

Master Thesis in Social Work

“A qualitative study on how individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds experience domestic violence, and what they do in order to survive and escape a violent relationship”

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FOREWORD

This thesis concludes my Master's Degree in Social work, and is submitted to the Department of Social Science at the University of Stavanger. It has been an informative and challenging process, and in many ways a lonely process. But I have certainly not been alone during this period.

I would like to give thanks to my supervisor Ingunn Studsrød who has been enthusiastic about my choice of topic and given me constructive criticism. I would also like to thank other employees in the institution that have been helpful with courses (a course from the shelter and a course in q-methodology) and the loan of a tape recorder. The thesis is based on qualitative material obtained by interviewing four women and one man exposed to violence in a relationship. I sincerely thank you for sharing your stories and experiences with me, and for wanting to be a part of this project. You met openly and talked about the struggle, defeat and victory by being in a vulnerable situation. I hope you feel this thesis is worthy of you, and I hope you all are well wherever you are. Many thanks go to the shelter which has been helpful and generous with information, and thank you for showing me confidence. You do an important and good job! Also a great thank you to Matthew Woodall for proof reading. Thanks to fellow students for two wonderful years together for useful suggestions, motivation, and inspiration and for the time outside the University. I would also like to thank my dear Tommy, my parents and siblings who have supported and encouraged me in my work with this thesis.

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SUMMARY

The study has explored “how individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds experience domestic violence, and what they do in order to survive and escape a violent relationship”.

From this issue, the following research questions have been formulated:

- What forms of violence have the participants been exposed to?
- How do the participants experience the violence and relationship they are in?
- What factors prevent the participants from leaving their abusive partners?
- What factors contribute to their desire to leave the violent partner?
- How do the participants cope with the situation?

The thesis is designed with a qualitative approach with interviews as a method. The work was done in cooperation with, in this thesis, an anonymised institution – hereinafter “the shelter”, as part of the EU-funded PERARES project at the University of Stavanger. The participants are four women and a man who are experiencing or have experienced partner violence. The study is based on theory about coping; how people, exposed to domestic violence utilize strategies, try to sustain with the on-going violence and escape a violent relationship.

The results show variations in the violence the participants have been exposed to: “physical, mental and sexual abuse”. The violence has consequences for the participants in several areas. They report about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), suicidal attempts, depression, isolation and fear. The participants are trying to normalize the violence, but over time it's still a gradual process in which the participants have distanced themselves from the abuser. The process seems not to be a linear process but a process in which they go back and forth. The process is categorized as “the beginning, good and bad periods and move (forward and back)”. According to this thesis, the participants reported several obstacles when trying to escape the violence: Feelings of sympathy towards the partner, hoping that things would change for the better, negative experiences of social services and lack of knowledge of the Norwegian system/law, not having a supportive network, and the ongoing, long term impact of abuse were identified as important factors. When exploring what they do in order to survive and escape a violent relationship three major themes were identified – “developing knowledge, telling and gaining support”.

1 INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a serious and often hidden social problem with major consequences for those affected (NOU 2003:31). Domestic violence in Norway is an area the Norwegian government wants to combat. The Soria Moria declaration¹ maintains that the government will improve efforts against violence in close relationships. This is in accordance with an on-going process among Norwegian authorities wanting to raise awareness about violence in close relations and, thus, emphasising it also as a public concern. There are several action plans prepared by the Norwegian state, which discuss how to combat violence in close relationships (Storberget 2007). In 1999, the Bondevik government forwarded the action plan “Violence against women”. In 2003 there was an official report: “The right to a life without violence. Men's violence against women in close relationships”. A new action plan “Domestic violence” was prepared for the period 2004 - 2007. The last action plan “The turning point” came in 2008 and has been prepared for the period 2008 to 2011. These action plans are important because they show that domestic violence is something society sees as unacceptable, and that it is something the community wants to combat and change. It gives a signal that we want to support and protect people who are exposed to violence in their own home.

There are many factors, among other things significant somatic and psychological damage, that make violence in close relations to be a serious problem for the people affected (Haaland 2005). The situation for women and for men who experience violence from their spouses is very varied and complex. In addition to variations in the history of violence, they may have different views on what should be done for the violence to cease, and to have different needs for assistance. Conditions such as finance, access to various resources, network, citizenship, and children help to create a more complex picture of the abused (Skjørten 1999). Despite the tremendous amount of research on coping over the past two decades, studies of coping strategies in samples of battered women and men are few. This study will explore how individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds experience domestic violence, and what they do in order to survive and escape a violent relationship.

¹ The Soria Moria declaration is the political platform for the Norwegian government.

1.1 Refinements

The thesis wants to explore ethnic minorities exposed to violence experiences and perceptions regarding the violence they have been exposed to and the factors that affect or influence them in order to remain in or to break out of the relationship. I have chosen to focus on adults with ethnic minority background because they may have special needs for assistance in creating a self-independent life without violence (NOU 2003:31:61). A large proportion of individuals who are breaking out of an abusive relationship have children. In this thesis, the focus is limited to the women and the man, and in some places extended to their role as a mother or father. This refinement has several causes. A child's situation in itself is a major theme requiring more space to be presented in a prudent way. As minors, there are other legally related, complex issues which required both children academic and legal expertise.

1.2 Justifying the choice of theme

It is important to highlight and combat domestic violence because violence robs people of basic human rights. Violence in close relationships is a universal problem, and affects women and men regardless of country, society, culture, age, class, education, and so on. In every country violence blights lives and undermines health. Acknowledging this in 1996, the 49th World Health Assembly adopted a resolution (WHA49.25) declared violence as a major and growing public health problem across the world. The resolution ended by calling for a plan of action for progress towards a science based public health approach to prevent violence (WHO 1996).

Domestic violence does not only discriminate the victims from the society, it also poses a direct threat to their health (Ellsberg and Heise 2005 in Barkvoll 2009). Women are more often the victims of domestic violence, but domestic violence affects men too. It has a damaging impact on physical, mental, reproductive and sexual disorder, leading to suicide attempts, substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, gynaecological disorder, sexually transmitted infections, increased HIV/AIDS risk, and others (Heise et. al. Dahlberg and Krug 2006 in Barkvoll 2009). It is also important to study the coping strategies people exposed to domestic violence utilize. Then we may more easily meet them with a better understanding and help in line with what they want and need. And hopefully the coping strategies, as flexible and constantly changing as they are (Lazarus and Folkman 1984), can change to something better with feedback and influence from other contextual variables.

Ethnic minorities may have a position as a minority in society and poor living conditions in terms of employment, economy, education and housing help to dictate the living conditions in Norway (Skogøy 2008). Skogøy (2008) shows that when immigrants come to Norway because of family establishment and they don't have knowledge of the country nor have any network, it is common that they initially experience loss and bereavement. They often have left a social network of family, friends, neighbours, and perhaps work colleagues in their own country. Losing female/male community opportunities to talk about things and do things together can also be a great loss, and the ability to continue to maintain contact with their former network varies. Mother tongue and previously learned action strategies, skills and potential job skills are not enough to meet the daily challenges of life in Norway. They are faced with large demands for restructuring and learning to participate in the Norwegian society. For example, it is perceived as a challenge to make contact with a government that is both bureaucratic and specialized. They can also feel it is difficult to take part in their children's everyday life in kindergarten, school and spare time, where it is necessary to master both the Norwegian language and cultural codes. The result is often discrimination. Minority women are subjected to double discrimination: both as a minority and as a woman (Skogøy 2008). As I see it, men may also feel discriminated when experiencing violence in close relationships. People may not always believe the man has been exposed to violence and he may not get the help he needs because of this. Discrimination is deeply embedded at all levels of society. It may therefore be difficult for the majority of citizens to acknowledge the extent of the issue and to understand how it is experienced by the person discriminated against (Skogøy 2008).

1.2.1 Professional interest

I decided to write about violence in close relationships, where I could participate on a major project gathering information on violence in close relationships and against pregnant women. This project, "Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society", takes place at the University of Stavanger (due to be completed in 2014), and the goal is to gather information on Norwegian conditions whilst others do the same in relation to their countries. However, this thesis is also counted as a separate project.

There is a need for more research on specific risk and vulnerable groups and it is recommended that we work to reduce barriers for seeking help (NOU 2003:31). Through social work, the goal is thus to exercise social management and control as they should exercise solidarity humanity. Social work must act so people can come out of the crisis they are in (Levin 2004).

1.2.2 Personal Interest

My personal interest in writing this paper is that I have worked for several years as a social worker at a youth psychiatric hospital, where I have seen the harmful effects of violence in close relationships. Violence in close relationships is also something I lived close to when I worked and studied in Guatemala in 2003 to 2004. I see the importance of knowing what one is entitled to, and I want to help people in difficult life situations. By using a critical eye to search and explore such a theme, I will increase my knowledge and action competence. My knowledge of the field will of course affect me in that exploration.

1.3 Methodological choices and outline

This is a qualitative study, and is directed towards the goal of understanding the reality as perceived by the participants. The issue in this thesis is to seek insight into how the participants experience their situation as violence prone and how they handle this by leaving the partner or to remain in the relationship. My main method to understand their reality is through interview. This method is best suited to get the participants own thoughts, feelings and reflections on what they have experienced.

In order to answer my research questions, the thesis is outlined in 6 chapters (plus a literature list in chapter 7 and attachments). Chapter 2 contains theoretical framework and previous research findings. This chapter starts with a description of three different forms of violence. Furthermore, the chapter will look at what regulations and legislation say about permissions for residence and provision of mistreatment and relevant theory to this study. Chapter 3 aims to explain and justify the research methodology required for generating the findings in this study, so as to better understand the participants' experiences. In a broad outline, this chapter justifies the methodological orientation adopted for this thesis, explains the research design strategy developed for exploring the key research questions, and provides an account of the specific instruments and steps employed for generating the findings. Finally, the ethical issues

and the study's transferability are presented. Further on, the purpose of chapter 4 is to outline the findings of the study and chapter 5 wishes to provide discussion based on these findings. This last chapter provides the conclusion of the research. It highlights general findings, relevant literature and research model. Additionally, suggestions for future research are also provided.

1.4 Conceptual clarifications

- **Survivor and victim** both mean the person in the relationship who is being hit, beaten, abused, raped and controlled. The term “survivor” is used because it emphasizes that battered women and men are strong, courageous people who have survived terrible attacks. The term “victim” is used because this word is used in a lot of the theory and research.
- **Partner** in this thesis, describes the relationship with another person.
- **Domestic violence and abuse** mean the same thing in this thesis. They describe a pattern of coercive control which one person exercises over another.
- **Minority** is a term used of people with immigrant background from non-western countries in this thesis.
- **Violence in close relationship** describes all forms of violence or threats of violence from a related person. This often refers to relationships within the family or network. In this task, it will mean the (ex-) husband or (ex-) wife.
- **Citizenship** is defined of the British sociology T. H Marshall (1998:102) as a “status bestowed on those who are full members of a society. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed”.
- **The three year rule** applies to spouses and cohabitants who come to Norway to be reunited with a spouse or cohabitant and states that the incoming person(s) cannot stay on an independent basis until maybe after three years in marriage.
- **Coping** is defined as following by Lazarus and Folkman (1984:141): “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH FINDINGS

2.1 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a breach of trust which in itself is a huge contrast to good and safe conditions (Storberget 2007). Isdal (2000:36) defines violence as: “Any act directed against another person that through this action causes damage, pain, fright or insult, whilst getting the other person to do something against their will or to stop them doing something that they want” (my translation). Violence in close relationships may have important consequences for physical and mental health as well as social relationships outside the family (Råkil 2002). World Health Organization (WHO) uses the following general definition of violence as a cause of disease: “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (World report on violence and health 2002:5).²

Violence can end in death. In 2002, the WHO estimated that 1.6 million people worldwide die annually as a result of violence. In Norway each year approximately 10 women are killed by their spouses (Schei 1999). About two-thirds of women who are killed by their partners or ex-partners, have been physically abused over time (Campbell, Soekn, McFarlaine & Parker 1998 in Råkil 2002:66). People exposed to violence are at risk for developing a range of psychological distress and symptoms. Research from the USA show that suicide attempts occur 12 times more frequently by women exposed to domestic violence than those who not are exposed to domestic violence (NOU 2003:31). American sources conclude that abuse causes significantly more injuries than accidents (Schei 1999). It is unfortunate, but valid to say that the most dangerous place can be in the home.

² The understanding of violence will vary between different disciplinary traditions and professional approaches. A criminal approach will particularly focus on violence within legal implications. A health perspective will focus on violence as the cause of illness and injury. But we must know that the differences may also occur in the disciplines within the same profession (NOU 2003:31).

The Swedish philosopher Lennart Nordenfelt (1996) says that a person has good health to the extent one is able to achieve his or her vital goals. Vital goals are goals that are important for the individual pleasure and happiness in life. Choosing a relationship with another is a matter of trust and belief regarding the future. It is about giving ones all to a person one loves, believes in, wants to have children with and share a life with. One lives in an atmosphere of fear and abuse of power with the loss of daily security and that insecurity creates fear. Violence and abuse in families and couples is serious and has significant consequences for those affected. Because the violence is perpetrated by a person you have a fiduciary relationship to, the violence can reduce self-esteem and sense of security. Another factor that makes the violence a particularly serious problem is that it usually involves repeated incidents of violence (Skjørten, Bjørge & Olaussen, 1999). The survivors live with fear of new violence. This means that one cannot see each violence incident as an isolated event (NOU 2003:31).

Isdal (2000) split the abuses into several categories. I chose to embrace three of these: physical, mental and sexual violence. This characterizes the offences as different types of actions within a broad range from inflicting direct physical damage to influencing others' behaviour through the intricate psychological mechanisms. Although the abuse is split into three categories, we have to be aware that one abuse usually includes several of these aspects. For instance, physical violence almost always also has psychological dimensions. Rape is sexual violence, whilst also having both mental and physical dimensions. For example, a forced marriage includes several of these aspects. And human trafficking in prostitution will in many cases cover all the different aspects (Isdal 2000).

