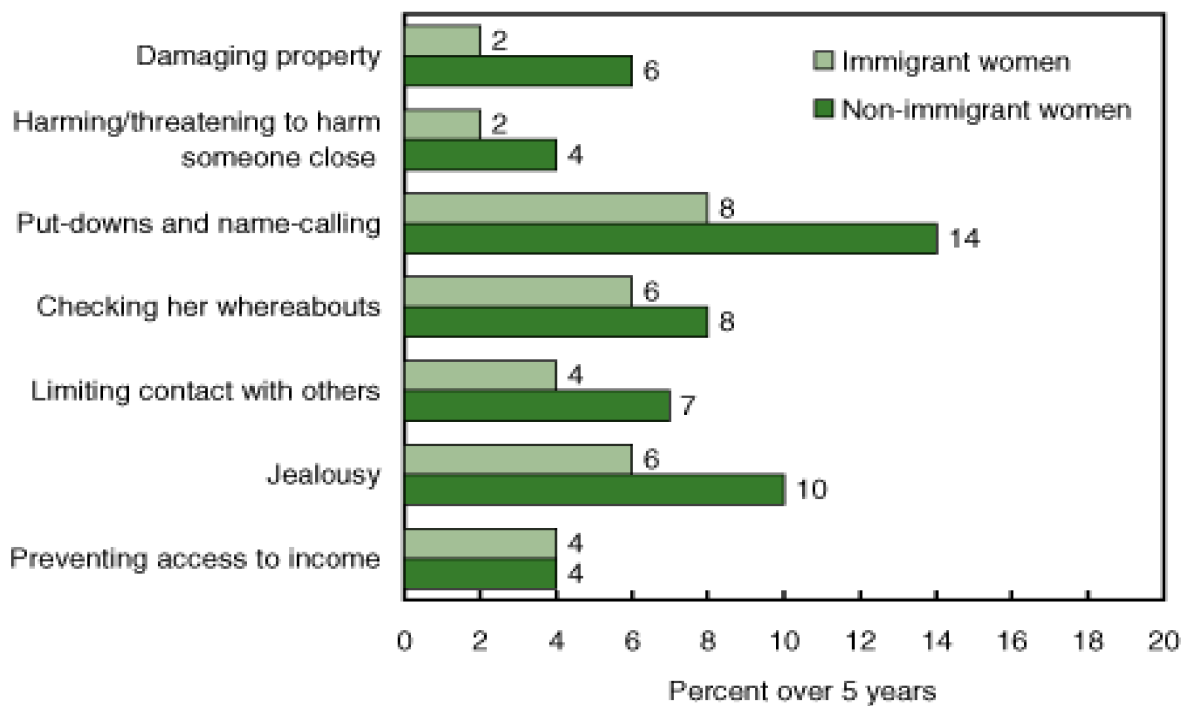
Table 3. Five-year rates of physical partner violence for immigrant women (researched 1999 and 2004).

Percent over 5 years



Source: Statistics Canada 2004a.

Table 4. Five-year rates of emotional abuse against spousal partners, by type of abuse and immigrant status (research is done in 2004).



Source: Statistics Canada 2004b.

In Finland, as well in Canada, there are no extensive statistics about partner violence against immigrant women since all the existing statistics are based only on the information given by police and shelters. Yet, it has been estimated that immigrant women face more violence than women who belong to the majority. (Kyllönen-Saari & Nurmi 2005, 23-26.) In 2005 72 % of the abused immigrant women had suffered physical violence, 6 % sexual abuse and 22 % threatening with violence. From the physical violence 60 % had been categorized as partner violence and most common victim of violence was 18-29 years old immigrant woman who already had the Finnish citizenship. According to the country of origin women from Russia, Sweden and Estonia faced most of the violence (from which countries also majority of the immigrant women are). During the year 2005 five immigrant women were killed as victims of violence. (Korhonen & Ellonen 2007.) A study done in 2002 found out that in the half of the cases when an immigrant woman reported partner violence the offender was ex-partner and in half of the cases he was the present partner (Ministry of the Interior 2002).

3.6 Previous Research about Risk Factors

In my bachelor thesis I did a literature review about what makes immigrant women vulnerable to partner abuse in Finland and Canada. I categorized the results in two classes: personal and societal factors. Under these two classes I categorized seven subclasses: personal history, language problems, social network, collision of the cultures, racism, immigration status and social welfare and legal systems. Collision of the cultures is situated on both personal and societal classes because of its multidimensional nature. The literature has outlined the results since the classes were chosen according to the literature I had from both countries. Even though, there are factors that can be seen as effective in both countries I have not added them under the other one if they were not mentioned in the literature of that country. For example the factors under the personal history -class are quite similar.

Table 5. Personal Risk Factors.

Personal Factors	Finland	Canada
Personal History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - big change in the social status when immigrating into a new country - traumatic experiences in the past may cause mental problems - underrating current violence in comparison to past experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - traumatic events in the past - homesickness
Language Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-professional interpreter is used - information is not available in the mother tongue - believing in rumours and empirical knowledge and not having right information - the role of Finnish partner is emphasized - no possibilities to ask for help without knowing the language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-professional interpreter is used or even the partner can be used as an interpreter
Social Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - narrow social network - divorce can isolate from the whole ethnic society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no family or relatives close by
Collision of the Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the belief that “good motherhood” means that woman has to stay home - violence is not known to be forbidden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violence is seen as eligible - acculturation

Table 6. Societal Risk Factors.

Societal Factors	Finland	Canada
Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discrimination - getting a job can be difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discrimination - getting a job is difficult without Canadian degree or work experience
Immigration Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staying in the country depends on the residence permit - woman is often financially and informationally dependent on the man - the man may threaten with divorce, deportation or taking away the children - blaming the woman for not being thankful enough - the fear of child protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complicated immigration system - sponsorship binds woman to the spouse in the fear of deportation and woman-sponsor is also obligated provide maintenance for spouse - getting a residence permit is difficult if the sponsorship breaks down
Social Welfare and Legal Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fear of authorities - no knowledge of benefits, services or the Finnish law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - getting a low-rental apartment is difficult and there is no housing benefits - no right to use the health services during first three months - financial difficulties - no knowledge of the rights, services or the Canadian law - fear of authorities - divorce and getting the custody of a child are legal processes - child protection can apprehend the children if a mother fails to protect them
Collision of the Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rape in a marriage is accepted in many cultures - violence is seen as a man's right in some cultures - conflict between different kind of values and norms - the change in man's social status and role can cause aggressivity - religion may effect in the attitude against for example divorce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the change in the gender roles may cause aggressivity and the man can for example control woman's working - new home country may question the traditional values and religion

There were many similar risk factors in Canada and Finland. In this thesis I focus only in the risk factors in Canada and I do not go any further to the Finnish ones than what is mentioned in the tables 5 and 6. According to Alaggia and Maiter (2006) an immigrant faces many challenges when she comes to a new country: new language, acculturation (assimilation into a new culture), isolation from the majority, discrimination, financial difficulties and homesickness. In the new country the whole social system is foreign including complicated immigration system and strange schooling, health and social welfare system. In addition, many immigrants have very traumatic history behind them, which can make the situation even harder and stressful. The Canadian culture may be in a conflict with the immigrant's own cultural and religious background. All these factors make the life of an immigrant family strained, which makes the women vulnerable to partner violence. Cultural background also has a significant effect on how ineligible partner violence is seen. (Op.cit., 100.) Language problems may also be a barrier to get help especially if the partner is acting as an interpreter for the woman:

”You could see a woman for two to three years. She could be beaten every time before her appointment, but you would not be told that because her partner is interpreting for her. Only professional interpreters should be used.” (Smith 2004, ix.)

Many risk factors are the same for the immigrant women than to the majority women. However, since an immigrant woman has moved into a new country she has lost the proximity and support of her own family. She can be extremely isolated from the whole society without knowing any safe place to go. She might not know her rights, the laws or the legal system of the country. (Smith 2004, viii.) In the study done by Wachholz and Miedema (2004) in New Brunswick, Canada it was found out that majority of the interviewed immigrant women had almost no knowledge about legal issues, for example about protection orders, peace bonds, property and pension rights upon divorce, and mandatory arrest policies. Wachholz and Miedema admit that these are quite complicated matters but without any basic understanding of their rights immigrant women are left in a very vulnerable position. (Op.cit., 207-208.)

Many immigrants are afraid of authorities and cannot trust them because of their previous experiences. In the worst case the partner tells the woman false information about Canada and especially about how easily the woman can be deported. The man can be worried that the woman would leave him if she knew more about her rights in Canada. (Smith 2004, 26-27.) Some of the immigrant women are afraid of the racist treatment from the Canadian police. They have the feeling

that the police operate using stereotypical ideas of immigrant women. The police may think that immigrant women are capable to endure the violence and so does not offer protection for them. These kinds of assumptions make it more difficult for immigrant women to ask for help. (Wachholz & Miedema 2004, 210.)

Some of the immigrants are originally from countries where the man is seen as the head of the family and so controlling and beating the wife is seen as his right. If the woman is from that kind of culture she breaks the traditional norms if she leaves her partner and as a result she can end up being excluded from the whole ethnic community. For many immigrant women leaving an abusing partner means poverty for her and her children. Getting a job in Canada can be difficult without Canadian work experience or degree. If a woman comes to Canada at the same time with her partner but she gets a job first, he can see it as a threat to his honor as being head of the family and providing the living for the family. The change in the gender roles can cause strong conflicts and even violence if the man takes his frustration on the woman. Often, the ethnic community values the traditional gender roles, and so he may even forbid her from working outside home if he has not got a job yet. (Smith 2004, 24-26.)

Ayyub (2007) explains in her article "The Many Faces of Domestic Violence in the South Asian American Muslim Community" how Muslim women face different kind of difficulties than the majority when they are trying to get a divorce. An Islamic marriage usually has two levels in America: religious and the civil marriage. The religious ceremony includes the "Nikah" which is an agreement to enter to a marriage and give an agreed sum of money to the groom by the bride. The meaning of civil marriage is just to get the marriage registered in the country of immigration. Like marriage, divorce also has two levels and so the civil divorce is not enough to set a woman free to remarry. The religious divorce is final only when the man gives "Talaq" to his wife in the presence of two witnesses. In many cases, the Muslim man grants a women divorce in the civil court but does not grant her the religious divorce. Islam allows a man to have four wives but the woman cannot remarry before she gets the Talaq. Women face problems if they want to travel back to the country of origin since there they are still seen as a wives of the men who left them. Often, divorced women are seen as damaged goods and people tend to think the divorce was their fault. Divorced women are viewed as carriers of bad luck and they may have big difficulties to get married again. (Op.cit., 27-30.)

In Canada the immigrants are not eligible to the health services during the first three months after arriving into the country and so to get health services they need to have a private health insurance. This is a big barrier to the abused women if they do not have an insurance and they need help in that time. After the first three months the state offers free health services to everybody who has a legal status in the country. However, there are rarely health services offered in the woman's own language or in the culturally sensitive way. In some cases the woman goes to a doctor who belongs to her own ethnic community which can stop her from telling about abuse since she might be afraid that the doctor will tell others in the community or belittle the woman's experience. (Alaggia & Maiter 2006, 109.) One extreme example of the difficulties immigrant women may face when requiring health services is discrimination because of the lack of language skills. In Finnish context Tiilikainen (2000) tells a story about a somali woman who did not speak proper Finnish but a health professional refused to call for an interpreter because it is so expensive to use interpreter and it is better to save tax payers money. Therefore, the health professional asked the woman always to bring somebody with her who can speak Finnish. (Op.cit., 107.)

Migliardi, Blum and Heinonen (2004) criticize that many of the services are planned for the needs of the majority and there is not enough culturally sensitive services available. Current services are mostly provided in English and even their outreach materials are usually not translated. There is a lack of personnel from minority groups, appropriate health care services to immigrant women's needs, and a lack of counseling for women who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Formal social services can be difficult to understand for a woman who knows no English. (Op.cit., 80-83.)

4 Methodological Issues

4.1 Ethics of the Research

I have to admit that I found my subject quite difficult for such an inexperienced researcher as I am. Before going to Canada to do the interviews I was doubtful if I am going to succeed doing the interviews. Fortunately, I had some experience of social work already and as told before, I had done an internship in Canada working with abused immigrants. However, I made sure to find about all the permits and papers needed before the trip in order to do have all the paperwork done properly. I discussed about the research permit with the organizations, but they did not need me to apply for one. Before the interviews both the clients and workers signed a consent form where I explained the meaning and topic of my research. I took time to let them read the paper properly and usually asked if they had any questions before beginning with the interview. I described in the consent form (see appendix 3) that I mainly ask questions about women's experiences on racism, immigration, social and legal systems and the collision of the cultures. I told the immigrant women that I understand that it might be difficult for them to talk with me about their life experiences and I want them to tell me only as much as they feel comfortable telling. I recorded the interviews and I have promised to keep the tapes and my notes safe from outsiders. I will save the records and transcripts only for my own use in the future and I will not let anybody else to use them. I respect the clients and workers for their willingness to share some of their knowledge with me, and I acknowledge the possibility of both language and cultural barriers, which I have to keep in mind in order to avoid misinterpreting the interviewee. No information that discloses interviewees' identity will be released or published.