2.1.1 Physical violence

Physical violence is a concrete action where the intention is to exercise power by harming another person. It may be holding, pushing, shaking, beating or kicking. It may also be the use of impact weapons, stab weapons (like knives) or firearms, and can result in death (Skogøy 2008). Isdal (2000:43) defines physical violence as “the use of any form of physical force that through the use of pain, injury, fear or insult, causes another person to do something against their will or causes another person to stop doing what they desire to do” (my translation).

Material violence, as Isdal also refers to, is any action directed against things or objects, such as they seem intimidating or offensive, influence others to do something against their will or stop doing something they like. You may talk about slamming doors or walls, crushing or destroying objects, tearing clothes, throwing and destroying furniture (Isdal 2000).

2.1.2 Mental violence

According to Isdal (2000:49) mental violence is “all the ways to harm, frighten or hurt that are not directly physical in nature, or ways to control or dominate others by means of an underlying force or threat” (my translation). This use of threats is much more common in daily life than we imagine. It can be an integral part in upbringing children: “If you do not eat up the food, then you...” Many couples may also have a threatening attitude towards each other: “If our relationship is going to be this way, we may as well part”. This threat can get the other part to bow down, but what is the cost to resolve disputes in this way? Often resolving conflicts in this way at the beginning of the relationship can be seen as a foundation for how the circumstance in later crises will be resolved. Many couples can say things that they regret, however this does not define psychological violence such as when using repetitive violations without regard to the other's feelings. Mental violence is direct or indirect threats, demeaning and humiliating behaviour, control, jealousy, isolation, and emotional violence and death threats (Skogøy 2008). According to Follingstad et al. (1990) mental violence can be understood as follows:

- a) Verbal attack (ridicule and bullying),
- b) Isolation (social or financial),
- c) Jealousy/ownership feeling (also when it comes to family, friends and pets),
- d) Verbal threats to harm, abuse or torture,
- e) Threats of divorce, to leave, or to launch an affair,
- f) Damage to or destruction of personal property.

To this we can add threats in connection with divorce, to go to court to get custody for their children, sabotage of companionship and to defame the other parent to the child/children (Sogn 2010).

2.1.3 Sexual violence

The last type of abuse that Isdal (2000) points out is sexual violence. Isdal (2000:45) believes this type of violence includes “any action directed toward another person's sexuality, as in through pain to harm, frighten, or violate in order to get this person to do something against their will or to stop someone from doing something” (my translation).

This type of abuse encompasses a broad range of actions from sexual harassment and violation, sexual pressure or coercion to rape and sexual torture. Within groups where women's status is linked to sexual chastity, sexual abuse can be particularly degrading. But on the other hand, women with a background in society where men have markedly higher status than women find it difficult to see the coercion of sex in marriage as rape (Skogøy 2008). Sexual violence is especially psychologically destructive because it is aimed at the human's most private and vulnerable side. Rape also has status as a war crime (Skogøy 2008). In war, the rape of women and children is a familiar strategy to cripple the civilian population, making them scared and ashamed. Rapes of women and children have been used in many wars.

2.2 The extend of domestic violence

In 2003/2004 Statistics Norway conducted the first nationwide study on violence within couples in Norway named “Couple Violence - different perspectives”. Results may help to provide some hypotheses in relation to the percentage of women and men who are still survivors of violence in intimate relationships, namely that they do not have access to the resources and self-awareness that is needed to take a break from a person who uses violence. This study has shown that a significant proportion of adult women and men have been effected by violence more than once in life. The study reported every fourth woman was or had been in circumstances where there was violence and threats of violence. Every fifth man reported that same (the study applies to Norwegian women and men). It is necessary to point out that this study sees that such experiences are done in close relationships but also not in an abusive relationship. Moreover, the results from this study show that violence against a partner in the near relations is a significant public health problem. The study concluded that violence against partners in close relationships can lead to extensive health problems, but there are still many who do not contact the support system or are captured by the helping professions (Haaland a al., 2005).

There are no statistics that provide a complete picture of the violence scale. When trying to see the larger picture, one must refer to information from various studies, crime statistics and research³. According to Statistics Norway's standard of living study in Norway about 5 percent of the population have been survivors of violence (Stene 2003). In The Justice Department's Violence measurement (2003) they found that in one week over 1,000 calls came in from women who experienced violence in close relationships. Approximately 1,500 children in the same week were affected by violence and threats from someone they have close ties to. It was noted that violence practitioners are mostly men - up to 85% of the cases. In almost half of the cases there was talk of physical violence, while threats and other forms of psychological abuse were present in two thirds of the cases. There is no research that tells us anything about the extent of violence against women and men of minority background in Norway, but when we look at who is receiving assistance from shelters in Norway, the women from minority backgrounds represent an increasingly larger audience (Nørgaard 2007). The shelters for men in Norway were created in January 2010. Before that time, employees at the shelters had to reject the men who called in for help, and instead refer them to other kinds of help.

The violence measurement "A week of violence in close relationships" (Justisdepartementets voldsmåling 2008) provides a snapshot of how many inquiries about violence in close relationships the unit gets within a randomly selected week (this is a measurement for the whole country). Shelters and police are the agencies that receive many inquiries about violence in close relationships during the measurement week. On average, a shelter receives 11 such cases in the course of a week. The individual police receive an average of 9.5 cases of violence in close relationships within a week. In the majority of requests, it is the survivor that takes the initiative to contact the support system. In 60 percent of the requests this happens by personal appearance. At the same time, we see that a large number of inquiries come from other agencies. This applies particularly to child protection, where more than half of the requests came from other professionals. In total there are registered 1380 survivors of violence in close relationships during the measurement week. And this may be another dark

³ Since there is no normative definition of violence, the different studies are based on different definitions of violence, and can therefore not be directly comparable.

number as there are more people out there who have been exposed to violence that don't report it, and one report can include more than one exposure (Justisdepartementets-voldsmåling 2008). This means that one cannot watch every episode of violence as an isolated event, and the constant threat of violence is part of the practitioner's exercise of power/violence (NOU 2003:31). In total there were registered 1103 women or girls exposed to violence, while the number for men and boys was 227 (Justisdepartementets-voldsmåling 2008).

2.3 Coping with domestic violence

Jonassen (2001) investigated how female survivors experienced the help service. The research shows that the received help is not always in line with the needs of the women. The study took a general look at women who live in a violent relationship, and a look at the consequences of violence. The research shows that when not getting proper assistance from the support system it is as a barrier to break out of the violent relationship. A more recent project with the name "Ny i Norge" (Berntsen 2008) shows that women exposed to violence needed a massive and intensive assistance in an induction - and a transitional phase. This survey was based on how women from minority backgrounds mastered independent existence. It showed they needed massive support to go through with the separation. This project was conducted under the auspices of the shelter and was a follow-up of an earlier project named "Brobyggerprosjektet". The main objective of the project was to develop methods to assist women from minority backgrounds to cope with an independent existence after the break with a spouse and / or family (Berntsen 2008).

Loring (1994) conducted interviews with 121 women who had experienced only psychological abuse, both mental and physical abuse, or no abuse. She interviewed each woman several times, and in some of the interviews the man was also present. What Loring was investigating concerned the relationship between psychological abuses and self-esteem, and emphasizes that mental abuse damages the self of the person exposed to it. She describes losing touch with who you are as an inner death. According to Loring, people who have been subjected to psychological abuse experience fragmentation of individual identity - as if the various components that make up who they are, are no longer linked together. Loring describes what kind of processes that may contribute to mental abuse damages the self-esteem. For example, the person being abused will be forced to take actions or say things that

go against their own basic values, thereby losing some of the things that symbolize who they are. Furthermore, according to Loring it appears that mind control and brainwashing leads to the one being abused to internalize the image the perpetrator conveys of her (Loring 1994). Other studies also found that the attribution of guilt often changes during a violent relationship, and it is common that the woman goes from blaming themselves to blaming the partner when the severity of violence increases (Cantos, Neidig & O`Leary, 1993; Miller & Porter, 1983).

The study “Couple Violence - different perspectives” shows that women and men are relatively quick to get out of violent relationships. The study also shows that women and men react very much alike to the exposure to violence, they suffer from the same types of anxiety and psychological after-effects. Moreover, the study show that the violence that is recorded by shelters, emergency services and the police provide only a limited picture of violence in relationships (Haaland at al., 2005).

2.4 Research focusing on male survivors

International studies have shown that violence against men in close relationships is an issue that deserves attention. A retrospective cohort study, conducted in the U.S. period 2003 - 2005, found that 4.6 percent of men had experienced violence in close relations over the past year, that 10.4 percent had experienced this in the past five years and that 28.8 percent had experienced such violence in their lifetime. Domestic violence was in this study defined as “actual or threatening physical, mental and sexual violence used by an intimate partner to do damage or cause trauma” (Reid, et al. 2008 in Sogn 2010).

A German pilot study, conducted in 2004 on interpersonal violence against men in general but also concerning men's exposure to physical and psychological violence in heterosexual relationships, found that one in four men reported having experienced physical violence from a former or current partner or several times. This included the following forms of physical attack, “lightly slapped my face, bit or scratched me hard enough, kicked, shoved or grabbed me so that it hurt, threw something that could have caused injury”. A fifth of the men who had experienced a physical form of partner violence had been damaged. The injuries ranged from bruises to the head and face injuries (broken nose, damage in the mouth and teeth). Just as many had experienced fear of being exposed to a life-threatening injury (Dissens e. V. Berlin,

2004 in Sogn 2010). In a German pilot study, they found that mental violence against men in relationships was more frequently occurring than physical violence. Social controls, which include various forms of control over the partner's activities, were frequently reported. Every fifth man stated that the partner was jealous to an extent that made it difficult to have contact with other people. Every sixth man replied confirming that the partner controlled exactly where they went with whom, and what they did and when they came home. Between five and eight percent of men reported that their partner checked their mail, phone calls and e-mail, telling them what they had to do/not do, or preventing them from meeting friends, acquaintances or family. When the partner exercised mental violence, the likelihood that men also experienced physical violence was greater, compared with the men who experienced physical violence only (Dissens e. V. Berlin 2004 in Sogn 2010). Figures from the “Association for the prevention and handling of violence in the family in Cyprus” shows that of 376 adult survivors of violence in close relationships 38 were men. This means that 10 percent of requests from adults concerned men. It is believed that in a society like Cyprus (patriarchal and male dominated) there will be a large number of men who do not report or seek help if they are exposed to such violence from the partner as this is seen as shameful (Sogn 2010).

Mens' exposure to violence in close relationships has so far been far less documented. Currently there are no Norwegian studies that provide an overall picture of mens' exposure to violence in close relationships, the consequences of such exposure and the exposed mens' need for any assistance. Norwegian research on violence in relationships (Pape and Stefansen 2004 in Haaland 2005) shows that the use of physical force and violence in relationships has a significant extent. Approximately equally as many men and women reported that they had been subjected to partner violence in the past year, but very few (2-3 percent) had suffered serious and/or high frequency violence. According to Pape and Stefansen (2004 in Haaland 2005) there are significantly more men than women threatened or subjected to violence by a stranger, while women are far more vulnerable than men to be victimized by a partner or former partner. All in all, the study shows that verbal attacks and non-physical violations from a partner is something relatively many adults experience, but it is rarer to be subjected to physical attacks (Sogn 2010).

The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress has in the government's action plan against violence in close relationships 2008 - 2011, "The turning point", got a mission to take a study of violence and abuse against men in close relationships. The results of the study will hopefully form the basis for further method - and measures development (Sogn 2010).

2.5 Research focusing on female survivors

"Coping Among Adult Female Victims of Domestic Violence".examines the current literature regarding coping among battered women. Their research showed a number of contextual factors that are related to women's choices in coping with partner abuse, including factors related to the relationship as frequency and severity of abuse, length of relationship, and women's resources as social support as well as financial resources. The data regarding coping strategies permits several conclusions. The women appear to use avoidance strategies when they were still in the violent relationship. However, the more severe and frequent the violence becomes, the more likely the woman is to take active steps to leave the relationship. The resources available and the responsiveness of potential help, help the woman sustain with the abuse. Further on, the contextual forces are important to women's selection of strategies in coping with intimate violence. Typically, they try a variation of coping strategies to deal with the abuse, some of which are more effective than others (Waldrop and Resick 2004).

Ferraro and Johnson (Ferraro 1983) were concerned with why so many women remain in abusive relationships. They found that like offenders, victims of domestic abuse employed neutralizations to justify their spouse's abusive behaviour. Their study described the type of strategies assaulted women used to remain in the abusive circumstances in which they found themselves. The study found 6 types of rationalizations used by women who return to their assailant after trying to get out. These were "the appeal to salvation ethic" in which the women use their caring role to justify being with a man who needed psychological help; "the denial of the victimizer" in which violence was not recognized as abuse; "the denial of injury" in which the damage from the mental or physical violence was minimized and trivialized; "the denial of victimization" in which the woman did not see themselves as abused; "the denial of options" in which the women saw only the opportunity to stay with their abuser; and "the appeal to higher loyalties" in which the women felt that they could not leave their partner because of social or religious ethics.

2.6 Domestic violence and ethnic minorities

The study, "To create meaning and coping: a qualitative study of ethnic women of victims of domestic violence in Norway" (my translation) shows how foreign women achieve meaning and coping in many ways. The environment is vital to the meaning and the coping of the situation: the environment must recognize women's experiences so that women can regulate their emotions after the experiences they have. The women in the shelter seem to partly regulate the emotions through their narratives, actions, body and social relationships. The fact that women regulate their experiences and feelings through the recognition and understanding of the environment is helping to make women more active in their own situation, and the basis for further mastery can thus be said to be added.

Norwegian studies show that more and more marriages involving a person with an immigrant background are being recorded in Norway. NOU 2003:31:57 pointed out that women from immigrant and refugee background did not immediately break the relationship with the perpetrator because they fear the threat of expulsion from the country by divorce, of pressure from family to return to her husband, of a lack of social networks or of a number of other barriers to an independent existence. A study of marriage patterns in Norway in 2006 (Daugstad 2006) shows that there are an increasing number of women with foreign nationality who marry a man with a residence permit in Norway. The pattern shows that 13.5 percent of the marriages were between a man without immigrant background and a woman with an immigrant background.