In the first agency the clients were also required to sign release form stating that my research was not part of the agency's work and the agency is not responsible of any harm I might cause to the clients. I gave the release forms to the agency when I was done with the interviews. Both agencies asked me to give 10 dollars (ca. 6 euros) honorarium to the clients after the interview and also to get them to sign that they had received the honorarium for their participation. For ethical reason I first did not agree to give clients money because in Finland it is not acceptable or preferable way of getting the client's consent to the research. However, I was explained that in Canada clients are used to get an honorarium from the local students, and that is it why I have to do give it to them too.

Despite my concerns I gave the clients 10 dollar after the interview as I was told to do but I did not tell the client about the money beforehand. Afterwards, I found it quite interesting to see the different kind of responses when the clients received the money. Many of them were really surprised and thankful and asked if the money was from me or from "the government". One of the clients even refused to take the money when she realized that it was from me. One other client donated the money to the agency right away after leaving the interview room.

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009) one of the most important ethical questions when planning to do interview is to consider how to make the interviewees life situation better. The ethical principles demand the interviewer to get informed consent and protect the identity of the interviewer to maintain the trustworthiness. The interviewer must be aware of the risks caused to the interviewee, for example stress. (Op. cit., 20) I think that the ethical principals are even more important when doing culturally sensitive research. The risks of causing harm are much higher when dealing with both culturally and emotionally sensitive issues.

Writing the thesis affected me as a person as well. Like Merja Laitinen (2004) noticed when interviewing sexually abused people, a grave subject takes a lot of energy when day after day one has to think about hard and violent issues. Laitinen noticed that some people wanted to tell her more than she wanted to hear, and she felt it as her responsibility to listen. (Op. cit., 62). I think it was the similar phenomenon when I was doing the interviews, and even though I tried not to ask about the abusive experiences many of the clients seemed to feel it was their obligation to tell their "story". I think the "storytelling" is what they have been used to while dealing with many different workers (see for example Lawless 2001). In total, four out of six clients told me, some shorter some longer, stories about their lives with an abusive partner even though I tried not to encourage them to do that since I was not able to offer the women any counseling or other further help. While doing research I could not act as a social worker even though I felt urge to help some of the interviewees: I had to take the active role of a listener and hope that it was enough.

4.2 Theme Interview and Storytelling

According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009) the advantages of interview are that the interviewee can act as a subject and construct his or her own meanings of the issue and so be an active participant of

the research. Interview is a good method especially if there is not much research of the topic yet or if the topic is sensitive. In the interview it is possible to ask clarifying questions and get an understanding of the issue in its context. Disadvantages of the interview are that the interviewee may answer as she thinks that she is expected to answer, it is also hard to separate the meaning of the interviewer as a part of the interview, and the interview demands skills and flexibility from the interviewer. However, interview is seen as a good method if the target group may have difficulties filling a form or may not be motivated to participate in a questionnaire. (Op.cit.,34-36.)

Since I decided to use interview as my research method it meant that I had to travel all the way to Canada. It was an expensive and challenging trip. I did it only because I believe that most of the immigrant women are only able to express themselves clearly in the face-to-face interaction. Some of them may not have been able to fill forms in English. My subject is really sensitive, and so I think the only way to build trust and motivate interviewees was to arrange meetings with the women in their own environment. According to Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2008) in an interview the client gets the possibility to tell freely about her situation, and to be the subject of her life, which was also my goal in the interviews.

As an interview method I chose to use a theme interview which is an intermediate between form and open interview. In the theme interview the interviewer usually knows the themes beforehand but there is no strict order of the questions. (Hirsjärvi & Remes & Sajavaara 2008, 203.) It is important to follow the themes, instead of asking detailed questions to let the interviewees' voices to be heard. In a theme interview interviewees are considered as individuals having different kind of views and opinions on the issue, and thus their thoughts may vary depending on the context. However, the theme interview is not as free as the open interview because it follows certain previously set themes. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 48.)

I believe in the words of Elaine J. Lawless (2001) that it is not so meaningful if the interviewees are telling the accurate truth or not. According to Lawless, it is more important how the women view themselves and the world on that day of the interview. That is the only truth for the interviewer. The women will not have an opportunity to write and re-write their stories, but they are constructed the story while telling it. Despite the many times chaotic life situation the woman may be living, her story may be surprisingly coherent. This is often the result of her telling her story over and over again to other people to get through the system and to gain all the services. With the help of the workers the woman usually learns to tell her story in the "right way": she learns that her words have

the power to save her if she gives the right answers to the questions of the workers, police or court. From the women's stories it is possible to learn about the significance of speaking, the significance of storytelling. The interviewer's interest to the women's stories may give the women the feeling of empowerment because the interviewer is willing to attentively listen the story of their life. Usually, the stories of those women who are furthest from the violence offer the greatest hope of life without abuse, showing the possibility of recovery and safety. (Lawless 2001, 6-9.)

4.3 Culturally Sensitive Research

Since I went abroad to do research I faced many cultural differences, which may alter the results of research. For me, the risks of misunderstanding or misinterpreting were especially high because I interviewed immigrants in their new home country so I was facing three cultures: the cultural background of the immigrant, Canadian cultural context and my own cultural background. It is very challenging to do research and be aware of the cultural factors all the time. In my case, I was fortunate to meet the interviewees face-to-face and therefore, I was able to ask clarifying questions and see the nonverbal communication. However, I cannot be sure that I have understood everything correctly, and I need to keep that in mind when I writing the analysis. Especially, many different accents and the fact that no woman was speaking her mother tongue made the transcribing very hard, and there is always the risk of mishearing something.

Sands, Bourjolly and Roer-Strier (2007) have analyzed the cultural barriers in research interview in the United States. They base their results on the interviews done mostly in telephone: the interviewer was part of the cultural majority and interviewee part of the cultural minority. One of their findings was that both interviewer and interviewee acknowledged the race and religious barriers in the beginning but the barriers receded when the interview continued. Genuine interest of the interviewer and respect towards the interviewee's experiences and knowledge were important to brake the barriers. Talking freely about the cultural differences helped to open up the communication. Altogether, interviewing somebody who is not from the same cultural background demands more sensitivity and skills to develop the conditions for openness and trust. (Op. cit., 366-369.)

Proctor and Davis (1996) have analyzed in their article "The Challenge of Racial Difference: Skills for Clinical Practice" is the help offered by the social workers to the racially different clients valid

or meaningful for the clients. They argue that social workers lack understanding of their clients in many level, for example workers do not understand the language or the expressions the client is using. Many workers try to hide their lack of understanding of the client's culture, values and norms. Workers are usually afraid of losing their professional credibility if they confess that they do not understand the client even though often the pretending leads to the losing of worker's credibility. Proctor and Davis suggest that workers should admit their limited knowledge of the minority cultures and try to be more informed and exposed to different cultures so that they could be comfortable with them. The clients should not have the responsibility to educate the workers. (Op. cit.) For me admitting my limited knowledge of the interviewees cultures is the only way to gain some understanding of their lives: I have to be open to hear what they want to say, instead of looking at them through my own prejudices.

5 Research Process

5.1 Doing Interviews in Canada

I visited two middle-sized cities in Canada spending two weeks in then first one, and then one week at the other one. Because of many reason, for example transit problems and difficult weather conditions, I was not able to do as many client interviews in the first city as I had hoped. Thus, I decided to interview one more worker there in order to have in the end two client interviews and three worker interviews. In the second city the weather was again against me, and during my stay there it was the coldest week of an extraordinary cold winter according to the local people. In spite of that, I managed to interview four clients and two workers. Finally, I had 11 recorded interviews to take back with me to Finland. Everybody were really helpful, and I am truly thankful for both of the agencies for all the efforts of the staff: they took such a good care of me that it will be one of the best memories during my whole university studies.

5.2 Research Data

My plan was to interview abused immigrant women - who I from now on call also as clients - as my main source of information and then interview workers to get more background information. While transcribing, I noticed that both clients and workers had a lot in common: they both were immigrant women and therefore, I had to change my point of view. Unlike in Finland, in Canada many non-governmental organizations work with immigrants and there the workers are quite often also immigrants. Because of the different kind of social welfare system in Canada and Finland immigrants in Canada do not deal with the municipal social workers so often like in Finland where the municipality is responsible for offering the needed services.

At first, I was confused what to do with 11 interviews of immigrant women from which only six were clients. What I noticed the main difference between the clients and workers were the clients' experiences of violence which none of the workers had. Some of the workers told stories of their own life as an immigrant in Canada and they answered with the knowledge from their own life when I asked about for example racism and discrimination. I think it is really valuable for the

clients that the workers helping them shared the same reality and have first hand knowledge about what kind of difficulties the clients are facing while integrating into Canadian society.

Ten of the eleven interviews were done in the agency, and only once I went to a client's home after she had requested me in the phone to do so. All the clients I interviewed were previous or former clients of the two agencies and had some kind of contact to the agencies; some of them were still seeing a worker regularly. The clients had first given their verbal consent to their own worker to take part to my research, and then the worker referred them to me. So all the clients had some kind of idea about to what they were to take part before meeting me. I also believe that all the clients had access to counseling sessions with their own worker if there was something traumatizing in the interview. However, even to my own surprise I got the feeling that to many of the women the interview was an empowering experience. It might be because of the sense of empowerment one gets when somebody is listening carefully when she tells her story but moreover, I think it was because of the nature of my questions. The clients got a chance to complain how the system has been treating them badly, and many of them were really motivated to think about what could be changed, for the other immigrant women to have easier lives than the interviewees had had. Only one of the clients was being pessimistic about the possibilities to help abused women in Canada: she had bad experiences trying to help her daughter to leave an abusive boyfriend. Most of the clients were really thankful for the help they had got from the agency, and they seemed to have a good relationship with their own worker. Yet, with some of the clients I got the feeling that they were thankful for me for giving them the chance to tell their opinions.

The workers I interviewed were chosen by the supervisors of the two agencies. Despite that, all of them were motivated to take part in the research, and were willing to help me as much as they could. I think the workers saw me as being on their side trying to get help to their clients. The workers were really interested about Finland and how things are done here. They told me that in some Canadian universities they even study the Nordic welfare societies. Actually, one of the workers told me that as far as she knows Finland has the best social system in the world. For those, who worked in the social work field and knew something about Finland it seemed to be the main image: it has the best social system. As a Finnish social work student I could not agree with that opinion, instead I tried to explain that there are failures even in a strong social system. The clients did not react to the information that I was from Finland. In any case, I think for both clients and workers, the fact that I was also a foreigner in Canada, made the interaction easier since I did not belong to the majority either.

The clients I interviewed were originally from China, Vietnam, Chile, Philippines, Iran, and Sudan, alias from Asia, South America and Africa. I will be using Canadian names to call the clients instead of their real names or any name that would tell something about their country of origin. The names are chosen in alphabetical order so that the client's names are from the beginning of the alphabets and the worker's names are from the end, in order to make it easier to distinguish them from each other. Workers are Rachel, Sarah and Yasmin, who were from Africa, Teresa from Asia and Valerie from Europe. Even though I did not directly ask the workers' country of origin, it came up either during the interviews or in the other discussion while I was doing my research in the agency. More detailed information of the clients can be seen in the table 7. Unfortunately, the record of the Sarah's interview was poor quality, and I could transcript it only partly. Other records were fine. All the workers I interviewed were women but further in the text I will refer with the word woman only to the clients and with the word worker to the workers.

Table 7. Personal Details of the Clients.

	Immigration Status Now (Former)	The Year of Immigration	Immigration Status of the Partner Now (Former)	Experienced Forms of Violence	Last Time when Experienced Partner Violence
Abbey	Citizen (church sponsored refugee)	1993	Citizen (church sponsored refugee)	Physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual and threatening	Eight years ago
Becky	Citizen (sponsored by her husband)	2003	Permanent resident	Physical, emotional, financial, spiritual and threatening	Three months ago
Carol	Citizen (came with her parents)	Last time 2008, first time came as a child	Citizen	Physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual and threatening	Eight months ago
Debbie	Citizen (sponsored by her mother)	Came as a child	Citizen	Physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual and threatening	A year ago
Edie	Refugee (sponsored by her husband)	2006	Refugee	Emotional abuse and threatening	Six months ago
Francine	Citizen	2002	Unknown	Sexual, financial and spiritual	Four years ago

All the clients I interviewed told me that their abuser was their husband or ex-husband, and that he is originally from the same country as the client. Therefore, in this data there is no situation where the abuser would have been Canadian or from another country than the woman. The level of English varied from client to client, and I have been careful interpreting the sayings of some of the clients. Especially, Becky and Francine had difficulties understanding the questions and some of their answers did not correspond with the question. With Becky, I had to use one of the workers of the agency as an interpreter about half of the time, because Becky felt so uncomfortable speaking English, and I had to repeat the questions over and over again. Francine had such a strong accent that even though I could understand her well in face-to-face discussion, some of her speech was quite unclear to transcript. If I have not been sure or clear about the answer of the interviewee, I have not used it in the analysis, thus avoiding misinterpreting.

While I was transcribing the data I noticed that alongside with my four initial major themes racism, immigration status, social welfare and legal systems and the collision of the cultures, also the language barrier was emphasized as playing an important role in the immigrant woman's life. I asked questions about language under the theme immigration status but it came up many times in other parts of the interviews too. Thus, I chose to analyze the meaning of language barrier more closely than I had originally planned even though it is not really a societal risk factor. In chapter six, seven and eight I go through the data from the interviews, and I have named the subchapters according to the issues, which were discussed in the interviews and rose up as important ones.

6 Being an Immigrant

6.1 The Importance of Immigration Status

Like I introduced in the chapters 3.1 and 3.2 there are many different ways and motives to immigrate into a new country. In Canada the sponsorship program is widely used which can make the situation harder if everything does not go well between the husband and wife (look for example Smith 2007). Often, when a woman comes into a country trusting only to her husband and then the husband deceives, it makes the woman very vulnerable to violence and threatening when she is not aware of her position in the country. It is essential for the woman to know her status as well as the meaning of it: what responsibilities and rights it gives to her. For example, can the woman be deported if she leaves her husband or not, is crucial knowledge for an abused woman when she considers her options of fleeing abuse.

All the women I interviewed said that they knew their immigration status when they came to Canada. I am not sure if they really knew it, or if they got to know it later which is why they answered to me that they have known it all the time. I doubt especially Carol and Debbie knowing their immigration status since they came to Canada as a child. Abbey told me that she was not "an immigrant" when she came to Canada but she knew that she was sponsored by the church, and that is why I think she was a church sponsored refugee and not sure about her status.

According to the workers some of the women know their immigration status and some do not. Teresa was certain that many of the women do not know their status since many times the clients need to show their immigration papers to the worker before they get to know what their right status is, but Valerie had an opposite opinion and she said that the women know their status and they also know what it means. Thus, the workers had some different opinions on this matter but many of them emphasized the meaning of knowledge when a woman is abused. Many times the abuser can use the woman's ignorance when he is threatening the woman with a deportation if the woman leaves him.

Rachel: Well, what I find is that a lot of the women...they are sponsored by their partners. And the sponsor, their partner gives them the indication that if you don't behave or you don't do as I say I will ask immigration to send you back. So they feel that their life is in the

hands of the partner. So the partners use the women's immigration status if they are sponsored as a tool to manipulate the women. So immigration status has a lot to do with women being vulnerable to abuse. The men use it to keep the women under their control.

I tried to ask Becky and Edie if they had had any difficulties because of the sponsorship program but they could not understand the questions when I was trying to clarify their answers. Edie said that she did not have any problems with the sponsorship program but did not answer if she was aware of the process or not. Becky told me that her husband had threatened her sometimes. I asked from the workers about the difficulties they know with the sponsorship program and the answers were very rich and vivid. Clearly they had all been working with clients who had had misunderstandings or other problems with the sponsorships. According to the workers the women do not usually know that they are free to leave from an abusive relationship if the partner has sponsored them into the country: the woman will not lose her status even though she leaves her sponsor, unless she commits a crime or something similar which can risk her residence permit. A sponsored woman has all the same rights to social assistance and subsidized housing since she is usually a permanent resident when she arrives into Canada.

Teresa: If they are sponsored by their husband, they come here, they are landed immigrant then, in fact, they have no problem even though their husband will say: "I will send you back", in fact, it is impossible. Unless the woman have criminal, you know, charge or some special things. However, the husband or the abuser will always say that "Oh, I will send you", because they don't know. They don't know their rights, they don't know their status therefore, of course, they are afraid of that, therefore they come to see us and say: "My husband will, you know, kill my children and then ask me to go back and then is it all right for him to do that?" All these things.

Sarah also mentioned that some of the women do not want to depend on the social assistance because they are afraid of the man coming after them because he has to pay it if a sponsored woman goes on social assistance. The women do not want to cause any trouble to the man because they might be thinking that: "Even if I leave him he is going to come after me because the government is going to come after him". According to Sarah this has also happened: a man has got angry because he has to pay the social assistance back and he has avenged this to the woman.

Valerie told me that about 90 or 95 per cent of her clients are sponsored into Canada by family members, church or the government. Surprisingly, in Canada those who are sponsored into the country by the government have to pay the money back to the government in a certain amount of time. Therefore, also the refugees who come from the war-torn countries have to pay the money back to the Canadian government after they have settled into the country. The amount is over two

thousand dollars (over 1200 euros), and if you are unable to pay the money back it will be taken through taxation, and an interest will be put on to the owing so you may end up paying a lot more if you do not pay "the loan" on time. There are no free-comers in Canada like in Finland. Here convention refugees do not need to pay any money back to the government: Finnish government will pay the whole expenses of taking refugees here. According to Valerie, in Canada the church helps people to get their family members into the country. The government usually sponsors some people over and then many churches do fund-raising or things like that to get also the rest of the family into Canada. Otherwise, the immigrants in Canada might not be able to get their family back together if they do not have a lot of money themselves, which is rare when people come from the refugee camps.

On Valerie's opinion there are also other problems in the sponsorship program: people are brought over and there is not enough housing for them, and their language skills are poor, and thus they have to go back to school. Because of the lack of housing people end up living in terrible slums, and because of the lack of money they need all the money they can get to survive, especially if they have children, so the parents do not have an opportunity to go back to school. The government brings them into the country but does not help them any further: it is like a set-up for the newcomers. Valerie says that government should lower the price of bringing people over, since there are all the social issues the immigrants are facing as well. Many foreign professions and educations are not recognized in Canada and many people end up doing lower jobs than they are trained in order to survive, which causes depression and other problems. Valerie thinks that because of all these reasons and because the immigrants have to pay the government back the expenses, thus the immigrants are set up to failure.

Teresa described the situation if a person who is in the process of sponsorship decides to come into Canada first as a visitor: then her situation is far worse than if she would be sponsored into the country. Sometimes it may happen that a woman wants to leave her abusive partner but he threatens to withdraw or withdraws the sponsorship application, which leaves the woman without any status and without any right to stay in the country when the visitor permit expires after three months. Teresa told me that in this kind of cases a woman may have children in Canada, and the partner will not let her to take the children with her if she goes back to her country of origin. According to Teresa, what happens is that the woman will have to consult an immigration lawyer and with the lawyer's help go to office of "Citizenship and Immigration Canada" and ask for a refugee claim. The procedure is not so simple if one comes from a safe country, then she needs to apply for a

residence permit for humanitarian and compassionate reasons, which can be an extremely long process taking from four to eight years. During that waiting time the woman is not eligible to any social assistance or subsidized housing, and she is not allowed to work. The refugee claimants have rights to social assistance, health care and to work while they are waiting for the decision, therefore their situation is better than those who are just visiting and cannot make a refugee claim in order to stay in the country if the sponsorship application is withdrawn.

6.2 Financial situation

I discussed with the clients about how did their family's financial situation change when they came to Canada. Abbey told me that they had nothing when they came, but they were church sponsored for one year, which means that they got some help from the church. After that her husband got a job, but it was a low paid job even though he is a trained medical doctor. Abbey stayed home taking care of the children who had a lot of troubles that time. Abbey said that she could never get the same life they had back home when her husband worked as a doctor. Edie and Becky described how their husbands controlled all the money when they came to Canada and the women had none. On Francine's opinion everything changed when they came to Canada but they were able to get better jobs in Canada than in their home country, and they also shared the money.

The workers agreed with the women's stories: many times the family's financial situation changes when people immigrate into Canada. Teresa said that some of the people can be very rich and they lose everything when immigrating, and in Canada the husband usually keeps the money from the woman. It is common that the women stay home taking care of the children because it is the traditional way. Sometimes the women may go to work but then the man takes their money. Usually, the women are highly dependent on their husbands, and the husband is taking all the child benefits and social assistance as well. Valerie said that many times the women are not aware of all the benefits they are entitled to. For example, immigrant women may not know that they need to do the taxation once a year to get the child tax benefits. Often, the men have better understanding of the system and therefore, they get the money. From my own experience as working with immigrants in Finland I agree with the Canadian workers: also in Finland the man usually comes to meet the worker to get the social assistance, and wives let the men take care of all the issues concerning money, for example benefits from Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland). This leaves the women in a very vulnerable position.

For many immigrants it is a problem that their profession is not recognized in Canada, which causes financial difficulties, since their salary decreases remarkably.

Yasmin: And definitely the financial situation changes for most of them because I have some clients whose husbands were lawyers or doctors or they had really good jobs, even the clients themselves were teachers, doctors, lawyers, what ever. But when they come to Canada because their degrees or their education is not recognized they'll have to take up jobs: cleaning, selling food like in food courts and stuff. So money goes down. Where as other families are doing pretty well because...but that's a few, a smaller percentage.

According to Yasmin, those families who had not so comfortable life in their home country may be doing better in Canada, especially if they speak English or French, and are able to pick up jobs right away. For many, the dependency of a man as a breadwinner and tight financial situation may cause domestic violence as Valerie mentioned.

6.3 Racism and Discrimination

I asked questions about have the women faced discrimination, and does it make a difference if you are an immigrant woman and you are trying to get a job in Canada. In some interviews, I asked specifying question about what the women and the workers think about skin color or accent: whether they matter in everyday life or not. Discrimination and racism were issues that both the women and the workers were enthusiastic to talk quite a lot, and they told me a lot of examples from their own life or from somebody else's life, and that is the reason I have included so many passages in the text in this chapter.

From the women I interviewed four of six told me that they had experienced racism or discrimination: Becky and Edie said that they have not felt that way. Carol explained that she has noticed how people are being rejected because of their skin color, and for her, the problem has been the lack of language skills. She thinks that people look at immigrant women differently, which can be very encouraging. Moreover, Abbey said that she has seen so much discrimination that she does not care about it anymore.

Abbey: Oh, I have seen discrimination here. When you go to a bus you say: "Hi", they don't answer you back. When you don't say: "Hi", they say: "Oh, you can't say hi or good morning". It happened to me so many times, so many times...but I don't care anymore.

Francine said that she usually just walks away if somebody is being nasty to her but she is worried how her son bears it at school. Debbie described how she has faced racism at work when others were trying to lower her position, since she is the only one who is not white, working in a leading position. She thinks that a lot of Canadian are racist, and they are not happy that immigrants are in Canada because they think immigrants are taking their jobs. Debbie has also received some really weird comments when some people have come and asked her how they do things in her home country even though Debbie has grown up in Canada. She has also had a lot of problems at the border when she has visited United States.

Debbie: Oh, at the border...whenever we would go to the border and a lot, I have noticed that, a lot of Canadians are passing, just passing through but when it's us, they always check us. I don't even have a record or anything.

Interviewer: Even though you are Canadian?

Debbie: Even though I'm Canadian. And the question that they will ask me...when you crossed the border you were showing your passport and my passport is Canadian citizen, they still ask me: "What's your citizenship". Yeah, so I said: "What are you holding officer?" and he goes: "Don't get smart with me" and I'll say: "I'm sorry, I'm Canadian, I don't know what to say". And right away he will say "What...what nationality, what country you came from".--- So I would say racism. I would say racism. So like I noticed that four times we had to go inside and they had to check everything, everything that...the car, everything, my bag, everything. I said like I'm a criminal.

All the workers told long stories about their own or their client's experiences about racism and discrimination. I found it interesting to notice that the workers did not share all the same opinions on the matter, instead some of them thought that for example, skin color has some importance and some thought that it has no meaning at all. At this point it is important to remember that all the workers were also immigrants, and I think that affects their answers when speaking about racist experiences. Rachel was the one who thought that there is only covert racism and the skin color does not matter in everyday life, or if people have racist ideas they do not show them. Teresa told me that some clients feel discriminated against if they do not know the language, and thus they cannot get a job or cannot go to school. Valerie and Yasmin mentioned that for Muslims the situation got worse after 9/11 terrorist attack, and many of them are feeling that people treat or look at them as terrorist. Yet, Valerie had experienced the racism at first hand couple days after 9/11 when she was on a walk with her client who is a Muslim woman: people threw things on her, swore, and some people even came and tried to spit at her. On other occasions, Valerie has heard people saying how immigrants get a free passage into Canada, and take all the jobs so that there is no jobs for Canadians because the immigrants will work for nothing. Valerie also sensed that she

had experienced reverse discrimination from the workers of other agencies. She had got an appointment with her client to employment and income assistance but they had big difficulties getting to see the worker.

Valerie: First time we were late for the appointment. I was waiting this lady, English is her second language and I was going with her to employment and income assistance to help her get in to the system because she had no money. And I first called a worker and when I told them she was from...she was from India, just explained a little bit about her situation: she needs some support, baby is coming. "Oh, one of those" I heard that from a worker, "Oh, one of those". Anyway, I had...I made the appointment, went to an orientation session, we made it to the orientation session then we had...we were suppose to meet with a worker. She gave us an appointment, I booked the appointment, I told my client the appointment time and I said: "Please, don't be late, we can't be late". --- So she was maybe about...maybe about five, ten minutes late meeting me here and I was: "Ok, she is late but you know what we'll go...". I was driving, I drove as quickly, as fast as I could. I wasn't speeding but we had to get there for the appointment. We had to wait in line...we got there, probably would have made the appointment time but we had to wait in line for about half an hour, it was lots of people there. --- Well, anyway, we get to the front and she asked: "What time was your appointment for?" And I think it was like one o'clock and by that time it was like one thirty, twenty-five to two something like that. She says: "I'm sorry, you are suppose to be here for your appointment. We only get fifteen minutes for your appointment". And I said: "Well, we have been waiting here in line, we have been waiting in line for about half an hour". She says: "I'm sorry, there is nothing I can do about that". --- Didn't matter whether there was a worker, didn't matter that English was her second language, didn't matter. We had to make another appointment. So ok, we made another appointment. Well, we were early...we were early. I made sure of it and...--- We had to wait for this appointment. We were there on time but their worker was late. And we had to wait 45 minutes for the worker, yeah yeah. And there was no...no apologies...no...no nothing, yeah.