2.7 Legal perspectives

2.7.1 About permissions for residence

A foreign national intending to enter and reside in Norway has to be in possession of a permit from the Norwegian state.

Certain groups are exempted from this rule, mainly due to international conventions and agreements entered into by Norway. Firstly, the Agreement establishing a European Economic Area (the EEA-Agreement) and directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, confers certain rights of entry, exit and residence on nationals from other EEA states to

Norway. Hence, an Italian could travel to Norway to take up work and reside without being subject to any residence permit requirement. Secondly, between the Nordic states, there has long been a Nordic convention ensuring free movement of nationals of those states between those states. Finally, it should also be recalled that there are several international humanitarian conventions, to which Norway has acceded, which oblige Norwegian authorities to afford collective and individual asylum rights to individuals or groups fearing persecution on various grounds or due to certain humanitarian situations.

Persons not covered by the afore-mentioned categories fall under the normal scope of the Immigration Act (“Lov om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her”). The Immigration Act in Norway is a fairly new legal instrument, having been adopted as recently as 2008, repealing the old Immigration Act from 1988. It provides for a differentiated system of permits and the legal grounds for granting them. The Act is a so-called framework law in which the main rules are provided by the act itself, and the competence for giving more detailed rules is delegated to the Government. The Government has adopted several regulations in order to give such detailed rules, the most important being the Regulation on Immigration (“Forskrift om utlendingers adgang til riket og deres opphold her”). In addition, several circulars have been issued by both the Ministry of Justice and the Police Justice Department as well as the Directorate of Immigration on how the Act and the Regulation shall be practiced for individual cases to be decided (Ljoså 2001:14).

Visas are as a main rule required by nationals from other states, cf. the Immigration Act § 9. However, many agreements between other states and Norway provide for exemptions. Almost all states belonging to the western hemisphere have entered into such agreements with Norway, e.g. the Schengen Agreement and the EEA Agreement. For nationals not being covered by any such exemption, a visa may be granted for the purpose of *inter alia* tourism, family visits, public contributions, business trips and studies. A visitor's visa lasts a maximum of three months (Hagesæther 2008).

Residence permits are permits required for a foreigner in order for him to reside and work in Norway. The Immigration Act § 60 states that a residence permit is normally granted for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years. It allows the foreigner to reside and work in Norway including allowing multiple entries to the country. In order to be eligible for the

permit, several conditions have to be satisfied and only special groups are considered. One particular group is those applying under the family immigration rules. Other groups are those having specialist skills needed for work purposes in Norway, student entries etc.

Any foreign national who for the last three years has resided in Norway on the basis of a residence permit may, pursuant to § 62 of the Immigration Act and the corresponding regulation providing the more detailed rules, apply for a permanent residence permit (under the old Immigration Act of 1988 this was called a “settlement permit”). As indicated by the name, this permit gives a permanent right to reside and work in Norway. However, the foreigner must still comply with conditions, *inter alia* not being too long away from Norway. In order to apply for the permanent resident permit, several conditions have to be satisfied. First of all, the conditions for the residence permit must once again be scrutinized. Secondly, the foreigner must, *inter alia*, not have resided outside Norway for more than 7 months during the last three years. Consequently, if the basis for the residence permit lapses, the foreign national also lose the right to stay and thus will not be able to apply for the permanent residence permit (Hagesæther 2008). This rule of law is what this thesis refers to as the “three years rule”.

Given the topic of this thesis, the rules for family immigration are of special relevance. Spouses and cohabitants of a Norwegian or Nordic national who is resident in Norway, or of a foreign national who has or is granted lawful residence in Norway with a residence permit without restrictions (“the reference person”), are in principle entitled to a residence permit in Norway.⁴ In order for such a residence permit to be granted for the first time, it is, however, required as a main rule that they live together⁵. Furthermore, the residence permit cannot be granted for a longer period than that of the reference person,⁶ and it will also be repealed if the permit of the reference person is repealed. Thus, the permit of the foreign spouse or cohabitant is of a somewhat indirect nature.

After 3 years of temporary residence permit without restrictions, the foreign spouse can apply for a permanent residence permit which is not conditional on the status of the partner (the

⁴ Cf. the Immigration Act §§ 40 and 41

⁵ Cf. the Immigration Act § 40, third paragraph and § 41, first paragraph.

⁶ Cf. the Immigration Act § 60, first and fourth paragraph

reference person). The foreign spouses will thus not gain independent legal status until after 3 years (Salimi 2001:39).

The ultimate way of securing the right of residence and work in Norway is by way of acquisition of Norwegian citizenship. Pursuant to the Norwegian Nationality Act § 7, a condition for the acquisition thereof is the residence in Norway for 7 years during the last 10 years. Obviously, when being a Norwegian citizen there is no need to apply for a residence or work permit anymore. With citizenship comes passports, voting rights and the opportunity to stand for election, certain economic rights e.g. related to licensing and concessions laws, access to certain positions reserved for Norwegian nationals or, as the case may be EEA nationals, as well as the right to certain social security and social benefits to which foreigners are not entitled.

2.7.2 Provision of mistreatment

In the Immigration Act from 2008 the legislator has found place for a special provision giving a spouse or a cohabitant an independent right to residence, even though the condition of living together is not satisfied. Pursuant to the Immigration Act § 53 first paragraph a residence permit may be renewed in such a case, if the couple no longer lives together and it is probable that the spouse or cohabitant or any children of the couple have been mistreated.

The *raison d'être* of the provision is that a one should not be forced to continue in a relationship where oneself or the children are exposed to the mistreatment of the partner. In absence of such a provision many could feel pressured to continue in such a relationship due to the fear of otherwise losing the permit to residence in Norway.

In practice it points to the necessity of good documentation of abuse. That this type of documentation exists - and that the documentation follows the woman and men's application for a stay - can have a decisive impact on the outcome of the application (Skogøy 2008). According to NOU 2003: 31, "The right to a life without violence", it has been shown that in practice it is very difficult to obtain a residence permit on grounds of ill-treatment.

2.7.3 Citizenship

Tove Smaadahl, a leader in women's shelter Secretariat says there are several lawyers who have told her that they ask women to return to the violent husband and live with him until

they get permanent citizenship. Smaadahl knows of several cases where there has been an unfortunate result. Some end up in prostitution because they cannot speak the Norwegian language, may not have education, nor have anything to go back to. Arild Humlen, leader of the Advokatforeningens rettssikkerhetsutvalg, said that the interpretation and application of the provision is arbitrary. He says he cannot say to a person that they will surely end up getting a residence permit if she/he breaks from the violent husband. This uncertainty means that some choose to continue in a violent relationship (Maryam 2009).

Norwegian authorities have argued that the “three year rule” is important and necessary in the immigration policy considerations, where an important goal for them is to limit and control immigration. Critics argue that the rule weakens the foreign spouse's legal rights and that it can be criticized on the basis of equality considerations between the genders. Furthermore, there is nothing in the law called “pro forma marriages”. Whether one is married is according to Norwegian law, or they are not married (Seljord 2002).

Culture is important for human development. Membership in a "rich and secure cultural structure" is essential both for the development of self-respect and to give people a context where they can develop the ability to make choices about how they should live their lives. Cultural minorities may need special group privileges to preserve a "rich and secure cultural structure" (Jacobsen 2002). However, not all individuals with a multicultural background need special arrangements, there may be differences between the generations as much as differences in social background (NOU 2003:31:61).

2.8 Coping and resources

Coping strategies include a broad diversity of thoughts and behaviours used to manage the demands of a taxing situation (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Coping resources, is on this basis, what we have that allows us to continue. This is aligned with Antonovsky (2000) understanding of achievement which is based on the individual's available resources.

Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994) is a renowned professor of medical sociology who wrote the book *Mystery of Health* in the 1980s (Antonovsky, 2002). Throughout his career he has been concerned with the factors that are critical to how people manage their way through crises and challenges without becoming ill in spite of great stress in life. He did a large study among Jews who had survived the Holocaust, who in spite of repeated trauma, still did well. Through

his research he found that they had an experience of relationship between themselves as beings and their lives (sense of coherence). With this he believes that the person has a lasting trust in their inner and outer world that is reasonably predictable, and that the probability is high that it will go as well as one would expect. According to Antonovsky, the context of this experience is at the core of good mental health. He relates most of the context to the three components: “comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness” (Antonovsky, 2002).

“Comprehensibility” is our cognitive component which refers to whether one perceives various stimuli in the inner and outer environment that are understandable, coherent and structured rather than chaotic and inexplicable. A person with a high degree of comprehensibility will be able to expect that the events that occur will be predictable. Even if the worst happens, the individual will still be able to explain and understand their difficult situation. Thus, the event is manageable, and it is Antonovsky’s second term (Antonovsky, 2002).

“Manageability” is an action component, and refers to the extent that one perceives that the resources available are sufficient to meet the difficult challenges of reactions and events. This will mean that a person, who has sufficient resources available when an event or situation occurs, will be able to handle this. This applies both to internal resources such as concepts and explanations, as well as external resources such as people (Antonovsky, 2002).

Antonovsky’s last term is “meaningfulness”. This is the motivation component and refers to the extent that one feels that life is comprehensible and make sense emotionally. It's about being a player in one’s own life. A person with a high degree of meaningfulness will take the challenge and find meaning in events that occur, and also do their best to make it through (Antonovsky, 2002).

The last of these components is perceived as the most important because it provides motivation to find solutions to the challenges that the situation provides. The other two components will affect how the process is carried out. Antonovsky argues that a sense of comprehensible is a prerequisite for a sense of manageability and meaningfulness (Antonovsky 2002). To achieve such a sense of coherence in life, Antonovsky says that the situation must be understandable and predictable; one must have faith that one can find

solutions to find the necessary resources as the situation requires and to find meaning in attempting to find solutions. All of the various general coping resources that a person has are required to ensure it is possible to put the countless stressors we are bombarded with into a meaningful context. Gjørsum et al (1998) points out that the concepts salutogenese and coping process are very similar to each other, but that the word salutogenese clearly indicates that we are considering a different way of thinking. This thinking is searching for the causes of health and focuses on the users' resources and not only on the problem. To make the client see himself as a whole person, and to not see the problems will strengthen the client's own experience and give him a better faith in the future (Antonovsky 2002).

Being exposed to violence is a dramatic challenge. The tension caused by stress is intended to mobilize the person to act (Antonovsky 2000). People with a strong sense of coherence will take the action as a challenge and try to master it; they will not accept that there is nothing to do (Antonovsky 2000). Moreover, there can be difference between cognitive and behaviour strategies (De Ridder 1997; Holahan & Moos 1987 in Waldrop and Resick 2004). Strategies in relation to the behaviour may be “getting away from things for a while”. Cognitive coping include how to change the thinking of the situation, for example to trivialize what is happening and think about the positive side of the situation (Holahan & Moos 1987 in Waldrop and Resick 2004). Antonovsky (2002) points to this; people need social validation of their actions to achieve meaningful and good coping. Therefore good coping also creates mastery-friendly environments that support the choices you make. That people gain sustenance and support from social relationships has been intuitively known for a long time, and should be, in a sense, obvious (Lazarus 1984). Our social network contributes resources in our lives so that we can sustain with life's challenges in a constructive way (Fyrand 2005:16). Supportive networks are important for change (Bunkholdt 2002).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) write that coping is all about behaviour that tries to sustain with the demands that a person experiences as difficult and exceeding one's resources. The term coping in the literature is often linked to concept of stress, where stress is an externally applied burden (such as a difficult life situation) and how coping is about the extent to which one is able to meet this burden (Lazarus 1984). Stress is considered a transaction between the person's resources and environment, in which what is perceived as stressful is dependent on the person. The term “coping” is not related to outcome, but to the process and the efforts you

make to deal with the situation (Lazarus 1984). By coping one tries, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), to achieve control over their own life situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe coping as the individual's way of looking to solve a situation or event that include discomfort or threat to one's own integrity. Ferraro and Johnson point to how rationalization may be seen as trying to survive with the situation: "The process of victimization is not synonymous with experiencing violent attacks from a spouse. Rationalizing the violence inhibits a sense of outrage and efforts to escape abuse. Only after rationalizations are rejected does the victimization process begin" (Ferraro and Johnson, 1983:324).

People respond differently to life's challenges. Lazarus and Folkman point to primary and secondary appraisals in how the individual handles the situation. A primary appraisal is made when the individual makes a conscious evaluation of the matter at hand of whether it is a harm or a loss, a threat or a challenge. Then secondary appraisal takes place when the individual asks him/herself "What can I do?" by evaluating the coping resources around him/her. These resources includes physical resources, such as how healthy (energy) one is, and one's network and support such as family and friends. It also depends on the persons psychological resources, such as self-esteem and also material resources such as how much money/equipment the person is able to use. Choice of coping strategy is about what coping resources they have available (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Håkonsen (1998) says that problem-focused coping seeks to solve the problem of behaviour that we have learned or had experience with before. In other words, a coping strategy we can learn is an ability which will increase with the more experience one gets.

Emotionally focused coping (Lazarus and Folkman 1984) focuses on the individual's emotional issues that are related to a situation or event and seeks to reduce or eliminate the emotional distress without having to change the situation. This form of coping involves the use of "defence mechanisms" which is a defence against the anxiety people experience when their own experience is threatened (Bunkholdt 2002). In severe stress experiences, Bunkholdt (2002) writes that the defence mechanisms will help us with a gradual adjustment of the external realities. At the same time, they may also contribute to a person denying the reality and experience displaced world view. Bunkholdt (2002) mentions the following defence mechanisms: displacement, denial, rationalization, intellectualization, regression, projection and displacement. Some of these may be related to participants' lack of available resources to

solve problems. Help from professionals or a network can give hope that can bring the resources to them (Killen 2004). If people think that they have a good chance to improve their life situation, then they can cope better than if they do not think so (Bunkholdt 2002).

2.8.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is according to Antonovsky (2000) a key coping resource. Antonovsky points out that lack of coping may lead to low self-esteem and low self-esteem can lead to reduced coping. What one thinks about oneself must to a large extent, influence one's experience of life and the world, the self-esteem therefore seems to be an important piece for understanding domestic violence (Antonovsky 2000).