I cannot be sure if this story is actually about racism or did Valerie just interpret it as racism. Quite often, one is treated worse if he or she is late, but without knowing the other side of the story, it is impossible to know if the unknown worker really acted following her prejudices. Yasmin told me that some of her clients are saying that their landlord is chasing them out of the apartment, because the landlord does not like people of color. Sometimes the problem can be the accent like happened to Yasmin on one of her previous workplaces: her supervisor told her that in two weeks time Yasmin has to learn the Canadian accent, or the supervisor will have do some other arrangements meaning that he will need to look for a new employee. Yasmin said that she felt discriminated against because she is black and she does not have the Canadian accent even though she speaks proper English. Teresa explained that for those immigrants who look like Caucasians it is easier to tune into the society because people do not recognize that they are immigrants at all. She has been talking with some Italian-Canadians who are more or less white and thus look like Canadians. She said that they think themselves as Canadians more easily than the visible minorities where even

second and third generations may have more problems, because people notice their skin color and think them as immigrants. One may be born in Canada but not get the feeling of belonging in Canada because of the color of his or her skin.

Teresa: But for visible minority, you know, that even you are second generation, third generation, you speak English fluently, right? A lot of Chinese they cannot even speak Chinese, yeah. But they don't.... they still tell me that they go to school, people ask you: "Where you come from". "Where do I come from? I was born here". The black people too. "Where do you come from?" "Oh, I was born here."

Teresa thinks that especially those nationalities, which have big communities in Canada, have problems adjusting into the society and learning the language because they feel different from the majority. She said that it is usually much easier if you come from a European country, and maybe even speak English or French already. I have to agree with Teresa on this because when I was in Canada doing my internship many immigrants told me that I look like Canadian and they would not know that I am a foreigner since I am white and speak English without a strong accent. Even though Canada is really multicultural society as a white person I felt privileged there without being able to say the specific reason for that.

Sarah told an example of racism where an immigrant woman's landlord set unreasonable rules about taking a shower. The woman was allowed to take a shower only once a day and when she broke this rule her landlord who was living in the same house came screaming at her how in Africa the woman probably showered once a week, and now even once a day is not enough. The landlord called police to whom the woman told how badly her landlord had behaved and how the landlord had come to her room while the woman was still getting dressed. However, the police did nothing and did not take the woman to a shelter even though she said that she does not feel safe staying in the house. Finally, the woman took a taxi and spent the night at her friend's house. Sarah thinks that in this case both the landlord's and the police's acts were racist but the woman was too exhausted with everything in her life that she did not want Sarah to get her a lawyer to defense her and press charges. The immigrant woman in this story was able to speak good English so it was not about misunderstandings. In general, Sarah thinks that skin color does not matter a lot on Canada. She has another case where a black Muslim woman got married with a white Christian man and in that case the woman ended up being abused by both the man and his family, especially his mother was violent against her. The woman lost her children when she got a divorce and now she is trying to start a new life. Obviously, the differences may aggravate the situation and people who are racist

look at the skin color more often than others.

6.4 Collision of the Cultures

There is often a collision between the cultures when a person moves from one country to another and starts a new life there. It may cause a lot of stress, culture shock, and pressure to change the gender roles and traditional ways of doing things. All the women I interviewed were aware of the many differences and they agreed that there had a been a big change in their family's life when they came to Canada. Since my research focuses on the partner violence I wanted to know how easy or difficult it is to get a divorce and does the culture have any effect in that. Abbey told me that she has stuck at her original culture and therefore, she has not had any problems with the culture differences. Although, she mentioned that she disapproves the way children behave at school in Canada because at her home country children respect the teacher. Abbey has noticed that in Canada women can ask for more but she has not been willing to act that way.

Abbey: Women here...they have...they have a lot. They have a lot. They can ask for a lot, you know, which is not the same back home...[name of the country]. But...I never used that. I don't know why made me...this is a culture you don't want to put your husband in trouble or... you know, maybe this is the way we brought up. I never did that. I could have done so many things. But I never did.

However, Abbey thinks it is not a problem to get a divorce if you just have enough money to do it. According to her there has to be a reason for the divorce, which you tell, to the court after the one-year separation. For Becky and Francine the violence got worse in Canada. Becky said that back in the home country her husband only used bad language and physical violence started when they immigrated. Becky explained that there was a lot of pressure for both of them when they came to Canada and either of them knew the language.

Becky (through an interpreter): Ok, she said that what make it worse here that means why her husband behave worse than...here in Canada is that...well, when they came here the first thing they had is the language problem because both of them...they cannot speak very good English or French therefore, make them difficult to communicate with other people and then they can't, of course, it create a problem. Then they cannot find a job, they cannot make friends or all these things. So it gives them pressure. In fact she has pressure, her husband has pressure too and then the other thing is that financial pressure. They come here, her husband in [name of the country] is employer, you know, a boss, right and then so, right now he came here he cannot be a boss anymore, you know, he don't even...he doesn't even find...can find a job. Therefore, it also makes him pressure, give him a pressure and then this pressure go to her, go to the family, ok. This is one of the pressures too.

Becky said that in her country of origin many women go to work and still take care of the housework in the evenings: cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. However, in Canada Becky noticed women have more dignity and they are more independent which is better for the women. When Becky separated from her husband she felt really good because she found out that she can take care of herself and the children without her husband as well. In her home country single mothers have a lot of financial and social pressure. Parents and friends would give her a lot more pressure in her home country than in Canada, and thus it is a lot easier to be a single mother in Canada. Becky is not divorced yet but she is in the process even though her parents do not agree with it since she has two children who, as her parents think, will be vulnerable without their father.

On Carol's opinion things have not change that much when she came to Canada because her country of origin is Catholic. The roles of man and woman however, have changed in the sense that she feels that she is treated more equally now than in her home country, which is very patriarchal: the man decides everything. Carol has noticed that it is easier to get a divorce in Canada even though the system is complicated. Debbie had experienced difficulties trying to balance between the two cultures since her husband did not want her to work at all, which she disagreed.

Debbie: Like my husband, he thinks that he can...he can do like the [name of the nationality] way that only the husband is working, the husband will support you. You just stay home, you just cook, you know, do everything in the house. My husband wanted me to do that. For the first five years I was with him I was only working part-time because he won't let me work full time. He wants to come home with the supper ready, everything is ok, you know.

Debbie explained that she wants to use her own money and not to depend on her husband on everything. I found it really interesting to hear that in Debbie's country of origin there is no possibility of divorce even though people can live separately but legally you are always married no matter what happens. However, Debbie can get divorce in Canada but it is not effective in her home country. Also violence against women is accepted there.

Debbie: Yeah, I can't divorce him because in [name of the country] there is no such thing as divorce. The [name of the nationality] culture is that's how the husband and wife is. A lot of [name of the people of that nationality] think that it's ok to beat their wife up. It's ok to hurt them. Because there is no divorce, right? And there is no place they can go to like here, that they can talk to some one, discuss their problems, you know. Yeah, my family and his family when these things happen like last year...my family and his family got together and they tried to convince me to drop the protection order. And they did. So I did drop it and my mom too was saying to me that..."Maybe we can work things out", that I wouldn't want to marry another person: "It will look bad", "People will talk about me". That's...it's like a culture that they don't want people to talk about the family, they want...they want everything

to keep secret. But no...it's wrong.

For Francine the difficulties in a new home country were the weather and the rights in Canada because she told me how in her home country people spend a lot of time outside and the doors are always open. In Canada people just go to work and then home without enjoying the day. Francine explained that in Canada women are more equal with men but in her home country man is the leader of the wife. Women stay home taking care of the housework and the man goes to work, and even in Canada many men have not changed the order of things. Francine said that the first year was really difficult for her family because her husband did not understand that things had changed and it is not fair to expect that the woman will do everything at home. According to Francine, the abuse got worse when they had stayed in Canada for six months. Edie agreed with Francine as well.

Edie: Yeah, it's different here more and more. It's different. In [name of the continent] the man is first and then the kids and then the woman but here it's different. Here it's woman and kids, kids and woman and husband is last one.

Edie said that she tried to stay in her place as a woman and trust her husband in Canada as well. She listened to him and did what he wanted her to do. Now they are living separately because Edie is afraid of her husband. She has asked her to stop drinking and yelling in order for her and the children to go back to him. They are still married and Edie told me that divorce is seen as a bad thing and even her sister is encouraging her to stay alone and wait if he could change.

The workers explained many same things than the women when I asked them about the cultural conflict. Many of the workers emphasized the tension between so-called Western and Eastern culture. Teresa explained that the Western and Eastern culture are the two extreme ones. In the Western culture women are more equal and free, and in the Eastern culture the gender roles are more conservative, and thus the man is the head of the family. When the family immigrates into Canada the man has to learn how to take care of the house, wash dishes or do other housework, which may be difficult for him. Usually, the man still thinks that he is the master of the family and tries to keep everything under control while at the same time the woman is wondering why in the other families the husband is helping to take care of the children or cooks, and why does not her husband do so. Sometimes the man cannot find a good job and the woman has to go to work too, or maybe the man does not get a job at all. Then there is going to be a conflict in the family because there is a lot of pressure for the man and he may not feel good at all. Yasmin described this kind of situation really accurately.

Yasmin: With the man would be like breadwinners and women are staying home taking care of the children and all that but if the husband was a lawyer in his country of origin, maybe very intelligent speaking many...several languages and then the wife was staying at home because the husband is bringing money in but when the husband...when the family comes to Canada the husband cannot practice as a lawyer. He has to either go back to school or...or take some test whatever equalizes his degree or whatever he has from his country so that he can practice it in Canada. And that process is really long and sometimes it's just time consuming and very hard for the new family and then the husband gives up. But then you cannot live just with no income, the wife goes out to work. The wife is the one who is working either cleaning or at McDonalds' or health care either something like that. The wife is working and the husband is staying at home. So now the roles are reversed. So the wife is being the main breadwinner and the husband is not bringing in money and that causes domestic violence. Because now the men are feeling threatened: "I used to bring money into house and I used to call the shots but now it's my wife who is doing all that and she is going to be calling the shots." And sometimes it's hard and then there is a lot of financial and emotional abuse.

Teresa and Valerie explained that most of the immigrants come from a culture where the man is given more power and more rights. In Canada woman's eyes open when she goes to school and starts to think she can do things on her own, thus sometimes the violence starts in the new country because he wants to have the control. However, when she learns that she can go out, and she can have a career the man gets afraid of losing her, which can start the violence or make the violence worse, especially if the man feels that her role as a head of the family is threatened. However, Sarah thinks that it can be even worse if the man is originally Canadian, and thus knows the language and everything else.

Rachel explained that many immigrant women come from a culture where the man has the right to do whatever he wants including hitting the wife and children. The woman has to obey the husband in their culture, and when they come to Canada it is a shock because the system is so different. However, the woman is more vulnerable to violence if she is dependent on the man and does not know that in Canada she can decide about her own life and she is free to leave her husband if she wants to.

Rachel: If they don't know their rights they just accept the violence and try to live with it. Ok, they feel that...she is being a good wife or good partner by not, you know, asserting herself, by not asking for her rights. So they take that docile attitude, you know, "It's ok, I'm a good wife if I just take it and keep quiet". That makes them more vulnerable to violence. They need to know their rights and they need to know the services and the resources that are available to them. And also they are mostly dependent on the men. --- In a lot of other cultures women are taught to stay in a marriage even if they have hardships. They see it from their mothers and in their culture. So they stay and they stay and they stay and they stay and they believe that is my culture, that's expected of me.

Rachel mentioned that a lot of women also stay because of their children because even though the women are abused they do not want to break the family. Sarah said that there are also women who want to be housewives and do all the housework and that is their own choice, and for them it can be annoying when some people think that all the immigrant women are abused and not allowed to work outside home. Sarah mentioned that also the Muslim headscarf is too often seen as oppressing when, for example for her it is not oppressing at all.

Teresa, Valerie and Yasmin talk about how difficult it can be to raise children between the two cultures. Teresa explained that quite often children speak better English and they learn the new culture faster than their parents, which causes conflicts at home. Parents may think that children should use their free time doing homework and not playing with their friends but what about when there is no homework from school? Parents are not allowed to punish their children physically, instead they need to negotiate and that can be hard. If the parents do not know the language they do not know what is going on in the school and they cannot talk with the child's teacher. In their home country immigrants may have had an extensive family but in Canada there is just the nuclear family and no relatives from whom to ask support. Although, if there are also grandparents helping to rear the children they may have totally different view about how the children should behave. Valerie agreed with Teresa that often parents do not know how to punish or control their children in Canada. It is confusing to the parent when the children learn to eat new food and wear new clothes instead of the traditional food and clothes. The children try to be like everybody else in Canada but the parents may not like it. Yasmin mentioned that especially teenagers acknowledge both cultures and they have to choose between them, which can cause big conflicts with the parents.

Yasmin told me how in her original culture abuse is tolerated and it is kept inside the family. If a person is coming from that kind of culture it can be really difficult to understand that violence is a crime in Canada and even somebody you do not know at all can call the police who will come and charge the abuser.

Yasmin: So sometimes the most immigrants when they come here...when you come from a country where it's tolerated, it's encouraged or no one says anything about it or it's only a family thing, that's only in the family can talk about abuse and then you come here where abuse is...where you can get professional help, you can talk about it, you can get help about it. Most women find it hard to put that together. How do you come from a country where it's only a family matter to a place where it comes...where you go outside your family to help...to get help. So it may be really hard for women in terms of the culture and the values. --- So you are coming from a country where also: "I can hit my child, I can hit my wife or I

can hit my husband and nothing will happen to me". The family, the police would not even be called, the neighbours won't come in to help, it's only a family issue. And then you come into Canada where the next door neighbour whose not even a friend hears you fighting and then calls the police. That can be really...that can be really hard to understand. And then not only when they call the police but when the police come you get charged so all of a sudden you are a criminal. You are criminalized. So sometimes that's really hard for the women to understand or to accept that. "Now I'm in a different country". And also what I find is some of the women they are still holding on to their country of origin like the values and the culture.

Yasmin emphasized that it is not possible to bring the laws from the country of origin into Canada because Canada has its own laws, which apply to everybody. For some immigrants it can be really hard to understand that they are living in a new country where there are new rules. According to Valerie it is a lot of struggle if an immigrant woman decides to leave her husband and get a divorce since then she has to go against her cultural values and norms. Yasmin described that often the women come from a country where a divorce is not accepted even though the relationship may be abusive. In Canada even the community may give pressure to the women like here Yasmin gives a good example.

Yasmin: They put pressure, they try to...like I had a client who...she was trying to get a divorce but there was no one...she didn't speak English and the husband spoke little English, as well so they were going to need an interpreter. The only person who spoke the language was a friend, one person from the community who was also...who was a man and on the result when they went to court this interpreter was not interpreting what was being said but he was telling the woman that: "You should stay with your husband", and then he told the judge something else. So sometimes there is pressure on the community and in that case they had to use an interpreter from the community because the trained interpreters they didn't have no one who spoke the language.

Sarah said that in her culture most women are afraid of divorce because of the stigma attached to it. People think that no one will ever be interested on a divorced woman again. However, Rachel thinks that the stigma is not that important in Canada, but it is the effect of the culture, which prevents women asking for divorce.

7 The Complexity of the Society

I asked the women if they knew their rights and services in Canada. Francine and Becky had got most of their information from the agency, and before that they did not really know about their rights. Abbey and Carol had been active themselves and looked for information about the services, and Debbie had learnt about her rights in elementary school. Edie told me that she had called the police once when her husband was threatening her with a knife, and then the police had given her the phone numbers so she could call somewhere if she needs help. I got the impression on what I heard from the women's answers is that it is difficult to find help if you are not able to speak the language and able to go and search for help. All the others except Debbie had not know about the services that are available for them to get free from violence.

Sarah explained that many times the women are sent to their agency by police or the shelter workers, and often the women are not aware of the services. According to Teresa the problem is that there are too many places where you have to go to get all the needed services. She said that sometimes they write a map to a woman so that she could find all the places to get things done, for example custody issues, immigration issues, education and employment. Dealing with all these different agencies is really difficult for an immigrant woman, especially if she does not speak the language. Free legal clinics help women to know their rights since family law and immigration law can be complicated to understand. Rachel described how much effort the agency is doing to get the women know the services and that they have right to a life without violence.

Rachel: There is from Internet, there is from mouth...word of mouth. We have like...recently we had a program on TV...and there is on the radio. We have an outreach worker here who goes out into the community. She goes to where there is a lot of immigrant women. She gives workshops and talks and informs [unclear word] about services that are available. Because at the end of the day we want the situation where each and every immigrant women knows her rights and knows that there is help. We have to eliminate abuse.

7.1 Language Barrier

I wanted to know how easily immigrant women get an interpreter or do they find information in their own language since it is essential to understand what is happening and to be able to

communicate with others. From the women's answers I came to a conclusion that most of the times they have got an interpreter, however, they have also used a husband, a friend or a relative as an interpreter.

Table 8. Use of Interpreters.

	Has she used an official interpreter?	Who has been interpreting if needed?	Other information
Abbey	No	Husband	Knew some English initially
Becky	Yes	Official interpreter	Family doctor speaks her language, police has called an interpreter
Carol	Yes	Official interpreter	Has had problems getting an interpreter, for ex. with a lawyer
Debbie	No	No need	Learned English in elementary school
Edie	Yes	Husband and official interpreter	
Francine	No	A friend or sister-in-law	

The workers were quite sure that their clients get interpretation if they have appointment in their agency or in other places, for example medical or legal appointments. Both agencies offer interpreters for free to their own clients or clients in the certain partner shelters. However, Teresa said that in other agencies, hospitals, police or health centers the women may have difficulties getting an interpreter because there may not be enough budget to pay for an interpreter. Of course, there are situations when there are not enough interpreters and they might all be busy and it is impossible to find an interpreter on short notice. Teresa and Yasmin have heard from the clients that sometimes the police has not called an interpreter even though the woman has been abused and only the man has been able to speak English, and so the police has believed what the man has told them. Valerie has also noticed that in many places her clients have not got an interpreter and sometimes she has gone with them to advocate for them if she knows that the woman has problems understanding what is told and what her rights are. According to Teresa, it is a law in Canada that

the person should get an interpreter if he or she does not speak English or French, and has matters in governmental institutions. In contrast I know that in Finland it is a social worker's obligation to get an interpreter if there are any child protection issues, but in other social services the social worker can consider if she uses an interpreter or not.

Becky said that it has been really helpful for her that her worker at the agency speaks the same language and she has got all the possible information from her own worker. Carol, Edie and Francine have found information in their languages, and Francine also mentioned that she finds information from her community as well. The agency workers told me that the agency has pamphlets in the most common languages about violence against women, and women's rights in Canada. However, if the woman does not speak any of the major languages, for example Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Swahili, Punjabi or Somali, then she will not find any information in her own language. Sarah has noticed that there are pamphlets available in many languages also in some community centers, but since Canada is so multicultural she thinks it is not easy to have all the required languages. According to Rachel it may be vital how much information the woman is able to get.

Rachel: The more information they get the more they are able to ask for help, ok. Usually, when women come here and the family and there is abuse...if they don't know where to go for help, they don't have the language skills, they don't know how the system works then they just stay and they live the abuse but the more information gets to them, the more they are able to break free from violence because they have help from agencies like ours.

Teresa explained that as her personal opinion she thinks that some immigrants want so much to stay in their own culture and own language that they do not want to learn English or French in order to integrate into the Canadian society. Especially adults have problems with the learning. On Teresa's opinion it is good to keep the original culture too but when a person immigrates to a new country it is his or hers responsibility to adjust into the new culture. Government uses so much money to the language courses that if a person has the chance to learn the language then he should learn it.

Teresa: When I compare this system...our language...you know how much money government pay every year for the ESL (English as second language) class, [unclear word] class, French class to... to teach the new immigrant, newcomers. Yeah, over billion. Billion. Compare the States, you know. The States will only say that: "You come, you learn English, otherwise I'm sorry". If you don't know that's ok, it's your right now to learn that but you need to learn that, right?

Teresa thinks that otherwise people will stay in their communities for over ten or fifteen years and it is very difficult for them when they do not know the language.

7.2 Employment

In Canada it may be difficult to get a job if you do not speak the language or if you do not have Canadian work experience. There may also be covert racism when an immigrant is applying for a job: it is not allowed to discriminate somebody because of his sex, race, skin color or background although, that happens. Some people even change their original name to a Canadian one to get work easier, and thus they may get to the job interview where the employer then realizes that she is an immigrant. From the women I interviewed two had taken part to employment courses where people are taught, for example to make good resumes and act well in a job interview. Abbey told me that the government has used thousands of dollars to get her a job through different programs but she thinks that it is mostly just waste of money since the jobs do not last long, and she wonders why does not government pay all the money directly to her that it uses to pay for organizations for finding her a job.

Abbey: Finally I get a job after years of going and calling everywhere in [name of the agency]. I worked for them maybe more than a year just for free, nothing, three days a week eight hours full-time. Not a penny. Then after that again they didn't hire me and again there was another program which...government give money to this organization, for example they give money to [name of the agency] and they hire you and they don't pay you, the government pays them some and they pay you some, you know what I mean? For example if government gives you one thousand you give me six hundred of that. This kind of job which that was for two years which again I was happy, I was very very happy about it because it was a job, you know, I didn't care, you know. But after my contract finish they said that they don't have budget and ok, [name of the agency] they don't have budget to hire me and government had this five thousand dollars or four thousand dollars for one person. It's all they afford to spend which is a lot of money and maybe this should work, you know, but didn't work. In my case didn't work.

Abbey had written letters to many places but without any results. Now she has been unemployed for years and cannot find any job since she is unable to do physical work like cleaning. However, according to Francine it was useful to learn about getting a job and she got a job with the teacher's help and is now working. Becky and Edie are still studying English and they told me that it is better to learn the language first and then look for a job. Becky thinks that she needs to learn French too in order to get a job even though her studying is progressing slowly since she has little children and she has not found childcare for her youngest one. Debbie has attained a high position at her work

and she told that she has not had any difficulties finding a job because she has not let her immigration background bother her.

Debbie: Not really. Not with the job part. I'm very proud to say that I'm [nationality]. I guess it depends on your personality too. I'm a people person although, I have problems on top of my head...over on top of my head I'm always smiling, you won't notice it. So no, I never had problems getting...or looking for a job.

Carol's story was a bit different than others since she was working before but her troubles started when she lost her job because of many health problems. She did not get her insurance money while she got unemployed and she had to fight for a long time and talk to the supervisor until she got her money. She told me that it is really hard for immigrant people to get through everything.

Carol: However, I was under so much stress, health problems, legal issues and my marriage and all and at the time, it was when I came to this organization. I didn't know much about it. And just before that coming to this place here, I had a heart attack. So unfortunately, I'm not working right now. But at the employment insurance, which is called welfare where they help you, government, they gave me a very hard time. They did not want to help me because of my husband's past issues, you know, they...he...because I had health issues years ago because of the violence and the stuff like that but because my husband had done some..a fraud which I wasn't aware of they did not want to give me help for my children and I, you know, they let me starve for a month eventually. --- However, after I knew some of my rights, you know, I went back there and I told them that, you know, it's our right, you know, that we pay for that, you know, when we worked, when I worked before, you know, we put money into that and especially with children. I was going to go to the press to let them know they didn't want to help me. That's what pressured them to help me, you know, and I spoke to the supervisor.

Teresa explained that theoretically an employer cannot discriminate immigrants because of sex, age, race or anything like that instead, the employer should treat people equally. Yet, Teresa thinks that it is discrimination when the employer declares that he only recognizes Canadian degrees, which means that a person who is educated outside Canada cannot apply for the job. Personally, Teresa has not faced discrimination since she got the first job she applied but she has heard from her clients about many kinds of discrimination. Yasmin agrees with Teresa that it can be really difficult to get a job if you are highly educated since for example doctors want to protect their field so that there is less doctors than demand. Yasmin told me that there is also discrimination because of one's accent or skin color, and she has experienced it personally.

Yasmin: Sometimes people look at you: "Ok, you are black", and then the first thing that comes to their mind is: "You are from Africa". And they think that you are different because

you are coming from a different continent and the [unclear word] of what ever that continent is, is what they put on you. They won't look at you as a person, as an individual: "You are from different experiences". "Yes, I have been coming from Africa but I was not living in a jungle. I was living in a city which is not so different than a city here in Canada." So sometimes people are...they are prejudice because of black in that way.

However, Yasmin thinks that most of the employers are good and only some have racist ideas. Sarah told me that her relative has faced a lot of difficulties getting a job because of her skin color because although, she has a lot of work experience and a Canadian degree but every time she goes to job interview she knows from the first impressions that they are not going to give the job to her. Sarah said that when she came to Canada and tried to get her first job she was really frustrated since everybody asked about her Canadian work experience. How could she have any experience when she does not even get a chance to show how good she is? Sarah thinks that it is just a civilized and indirect way to say that you cannot get a job because you are not Canadian. Often, for immigrant women it is even double the pain when you do not speak the language. For abused immigrant woman first the man tells her that she is nothing and when she gets free from the abuse, and then the system puts her down. Sometimes the woman even goes back to the abusive situation if she cannot find any way out of it. Valerie said that often immigrants get cooking and cleaning jobs and they may be doing long hours with low salary, sometimes even without the right pay. She was recently dealing with a case where an employer had paid less to an immigrant woman than what her hours were, and Valerie thought that the employer tried to cheat the woman thinking that she will not understand the language and the hours. Overall, Valerie thinks it depends on the level of English whether an immigrant woman gets a job or not.

7.3 Health Care

In Canada the health care is free for everybody after the first three months arriving the country, and there are no private health care clinics like in Finland where you can choose which system you want to use. In Canada people usually have family doctor or if not, then they use the walk-in clinics. The medicines are not covered under the governmental system, instead many people have extra insurances included in their employment contract. Most of the women I interviewed brought up how hard it has been to find a family doctor. Finally, Debbie had decided to use only the walk-in clinic doctor and call him her family doctor. Debbie said that it takes her four to five hours wait to see the doctor if she is sick but she sees no other options because she cannot go to work if she is sick so she has to go and sit at the clinic the whole morning.

Debbie: He is a walk-in so...they are open at nine. You got to be there at nine and I try this whenever I'm sick, I try to be there at nine or sometimes before nine, and I would sit there for a half a day. Half a day, four hours, the max is five to wait...sitting for me to see the doctor.

Interviewer: That's quite long time to wait.

Debbie: It's a long time so if you are sick...yeah, you are going to be more sick because you are sitting there waiting and because I work I need that doctor's note because I can't go to work, right? And it doesn't leave me no choice.