Self-esteem refers in general to the experience of how one thinks about oneself according to all pages such as looks, abilities, gender, ethnicity and nationality (Bunkholdt 2002).

Håkonsen (1998) says that although the perception is both descriptive and evaluative, it can be different in different situations. The participants, for example, see themselves differently in the role as a friend, colleague, mother or daughter. We are talking about a general and a specific self-concept (Bunkholdt 2002). The general self-perception, for example, "I am a good friend" tends to be more specific than "I take good care of my friends; I spend time with them and am aware of their needs." Individuals have a fundamental need for positive self-esteem and to feel appreciated (Håkonsen 1998). Germundsson (2006) points out that one's basic self-esteem directly affect one's own reactions and choices of action. Deep inside us we find our basic self-esteem that, according to research is one of our most important resources for coping with adversity. Our own experience tells us for example that "no one will kill me," "I am strong, " "I can" when we face adversity (Germundsson 2006). A positive self-esteem (I see this as having faith in yourself) will be a resource. Individuals with a positive self-esteem are more likely to get in touch with other people and feel that they solve tasks better than others (Håkonsen 1998).

For a man to be subjected to abuse of power may be less in line with his self-esteem than hers. Men are not traditionally accustomed to regard themselves as victims, or to be perceived as a victim by the surroundings: it goes against the masculine ideal role (Andersen 2001 in Sogn 2010). The traditional image of a man as aggressive, selfish and with a role as hero, hunter

and warrior is not very compatible with the violence and abuse vulnerable man receives. Even less compatible if the man is assaulted or predator is a woman (Sogn 2010).

2.8.2 Networks and social support

Social networking is all about relationships and interactions between people. Networking is often defined as a pattern of relatively long-term informal and independent social contacts that interact more or less regularly with each other (Fyrand 2005). One thing is the extent to which having a network is related to perceived coping and control in the participant's life. Another factor is whether this network in any way provides supportive functions that are related to coping. According to Bø (1993), it is not the quantity of relationships that is crucial, but the quality.

Schiefloe (1992) highlight three types of conditions in the network, which are issues of psychological and social adjustment, the exchange of services and material resources, and opportunities to mobilize support and assistance in situations where one cannot do this on their own. From this I see that social support can mean a lot, including emotional support and socializing, but also provides more convenient, more economical and advisory assistance. Bø (1993) points out that the structures, scope, frequency, composition, etc. are also important because they provide opportunities for interaction and influence on the quality of interactions. Bø (1993) sees that both the content of interactions and the various relationships in our social networks can be crucial when it comes to coping with daily problems and customization.

Bø (1993) emphasizes the fundamental importance of social contact, especially in a positive sense, and referring to the support, of the care and control that is transmitted through network ties. These are factors that appear to be a resource in that they create a positive experience and self-confidence. In connection with this, Bø (1993) says that it is also important to mention that the network relationships are not necessarily positive, but also in some cases, can create problems, stress, lack of stimulation and / or be oppressive. Networking seems to be of great significance for mental health and wellbeing (Bø 1993). In working with disadvantaged families Killén (2004) points out three different patterns when it comes to networking and the family's relationship to it:

- Isolation from networks: Many have been rejected or denied their network. Being part of a supportive network is about both giving and receiving support. Ethnic minorities may have been denied or have limited contact with family in their home country. People without education / jobs may have small financial resources and this may restrict their access to the network.
- The extensive and prolonged contact families have with health services is also likely to affect their network relationships. Dependence on the professional network and a lack of positive social networks probably reinforce each other. This can cause an obstruction to the improvement of self-esteem. The social network remains very limited, while their contact with health services increases.
- Conflict-filled relationship with a large and often overloaded network where members affirm one another in self-destructive life forms. People from minority groups may have a small network or have a network that does not provide support.

Networking and social support plays a major role for the participants' life situation. Social networks, according to Bø (1993), are on the one hand harmful by being stress-and problem-creating, whilst on the other hand are positive resources and may help to cope with difficulties. Stable, interpersonal relationships, social ties and belonging are essential to the participant's lives and circumstances (Bø 1993). Bunkholdt (2002) calls it the *live network*, because it is not enough that people are present around one. There must be an active connection between the people of the network to act as a safety net to deal with problems in emergencies, and as insurance in the daily life of that one is not alone in the joys and sorrows (Bunkholdt 2002). Community, safety, and social ties are terms used to describe such conditions. It seems that a lack of relationships and social involvement leads to dissatisfaction and lower sense of coping (Schieffloe 1992). Supportive networks represent an important coping resource because it enables access to information and emotional processing as well as opportunities for practical guidance and assistance. A supportive network functions as a resource in difficult and stressful situations. Critics have the opposite effect and can lead to poorer coping (Antonovsky 2002). Håkonsen (2009) writes that for most people, work is a strong factor contributing to positive self-esteem. Together with other important issues in life, like family, friends and leisure activities, the work allows you to show people who you are

and what you are worth. In our Western culture, the work is highly appreciated. Work is a contribution to both income/money and social integration. Work and school can also provide a sense of belonging and community in that it contributes to maintaining self-esteem and gives the individual the opportunity to manage their own resources (Håkonsen 2009).

Economic and social insecurity can be an important barrier to break out of a life of violence (NOU 2003:31:99). Isolation often takes place where violence is both direct and indirect. Direct in that the survivor must deal with the partner limiting her/his contact with family, friends, colleagues, etc. Indirect as in trying to survive with the situation in terms that the survivor withdraws from the network she/he had. Through the isolation, the victims' networks get weaker and she/he has less to speak with and get help when she considers breaking out of the relationship (Killen 2004). This also shows the Government's action plan NOU 2003:31:59 in that they are saying that research shows that social networks are of great importance to the survivors to increase opportunities to re-establish themselves and to get out of a violent situation.

2.8.3 Hope and belief

Hope is described as essential for human life, a healing force and a strong coping resource, which makes situations perceived less threatening and where they even perceive themselves as more competent (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Hope will thus be a resource for the participants to master. Belief determines how a person evaluates what is happening or is about to happen. Beliefs are personally formed. Beliefs can also be based on external authority (Lazarus 1984), for example, the network, the community/state or "higher-order" (faith). Although many (types of) beliefs are relevant for appraisal, beliefs about personal control influence emotion and coping. A version of a general belief about control is Antonovsky (1979:123 in Lazarus 1984) "sense of coherence" which he defines as:

"...global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring through dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as can reasonable be expected".

Rustøen (2001) says that hope is considered important for coping with problems and adversity, in that hope can help us to see what is positive in the future. In this study, the participants came to the shelter on the basis of their difficult life situation. Refuge in shelters may have led to loss of control, loss of self-esteem, loss of social relationships and loss of independence. These factors may lead to a sense of hopelessness (Rustøen 2001). Rustøen (2001) emphasizes that hope makes it easier to sustain with difficult life situations and events in life and is essential that you do not want to give up. Hope can give people the strength to solve problems. Hope forms the basis for coping with life-process, and it is a starting point for how we act and what decisions we make (Rustøen 2001). Rustøen (2001) emphasizes the importance of other people and of social networks for hope. Other people, especially those who are close can provide support and encouragement, a willingness to listen and provide security. The presence of others can also remind us that we are not alone and that we have something to fight for (Rustøen 2001). Thorgaard (2006) says that hope takes time and that hope gives faith, believing in that the situation may change - it can be different and better.

Hope is a feature of self-esteem (Antonovsky 2002). Antonovsky (2002) points out that lack of coping may lead to low self-perception and low self-esteem can lead to reduced coping. Hope is in this context, the participant's desire for a positive future and on development as an important driving force to keep the spirits up and not give up. Hope is described as essential for human life, a healing force and a strong coping resource, allowing situations perceived to be less threatening and that people will even perceive themselves as more competent (Lazarus 1984). Most of hope is a feature of self-perception of people and is central to coping (Antonovsky 2002). Research on hope has received the most attention in medicine and particularly in cancer and cancer research. This is about patients' hope, where hope is essential for them to fight on despite the fact that they are aware of their own impending death. The participants in this study were in a situation that was characterized by hopelessness and to some extent I experienced that they had a lack of confidence in themselves and their own resources.

2.8.4 Commitments

Commitments express what is important to the person, what has meaning for him or her, and they underlie the choices people make. They determine what is at stake in a specific stressful encounter (Lazarus 1984). First, commitments guide people into and away from situation that

can challenge or threaten, benefit or harm. For example, a person who is experiencing violence from the partner may often try to avoid upsetting their partner. The commitments also contain vital motivational quality. It can also have an impact on vulnerability. Because you commit to something you really want, and can be disappointed if you do not manage to reach the goal. Marriage may be seen as a commitment, you promise to be in marriage through good and bad days. The deeper a person's commitment, the greater the potential for threat and challenge, yet at the same time, the deeper commitment can also push a person toward ameliorative action and help sustain hope (Lazarus 1984).

2.8.5 Circle Theory of Violence

Walker (1979, 2000 in Råkil 2002:74) introduced the theory of *Cycle of violence* which can describe the feeling of hope as well as what often happens in the relationship with violence. The goal of the Cycle of Violence theory was to describe and predict the pattern that violent relationships often fall into. Domestic violence usually follows a definite pattern. Walker based her theory on interviews conducted with women who had survived abusive relationships. The cycle is described in three phases. Walker describes the three phases as “honeymoon phase, tension building phase and acting out phase” (Walker 2000).

“Honeymoon phase” is where violent relationships often begin. The abuser is presented as a charming, caring, gentle and affectionate man⁷. He may present his victim with gifts, go out of his way to do nice things for her, and generally make his victim feel accepted and loved (Walker 2000). “Tension building phase” is where the abuser can become more and more jealous, short tempered or paranoid. The victim will often try to protect herself by calming down the abuser. Sadly, an abusive person's anger is often irrational and therefore cannot be reasonably calmed. In many abusive relationships there is nothing the woman can do to avoid upsetting their partner (Walker 2000). “Acting out phase”: This is when things come to a head and the abuser becomes violent. In addition to physical attacks, a ‘batterer’ might use threats, intimidating behaviour and emotional abuse to keep his or her victim in line. During this phase, victims are often too frightened to seek out the help they need (Walker 2000).

⁷ My thesis include both men and woman as an abuser, however I will point at the man as the abuser in this chapter since this is what Walker's and Wood's theory is about.

Walker's theory shows that it starts with the excitement building, which is triggered with a violent outburst and ends with a repair phase. In the repair phase, some men will excuse their actions and promise repentance and recovery. He will point out the weak, unhappy and harmless side of himself. If the man seeks help for the violence, it can on many occasions keep women from leaving him. Women will often have new hope and think that now it is over, and that this was the last time. Walker states that in time the acting phase will lead back to the honeymoon phase. In many cases, she has to go through many rounds of violence cycles before she stops to hope for lasting change (Råkil 2002). Jenkins and Davidson (1999 in NOU 2003:31) believes that increased aggression in the stage where the survivor decide to move is so likely that they have begun using the term "separation violence" to describe the phase. Ekbrand (2001 in NOU 2003:31) refers to a number of studies showing that women to a large extent experience violence in connection with separation and divorce.

Francis Woods (1981) categorizes five different stages when a person is experiencing the cycle of violence.

- 1) In this phase the woman is denying there is a problem. She may downplay the seriousness of what happened, "He had a rough childhood, he only pushed me, didn't mean to do it". She is ashamed and does not want anyone to know.
- 2) The woman blames herself and is beginning to recognize the fact that she is battered, but her low self-esteem, and the fact that her partner blames her, makes her increasingly powerless. Her thoughts are, "I must provoke him to hit me. I'll try harder".
- 3) In phase 3 she seeks help. Sometimes this can be a negative experience. If she goes to family or friends, they may not believe her. Going through the legal system may also be frustrating and frightening due to their lack of knowledge of the system. She feels she is in a no-win situation. If she leaves, she hasn't tried, if she stays, she must like it.
- 4) She starts going in and out of the relationship. A large percentage of those who leave, return to the relationship more than once. She is trying to decide whether to stay or leave for good. She might have tried counseling or living on her own for a short time. She left because her life was in danger and she goes back because she still loves her spouse. She feels guilty and also has fears about making it on her own. Her going back is a test to see if the relationship can be changed. She may leave and return a few or many times. She may come to a definite decision gradually or suddenly. This stage could last for years.

- 5) The fifth and final stage would be living without violence. At this point, she will in all likelihood need ongoing support. Fear and low self-esteem may be a part of her life for a long time to come.

For an outsider, it may be hard to understand why abused women choose to remain in their situations, rather than leave. One of the answers has been that the abuse has meant that the survivor was not (any longer) able to make rational decisions (Walker 1984 in Haaland 2005). Margareta Hyden (1994 in Haaland 2005) has shown that women under certain conditions can help to maintain the common life together. A basic assumption is that the violent husband takes the blame for what happened, and that he promises not to repeat the violence. However, Bowker (1988 in Haaland 2005) says the reasons why women do not go are social, not psychological. This depends on economic dependence, fear of retaliation if she goes, and fear of losing her children. Jonassen and Eidheim (2001 in Haaland 2005) found that a number of factors worked together toward the decision to break out of the relationship. Social backing and support from family, friends, and professionals were such key factors. The woman's insight into her own situation was another set of conditions for the decision of the breach recognizing that it was not possible to change the man (Jonassen and Eidheim 2001 in Haaland 2005). Only when battered women reject these rationalizations and begin to view themselves as true victims of abuse does the victimization process actually begin (Ferraro 1983). Many women also referred to specific events, and events that got "the cup to overflow" were important markers in the decision making process. A key common feature among these authors are referenced under the stretch of the decision to leave the relationship must be seen as a process. Råkil (2002) describes that in a relationship with violence, there are many things that bind the parts together and that not is about freedom and love. It sounds right and reasonable that the survivor should move from the person who exercises violence, but for some it is not applicable. And for some, processes take time.

3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research questions are answered by a methodical empirical approach with qualitative methods. This way is chosen because I intended to capture the meaning and experience that is not possible to quantify or measure. The qualitative approach goes in depth and aims to bring out the context and wholeness.