Carol and Francine have family doctors who are originally from the same country as they are, and Francine is happy with that since she does not have any problems with her health. Carol said that it usually takes a month to get an appointment to her family doctor, and so she has needed to go to a hospital to get health care faster to her children. She thinks that the health system is not that great anymore and there is not enough doctors for everybody. Edie and Becky thought their health care is working fine and they did not have more to mention about it. Abbey said that she is satisfied with the health care but she thinks dental care is meant only for the rich people because it is so expensive.

Abbey: Dentist is just luxury here and it's just for rich people. I have no teeth. Not here, not here, not here, not here. Just this front and I cannot chew. I can't do nothing. I'm...I just can have soup or this very, you know, water, milk or this kind of things. And, you know, it's very sad because in Canada...people they think that you...they are very lucky, happy they got...but we cannot even go and fix our...yeah, rich people they do everything but for people like me...no, we cannot do that.

Teresa told me that it depends on the status of the woman how much health care she can get. If a person is a permanent resident or refugee claimant then there is no problem since they can get the health card, the problem is if you are a visitor. According to Teresa visitors can also get health care from the community health clinics, especially if you are pregnant. However, if you are able to get a family doctor or not is another issue since Canada has not enough doctors. Otherwise, Teresa thinks the health system is good but because of the shortage of doctors you may have to wait for a long time which is a problem in general, not only for immigrant women. Yasmin and Sarah agreed that health care is good, and Sarah also knows that there are services offered for those too who do not have the health card. Rachel mentioned that the language barrier may be a problem and sometimes the women take their partner to interpret for them. On Yasmin's and Sarah's experience immigrant women get interpreters quite often to doctor's appointments, and Sarah said that some of the doctors can be really sensitive to the women. Valerie thinks that there should be more immigrant women working as medical professionals so that they would have understanding on the background of the

women and what some of the women have gone through in their country of origin.

Valerie: I have a woman that...she has gone through a female circumcision, through torture, you know, and it's very difficult like...they are going with many women's issues and many problems because they have been raped and now they are having to be seen by a, you know, a male doctor and they might not feel comfortable with that so...I don't know...if some one could possibly...this is my...my own opinion...yeah, if they would have more trained doctors that may have come from their home country of origin and understand some of the social issues that some of these women have gone through. That would be helpful. It's very confusing I think for...some of the women because English is your second language and you got an appointment on this day and you have to go to this test and this test and see that doctor and don't you forgot to follow that line to the next room...they are lost. They..."What do I do?", you know, and they might not even know what the tests are for and are afraid to ask. So I think if there could be some more support in that sense, yeah. --- And they may not go to see a doctor, they may not have been to see a doctor, they may have had, you know, depending on when they came to Canada maybe they have never seen a doctor, they have had their baby at home, yeah.

According to Valerie many women also lack knowledge of many diseases, for example sexually transmitted diseases and they need that knowledge because often their husbands have had number of other relationships. However, complete physical examination can be very frightful experience to a woman if she does not understand what is happening. Valerie said that sometimes she goes with the woman to advocate for her at the doctor's appointment if the woman feels that she cannot survive on her own.

7.4 Housing

In Canada there is no such housing allowance than what we have in Finland. The Finnish housing allowance makes it possible that basically, everybody can live wherever they want and get allowance for the rent. On the contrary, in Canada there is only the possibility of subsidized housing if you are not able to pay the full rent, and the housing is located in the different parts of the city, sometimes in not so good neighborhoods. The waiting time into subsidized housing may be extremely long especially, from the Finnish point of view since in Finland you usually get housing in a year or faster even without any kind of priority status. For my interviewees it had taken from one month to ten years to get housing. Becky, Edie and Francine have stayed in a shelter waiting for subsidized housing and they had got help from the workers. Francine had waited only a month, Edie had waited for two months, which she thinks, was because she has so many children, and Becky waited for five months. However, Francine complained about the bad behavior of the workers in the housing office.

Francine: Sometimes I call...I call for the...I call for the [name of the province] housing, right. I have in my...for example I have a leaking in my sink but I call to them but my English is not very good and then I think that they don't understand what I'm saying and they mark at me for...they don't mark at me but they [unclear word] at me saying: "What, what, what happened?" They talk louder then, right. It's not nice I think so. But some, not all of them.

Carol said that she had problems getting housing because she did not have a reference from her previous landlord since she had just arrived in the country. Even though she is a citizen it took her four months to find a private apartment, and until then she had to live with her brother. Carol described how she had to cry to people in order to rent an apartment. For Abbey it took ten years to get subsidized housing, and she had to stay at her daughter's house after she separated from her husband. Then her daughter moved to another city and Abbey told me that she had to go and cry and do many other things before she got housing. Debbie has never had any problems with housing except that now when she is a care-taker of the building in which she lives the owners treat her in a very racist way, and they have been trying to make her leave.

All the workers had strong opinions concerning housing. They all saw the housing situation quite bad and the waiting times too long. According to Sarah, housing is the problem number one for the women and it can be crazy. Sometimes it is even more difficult to help the women because all they want to talk about is the housing even though they may have other deep problems as well. Sarah thinks that it is understandable because how are you supposed to settle and work through other issues if you do not have a home. Fortunately, many of the abused women get the priority status if a worker writes her a reference letter stating that she is fleeing abuse. Without the reference letter it might take eight to nine years to get housing but with the letter it usually takes two or three months, sometimes just couple weeks if the situation is really life-threatening. It makes the process slower if the woman wants to live in some particular areas of the city and refuses to apply for all the areas. Often, the woman may get housing faster if she has children. On Valerie's experience it takes from three to six months to get housing, sometimes even a year even though the woman may be in a high risk abusive situation. However, if the partner has left already, or the woman is staying with a relative or a friend so that her safety is not in an immediate risk, then the woman goes under the regular application system and it may take two to four years to get housing. If the woman is staying in the shelter then the process is the fastest possible because they also need to make room for others in the shelter. Of course, subsidized housing is only for those who are low-income. The rent goes up if your income goes up and sometimes people may end up paying high rent for low-rental housing. Valerie said that there is not enough housing and some of the housing homes are infested with

cockroaches, pucks and mice. As well as there may be electrical or plumbing problems. Valerie explained that the government housing is usually situated in certain areas, and it feels like segregation since many social problems are also centered in those areas.

Valerie: And then you are low-rental, we call it low-rental housing, you know, so I feel it's almost like segregation, you know...you know...and I think for some families they are shamed to tell people where they live because people know that "Oh, oh, well ok, you live there". Yeah, and right away they would know and I think even for the children...the children growing up, you know, government housing...it can be difficult for them too because, you know, maybe they can be taunted by other kids, yeah. I think they should be scattered like, you know, and blend in with the rest of the homes. And I think it would cut down a lot of gang activity, a lot of...a lot of things, a lot of problem...the word I cannot think today...a lot of vandalism.

Valerie said that quite often the women are offered housing from the far away part of the city which is widely known as a bad area, which is also the reason why there apartments become available quicker than elsewhere. Valerie thinks that it can put a woman in a difficult position if she refuses to take an offer from that part of the city.

Valerie: A lot of women don't want to go to live in the [name of the area]. Yeah, because that's...it's commonly known as...you know, the bad area and not as some wonderful, beautiful people that live in the [name of the area] and I think it's wrong but it's just the stigma that it's [unclear word] [name of the area] and a lot of women don't want to live in the [name of the area], you know, that where most of the rapes, the killings, the shootings, the stabbings, the drugs, you know, and so they don't want to live in the [name of the area]. But that's where most of the houses with [name of the housing office] become available much quicker, yeah. So they would offer: "Well, we have but if you are in high risk, you know, and you are in a need of housing then we have this house for you but now you are telling me you don't want this house. So you can't be in such a high risk situation if you say...." Yeah, you see what I mean? Yeah, yeah. Very political.

Valerie continued telling that women are given only three offers and if they refuse them all then they will end up at the bottom of the list. Rachel and Teresa emphasized that many times the women are not aware that there are such things as subsidized housing or shelters, as well as, they do not know that they can get the priority status if they apply for housing. Before the woman meets with the agency worker she may have been thinking that she has no other options than just stay with the abuser, and because of that some woman just stay and try to bear the violence. Therefore, the knowledge of other options is critical when women consider leaving the abuser. Yasmin explained that altogether there is shortage of housing because they are not building as many housing complexes as they are taking new immigrants. According to Yasmin it is a big problem if you do not have references stating that you will pay the rent from your previous landlord because then you

will have difficulties getting private housing. The language can be an obstacle too because the potential landlord will not look for an interpreter, you have to do it yourself. Also if the woman is not working then she will be unable to pay the rent. Yasmin thinks that sometimes it is just pure racism if people do not want to rent an apartment to you.

7.5 Legal Aid

In Canada the meaning of getting legal aid is much bigger than in Finland since a lawyer is usually needed to get a divorce, get the custody of one's children in the separation or to deal with immigration problems. Private lawyers are really expensive and that is why it is so important to get legal aid if you are eligible for it, meaning that you do not have a lot of property or money. Rarely, an immigrant woman is so rich that she could not get legal aid but even if you are eligible it can be hard to find a lawyer who has time and motivation to take your case. Both the agencies I visited had their own ways of getting legal aid for their clients, usually there were some visiting lawyers at the agency who would give free legal advices to the women. Becky, Debbie and Edie mentioned that they have got legal aid and it has been helpful for them. All three had got the legal aid or legal advices through the agency. Abbey told me that they had asked a lot of money from her in order to get legal aid and so she had refused from any help since she had got scared of them taking her money.

Abbey: I have situation with my husband because I am separated and they gave me lawyer. I went there and the lawyer said legal aid asking me to sign for five thousand dollars, you know, to give them back. I said: "How do I even know I'm getting five thousand dollars?" And that scared me. I just said I don't want to. No, I said thank you very much but I'm going to stay just separated. I don't want divorce. I don't want anything from my husband because that is scary. Why do you have to do something like this if you want to help somebody like me? Ok, if I get some money then you ask for some portion of it. But when you give me five thousand dollars and I sign for you...no thank you. I just said no...which didn't help.

First I thought it was just a misunderstanding with Abbey but Rachel told me that legal aid does not cover divorce or separation unless it is some special case. To get legal advice for divorce you have to go to one of the community legal clinics where you will get information about family law and the relevant forms. Valerie said that about 90 per cent of her clientele would be eligible for legal aid and those few who are working will get legal assistance from the agency's visiting lawyer.

Valerie: The majority of them would be eligible for legal aid. I would say ninety per cent of my...of my clientele would be eligible for legal aid. There are some that I have come across

and they have been working and they have made too much money although they...they probably would be eligible for legal aid but it would cost them...you know...quite a bit so they just decided not go with the legal aid lawyer. They are going to go with their own lawyer that might...that might support them a little bit better.

Yasmin was worried that some of her clients who get legal aid do not benefit from it as much as one might think. Sometimes the woman does not understand everything that is told to her because of the cultural differences even though she may have an interpreter with her. The law might be very different in Canada than to what she is used to, and the woman may refuse to do what the lawyer wants her to do, and then the lawyer may get frustrated and the woman will not get all the services or help she would need. Yasmin still thinks that legal aid does its best to help immigrants. Teresa described the possibility that a woman can also get two-hours family violence form from the agency if she is low-income. With the form she can see a lawyer for the two-hours time for free. On Teresa's opinion the women do not usually know how to get legal aid but they will get that information from the agency workers.

8 Getting Help

8.1 Fear of Authorities and Finding Help

I asked a lot of questions about knowledge of the Canadian laws and services and the attitudes towards authorities. Most of the interviewees had a lot to say to these topics and strong opinions on the matters. Because of their background, many immigrants do not know if they can trust Canadian authorities. In their home country for example the police may have been the most feared person. Similarly, when I was working with immigrants in Finland, I had one client who had been severely tortured by the police in his country of origin, and also his father had been killed by the police. It may be difficult to trust police after such experiences. In my research three of the five women answered that they are afraid of authorities, for example police or child protection.

Abbey: We are...yeah, we are always afraid of police, no matter what. I'm very innocent person. I never did anything wrong during my life but, you know, people they come from [name of the country]...they are always afraid of police because police is bad news, you know, calling...still, I'm afraid of police. --- Well... here..., I don't think I called police. No, I never called police. No, I never called police...even if I needed help.

Becky and Carol mentioned that they were afraid to ask for help especially at the beginning when they arrived in Canada because they thought that they could not speak English well enough to be understood. Carol said that even nowadays she is afraid to ask for help because of the language barrier, and because she never knows who might be a racist. She is satisfied with the agency but thinks that in governmental agencies the treatment is not that good. Debbie told me that she knows that some people can be racist but she can speak up to herself and so she is not afraid of authorities.

All the workers shared the opinion that the women are afraid of authorities, especially police and child protection. Teresa explained that many immigrant women feel that is a lot of trouble if they contact police. Many times the women do not want the police to take away their husband or charge him; they only want to scare him. Because of the different legal system, the women may not know the laws in Canada or understand what all the institutions do: there may not even be any kind of institution for child protection in their home country. Yasmin thinks that it is unlikely that the woman calls the police even in an emergency if she has prejudices against them.

Yasmin: And most of our clients are coming from war-torn countries where the police, the soldiers, the people of authorities who are suppose to be protecting them are the ones who are abusing them. So what are the chances that this woman is going to call police when she comes to Canada if...she is in a domestic violence situation she is afraid...that "Oh, my husband is going to kill me, he is hitting me really hard", and call the police that she has had bad experiences with police in her country. --- So the chances of her calling.... sometimes they are very low or even none.

Rachel said that the women are afraid of authorities because they are not used to getting any support from them, and a lot of education is needed to fill the lack of knowledge. According to Valerie, the women may be afraid what happens to them if they ask for help outside their community because they may be excluded from the community if they contact a person outside it. The abuser can also scare them with the deportation if the woman tells anybody about the abuse: there is the imbalance of power and control. Rachel explained that if a child is witnessing abuse or is a victim of abuse then it is a worker's obligation to contact child protection according to the Canadian law. Sarah explained that many women panic when the child protection is mentioned because the first thing they think is that they are going to lose their children even though child protection can also offer supportive and preventive services to the family.

Four of the six women told me that initially they did not know that violence against women is forbidden in Canada. Abbey was the only one who got to know it right away. Carol said that she wanted to come to Canada because she thought she would be more protected there. Francine went to work straight after arriving Canada and nobody told her about violence at that time. Edie described how she heard about it in school and how it has been more difficult to cope with the violence in Canada than in her home country.

Edie: When I come I...I don't know but I hear somebody but I don't know what they mean abuse or thing because first time I don't know...I didn't know language. After he start to drink, to talk, yelling in home, bad words, yeah that time I know. --- In school, some friends say it's not allowed and I then...I feel it's not good...it's not good because we are here, we came from another country. It's hard here. In my country if like that happen you can run to father, his father or her mother to stay like short time or long time. Everything is done, is cool down. If you want to go back it's easy but here it's hard. No place like that around. I don't have sister or brother or somebody else beside me.

All the workers except Sarah thought that immigrant woman do not know that violence against women is forbidden in Canada even though the women may learn it later on when they get to know the Canadian culture and laws. Yasmin said that if the man keeps the woman isolated at home, then the woman may not get to know her rights at all. Sarah mentioned that many women get pamphlets

from the airport when they arrive, and so the women get to know that violence against women is illegal in Canada. Rachel, Valerie and Yasmin emphasized the role of the culture, because in many countries violence is tolerated or even allowed, so the women do not know that they have a right to say no. Teresa told me that sometimes the women may know about physical abuse but they may not know that there are other types of abuse as well.

Teresa: I think most of the people they know that... in another country physical abuse is a problem. People know that but they don't know the other type of abuse, for example financial, social or sexual. I think sexual... sexual abuse is another issue because not many women... they want to tackle this problem. But for the social, financial, emotional, you know, psychological, all these things. They, they don't know so therefore they...they come here and... they call us, they may not tell you about this is the...this is... financial abuse, that is social abuse but they just tell us: "My husband just lock me in a room and then not allow me to go out, not allow me to go to school, not allow me to have my friends". Then we know that it is social, you know, abuse, yeah. They don't know.

There are many obstacles, which make it more difficult for an immigrant woman to ask for help. The women I interviewed did not specify why it was difficult for them, however, Debbie said that she heard about the agency from a friend and she has felt it easier to talk about abuse there than to a psychologist at work place health care. First she had not even felt like going somewhere to get help so it had taken her some time before she even had started looking for a place where she can discuss her problems. The workers found many reasons why it is difficult for an immigrant woman to ask for help: language barrier, lack of knowledge and cultural differences. Yasmin described how in some cultures violence could even be encouraged.

Yasmin: If you are coming from a country where abuse is encouraged or tolerated or promoted or allowed then it's normal, that's your life, that's what you have been raised to take. "It's ok, if my husband hits me. It's ok, if my husband sexually abuses me. It's ok, if my husband does this to me because he is suppose to do it." So you won't go and ask for help in that case even though it hurts you but you won't ask for help because it's normal and it's ok for him to do that.

According to Yasmin, some women do not go looking for help because they are thinking that their husband will change. It is the circle of violence, and on good times the woman falls in love with her husband again and so she does not want to disappoint him and ask for help. Yasmin said that some of the women do not even know what abuse is or they do not know that for example that it is a rape if their husband forces them to have sex. When these women come to the agency and meet a worker there they may not have a name for what they have been experiencing.

Yasmin: For other women...they may not even know...they may not even know what abuse is because, you know, when you get something a name and you are coming from somewhere where you don't have a name for it it's hard to understand. Because I know some of my clients I have had to explain what abuse was. They know that...they have been going through everything but they didn't know it is abuse. --- So if you explain then they will know: "Oh, this is abuse". But if you don't know what it is how can you report or how can you ask for help if you don't know what it is what you are going through.

The women may be unaware of the functioning of the Canadian system like Rachel mentioned. She said that many times women do not know the resources and services that are available or they may not be familiar with the Canadian laws. Immigrant women lack the information and they may be isolated. Valerie explained that an immigrant woman can be afraid that she will be rejected from her community if she asks help or she might meet somebody she knows at the agency and this person will tell others about the woman's problems. On Sarah opinion, also the Canadian weather can be an obstacle to immigrants, when they are trying to adjust to a new country. Sarah told about her own experiences when she came to Canada and she was really depressed because of all the snow. She was afraid to go out and she was really homesick. Sarah went to see a doctor but the doctor said that Sarah should do some winter activities in order to get over her depression and fear of snow, which advice Sarah find no helpful at all. For abused women the weather can intensify their stress and deepen their isolation.

8.2 What Could Be Done Differently

I wanted to ask from those who know the most about the issue what would be the best way to help immigrant women to get free from violence and integrate into Canadian society. I used this question as kind of ending question for the whole interview in order for the women to look forward and get the feeling of being empowered after all their experiences. After all, they are the true experts of knowing what should be done differently when helping immigrant women. Interestingly, also the workers were enthused to tell me a lot of their own opinions on what should be enhanced, and this last theme seemed to be a really important one during the whole interview. From the women only Abbey was pessimistic about the possibilities to get help for other woman experiencing violence. She described how she has been trying to help her daughter without any success.

Abbey: I am a mother I know my daughter. She, you know, she is under his control, this man's control and everything but she cannot talk for herself. She doesn't want it or maybe

she...the guy is washing her brain or something, you know, nobody can do anything. I see my daughter in Canada, she is suffering from so many things...abusive relationship but I cannot do nothing about it. This, you know, but they have everything. Here they do have. So many things here, you know. You know that. And I don't know what kind of change they can make. I don't...I really don't know that.

Interviewer: You don't think that there is any way that she could be helped?

Abbey: No, I tried everything. I tried everything. For five times she came for divorce. She stayed here for a month we went for...to apply for divorce and this, and she saw workers five six times. Again this guy...I don't know is he a magnet or something. She goes back and I'm worry. I'm very worry and... but I cannot do nothing about it. I know what's going on...but unless she is ready no we can do. I can do nothing. And this is sad. This is sad. You see in Canada this is sad. But now they have everything. I'm sure you know.

However, Abbey said that it is important if I can reach all those people like her who have the same problems, and if I could be the voice for those people. I do not think that my master thesis can reach many immigrant women but maybe somebody will read it and understand that there are others too who are going through the same problems. Becky, Carol and Debbie said that there should be more information about abuse and where you can go to get help. Becky told me that she knows a lot of women in her community who are being abused and she has been trying tell them about the agency but many of them do not want to talk about the issue to outsiders. Violence is still seen as a family issue and that is why it is very difficult to ask help. Becky said that those women just stay in the abusive relationship and hope that some day the abuser will get better and the situation will be better. Becky thinks that there should be articles in the community newspaper in their own language because even though Becky is trying to tell as many as possible there is still a lot of people who do not know about the services. The article should describe what is abuse and that it is not only physical but also emotional, sexual and financial. Because there was a agency worker helping Becky with the language the worker told that actually, she writes every year one article about abuse to the community newspaper but since she is so busy with her work she has not had time to write more often. According to Carol immigrant women should get more information about employment, health and legal issues. There should be places to rent and information about them in order for the immigrants to settle in Canada.

Carol: Tell them well, you know, there are these places to rent. Make it easier on us, you know, in order to settle down and in that sense if you go through all that, you settle down, you will be more able to do what ever you need to do as citizen in this society. Give them the tools to do that. If you don't give us the tools, you know, to achieve what we want, to be a good citizen how are we going to do it? If they don't give it to us. It's not just coming from an another country and leave us there: "That's it, do on your own", you know, I don't think that's the right thing to do. And you know, we need more help in that sense, you know.

I think Carol really had a good point in her sayings since I also think the main point is to help immigrants to settle down in the new society so that one day they can be part of the society, instead of being excluded from it into their own communities. Debbie said that there should be posters everywhere about domestic violence so that people could see the posters and know that there are places to go for women and children.

Debbie: I think there should be more advertising and... especially for immigrant women. They should...you know...could you imagine if you are coming from a country and you even know...you even know nobody and all of a sudden you are in a situation that...you are in an abusive situation. If I didn't have this and if I'm just new here I would kill myself, you know, I would be devastated. So yeah, I mean like Canada should really push funding for domestic violence and it should stop.

Debbie thinks that it should be zero tolerance to violence, which took effect only this year or the year before. Debbie said that she has been in the shelter number of times but no one has ever called the police, however, when she went to shelter in United States the workers called the police right away and now her husband is going through many different programs since the judge in USA told him to. Debbie thinks that her husband has been free to do whatever he likes all these years before the last incident that happened in USA. It should be zero tolerance because no woman or girl has enough strength to defend herself in a battle against a man so in order for women to be safe the violence should be reported to police. As well, there should be advertising in TV that violence against women is forbidden in Canada and there is help available for the victims. Francine agreed with Debbie that there should more information and education for people, especially about the women's rights. Francine also thought that there should be workers who speak the languages of the immigrant women because the language is such a big problem. Edie emphasized that women should take violence seriously even though you may love your husband. You need think about the safety and the children first.

Edie: Yeah. You have to take your life is serious. If you take your life serious you are going to be the...you are going to get life and kids, you are going to stay in the...kids have peace, yeah, have peace and then kids see your life is good, is [unclear word]. Then the kids learn from you. If you not going straight the kids come like you, the same. Up, down, up, down, up, down. Sometimes we women if you take the good, right way we have kids, they are going to take good way. If we are going to take up, down, up, down, up, down, the same. Yeah, the same. Especially women. Yeah, especially women. Because the women, she protect...she protect the kids, cover kids.

The workers mentioned mainly the same things as the women: more information, more education, more publicity for the issue. Teresa and Valerie described how it is important to train people before they come to Canada. Teresa said that it is happening already in some countries that when people get to know that they are allowed to immigrate into Canada they will get information about the social system, legal system and education. It is called pre-arrival program and after attending the program people are more prepared to face all the problems they will have in a new country, and the culture shock will not be so hard. Valerie said that immigrants should have higher level of English when they come than what they have now because those people who do not understand the language struggle the most. On Valerie's opinion also the government should do more when people are arriving since sometimes there is nothing ready for them and people will have to go to hotels.

Even the weather can make it very difficult because if it is freezing outside people cannot go around the city just looking for a place to stay or looking, for example a doctor or English classes. There should be some kind of safety net when new people arrive so that they would get to know the services and at least have a housing. Teresa thinks that government should put more money on employment because now some of the immigrants come to Canada but when the man cannot find a job he may go back to the home country and send money to the rest of the family in Canada. This causes problems when the wife and children live on their lives and it can be hard to be together again after many years of separation. If there is work available then the immigrants can settle down and be financially stable. Teresa explained that often the violence starts when the life in Canada is not what the immigrant expected: the man is earning less money or cannot find a job at all and then there might be the imbalance of roles if the woman goes to work. Many things that have been normal in their own country are now wrong and it can be a total shock. Teresa told an interesting example from her own life how it can be difficult to know what is wrong and what is right.

Teresa: I can tell you, in my culture when I was young even when my father, before my father past away we don't eat with my mom, right? My mom cannot be allowed to eat with us. Yeah, because she...her role is serve her husband and children. Therefore when we eat and after we eat then...she eats at the kitchen. Yeah, ok? So, and we don't think it is a wrong thing, right? And then until, until...therefore when I thought...until when I...when we...we grow up and then my friend told me...came to my house and then she discovered that...and then my mom...and then she said: "Oh, it is not right"...we told...we learn and we told my mom: "Oh, no we don't need...you should not do that". She said: "What's wrong with it?". "Nothing wrong." "My friend, her situation is even worse than me, eh? They don't even get something to eat. I'm better now. I can eat that in the kitchen." That is...everything is...that's why I said it's comparative and if you are in my land, everybody is like that, it's no problem. When you come here then it's a problem. That's your...When you come to a new country it is a cultural shock. It's the system differs. All...even climate is different. Weather is different

for us. Therefore, you need to adapt to all these things. And then when you compare you and other people: "Oh, my husband is like that. Treat me like that." And then the other people they can say: "Oh, your husband is like that. Oh, your husband helps you at home, right? Do something?". Then they know that. They compare. They think something different here.

Rachel said that the language barrier should be overcome so that the women would get information and be empowered. She said that there is support groups where the women can go to get back their confidence and take their lives in their own hands: for example go back to school or do voluntary work. In the friendship groups women can meet other abused women and break the isolation. Yasmin and Sarah mentioned that there should be more help to the man because family is not only made of woman and children. Also the man need help to change their behavior. Sarah thinks that there should be education about domestic violence at schools and communities too so that the young generations would learn that violence is wrong and illegal.