3.1 Method

Interviews present the understanding the informants have of their own experiences. This is important information, but always a review of the informant's subjective experiences (Seale 1998). The qualitative research interview is centered on a conversation to get other people's information, understanding, interpretation of the phenomenon that is talked about, as well as stories about a given topic. "An interview is literally an inter-view, an exchange of views between two people who talk about a topic of common interest" (Kvale 1997: 28).

I was interested in the participants' individual and profound experiences, thus qualitative research method was suited. In order to develop such information one can rarely get by solely using quantitative methods. This is the rationale why qualitative research interviews were in the collection of empirical thesis. Kvale (1997) writes that the research interview is based on the everyday conversation, but differs in that it is an academic conversation, and in that the researcher defines and controls the framework for conversation.

I prepared the interviews before I carried them out, writing down questions I thought had an importance in my research. In this way, an interview guide was made with relevant questions for the thesis. The interview was semi-structured which means that while I had a format for the interview, I was open to change this based on what the participants told me. In this way there are reasons to believe that I've got information I otherwise easily could have missed (Becker 1970).

Semi-structured interview was chosen because the thesis seeks a comprehensive depth of knowledge from the ethnic minority women who have experienced violence from their ethnic Norwegian husbands. The most appropriate way to gain knowledge about this was that the talk about their experiences. The interviews gave me insight into the participants thoughts, experiences and feelings, as well as into the life situation in which they live. I tried to follow

up clues and themes that emerged along the way. In line with Kvale (1997), I had some questions and possible follow-up questions on an interview guide (cf. appendix). This method has been appropriate in this study and has made it easier to check whether I have understood the meaning as the participant has meant it when I have questioned in various ways on the same themes. What is characteristic with the qualitative interview is the challenge with going in depth. This entails that the number of informants cannot be too comprehensive. A good talk with two or three informants can give you a lot of information. The number of interview objects also depends on both the approach to the character of the problems and the time you have at your disposal (Dalland 2002).

3.2 Science Theoretical perspective

A direction in (interpretation of) science is according to Aadland (2004) a hermeneutic approach. I took advantage of the hermeneutic approach in that it aims to examine, explain, interpret and understand the full spectrum of human intercourse with the world (Aadland 2004). According to Kvale (1997) hermeneutics is about how “understanding and meaning” is possible. All understanding is conditioned by the context or situation. For example, "domestic violence" can be experienced and constituted in very different ways by each individual. These prejudices or assumptions characterize the pre-understanding. In the face of a text, it is for this reason that interpreters, as far as possible, free themselves from their own prejudices in order to familiarize themselves with the sender's understanding horizon. With hermeneutics, I understand that it involves a descriptive and reflective approach to the data. The interesting parts in this study have been to see how the participants experience and cope with their situation.

3.3 Selection criteria and selection procedure

The following approvals and recommendations were given from Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), University of Bergen.

The participants were selected because of some characteristics. The primary criteria were that they were adults, foreigners, and have been/was married to a Norwegian partner and are/have been exposed to domestic violence. The samples were recruited from a shelter in Norway.

The staff at the shelter recruited relevant persons with my request information (cf. appendix), and the participants who wanted to participate gave me permission to contact them.

3.3.1.1 The participants

Four women and one man were identified and selected as interview objects through purposive sampling techniques. The participants had all experienced violence in their relationship. The age of them varied from 26 to 33 years (average age: 29,4). Anonymising the participants, the fictional names that will be used when referring to them are Anan, Sara, Maria, Jennifer and Tumaini. None of the interview objects have a Norwegian citizenship at the time of the interview.

3.4 Author's background and reflexivity

Awareness of one's pre-understanding and role is important when one is researching. A researcher will always have a preconception⁸ in relation to the phenomenon being studied. This will especially apply where the researcher conducts research in his own field. A complete freedom from personal assumptions is not possible to realize, and probably not desirable (Kvale 1997).

I have in recent years worked as a therapist in youth psychiatric unit. I have seen the effects of violence in close relationships and what the consequences are. This experience has greatly influenced my choice of topic and research questions for this study and it has given me prior understanding and knowledge of the field I have researched within.

I had little or no knowledge (just chosen by the characteristics) or relationship to the participants before I did the interview.

Kvale (1997) emphasizes the basis of their phenomenological perspective in that it is important to be loyal to interview the person's own description, and that one must try to put

⁸ The pre understanding consists of the amount of experience we as humans have with us in all contexts. Our experience will affect us in our position as a researcher (Kvale 1997). Previous experience will at best provide nourishment and strength in the project and at worst, become an obstacle in terms of discovering something new.

the pre-understanding in parentheses. Regardless of the theoretical perspective we have, it will be difficult to eliminate the researcher's impact on the knowledge that emerges. It would therefore be of crucial importance to have a reflective and critical relationship to one's own pre-understanding, and its influence on the process. It is also important to have a reflective relationship with one's own theoretical framework. Reflection of one's pre-understanding should be involved in all phases of a study.

The participants' vulnerability was something I thought much about before and during the interview situation and in the analysis. I tried to not be too intrusive during the interviews. This is something that may have inhibited me in certain interview situations, in that I may have been afraid to ask certain questions or to be too direct. The interview situation in itself was also relatively new to me. This also brought insecurity on my part. In the analysis process, I became more conscious of looking for other conditions. I was forced to think again and break up the transcribed text.

3.5 The Interview

The participants were interviewed by the author of this thesis. The interviews took place at the shelter. The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and were semi-structured and can be called an in-depth interview. The interview guide was built around nine open questions (see appendix). I interviewed one informant at the time and mainly followed the interview guide (Appendix C), but at some questions I used follow-up questions because it was natural to ask the question and in this way, I also received more information about the theme.

The interviews were recorded on digital voice recorder. All the participants gave approval of being recorded. I explained to them why recording was an advantage for the information gathered. I also gave them assurances about personal security, anonymity and that that tape would be destroyed after terminating the thesis. I found that using tapes made it easier for me to concentrate and to listen to what was told by the participants. A possible weakness of using the sound recorder can make the participants feel that the interview is too formal in character, which might hinder their ability to go into depth on personal experiences (Kvale, 1997).

The participants were first asked to tell about their experiences with violence. I aimed to steer the conversation so that the most important themes in the interview guide were discussed, but

also to customize the questions by the individual participant's story. According Malterud (2003), it is important not to develop an interview guide which is too detailed or to follow it completely, when the study aims to learn something new about a topic or open up new questions about the problem.

3.5.1 Critics to the method

A fundamental requirement when collecting data is the validity, meaning that the data has to have relevance for the problem to be issued. In a structured interview the questions are usually put down in advance (Dalland 2002). The questions already being formulated may have influenced the answers given from my interview objects. In this way, I may have led the interview to be about the themes I wanted to have more information on. This could have made me miss out on important information that the participants did not tell me because of the questions already being applied (Dalland 2002).

A survey based on a personal interview is morally undertaken: the personal interaction taking place in the interview situation will affect the interview object, and the information produced in the interview will affect how I see the informant's situation. It is not easy to deal with all ethical questions appearing in an interview, and there are not always clear rules to follow. An consent form should be handed out prior to the interview, this was given to my participants several weeks before the interview took place. The consent provided information to the interview objects about the disciplinarian measure by implementing the interview. It should also tell the potential informants about the advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the research project (Kvale 2002). I did not say much about the latter in the consent form I gave to the participants. According to Kvale (2002), it is very difficult to give informant complete information about the study being conducted because you always change your project according to new information and points of view coming up during the process.

3.6 The analysis

I choose not to distinguish between the analysis and the interpretation, because in my thought one always uses interpretation when doing analysis. The basis for the interpretation of the data is that the analysis is performed in a manner that helps to highlight the meaning of the text. The transcription was conducted by me. The conversation was transcribed on an on-going basis after the interview. Reversal of oral speech to text will affect the material because few

people speak in literary form, so the writing provides a direct rendering of the call (Malterud, 2003). Proximity in time between the interview and transcription increases the likelihood the interviewer understands ambiguities in the written representations from the conversation context.

Although I skipped a number of small filler words of the type of "eh" etc., I have been fairly frugal with typing pauses and laughs. Although there has been a certain interpretation of the whole process, however, the main part of the interpretation is taken in retrospect. It is important to emphasize that I have then interpreted the transcribed interviews, and that I therefore have lost the information contained in the live call, the body language and tone of voice (information which is very comprehensive). A large part of the analysis has consisted in finding out what the participants did in order to sustain and escape a violent relationship. Although I have not been able to follow up questions to the participants after the interview, I have listened to the text itself. I have repeatedly seen that the text has opened up, and that I have understood it in a new way. I tried to find similarities and differences between the various interviews and find the theoretical concepts that could match the different meaning units.

I wrote down the first impressions immediately after each interview with emphasis on climate and tone of the meeting, emotional impact, nervousness, dialogue development etc. This is material that has been less used. I have probably been more concerned to bring out the verbal expressions in the uptake and raw material.

Because my sample is relatively small (5 participants), and because my participants had a lot to tell, I have chosen to present my findings based on the method Kvale (1997:135) refers to as "ad hoc meaning generation". This means that I have made use of different approaches and techniques for generating meaning in the analysis. It means I have not used any standard methods for analysing the interview material as a whole. Instead, it's a free interplay between various techniques (eclectic method). I can do deeper interpretations of certain statements and place parts of the interview in a story context and develop metaphors that can capture the material and so on. During the analysis process, some of the domains changed and some new ones were generated to fit better with the material. In the final presentation some quotes were

given a more written character. These changes are consistent with guidelines for the written representation of spoken language (Kvale 1997).

3.7 Validity

Validity is a statement of truth and correctness. Validity is about a methodology; it examines the objective to be investigated and to what extent observations actually reflect the phenomena or variables which we investigate (Kvale 1997). Kvale (1997) points out three different forms of validity: Validity as craftsmanship quality, communicative and pragmatic valid.

“Validity as craftsmanship quality” is about whether the work is properly performed. This comes under the extent to which I as a researcher master my craft/skill and the theoretical interpretation of the results. The procedure holds further control elements to counteract selective perception and unilateral interpretations. Reflexivity describes the authors’ focus in data collection and analysis, as well as the background. “Communicative validity” is about the verification of the validity of the statements made in a dialogue. In the interviews I used clarifying and detailed questions to ensure that I got hold of the participants’ actual experiences and perceptions. To bring clarity through dialogue becomes part of a process on the way to valid knowledge.

When I reflect on how I conducted the interview, I see that I should have been more closely with following up what they talked about. When I transcribed the interview I saw more of their experience aspects that I wanted to know more about, and to gain a better understanding of. Moreover, I worked through the data several times to arrive at an understanding of the material.

“Pragmatic validity” is the verification in the literal sense: to make true. Pragmatics is the truth that can help us to act in such a way that desired results are achieved. One can distinguish between two types of pragmatic validation. The first is whether the verbal statement is supported by action, and the other is whether interventions, formed on the basis of the researcher knowledge, can take real behavioural change. I have not used the observation of domestic violence outside the interview situation.

Kvale (1997) says that to validate is to check and control. During the interview I tried to set minimum leading questions, but sometimes I had to ask clarifying questions directly to control that I understood what the participant said. According to Kvale (1997) the researcher can lead to certain topics during the conversation, but not to the specific opinions on the subject. It was challenging to interview because some of the participants talked quietly, and some couldn't speak Norwegian or English very well. With that being said, I see that I might have missed information because I focused on the "three year rule" as a barrier. In qualitative research, bias effects can threaten the validity and reliability of findings. According to Kvale (1997), it is, in all research, important to assess the credibility of the results. I have tried to do this by reflecting openly on the question whether I have discussed what I wanted to illuminate and if I have interpreted the results correctly.

An important part of the process of the thesis has been to write: writing drafts, rewriting discarding, cutting and writing again. It is through the writing process that the hermeneutical spiral between me and the material has taken place.

Kvale (1997) points out that I have a scientific responsibility to the profession and my participants for the study to produce knowledge of value and that knowledge is as checked and verified as possible. I see that it is important that my perspective and position are clearly seen in the study as this has great significance for the type of knowledge that emerges. However, the selection is characterized as a weakness since it is not representative. The fact that the participants have been at the shelter may also have something to say about the "stories" being told. This could mean that they may have influenced each other. Some may also have processed their feelings and are more likely to talk about and reflect on their experiences, thoughts and feelings. The stories are created based on the experiences the participants have of what has happened, and that is what also is interesting: how the participants experience their reality, how they focus on some elements and not on others through the questions posed, and so also, to some extent able to cope and create meaning in everyday life. One important ethical aspect of the research is the question of how the researcher's part will affect the study (Kvale 1997). I see that it is me as an interviewer that has an influence on how data collection progresses and what comes out of the interviews. My gender can affect how the participants open up. It can also affect how I relate to the material.

The topic is sensitive and touching, and in either case my history will affect how I interacted with the material.

3.8 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research has to do with consistency of the research – this means that the procedure should be repeatable. In qualitative research, the interviewer and the participant are together creating the text, and thus it will to some extent be not directly repeatable. But if the procedures are accurately accounted for, it will most likely be possible to reconstruct and get the same result. In the task method, steps are reviewed in a precise and reliable manner so that it is possible to conduct a similar interview. It is important to note that reliability can be counteractive to create renewal and diversity that may be important for acquiring new, important knowledge. Thus, one also argues that the method must be able to accommodate a certain degree of possibility to deviation from the template (Kvale 1997).

Since the participants spoke English during the interview it has not been necessary for me to translate, which also validates the thesis. Thus, this may have led to me experiencing difficulties in understanding what the participants really meant. The interview objects did not have English as their native language, and neither do I as the author. Giving the interview in English, this may therefore have had an influence on the results and the way the interview was interpreted. The translation and understanding of what being questioned and said may have affected the interview guide and the interviews implementation.

3.9 Research ethical aspects

Research ethics guidelines have been guiding the research process. According to the research ethics guidelines (NSD) for the social sciences, humanities, law and theology, all research must be carried out in an ethically responsible manner, and this applies in particular to the protection of personal data and physical and mental integrity. Approvals were obtained from The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Consent forms from the participants were obtained prior to the interviews. In according with the NSD`s procedures, participants were recruited through the shelter. If they wanted to participate they could contact me on email or phone. When they did, I gave out oral and written information about the project and we planned where and when the interview could take place and it was emphasized orally and

in writing that the participant could withdraw at any time and without justification (see appendix for information write consent forms).

Safeguarding of the participants has been important, and my main concern was whether the participants would experience deterioration in their situation through participation. The relationship of abuser and the violence they have suffered, are deeply embedded in their lives. They were therefore followed-up after the interview under the auspices of the shelter. They were all grateful for this opportunity they had to share their story and wanted to help others in similar situations.

A goal has been that it should not be possible for the reader to identify participants, and I have tried to preserve the content and any special characteristics that I believe may be of importance for the understanding of the results. The sample is small, and since I only had one man in the sample, it can be easy to trace information back to the individual participant. I have consulted with NSD how this person can be anonymous in this thesis. Men at shelters were relatively rare (shelter for men was created January 2010) and the interests of anonymity demanded not to include the name of the shelter, or where shelter area is located. Therefore this is deleted from the data.

In the results section, direct quotes are used from the interviews for the best possible way to identify the participants' own thoughts and feelings about what they are experiencing. It is the participants themselves who are closest to the experience, and it will therefore also be participants who can best communicate and animate them. In the selection of quotes I have always looked to remove the most specific information that could have been potentially personal, or that was unnecessary to reveal the relevant points. I have to the best of my ability sought to find quotes that are most relevant for the topic to be discussed, and many quotes will be of such a nature that several of the participants will be able to recognize themselves. All raw data will be destroyed when the task is approved.

3.10 The study transferability and relevance

The study transferability is the ability to come up with descriptions, concepts, interpretations and explanations that are useful in other contexts (Johannessen 2006). I have tried to give a picture of a variety of ethnic minorities, and their experience of living with violence in close

relationships. The task is intended to illustrate a picture of the reality of these participants to provide depth, insight and knowledge and to be transferred to others in similar situations. The aim was to get answers to the issues and to analyse questions that I worked out from it. The study provides a basis to raise new questions and to go deeper into the topic. The thesis has provided insight and understanding to master and to build up resources both internally and externally. I have tried to enhance transparency by giving a good description of empirical data, theory and method. It is important to be aware that change takes time and that mastery is a process.

The primary approach to the problem in this thesis is:

“How individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds experience domestic violence, and what they do to sustain and escape a violent relationship”.

It would therefore be appropriate to consider the study generalization value from an analytical generalization perspective. The participants' stories in this study show the convergence phenomena with other qualitative studies on violence in the Nordic countries (Hyden, 1994; Skjørten, 1994), descriptions of clinical practice (Askeland et al., 2002) and knowledge of the reactions for those exposed to domestic violence (Herman, 2001; Walker 1994). This suggests that the sample in this study is not significantly different from other people who are victims of domestic violence, and that it is reasonable that this thesis results can say anything about how people who experience violence, live through this. If the selection is fairly typical, one can generalize on logical grounds because there is little reason to believe that the selection differs significantly from the universe from which it is selected (Kvale, 1997). The participants are too few to be able to say something in general about health services in Norway, but they may provide an indication that there still are variations as to what kind of follow-up support services are available in this area.

Although one should look at and study the common challenges, the experience that is related to being exposed to violence is always individualized. To study the common challenges also requires a study that is based on individual experiences, in addition to the common challenges people exposed to violence have. This brings out the relationship between universalism and relativism, and in this way the differences in experience and issues are also recognized.

Violence affects all types of people and occurs in all countries, all cultures and walks of life. It is not only a problem in the minority in a country. It is not intended to imply that all minorities are in the same situation. On the contrary, it is desirable to emphasize that the minorities interests may vary.

4 FINDINGS

In presenting the findings the following designation will be used: "All" or "everyone" will equal the five participants. "Most" or "several" will be equal to at least three of the five participants. "Few" will equal three or less of the five participants. Additionally, fictitious names are used. The topics are taken from the interview and will to varying degrees go into each other.

4.1 The violent relationship

When exploring how the participants experienced the violence they were exposed to, three themes were identified; "the beginning, good and bad periods, move (forward and back)". When exploring what kinds of violence the participants were exposed to, "physical, mental and sexual abuse" were the main areas.

4.1.1 The beginning

At the beginning, all the participants found acceptable explanations for their partners' violence. All said that they saw the partner to be so kind, positive and efficient in the beginning that they could never have thought of the partner as violent. All said becoming a victim of violence was a most frightening and anxiety-provoking experience. Moreover, at the beginning, all the participants found acceptable the explanations for partners' anger. Some of the participants said they had sympathy for their partner because he/she had had a difficult time or had had a rough childhood, and they gave the partner many chances. Most also said they would like to remain with his/her partner to help, and had a hope that things could change. Anan talked about a sudden change in her partner. He started going out more often and told her he had appointments and often came home drunk. He started to control her and stopped her doing things she wanted. She talked about being patience with him and wanting to do everything for him, doing everything his way.

4.1.2 Good and bad periods

The participants talked a lot about the good and bad periods. They stayed through loyalty and love, and thought that the abusive partner could change. Tumani pointed to the commitment of marriage and felt that he could not break out when he first discovered signs of violence: "People get married for good and bad. I didn't want to walk away from her. She has

problems. I wanted to fix the problems with her”. He said she had a lot to think about, including the child welfare service. They had been involved with her and her children for three or four years. She had children from a former relationship. The way she apologized for her temper and violent side made Tumani want to try again. Including other things, she often said “the kids are missing you. I am missing you”. Anan said she tried to calm down her partner by talking to him. She said “I want him to forget the problem he had before. I want him to be happy”.

Everyone said they avoided certain topics out of fear of angering their partner. Anan said she sometimes just kept quiet/didn't want to talk because she didn't want to fight. Tumani locked himself in the bedroom to have some time away from his partner. Sara also pointed to things she could do to be more independent:

The small abuses went on and on. That was because I was not independent. So I decided to get a job. I was told from friends about an employment agency and I made contact with them and tried to get a cleaning job. But he asked me to move out if I was going to do cleaning jobs, because he didn't like me to do this kind of job. So I moved to Denmark for about two months until he finally said I could come back and I could do cleaning job after all. I was always trying to not allow him to overcome me. He was tough.

Tumani pointed to marriage as a reason that he could not break out when he first discovered signs of violence. He said he gave his wife a lot of chances to change, but that he now wanted to break out of the marriage as she hasn't changed. Jennifer knew of a previous history of violence from her husband and reacted to his behaviour. But she said she had never been subjected to physical violence, but the fear was always there.

Most participants have had short breaks in the course of the relationship, but took the partner back. Several participants described that during the separation period, contact with the offender increased to the point where suddenly they were back in the relationship again. Many said that the reason they were together with the partner again was that they still had feelings for him or her, and they wished so strongly that it would be good. Some of the participants told of death threats and fear of what would happen if they broke out. Some were afraid of what the partner could do, and explained that they simply were afraid for their own lives.

4.1.3 Move (forward and back)

The participants talked about moving from the abusive partner in order to survive and escape a violent relationship. Everyone came to the shelter; some came through the police and some through the extended network (neighbours, people from courses etc). Further on she says:

I was spending hours on the internet looking at ways to be a better wife, better stepmother, better mother. Ahm... I suggested separation to him quite often. I was met by being a drama queen. Or.. I'm just emotional. And things like that. And afterwards when I came to the shelter. It was hell for months. He...20-40 phone calls a day. Text messages. I went to the police to have them talk to him. Because it wouldn't stop. When I came to the shelter he wanted me back. And he said he's not like the other guys, whos wife's are here.. and things like that. And.. He just didn't understand.

Tumani talked about trying to search for help from his family when he got to the point he knew that his wife wasn't going to change:

I was giving her many chances. And I was being patient. I was doing everything she said I had to do. I was following her in all she wanted to do. And this is how it ends. I've been trying to call my family in my home country to say I could use their help. My mum has tried to talk to my father to change his mind, but my father discarded me from my family. I am no longer a part of my family because I disobeyed him. Because I disrespected him. My father has warned me he might find another second wife. Like he is punishing my mother. Of course she doesn't like this. I am doomed. I have nothing any longer.

Several of the participants described how at the end they took more distance from their partner. Distance contributed to negative feelings towards the man and they got a more rational picture of the abuse. Anan said: "I shouldn't live with him, I'm scared of him, normal people don't do this". But still, she wasn't sure of what to do at the time of interviewing. She thought of a lot of things: to go back to her home country or to stay in Norway and study or work and get her own apartment. But then she also thought about staying with her partner.

Distance and indifference meant that participants no longer let themselves be influenced by the verbal violence or promises of improvement. They gave up hope of positive change. Sara got an apartment but her partner came to her place begging her to come back. He also called on the telephone to threaten her: "if you don't come back I will make sure they send you home." Sara got this on record without him knowing it. She told him he would have to admit

the abuse to get her trust again. And he did it. He went to the police and said he had been physically violent to her. He wrote a short note: “He really regrets and promise he won’t do it again.” She said that this is what can keep her in the country and after he has been treating her that way she has a desire to leave him.

Sara gave this description about how hope can occur between the violent episodes:

He used to send me home when he didn’t want me, and I kind of disagreed with him, but he didn’t want me here.. And in the beginning I was like.. ok, because I can’t let you enslave me. But he always started to call and apologize and wanting me back after a week or two. And I came. After two years it was this episode that freaked me out because he was so angry, hitting tables and yelling at me, and I called the police that brought me to the shelter. I stayed there for a month and he called a lot... He even came there... and he wanted me back... but I had to stand on my feet. Because it was too much... I had had enough. The Shelter helped me to find a place to live afterwards. He actually found my address on the internet. He came to my place begging me to come. Realizing how serious I am now. And.. One day he called threatening me...” If you don’t come back I will make sure they will send you home...” I have all this on record, and I recorded a lot of his conversations.

4.1.4 Physical violence

The participants, except one, had experienced physical violence from a partner. Moreover the severity and scope of the violence differed. Everyone talked about less violent episodes through to life-threatening. In summary, the participants have experienced a direct punch, kick, strangleholds, scratching, shaking, pushing, not getting food, being evicted from their home, or being physically held. Sara gave an example of physical violence:

I tried telling him that, “honey, I can’t”, I had newly come to the country and it was still too cold for me. 6 o clock looks like 3 am in my country. It’s dark. And he pushed me very hard to the wall and told me I had to go back to my home country and the marriage was over. That was the first time he.. I mean.. That was the first time he hit me.

Tumani tells about the physical violence:

when she beat me it was hard for me. I lost respect for myself. Because no one has the right to beat anyone. I did not feel human by treating this way. Living an unstable life, living not safe, I did not feel safe. One time I was asked how come a strong man like me gets beaten form his wife. I said, what was I supposed to do? It’s wrong to hit your wife. It’s wrong in every way, by the law, by the people, by everything. And it’s shameful. So that’s why I did not do it. But I was not to weak to do it. I could do it if I

wanted. But it's wrong and I cannot do this. And I was too nice with her. I was giving her many chances. And I was being patient. I was doing anything she said I had to do. I was following her in all she wanted to do. And this is how it ends.

Tumani also told about one experience of being cut on the shoulder with a knife;

I asked my lawyer about the culture in Norway, because my wife had said to me that it is normal for wives to hit their men in Norway, scratch them, make them sleep outside.. and so on. But the lawyer said that this wasn't true. She said I needed to have a social life, personal life, and control over personal things. You know. So I went back and things were fine. After some time I told my wife I wanted to be a vegetarian. But she didn't like it because she needed to cook different meals for me, her and her kids. And actually I wasn't deciding to be a vegetarian, I was just trying to discuss. She got angry most of the day and I was trying to avoid her and not talk to her. Because when she is angry she will explode. But at the end of the day I was talking to her, but she got really angry, screaming, boxing on me, pushing me,. All this. And when I went to take my clothes she screamed, go out without your clothes or I will kill you. And she came with an knife. Not a big knife, the one you cut beef with. And then she was threatening me. Go out or I will do this. She cut me with a knife on my shoulder. I was freaking out, told her to call an ambulance or do something. She said no. I took contact with the shelter and they took me to the emergency. And there I had something they called a panic attack. I lost control and passed out for three minutes. From this day I have started to have mental problems. They call it PTSD. It was getting worse and worse. And I was in the mental section three times. I stayed another place for a month and got a lot of help there. Taking much medicine for depression, the sounds, sleeping, nightmares, nervousness and so on.. I'm going there this month as well.

Sara tells about one time she got beaten by her husband. She was travelling to her home country to see her sick mother, but she ended up by being sick herself the first week away. Some hours before she took her flight she got beaten very hard:

One time he pushed me, slapped me in the face, I felt on the floor. He kicked me with his foot many times, through my shoes at me. I was bleeding on my hands, because I had lots of cuts. I had swollen face.

During the interview Anan showed how her husband sometimes used to grab around her neck and shake her and push her away. He punched her several times.

4.1.5 Mental violence

All of the participants have experienced degradation in that the partner has made comments, disparaging or harassing them. They were also harassed when they were called "useless", "bitch", or "hooker". Everyone experienced threats. Several have also experienced that their

opinions were never taken into account or that they were ridiculed. All of them said that their partner had been controlling and manipulative. The participants reported that their partners exercised control by regulating their social life, whereabouts, food and work. Some of the partners exercised control by taking full financial management. When I asked Tumani how the violence began, he said:

Actually it did not start as violence. It started with controlling. She started to control me in every way. It was not okay to go out for walks, it was not okay to have friends, and it was not okay to do anything. Even with the food. She controlled what I eat to make me eat healthier. I said it's my choice and it's up to me. But she made everything to a fight. So you can say I started to have fear for her. Fear of fight, fear of drama. So I started to follow everything she said to avoid having problems. And things got more and more complicated. It reached the violence level, physically and mentally violent (...) I tried to get a job and I went to the interview and everything was fine. And then she sent them an email saying I was not going to work there. She didn't want me to have a job. She said I had to make all the housework and babysit the kids when she was out. So this is how it's been in my life. I didn't even have control over my own personal things. For example my passport, the phone, and the papers from Folkeregisteret Everything was with her.

Jennifer explained that it was very painful and difficult that the man didn't take his responsibilities as a father and husband by failing to show up for their son. Anan said that her man had an extreme anger that occurred frequently and often abruptly for no apparent reason. The reaction was perceived as exaggerated and out of dimensions. He also posed threats to her for her not to leave him, he said he was using postpartum depression (PPD) against her, so he could get our son if she left. Jennifer said she was terrified he would take their son and get deported, and she would never see her son again "It was hard to break out of the relationship because I was terrified of losing my son." Tumani did not have his own children but said he was concerned about his wife's children and their perception of the situation. An interest in the children was also to influence his decisions to stay longer in the relationship.

4.1.6 Sexual violence

Two in five participants spoke of obvious sexual abuse. They reported being forced to have sex and if they did not want to have sex, they were forced to do so. Few, however, called it sexual violence themselves. Most said that they agreed to have sex to avoid getting more problems or trouble. However, Anan told that her husband forced her to have sex with him

while his daughter was sleeping in the same room. She said she didn't want to have sex with him, but he forced her.

Most of the participants felt that experiencing the psychological violence was worse than the physical. Tumani says:

I lost everything in my home country. I lost my job, I lost my friends, I lost my family, You know.. I lost my car. I lost my life. My wife sees this, and says I have nothing to go back for and I have to be with her and live her way. This is how she threatens me and I don't know what to do. The mental way is even more painful than the physical. I am doomed I am dead.

They stated that the psychological violence provided deeper wounds than the physical. The fear and pain (psychological violence) was experienced at any and all times, so it's harder to put it behind them.

4.2 Coping with domestic violence

When exploring how the participants cope with the situation four major themes were identified:

- a) Seek help
- b) Maintain hope for the future
- c) Change their partner
- d) Change themselves

4.2.1 Seek help

All of the participants came to the shelter. Many wanted to go to counselling/therapy. Two of five participants were separated at the time of interviewing and two of the ones that are still married are thinking about going through with a separation. Some have friends whom they say are helpful to talk to. Jennifer said she was depressed a lot during her marriage. The health station tried to get her to meet other people and she met some through a Norwegian course. She also visited a website forum to seek help and advices about the marriage and that was how she got the strength to seek help at the shelter. She told that her stepfather loaned her money and NAV helped and she was going to a therapist on her own. Some also were seeking

help through the shelter, police, marriage counselling and lawyers. Sara tells about her lawyer whom she got in contact with through the shelter and how she opened her eyes a bit about the law. Jennifer loaned money through her stepfather and got help from NAV and Tumani got help at the mental institution. However, seeking help are not synonymous with getting help. Some were telling about difficulties when seeking help. Jennifer pointed specifically about little knowledge of the regulations. In order to take advantage of a privilege, one must know about it. To have knowledge of this is a quite elementary sociology of the law.

Jennifer and her (at that point) husband were seeking help at marriage counselling. But she didn't feel it was very helpful as they both told her to stress out less. Many also pointed to the public institutions as a barrier for intervention. Tumani called the police, but they said they couldn't help him. One time he called at 3am in the morning, saying that it was snowing and he didn't know what to do or where to go. The police said he had to come to the city, and Tumani said he didn't have money to take the bus. The police said he had to walk. And Tumani said it was a long way and that he didn't know which way to take. The police just told him, you are on your own. He went to a bus station and lay down on the bench. He was in pain and it was painful to breathe. He has been sleeping outside the house many times. Sometimes three days in a row. People in the neighbourhood saw it and took him inside their house. They felt sorry for him. One of these people told him about the shelter, he called the shelter and they came to get him

I even went to the police with a sms message where she wrote she was going to kill me, cut my head off, look for me and drive over me with a car". The police just said to me, "Don't do this". The policeman didn't want to report it. I've never seen this in my life. It's unbelievable that the police can treat people like this.

4.2.2 Maintain hope for the future

Some report that the good periods are easier to remember than the bad. Apologies, the promise of recovery, and periods of non-violence means that the participants hope that the violence will end and they cling to that hope.

Sara also described her desire to stay in the relationship for three years for an easier way to get citizenship

I realized he wouldn't change, but also If I left I would have to go back to my home country, I wouldn't leave until maybe three years had passed. I think.. I'm not the only person that has admitted that. Because you feel like you let go of everything, and there is more possibility here.

Anan told about her desire to gain an education:

I would like for example to go to school and study. An opportunity to better myself again. I prefer to live alone.. Maybe with a friend. It would be nice to stay longer in Norway.

4.2.3 Change their partner

The participants said that they did everything to try to achieve a change in their partner, and put a stop to the violence, both in long term and the situation there and then. Anan tells how much she wanted her husband to change:

I still love him, and my greatest wish is that he could realize what he did wrong and change it. I am scared for him. I want to help him. I try to talk about the past, but he won't listen. He says no one will control me.

Several of the participants have tried to appeal to reason with the man and questioned his behaviour. The participants believed that he would change if he knew that what he did was wrong. All participants conveyed how the relationship was struggling with ambivalence as to whether they should go from the partner or be in the relationship. Several of the participants explain how the relationship survived on the good periods. Some reported that the good periods are easier to remember than the evil. Apologies and the promise of improvement and periods without violence helped the participants to hope that the violence will end, and they clung to this hope Most of the participants said they wished strongly that everything would be fine and focused on the partner's positive aspects. The participants thought the man would change if he just sees things clearly. Some of the women said that treatment/therapy gave them new hope for change.

4.2.4 Change themselves

During the violence, many wanted to change themselves to become a better parent, spouse and be independent. Eventually, when they saw that the violence did not cease in tandem with them getting more information and help, it looked like they changed by distancing themselves

more from the partner and looked forward to what they wanted do with their life. Some of the participants talked about study, work, travel to the country and to get their own home. Anan gave an example of how she changed her attitude. She told about how she tried to shut things out and not listen to what he said, because she didn't want to fight. She cried a lot and sometimes tried to talk to him, to help him forget the problems he had before. When she came to the shelter she discovered a whole new world. She liked it at the shelter because it was so quiet and nice. Nothing like it is in the house with the arguing and fighting. She started to think about what she was going to do including her husband in her life, but also thinking about her life without him. Sara told about how she realized her husband wouldn't change, but she wouldn't leave him until three years had passed, so she could more easily get citizenship in Norway. However, there were changes that were destructive for the participants as well. Tumani says he has tried to kill himself two times.

It was an established habit to shy away from what could lead to conflicts. Several participants described that they focused a lot on a hope that the partner should have a good time. Several of them said that they became less social when they moved to Norway. This was mostly because it was hard to meet other people. Some also said they had less contact with friends because it quickly became a source of trouble. Some said that the partners were very demanding in terms of things in the house, and what was done in the house was rarely good enough.

4.3 The process of leaving

Not all the participants had broken out of the relationships at the time of interviewing. However when exploring what the participants did in order to leave the perpetrators three major themes were identified:

- a) Developing knowledge
- b) Telling
- c) Gaining support

4.3.1 Developing knowledge

Many of the participants actively searched for knowledge about the society. Anan give an example about the help they receive is not always in line with what they want themselves.

They want to help me forget what happened to me. They want to bring me to a psychiatrist. But I like it at the shelter. It is so quiet and not noisy like it is home. But I don't like to go to psychiatrist. I don't want to have my life again. I want advice, what to do.

The participants conveyed that the employees need more knowledge about domestic violence. The male participant felt he was not believed or taken seriously by the police. Jenifer also told about how she felt she wasn't believed in the counselling therapy, and both her husband and her therapist told her to stress out less. Maria says that she feared for her life when she previously lived with her husband. Now she has moved to another city and started on Norwegian course. The only bad part about this is that she had to move from the friends she had. She pointed out that she would not have managed her situation if the police and the shelter had not helped her. She said she wants to get her son to Norway and get a job. However, she still lived with the uncertainty as to whether she was allowed to remain in the country.

4.3.2 Telling

Tumani gave an example of how he met people staying on the streets:

When I was sleeping at the streets I started to know people in the area and they felt sorry for me, and invited me in to their homes. One of these people told me about the shelter. That was how I got in contact with them and they helped me in some ways.

All participants said that they had a very small network in Norway. There are some who, however, point out that they had some relationships and how they had been talking about violence with these and consulting them.

4.3.3 Gaining support

Some of the participants described how they opened up more to others about the violence, both friends and institutions. This gave them support to see what happened was wrong and that they should get away. Some said that some people were important in the fracture process

because they supported and pushed them to do something about the situation. Several of the participants were looking for confirmation on their perception of reality, either in others or in the helping professions. Social support or confirmation from the professionals was important for the participants. Several of the participants described how they distanced themselves from the partner. Sara told that she didn't want to go back to her husband, but got an apartment. The participants were staying in or had stayed at the shelter. Everyone wanted advice to what they could do with the situation, and some said they had met other people in similar situations and that this had been a good experience. Some also mentioned they wanted to take education and work.

Some of the participants get their own apartment or live in shelters whilst waiting for their own home. Some also reported a desire to work or study and a desire to become more independent. One of the five participants clearly shows that she has taken significant distance from her partner by changing the phone number, hiding her address etc

When Sara realized that her husband was not going to change and became aware of the importance of material evidence in such situations, she provided evidence of abuse (for example, confirmation/statement from the abuser).

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Recall the problem we defined in the introduction:

“How individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds experience domestic violence, and what they do in order to survive and escape a violent relationship”

5.1 What forms of violence have the participants been exposed to?

There is considerable variation in the violence that the participants in my sample had been exposed to. The violence the participants did experience is categorized as physical, mental and sexual violence. It looks like it was more appropriate to divide the violence in these various forms of violence as the diversity, including the experiences of the survivors of violence who have experienced physical violence, came through. The severity of the violence varies from very severe, life-threatening violence to less serious violence. The psychological violence is however difficult to assess in the same way as it involves many different aspects, and most experience it as more real and present all the time. The majority of the participants said that the control aspect of the violence was prevalent. The theory shows that the sexual violence gives psychological consequences for the survivors. However, it is also pointed out that in cultures where men have higher status than women, women can find it difficult to see the coercion of sex in marriage as rape (Skogøy 2008).

5.2 How do the participants experience the violence and relationship they are in?

In the chapter of findings, several ways are described how violence affects the participants. The most consistently found result is that violence has gone beyond the participants' self-confidence or belief in their own judgments. Participants also tell that violence for whatever reason made them more isolated. They report of depression, anxiety, mental disorder and so on.

The first violence comes as a shock to most, and they react with despair and fear. The first violent incident challenges the participants' original understanding of the relationships and violence, and begins searching for meaning and explanations. Much time and effort is spent to understand their partner's behavior and violence as a phenomenon. They describe a range of emotions from fear and anger to sadness, low self-esteem and suicide attempts. The participants convey that they spend much time analyzing their own behavior to see if they did

something that triggered the violence.

There are many situations the male participant pointed to as difficult in this situation when exposed to domestic violence and being a minority in a country. However results from the first national study in Norway, "Couple Violence - different perspectives", show that men and women react quite similarly to the exposure to violence. They suffer from the same types of anxiety and psychological after-effects. This helps to indicate that violence and masculinity do not belong together.

As pointed to in the theoretical chapter, "comprehensibility" is necessary to perceive the world as making sense. However, the participants view their world as chaotic and inexplicable. Many tell of powerlessness and do not know what to do. They want help, advice and guidance to what they can do. All the participants tell about how the shelter has helped them with accommodation, advice and so on. The context, "meaningfulness" refers to the participants seeking advice on the internet for support groups and some talking with friends about their situation. They say that the meaning they attach to the violence and the partners behavior change along the way, and in the beginning, they want to change their partner and themselves for the relationship to be better. Some also think that the partner may change if they behave differently, and some use avoidance behavior to not go into topics that can make their partner angry. But eventually this wasn't making sense anymore and they changed their opinion and chose new strategies. This refers to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) definition of coping is "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral coping efforts in process".

"Meaningfulness" refers to the extent that one feels that life is comprehensible and makes sense emotionally. In this context, we can look at whether the participants think it is worth getting out of this situation. The findings of this thesis shows that the participants "earn" by being in the violent relationship through the "three year rule". The "three year rule" may therefore appear to weaken the motivation to get out before the expiry of 3 years or more because many would like to get permission for residence in Norway. On the other hand, the hope of education and their own apartment and tranquility increased motivation to get out of the violent relationship. This is, according to the theory, essential to wellbeing and coping.

5.3 What factors prevent the participants from leaving their abusive partners?

The findings of the thesis show that the participants experience obstacles on the way to break out of a violent relationship.

All the five participants haven't been long in Norway and have not established themselves with the network nor the economy. For them it's a new culture, new language and they don't have a stable network around them. However, some still have family in their home country. Some even have their children in their home country staying with their parents.

It can be difficult to understand that a person, that has experienced a number of violations both physical and psychological, can have warm feelings for the man/woman. However, some have good moments with their partner.

The participants discover early that the partner has temperament problems, but they mostly have largely acceptable explanations for this early aggressive behavior. The violent episodes, especially at the beginning of the relationship, were explained as and interpreted as something else, and they all assumed that the partner would change the behavior when he/she understands that what the partner is doing is wrong.

The belief that the partner would change and that the relationship would become better is maintained by several factors. This is particularly true when the relationship between violence and violence-free periods, especially the physical, is in favor of the violence-free periods. If the abusive partner also shows a high degree of remorse or in direct action appears to have changed, and that he / she sees that what he/ she has done is wrong, it will strengthen the hope of the survivors. The participant would then be more inclined to stay in the relationship or take the partner back. The fact that the participant had a strong desire that the relationship would become normal and free of violence seems to ensure that they are more apt to take into account the facts and belief on information that is consistent with their hopes. Many expressed the fact that they still had feelings for partner was very crucial for taking him / her back. From the "circle of violence", described in chapter 3.3.4, we see how the survivors live in the ratio of the good periods. All the apologies, promises of improvement and periods without violence mean that they are hoping that the violence will end, and they cling to this hope. They will often relate in the hope that the violence will cease.

Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds may have special needs for assistance in creating a self-independent life without violence. For some, this includes help to overcome language barriers, so their needs may be able to be conveyed to the helpers.

In addition to all the various agencies they must go through to get the help they need, not knowing the Norwegian system may be a barrier for seeking help. The four most common services are referrals to an attorney, social services, police and doctors. Some are also referred to a psychologist and child protection. There is a tendency for foreign women to visit far more agencies than Norwegian women. There are examples of women of foreign origin having required help from 55 different agencies in the re-establishment phase.

Several of the participants said they want a residence permit in Norway. Provision of mistreatment is not used among the subjects in this research. However, it appears that several attempt to obtain material evidence and one of the participants points out that she will remain in the marriage for three years so that it can be easier to get a residence permit, even if she is exposed to violence. It is important to ensure a better and more consistent use of the abuse provision and to help those who really need it.

Moreover, this study shows that the survivors do not stay in the relationship because he/she likes, accepts, or wants to live with violence, but because he/she has been exposed to some extreme experiences that create certain bonds and obstacles.

Breaking with the perpetrator is no guarantee that the violence ends. Research shows that many who leave the perpetrator fear that the violence will escalate in severity and extent. Today we know that separation and divorce can provoke aggression and violent conduct into the relationship. Statistics shows that women to a large extent experience violence in the process of separation or divorce. In a phase like this, a supportive network will be very crucial for how the participants master the situation.

Particularly for individuals with ethnic minority background, the existence after a breakup can be very difficult, either because the former wife/husband's friends were friends or because the survivors' cultural background does not accept divorce and she/he could experience being met

with social rejection. Tumani was rejected from his own family in his home country when he married and moved to Norway, because he didn't do as his father wished. Tumani disobeyed his father and is therefore no longer deemed to be part of the family even after begging for help! The result may be that many individuals live in very isolated circumstances after divorce.

The three-year rule weakens foreign women and men opportunity to be incorporated as full citizens in Norway. The three-year rule means that the foreign spouse does not formally get to stay on an independent basis before the first three years in marriage. Because the stay in this period is contingent on their private status as a spouse, the membership is based on affiliation with another person, rather than incorporated into effect by itself. Instead of having the integration as a criterion for citizenship, the granting of citizenship rather promotes the integration of immigrants.

This lack of clarity has led to uncertainty about the rights that women and men have for a family breakdown. People under the three year rule that are exposed to abuse, therefore, often remain in the marriage despite the violence they experience. For those who must move to a shelter, they are in an unpredictable situation and hold a very uncertain legal status.

For many of the foreign women and men at a shelter, the UDIs practice of long trials brings much uncertainty and results in a troubling encounter with the Norwegian state when women and men cannot obtain a residence permit on an independent basis.

With such a "three-year rule" it is likely to prevent and detect pro forma marriages residence in Norway. Among other things, it does not provide foreign spouses, who want to get out of the relationship until three years have passed, access to separation time which other spouses are entitled to under Norwegian law.

Many of the participants are experiencing a lot of threats. This tells me that the meeting with the support system is important, and it is also important that support agencies are able to protect and support a survivor in the phase of moving away from the violent partner.

5.4 What factors contribute to their desire to leave the violent partner?

The same for all is that nature of violence is incompatible with the existence of love, and over time the participants reported that their feelings for their partner changed character.

The violence and the distance seems to extend its meaning so, that some of the participants lose respect for their partners. It seems like it only took time for them to see what was best for them. In addition to get distance from their partner, the participants talked about them coming to a point in the relationship where they realized that the partner was not going to change.

As the theory about the “circle of violence” describes, the loving feelings change often with different degrees of disgust or indifference. This happens for several of the participants in that they physically take more distance to their partner and distance themselves more from him/her. It seems like their focus moved from their partner's well-being to their own needs. None of the participants were satisfied with the situation in that they lost their right to determine.

As shown in chapter 3.1.5, violence measurement of the Justice Department shows that people take more contact with health care now than before in order to talk about domestic violence. What does this mean? This may be a result of greater openness and less taboo surrounding violence in relationships today than a few years ago. But why do more women contact? Shelters for men was created in January 2010. As shown earlier in this thesis ethnic minorities are a large representation of survivors of violence. The thesis also refers to international studies that say that violence and threats are related to the degree of urbanity.

There are some factors that must form the basis for the participants to achieve mastery in terms of being exposed to violence - some of them stay at the shelter, and there is an unknown future ahead of them. The environment can mean a lot for how the participants cope with the situation (Schiefløe 1992). The environment must recognize their experiences so that they can regulate their emotions after the experiences they have.

They explore potential coping resources and are open to new information, and they are willing to explore new avenues. Some of the participants went out and actively sought information on their own, others felt that friends and acquaintances came with advice or took the initiative for them. Some of the participants also took a decision that "enough is enough" like the circle of

violence shows. They just didn't want to listen anymore.

As this study shows, the institutions contributed to the participants becoming aware of the shelter and they (including the shelter) assisted the majority of the participants in realizing the severity of their situation and that it was not good for them to be in the relationship, and making sure that they were able to break out.

5.5 How do the participants cope with the situation?

Hope was highlighted by several of the participants, and they expressed a strong hope for change hoping to get out of the difficult situation, and hoping for a better life. This means that the participants may have difficulties finding meaning in events that occur. The abusive relationship wasn't predictable, even if they see a pattern in how their partner is reacting and trying to form their behaviour after this pattern.

“Manageability” refers to the extent that one perceives that the resources available are sufficient to meet the difficult challenges of reactions and events. For the participants, all of which are minorities and not very familiar with the system, they will not have sufficient resources available.

The thesis shows clearly that there is insufficient knowledge in Norway about violence against men in general, and against men of other ethnic origin in particular. The lack of knowledge has a negative impact on men's ability to cope with this crisis situation. As shown from the male participant, he struggles to be met with understanding of his situation and must fight his way through the system. It is important to meet victims of violence with a good understanding to assist them so that they can make sense and cope with the situation they are in.

As shown in this paper it may offer additional challenges for people of foreign origin to create meaning and cope with the situation they are in within Norway, a strange society to them. How support services and shelter meet them is crucial to how they perceive the situation and find meaning in it. In the shelter, the survivors will be able to get help to learn to manage their own life situation and problem situations. The more experience people gain in dealing with situations and analysing and understanding a problem area of stress, the greater their ability.

Håkonsen (2009) says this is good for solving problems.

If the survivor chooses to go, this may involve a well-founded fear for their own life. For young women, domestic violence is a strong risk factor for homicide. As mentioned in the thesis, each year about 10 women in Norway are killed by their spouse (Schei, 1999). Several of the participants, the women and the man, tell of death threats or fear of their partner/ex-partner. Both American and Norwegian sources have found that domestic violence is an important and comprehensive cause of injuries among women (Schei, 1999). Some of the participants talk about life threatening situations after the break with the abuser. This tells me that the meeting with the support system is important, and it is also important that support agencies are able to protect and support a violence prone person in violation phase.

In practice it points to the necessity of good documentation of abuse among the helpers she/he meets. That this type of documentation exists - and that the documentation follows the woman and men's application for a stay - can have a decisive impact on the outcome of the application (Skogøy 2008). According to NOU 2003: 31, "The right to a life without violence", it has been shown that in practice it is very difficult to obtain a residence permit on grounds of ill-treatment. The requirements of Immigration make the probability slim, and the evidence far higher than what their own guidelines dictate.

Domestic violence is a topic that deserves to be high on the social agenda, regardless of the background to those affected. By including participants' own experiences and values, and avoiding hierarchical notions of absolute truths, one can find solutions based on perspectives that we maybe haven't seen before.

6 Conclusion

When exploring what kind of violence they were exposed to three themes were identified: physical violence, mental violence and sexual violence. Results of this study show considerable variation with regard to the violence the participants are exposed to.

Psychological violence is worse than physical. The violence has consequences for the participants in several areas. They report on PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), suicidal attempts, depression, isolation and fear. Moreover when exploring how the participants experience the violence and the relationship they are/were in, it appears that the participants use more avoidance strategies when they are still in the abusive relationship, trying to cope with the on-going violence and to normalize it. However, over time it's still a gradual process in which the participants have distanced themselves from the abuser. The more severe and frequent the abuse becomes, leads the participants to change their understanding of the violence and to start to believe that violence is not their own fault, and instead to blame their partner. Some factors that might place constraints on these efforts are the amount of commitment to preserving the relationship and the resources available to help them to cope with the abuse in an active and direct manner. Another important factor is the responsiveness of potential help sources, such as friends, policy, lawyers and the shelter. The participants that receive more positive response from help sources are likely to have greater confidence in their abilities to change their situation. Many experienced not being believed when seeking help. Discrimination is a result of uneven distribution of power between majority and minority.

Developing knowledge, telling friends and gaining support were the most important reasons for surviving and escaping the situation. The participants spontaneously gave feedback about the importance of participating in research on violence. It was something they felt was meaningful and useful among other reasons, because they felt that society generally knows too little and focuses too little on this subject, which they feel is very important.

6.1 Possible further research

This chapter wishes to outline some possible directions for further research. A theme for further research would be to investigate, compare and map European immigration politics for women and men's rights. It would be very interesting to have a look at how many people that have left his/her spouse and reported being exposed to violence, still get expelled from Norway because the evidence isn't good enough. Or even to get research on the people that don't want to report the violence. For an outsider, it seems appropriate that the case gets reported, but some women and men need time to find out what they want to do. How many women and men are there who come from abroad and subjected to violence by Norwegian spouse?

Foreign women married to Norwegian men are overrepresented in the shelter. Regardless of how many women this includes, the consequences are very serious for those concerned. There is reason to acquire more knowledge about both the reasons for this increase and the degree of integration, living conditions, and the risk of exploitation among women and their children. Also more knowledge is needed about men who are exposed to violence. From 01 January 2010, all municipalities in Norway have been legally required to offer men as well as women an offer of shelter. However, there is a long way to go. Often these survivors don't feel that society believe their stories. There exists a great lack of knowledge nationally (and internationally) about men who experience violence in close relationships. **There are several areas that are important to move on.** Not for curiosity's sake, but to develop knowledge in these areas, which will be in line with human rights. These rights also apply to family relationships, the integrity and value in itself, and the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment.

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8 Appendix

Request to attend the interview in connection with a thesis

I am a master student in social work at the University of Stavanger and I am now on the final master thesis. The theme of the thesis is violence in close relationships. I will examine how ethnic minorities who are married to ethnic Norwegian partner, experience their situation as exposed to violence, and whether there are any barriers to break out of this relationship. The supervisor of the thesis is Ingunn Studsrød at the Department of Social Science, University of Stavanger (tel: 51 83 42 20).

In connection with my thesis, I wish to interview the 5-10 foreign spouses who use or have used the shelter. The questions will be about your experiences with violence and how violence has affected your life. It is you who can best convey what offense you have been exposed to and if you feel there are any barriers to break out of the relationship. I will include asking you if you (women) have children/are pregnant and how you experience being a mother/father in this, I will also ask you about your relationship with your partner, what you do when it gets hard and your thoughts on the future.

I am subject to confidentiality and all information you provide is kept confidential by me. No individuals will be able to recognize themselves in the finished thesis. All information is anonymous when the task is completed, 01/05/2010. I want to use a tape recorder and take notes while we talk together. Present at the interview will also be an interpreter, if necessary. Like me, also the interpreter has confidentiality. The interview will take about one hour, and we will together agree on the time and place for the interview.

It is voluntary to participate in the interview. If you would like to thank refusal to participate in the interview, this has no effect on your future relationship with the shelter. If you accept to participate in the interview, you can still withdraw from the project at any time within the project end date, 01.05.2010, without having to justify this further.

If you would like to participate in the interview, or if you have any questions regarding the project, please contact me by phone 91 66 38 77, or send an email to astridsunde@hotmail.com. The study is reported to Personvernombudet for Research, the Norwegian Social Science Data Services A/S.

Best regards

Astrid Sunde

Vistestølen 8 HO101, 4070 Randaberg

9 Appendix

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Phase 1; heating of respondent

Give the person information about the program

- Inform about confidentiality and the exceptions to this
- Informed consent
- Short summary of the study

Phase 2; questioning of specific conditions

- What country are you from?
- How old are you?
- How long have you been in Norway? When did you come?
- On what criteria do you live in Norway? (Norwegian citizenship, permanent or temporary residence permit, awaiting the decision of Immigration, has been rejected and awaiting deportation, got off and hide me in the country, other).

Phase 3; open interview

- **Describe the violence you have been subjected to**
 - How long has it last, the frequency? When did it begin?
 - Exposed to Violence? Witness to violence? Physical, mental, sexual abuse (try to get specific descriptions).
- **Women: Did he hit you when you were pregnant? Can you tell about this?**
 - What did you do? What did you think? What did you feel?
 - Did you try to get help? Where? What happened?
- **How does violence affect your life?**
 - What do you do when it gets rough?
 - Do you have strategies to cope, or to prevent the violence?
 - Do you have children? Tell us about how violence affects you as a mother/father.
 - How does the violence affect your social life?
 - What do you think is necessary to overcome barriers for change in your situation?
 - Have the violence changed? What happened? Less/more?
- **Tell about the relationship you have to the man/woman who abused you?**
(Married/cohabiting/girlfriend).

- How old is he/she? Do you still live with him? If not, do you live alone, with family etc? Was it your decision to move out?
- Do you think it is/was difficult to brake out of the violent relationship? Why?
- Can you point to nay factors that prevent you from leaving?

- **Describe what kind of help you get**
 - from family / relatives
 - from friends
 - from the public (government)

- **Consider the assistance you receive** (do you see that you get the help you need?)
 - from family / relatives
 - from friends
 - public (government)

- **Many people who live with violence find it difficult to break out. Based on your experience, what is it that makes it difficult to break out? Is it something that is particularly difficult?**
 - Does he/she threaten you (for example, deported from the country if you leave him/her)? Do you have an example of that? Have several examples of this?
 - How do you perceive that the law plays in the breaking out of the relationship before the three-year period has elapsed?

- **What are your plans for the future in terms of ill-treatment?** (Leave your partner, announce him to the police, go back to your homeland, get help to continue the relationship, continue the transaction without having to seek help, apply for a residence permit in Norway).

- **Is there something I haven't asked you that you want to talk about?**