9 Conclusions

My main question for this thesis has been: what are the societal risk factors which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence. I believe that knowing the answer to this question might make it possible to help abused immigrant women in better way and gives information about what kind of changes should be done in the society. I noticed that the literature review and interview data describe similar risk factors and reasons for abuse but the interviews give much wider picture of the phenomenon. There are still quite few researches done about partner violence against immigrant women and most of the literature I have used for this thesis is from Canada or from some other country than Finland. I think that even in the international literature the voice of an immigrant women is not heard and especially in Finland it is totally silent. Violence against women is quite well known phenomenon but immigrant women have not been able to raise their problems in the common knowledge in a same way as the majority women. A big difference between Canada and Finland is also the education and knowledge of those workers who work with immigrant women: in Canada there is a lot more experience and training about immigration issues. Finland has less immigrants and the awareness of the special needs of immigrants is quite new.

All the data I have collected for this master thesis is from Canada and therefore, all the immigration stories are from Canada but anybody who has studied or worked with immigrants can recognize the similarity between Finland and Canada. Most of the stories of the Canadian immigrant women could also take place in Finland. The societies are different but most of the problems immigrant women face are the same because they all go through same kind of adaptation process. That is why I think my research can also be both interesting and important in Finland too. It is good to remember that even though there are fewer studies about abused immigrant women in Finland than in Canada, there are studies about immigrants and immigration in Finland. Just to mention few of the researchers, for example Laura Huttunen (2004) has studied the integration and marginalization of the immigrants in Finland. She noticed how the majority could determine all the immigrants as part of same minority even though the immigrants may have very different kind of backgrounds and personalities. Marja Pentikäinen (2005) has done research about refugees in Finland and about what kind of identities refugees form in Finnish context. Tuomas Martikainen and Marja Tiilikainen

(2007) have edited a whole book about issues concerning immigrant women and they both have also done research on the subject.

The research about abuse and immigrant women is still quite rare in Finland. In my opinion it is really important to interview immigrant women and hear their story. I think the women and the workers I interviewed have a lot of silent knowledge that is not yet written anywhere. In this thesis I have tried to understand and bring up the immigrant women's complex life situation, which makes them vulnerable to partner violence. I was fortunate to interview so courageous women that they were willing to tell me about their life and let me see some of their pain and suffering. I am also thankful for the workers I interviewed since they shared some of their work experience with me. I hope in this thesis I have been managed to tell everything as they told it to me. Thus, it is up to the reader if he or she is open to see the reality in which these abused immigrant women live.

In every woman's life there may be risk factors, which make her vulnerable to partner violence. However, those women who live in the same country that they have been born in are usually more comfortable using services and searching and getting help in an abusive situation. Immigrant women face many barriers and obstacles, and their life situation is often initially more stressing and complicated than that of majority women. An immigrant woman has lost the proximity and support of her own family and she can be extremely isolated from the whole society without knowing any safe place to go. It is obvious that a majority woman knows the language of the country, and she is therefore able to contact services and police, which is not so easy for many immigrant women. It is really important to have information available in the immigrant woman's own language, as well as there should be interpreters who can accompany abused women. When breaking the language barrier it is essential to keep in mind the cultural barrier, which is a real challenge for workers helping immigrants. Like mentioned before there is a lack of culturally sensitive services (see for ex. Migliardi, Blum and Heinonen 2004, 80-83), and to improve the situation all the services should be culturally sensitive. This is difficult task when often the workers in Finland are Finns and do not have any special training for cultural skills. I think that culturally sensitive work should be taught already during the social work university studies.

In the chapter 8.2 the interviewees give suggestions about the changes, which would help immigrant women, free themselves from violence. I list them here because they are that valuable information

which we cannot get from the literature. To begin with the abused women say that there should be more information available for abused women, for example articles in the newspapers in women's own languages. Those articles should describe what abuse is and especially, tell that abuse is not only physical violence. Also there should be more information about employment, health and legal issues. Furthermore, more rental housing would make it easier to settle down in a new country. Posters and other advertising about domestic violence would help abused women to know that there are shelters and other places where one can go when she needs help. Education about women's rights would make it possible for women to defend themselves. There should be workers who speak other languages than just the language of the majority. Any forms of violence should not be tolerated in the society and authorities should take actions every time they get to know about domestic violence.

The workers I interviewed said that there should be education for the immigrants prior to coming to a new country in order for the people to be more prepared to the new life. The government should put more efforts giving immigrants initial safety net and employment opportunities when they come so they would get as good start as possible. The workers also reminded that when helping the woman to free herself from violence it is important also to remember the needs of a man and children because often the whole family lacks help and support. The workers also agreed with the interviewed women and mentioned many same support and education methods.

As for example Johnson et al. (2008, 79-82) have mentioned there is a need for societal changes to improve the status of women and to break down the inequalities between genders. The strict gender roles may be damaging to women, as well as many societal norms and attitudes. I think also the immigrant men need help to find their places in the society. Many of the immigrants are originally from countries where the man is seen as the head of the family and so controlling the wife has been his right. In a new country getting a job which would make it possible to provide maintenance for the family can be very difficult, and the changes in the gender roles may cause strong conflicts and even violence (look for ex. Smith 2004, 24-26). It would make the family situation less strained if the man could feel he is needed and useful in the new society.

In Finland there is a specific law about the integration of the immigrants, which states how government and municipality should help immigrants to integrate into their new home country. For

example the municipality and employment office could organize guidance, information and familiarizing to the society as well as many other services (Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers 7§). In the coming years more and more immigrants will come to Finland and it will become even more important to find out how all these people could live peacefully side by side with the majority, and take actively part in the society instead of being isolated. Working against all kind of abuse makes it possible that an immigrant family can be a healthy and functional place to raise children. The next generation does not have the same burden as their parents from the original home country, instead they will feel more like Finns and want to live their lives like Finnish young people do. However, this is not possible if the first generation parents do not get help settling down. Partner abuse may make it impossible for all the family members to live full life and witnessing abuse can be very traumatizing for children.

Before this master thesis I have done social work in child protection and in immigration services in Canada and Finland. I think in both fields of work I have sensed the same feeling of compassion and urge to give comfort for those who are suffering. However, in child protection I often ended up feeling desperate while facing so much emotional and physical pain of children which seemed to be never ending story: there was neither enough workers nor enough money to change the reality. On the contrary when I was working with abused women in Canada I could see a great strength in those women. Even though those women had suffered beyond any measure there was hope. There was the glimmer of light that made the work feel worth doing. As Merja Laitinen has noticed while studying sexual abuse, often, the victim could be called survivor as well, because they have done active work to live on their life, instead of taking passive role (Laitinen 2004, 89). Even after all horrible experiences in the women's home country, after the hard immigration and adjusting process to a new country and after abuse, women are still standing strong. That makes me really admire them and motivates me to do my best to help them as a social worker.

In this thesis I have focused in the societal risk factors, which are often not the same as personal risk factors. However, all the abused women are part of the society where they live and so the societal risk factors are also big part of their lives. Like Wiehe mentioned partner abuse has to be prevented in all levels: personal, community and societal (Wiehe 1998, 124-125). Despite that it is important to keep in mind that excellent laws or work practices do not reach an abused immigrant woman if she does not get the information or maybe does not even know that violence is illegal or that she could call police for help. Social work is done in the societal level and it is social workers' mission

to gain changes in the societal level as well in the individual level. Unfortunately, many of the changes in the society do not reach those who are in the most vulnerable position or live there lives with a little contact to the surrounding society like immigrants often do. Knowing this fact does not make it worthless to do research about how to improve abused immigrant quality of life, on the contrary it means that we social workers need to work even harder to give information and break the language barrier in order to immigrant women to live free from abuse in their new home country.

As final words I say that this master thesis has been a great challenge for me since it included so many multicultural aspects and travelling. In a way this master thesis can be seen as a travelogue of my research trip to Canada. I have used my writer's privilege in many chapters to tell my own feelings and experiences during the writing of this thesis. Some readers may find it intruding but I hope others will find it enrichening. I am satisfied with the data I got from the interviews and I have tried to do justice to those abused women who helped me by writing as good thesis as possible. I leave it to the readers to criticize how well I have succeeded in it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Clients

1. Can you tell me your immigration status?
2. Immigration status of the partner?
3. Country of origin?
4. The year of immigration?
5. Experienced partner violence: a) physical b) emotional c) sexual d) financial e) spiritual f) threatening
6. When was the last time you faced partner violence?

Immigration status

- Did you know your immigration status when you came to Canada?
- Have you had any problems with sponsorship program? What kind of?
- Did your family's financial situation change when you moved to Canada? How?
- Have you been financially dependent on your partner?
- Have you always got an interpreter when you have needed one?
- Have you got information about violence in your own language?
- Have you been afraid to ask for help? (deportation)
- Have you been afraid of authorities for ex. child protection?

Social welfare and legal systems

- Have you been afraid to contact police?
- Did you know that violence against women is forbidden in Canada?
- Have you got enough information about your rights in Canada and all the available services?
- Have you got legal aid when you have needed it?
- Have you had problems with housing? Can you tell me about it?
- Have you got all the health care you have needed? Can you tell me about it?

Racism

- Have you been discriminated or faced racism?
- Have had difficulties getting a job etc.?
- Do you think your immigrant background has made it more difficult to ask for help or get help? In what way?

Collision of the cultures

- Have you noticed a conflict between your values and the Canadian values? Can you tell me about

it?

Has your religion or the traditions of your culture made it more difficult to ask for help or get a divorce?

Have you noticed any change in the roles of man and woman when you came to Canada? What kind of?

Help

What do you think is the best way to help immigrant women to get free from violence and integrate into the society?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Workers

Immigration status

- Do the immigrant women know their immigration status when they come to Canada?
- Do they have problems with sponsorship program?
- Does the family's financial situation change when the family moves to Canada? How?
- Are the women financially dependent on their partner?
- Do they always get an interpreter when they need one?
- Do they have information about abuse available in their own language?
- Are the women afraid to ask for help?
- Are they afraid of authorities for ex. child protection?

Social welfare and legal systems

- Are they afraid to contact police?
- Do they know that violence against women is forbidden in Canada?
- Do you think they get enough information about their rights in Canada and all the available services?
- Do they get legal aid when they need it?
- Do they have problems with housing?
- Do they get all the health care they need?

Racism

- What kind of discrimination or racism immigrant women face?
- Do they have problems getting a job etc.?
- Does the immigrant background make it more difficult to ask or get help?

Collision of the cultures

- Do you think there is a conflict between the values of the immigrant women and the Canadian values?
- Does the religion or the traditions of the culture of origin make it more difficult to ask for help or get a divorce?
- Is there a change in the roles of man and woman when people came to Canada? What kind of?

Help

- What do you think is the best way to help immigrant women to get free from violence and integrate into the society?

Appendix 3: Release Form for Clients

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

DATE: _____

Subject of the Research: Master thesis about **What Makes Immigrant Women Vulnerable to Partner Violence**

Researcher: Hanna Suni (Master of Social Work student), hanna.suni@uta.fi

Institution: University of Tampere, Finland, Department of Social Policy and Social Work

Funded by: the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies and the University of Tampere

Participation is voluntary. All the information is confidential.

Purpose of the research:

I base my research on the results and conclusions of my bachelor thesis in which I did a literature review about what makes immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence in Finland and Canada. In this research I focus on the social risk factors, which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence: racism, immigration status, social welfare and legal systems and collision of the cultures. I believe that by knowing more about the risk factors it is possible to develop new working methods to integrate immigrants to the society so that their life could be free from violence. I think there is a lot to be done so that immigrant women could settle down to their new home and live peaceful life side by side with the majority. I'm doing my research in Canada but I will write my thesis from the Finnish perspective. Learning from others ways of doing things is one of my motives to do international research: I believe Finland has a lot to learn from Canada and vice versa.

About the interview and confidentiality:

Since my research is about such an sensitive topic I will do the interviews using theme interview: **I will mainly ask questions about your experiences on racism, immigration, social and legal systems and the collision of the cultures.** I understand that it might be difficult for you to talk about your life and I want you to tell me only as much as you feel comfortable telling. I will record the interviews and keep the tapes and my notes safe from outsiders. I will save the records and transcripts only for my own use in the future and I will not let anybody else to use them. **No information that discloses your identity will be released or published.** In every possible way I will try to show respect to your kindness to share some of your life experiences with me.

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form, ask questions about the research project and so I'm prepared to participate in this project.

Participant's Signature:

Date and place:

Researcher's Signature:

Appendix 4: Release Form for Workers

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

DATE: _____

Subject of the Research: Master thesis about **What Makes Immigrant Women Vulnerable to Partner Violence**

Researcher: Hanna Suni (Master of Social Work student), hanna.suni@uta.fi

Institution: University of Tampere, Finland, Department of Social Policy and Social Work

Funded by: the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies and the University of Tampere

Participation is voluntary. All the information is confidential.

Purpose of the research:

I base my research on the results and conclusions of my bachelor thesis in which I did a literature review about what makes immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence in Finland and Canada. In this research I focus on the social risk factors, which make immigrant women vulnerable to partner violence: racism, immigration status, social welfare and legal systems and collision of the cultures. I believe that by knowing more about the risk factors it is possible to develop new working methods to integrate immigrants to the society so that their life could be free from violence. I think there is a lot to be done so that immigrant women could settle down to their new home and live peaceful life side by side with the majority. I'm doing my research in Canada but I will write my thesis from the Finnish perspective. Learning from others ways of doing things is one of my motives to do international research: I believe Finland has a lot to learn from Canada and vice versa.

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I have had the opportunity to read this consent form, ask questions about the research project and so I'm prepared to participate in this project.

Participant's Signature:

Date and place:

Researcher's Signature: