

**RACIALIZED IMMIGRANT WOMEN
RESPONDING TO INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE**

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigates how racialized immigrant women experience and respond to intimate partner abuse (IPA). The American and European models of intersectionality theory are used to highlight structural constraints and agentic responses as experienced and enacted by racialized immigrant women.

Eight women described their experiences through semi-structured interviews, revealing an array of both defensive and pro-active types of strategies aimed at short- and long-term outcomes. Responses included aversion, negative reinforcement or coping strategies like prayer or self-coaching, and accordingly varied by the constraints under which the women lived as newcomers to Canada.

Policy recommendations promote acknowledgement of women's decision-making abilities and provide a model in which women can choose from a selection of options in how to respond, rather than strictly interventionist models. Study results can help to challenge stereotypes of abused women as passive victims, and empower the image of immigrant women as active knowers of their circumstances.

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, criminological inquiry examines intimate partner abuse (IPA) within the various intersections in which it is experienced, including women of immigrant status in North America. This research helps expose and contextualize the experiences and constraints particular to certain social locations. While the intersectional approach has examined both racialized and immigrant women experiencing IPA, fewer studies investigate the ways in which these women express agency in their day-to-day lives. Accordingly, this research study has been guided by the following questions: What are the experiences of racialized immigrant women experiencing IPA? What challenges and constraints do they face? How do they respond to these challenges?

This is a qualitative exploratory study of how one particular group of racialized immigrant women in Canada -Guyanese immigrant women living in Toronto- experience and respond to intimate partner abuse. Chapter One is divided into two parts including a literature review and a theoretical framework designed to contextualize the research. The literature review entails a brief chronology of the study of IPA and the emergence of intersectionality theory as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Studies of immigrant women experiencing IPA are explored. The perils of overlooking the role of women's agency in circumstances of IPA are then discussed using the social constructivist branch of intersectionality theory (Prins, 2006; Oprea, 2008; Harper, 2013).

Chapter Two describes the methodological framework and methods employed in this exploratory study, as well as the epistemological orientation in which the research is situated. The research design is detailed through a description of the process through which

participants were recruited, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. The limitations of the methods and strategies employed throughout the study are outlined. This chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and the importance of researcher reflexivity throughout the study.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to display the results accrued from the qualitative semi-structured interviews. Eight women who had emigrated from Guyana to Canada and had experienced IPA comprised the sample. This chapter displays the various themes that emerged from these interviews concerning both the challenges these women experienced and the ways in which they responded to IPA. Accordingly this chapter highlights the constraints involved in immigrating to Canada while being compounded by partner abuse. It further explores how women recognized and survived abuse on a daily basis, as well as their help-seeking activity and long-term solutions.

In Chapter Four, a discussion of the emerging themes and subthemes are linked to the findings within the literature to draw out the contribution of the study. Intersectionality theory assists in explaining how the women's ability to respond to IPA is affected by the constraints they experienced post-migration. Research has unearthed the responses women employ to respond IPA (Mehoratra, 1999; Goodkind et al., 2004), and further contextualize how policies should respond to this social issue (Parent, 2004; Gillis et al., 2006; Johnson, 2012).

The final chapter summarizes key results and implications and makes recommendations for future research and policy. Fundamentally, this project seeks to represent the standpoints of the eight migrant women regarding how they expressed agency through responding to IPA, a perspective that has generally been understudied.

CHAPTER ONE: LOCATING THE RESEARCH ON INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE AND RACIALIZED IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Since the recognition of the battered woman as a social issue in the 1970s, social science research has broadened the parameters of the investigation on intimate partner abuse (IPA) to include the lived experiences from abused women of various social locations. Among these initiatives includes research on immigrant women in abusive intimate relationships and the exploration of constraints and barriers specific to women within this social location. While these examinations have uncovered the structural barriers faced by immigrant women that require policy solutions; the degree to which immigrant women express agency by responding to abuse in their daily lives remains an area that has been under-investigated. This chapter discusses the importance of immigrant women's expression of agency and its development within violence against women (VAW) research. It also explains the theoretical approach that underlines the current research project.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section One briefly details how the issue of battered women became recognized, the solutions to this problem, and the critiques of these solutions. Borne of these critiques was the concept of intersectionality, the theoretical framework for investigating the experiences of women of various social locations that were previously excluded from the initial discussion on woman abuse. Section Two examines the material realities of immigrant women and the various constraints their particular social locations entail. While findings in this area have contributed to an understanding of the diverse realities of abused women, there are challenges to the research on intersectionality that will be highlighted. Section Three explores one solution to these challenges and in particular raises the importance of including both agency and social structural constraints when studying IPA of racialized immigrant women and their reactions of resistance. This

section outlines the theoretical framework within which this project is located and explores how certain approaches within intersectionality theory can facilitate important considerations around structure and agency within immigrant women's experiences.

1. The Development of Woman Abuse as a Social Problem

Decades of investigation into woman abuse has concentrated on defining, documenting, and preventing VAW and developing services to respond to this social issue. Large scale IPA research has found that women suffer from higher rates of victimization and more lethal levels of violence perpetrated by partners as opposed to their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 1998; Gartner et al., 1998; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2013). In fact, it has been found that 7% of all Canadian women have experienced some form of violence within the last 5 years (Statistics Canada, 2013). In-depth analysis of Statistics Canada's General Social Survey by Ansara and Hindin (2010) finds that women disproportionately experience the most severe and chronic patterns of violence involving highly controlling and threatening behaviour. Men experienced less severe acts of physical aggression that were not embedded in control. Thus, there are clear differences on the extent and nature of IPA experienced by women, necessitating a particular emphasis on preventing and responding to this violence.

While historical records indicate occurrences of violence against women date back thousands of years, the concepts of domestic violence, woman, wife, and partner abuse as public issues only became recognized in the 1970s as a result of the woman's rights movement (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1992; Loseke, 1992; Renzetti & Bergen, 2005). It was in the second wave of the women's rights movement that the construct of the "battered woman" became visibly identified (Loseke, 1992; Sheehy, 2002; VanNatta, 2005). Though

many forms of feminist discourse on the battered woman emerged, all variants stemmed from feminist theory which maintains that women's oppression is rooted in patriarchy where men use violence to control women. Solutions called for strategies of change in order to counter this oppression (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 1995; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Garcia & McManimon, 2011). The status of victimhood became an integral part of the claims-making process in which affect and emotion were used to portray a person worthy of public attention (Loseke, 1992; Dunn, 2010). The idea of the "sympathetic victim" (Barry, 1979) was part of the claims-making efforts to dispel myths associated with violence within domestic partnerships, particularly those that assumed women enjoyed or deserved the abuse they experienced. In the development of the issue, the battered woman was portrayed as severely abused, trapped and alone in her plight, with no place to go and with few rights or supports.

In response, the Canadian government took a liberal feminist approach to the problem, which is based on the premise that female subordination occurs because women are denied access to the same roles, opportunities and choices to which men are privileged (Maidment, 2006; Comack, 2006). As such, remedies creating opportunities for women by inclusion and integration were at the basis of policies responding to victim needs and women's subordination more generally. Collective representations of the battered woman victim led to a need for immediate safety, through which shelters for battered women became a solution (Schechter, 1982; Loseke, 1992; Tierney, 2005). From the late 70s onwards, a plethora of agencies, services and roles were developed in addition to shelters, such as crisis and counseling services, as well as legal reforms around laws and enforcement of partner assaults (Schechter, 1982; Tierney, 2005; Renzetti & Bergen, 2005; Dunn, 2010). While solutions to

the problem were much needed, they were limited in their ability to ameliorate the inequality at the root of abusive circumstances.

1.1 Shortcomings and critiques of the solutions

The typification of the battered woman presented difficulties for women who did not conform to “ideal victim status”. Women who wished to preserve their autonomy by making their own choices or acted counter to this stereotype were not perceived to be truly helpless. Neither did ideal victims encompass diverse groups of women affected by poverty, disability, race or ethnicity, Aboriginality, and immigration and refugee status. Critics of liberal feminism charge that while the goal is to strive for equality between men and women by eliminating gender subordination, simply ensuring formal equality under the law will fail because this does not challenge the underlying structural inequalities that exist between men and women (Maidment, 2006; Comack, 2006). By creating “add-on” policies liberal feminists accept the hegemonic order of white, male-defined, male-centered norms as the measure against which policies affecting women should be assessed. The opportunities created to address gender inequality often failed to incorporate the experiences of working class women and women of colour who may not be any closer to equality based on mere changes of access (Chunn, 2006; Comack, 2006). The disjuncture between the expectations of policy results and the reality in which these policies were centered can be identified through several policy responses to IPA.

While shelters represent an urgent solution, Loseke (1992) found that service workers in California made many assumptions on the battered woman being a “humble” client. Her two and a half year ethnographic study in a shelter identified as “South Coast” found that in reality, both clients and workers testified to the fact that their expectations of the shelter as a

helpful system were not always met. Social workers admitted clients could be demanding, disrespectful of organizational rules, or not actively seeking to “repair” their lives. Clients too complained about the personalities and demeanours of other clients and workers. Loseke concluded that while shelters wanted to produce “strong, independent” women through re-socialization, they do not meet the needs of all victimized women. They are instead, a place for the “battered woman” as socially constructed (1992: 145), which becomes problematic for women who do not fit the image of the ideal victim or have goals that conflict with the policies established to assist them (VanNatta, 2005; Dunn, 2010).

Pro-arrest policies which were developed as a result of failed law enforcement around domestic violence (Ferraro, 2005) similarly fail to acknowledge the diverse realities of abused women and do not examine the way in which the policies interact with women’s lives. The criticisms are numerous. For one, police are often unable to determine the primary aggressor in a domestic occurrence (Ferraro, 2005); consequently, counter-charging occurs where women who retaliate against their aggressor are arrested and charged (Sheehy, 2002). Second, pro-arrest policies do not consider the material realities of poverty, where women of low income pay a heavy price, having to rely on state-funded legal aid, or live without the primary provider on whom they may be financially dependent (Sheehy, 2002: Johnson, 2012). In addition, the prosecution process fragments the charge into a single incident before the court and the history of abuse in the relationship is minimized (Johnson, 2012: 11). Arguably, this clouds the ability to look at IPA as an ongoing problem based on unequal power situated within inequitably gendered social structures. Lastly, there is a large problem of recognizing women’s choices and their autonomy: simply because women seek help from law enforcement, does not mean they want to relinquish their decision-making

powers, particularly if they decide not to have the abusive partner charged (Lewis et al., 2000; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Johnson, 2012). In fact, Gillis et al. (2006) assert that many women are unaware of pro-prosecution policies and do not know that the matter will be taken over by prosecutors once contacting police. Most women (88%) call the police wanting immediate protection and far fewer women (43%) desire to have their partners arrested (Johnson, 2006). Pro-prosecution policies that ignore victim wishes portray women as incapable of making decisions about their safety. Like the issue with shelters, the lived realities of women are often at odds with the anticipated results that criminal justice policy implementation was meant to have.

From the perspective of African American women and other women of colour, aggressive criminal justice policies fail to account for racial and other prejudicial forms of discrimination which results in over-policing of racialized communities (Harrison & Karberg, 2003 in Coker, 2004). This may result in the avoidance of law enforcement, further trapping women in abusive relationships (Plass, 1993; Abu-Ras, 2007). Moreover, the legal system has the power to make claims about who may occupy the status of a legitimate victim and Aboriginal women are often constructed as a “squaw”, an immoral, slovenly, uncivilized savage woman who has the characteristics of a bad mother and is often taken advantage of by a lazy male counterpart (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999: 31; Razack, 2002). The 1995 case of Pamela George, in which two middle class white men who beat an Aboriginal sex worker to death received light sentences, is a prime example. George was excluded from victimhood, as criminal justice responses argued for diminished responsibility for the accused parties who, according to them, “did a stupid thing, but didn’t commit murder”(Razack, 2002: 127). In contrast, Jamie Tanis Gladue, a young, first time offender

who stabbed and killed her abusive husband, received a lengthy prison sentence. In this case, the trial judge argued that race and gender were inconsequential to the decisions around the case, which had serious implications for how her actions were interpreted. Failing to consider the gendered context within which Gladue was abused, led the courts to view the violence as gender neutral and Gladue as the aggressor (Lash, 2000: 87). Absent from trial discourses are discussions on colonialism, the realities of poverty, systemic racism, and a history of prejudicial attitudes towards Aboriginal women both within and outside the criminal justice system (Lash, 2000; Razack, 2002).

The lived-realities of women affected by poverty and race are also largely excluded from policy discourses and responses. With high poverty rates, African-American women have fewer resources for responding to IPA, higher chances of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, and lower health status than the general female population (Coker, 2004). The relationship between IPA and poverty is bidirectional: poverty limits women's options, which in turn contributes to IPA if women have few options to living with a violent man; and IPA is a barrier to long-term stable employment for already-low income women (Sokoloff, 2004; Yoshihama et al., 2006). Likewise, colonialization is a form of patriarchy and oppression that continues to subordinate Aboriginal women relative to non-Aboriginal women and all men in communities across Canada (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Monture-Okanee, 2004; Brownridge, 2003; 2008).

These findings reveal harsh realities faced by women of colour and other minority and racialized women and present implications for a woman's ability to seek help, leave the relationship, or pursue her aggressor through the criminal justice system. Thus, the construct of gender as the primary framework for understanding IPA and developing responses to it

became criticized as this perspective limits and precludes other realities by blanketing them with the assumption that the policies could be equally effective for all women (Kanhua, 1996; Ristock, 2002). Increasingly, examination into how different systems of domination reinforced one another to create inequality and oppression became a critical framework through which to study violence against women (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

1.2 Intersectionality theory

By the late 1980s and increasingly into the 1990s critical-race scholars like Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins proposed a theoretical framework for studying various experiences of discrimination and oppression simultaneously. These were not new concepts as they had been identified from a century before, in the recognition of connections between the enslavement of African-Americans and women's oppression (Davis, 1981; Cooper, 1892 in Harper, 2013).

In 1991, the term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), placing attention on the social location of women of colour at the intersections of race and gender. Intersectionality takes into account the intersections of multiple axes of power relations such as class, sexuality, age, nationality, religion, ethnicity, and able-bodiedness instead of generalizing women's experiences as homogenous (Collins, 1993; Man & Grimes, 2001; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Jiwani, 2006; Clare, 2009; Bilge & Denis, 2010). Several scholars also contend that different axes that intersect are also "interlocked", meaning that social locations cannot be separated as being "distinct" systems of oppression (Collins, 1993; Man & Grimes, 2001; Razack, 2008). That one is simultaneously "black" and "female" shows that racism does not only belong to "The Black Man", nor sexism only to "The White Woman" (Bilge & Denis, 2010). The importance of this theoretical approach is to help us

understand that this matrix of systems of oppression is based on the “premise that the subordination may vary, depending on its combination with other sources of subordination” (Denis, 2008: 677). Its purpose is to obtain a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of how women differentially experience and survive abuse based on their varying social locations (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010; Veenstra, 2011). Since then, research has explored IPA from multiple perspectives including: sexual orientation (Giorgio, 2002), age and disability (Brownridge, 2006), colour (West, 2002; Coker, 2004) and immigration (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Among the intersections studied, examinations into IPA and race, ethnicity, and immigration status have yielded much about the variability in the lived realities and constraints of women of colour around the globe.

However, incorporating race and ethnicity in discussions about VAW is not without risks. With research investigating intersections of violence from racialized communities, critical race scholars caution against the interpretation of “cultural violence” or attributing violence to the effects of one’s culture. The “death by culture” effect (Narayan, 1997) is a cultural gaze reinforcing the idea that racialized communities outside of the Western world experience vastly different or more extreme violence than Western communities because they are traditionally bound by cultural or religious scripts (Razack, 2008; Jiwani, 2006). “Death by culture” stereotyping can potentially exacerbate racism for men and women in racialized communities. Evidence clearly supports this argument as Miedema and Wachholz (1999) found in their study of 48 immigrant women from a diverse range of countries in New Brunswick. Although patriarchy was identified through religious and cultural practices, this was more or less the same for non-immigrant Canadian women who are also subject to patriarchy from various social institutions and norms.

The culture debate offers possibilities for examining policies responding to violence in racial communities. Of significance are those who seek to veer away from discussing VAW because it is framed as a cultural issue requiring cultural tolerance or sensitivity. Meeto and Mirza (2007) argue that not intervening in domestic violence when it comes to cultural or religious practices can invisibilize VAW, leaving women to fall through cracks of multiculturalism and masking human rights violations. Prime examples are honour killings or female genital mutilation which should not be viewed as a cultural or religious phenomenon because they not only have a danger of trapping women under cultural stereotypes, but further evoke the wrong discourse in discussing these issues, privileging culture over patriarchy (Narayan, 1997; Sinha, 2001; Meeto & Mirza, 2007; Razack, 2008). At the same time, policies invested in “eliminating culture” are oppressive and colonial, such as those seeking to ban hijabs to create uniformity in dress code as a response to honour killings (Naffine, 1990; Ghafournia, 2011). Thus several scholars seek to find an appropriate balance between responses that promote human rights while veering away from ethnocentrist attitudes (Kang, 2006; Ghafournia, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2012).

2. Intersectionality and Immigrant Women

Research on immigrant women experiencing IPA finds that newcomers to the host country face several different systems of domination that exacerbate their abusive situations (Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Grossman & Lundy, 2007). These include socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers often intermeshed with oppressive immigration regulations. This section highlights the various constraints faced by women of immigrant status as largely studied from the “intra-categorical” approach of intersectionality, frequently used by feminists of colour who seek to study single cultural groups or cases (McCall,

2005). After this, examination of the criticisms of policies emerging as a response to the service needs of immigrant women will be explored.

It is important to note that while many of these experiences may be generalized to all women, or all immigrant women, such as poverty and isolation for example, some of these experiences, like language barriers may be specific to “racialized” or “minoritized” immigrants who speak neither English nor French and are not from European countries. According to Garner (2007), the process of racialization entails a dominant group demarcating themselves as different from and superior to “Othered bodies” (Garner, 2007: 87-88). The process of “Othering” often occurs by contrasting “whiteness” to things other than “whiteness” (hooks, 1994; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 1998; 2008). Thus for the purposes of this section, racialized immigrants will refer to marginal, ‘non-white’, non-Canadian, and non-Western European bodies.

Women in social locations other than the dominant group, regardless of ethnicity or citizenship status, face socio-economic obstacles when it comes to resisting or responding to IPA. However, some of these barriers are compounded for newcomers to the country. An example of this is the English doctrine of “coverture” entrenched in North American immigration law that creates a system of dependency for applicants under the sponsoring party. Coverture recognizes the couple as a single unit, giving the sponsoring party control over sponsorship and residence applications. Thus, women can become trapped in an already abusive relationship upon immigrating to Canada, and simultaneously be forced to depend upon the abusive partner for economic survival in a new country (Sinha, 2001; Erez et al., 2009). Financial dependence can increase women’s vulnerability for abuse, since their social options are lowered (McDonald, 1999; Acevedo, 2000; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Menjivar &

Salcido, 2002; Kasturirangnan et al., 2004; Salcido & Adelman, 2004). In combination with financial constraints, Canadian sponsorship rules restrict immigrant women of all social locations. It limits their ability to apply for employment, income assistance, access to housing, health care, legal assistance, and education for themselves or their children if they leave their sponsor before acquiring status, thus leaving them vulnerable to deportation (West Coast LEAF, 2012: 6-8). Obtaining resources for help seeking are furthermore limited, in cases where the abusive partner has control over finances (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Orloff & Sarangapani, 2007).

Miedema and Wachholz's (1999) study of immigrant women in New Brunswick revealed that many women do not know about the regulations governing their immigration status and therefore remain under the control of an abusive partner. Having conditional or undocumented immigration status further precludes women from seeking help, obtaining gainful employment, and accessing services (Moussa, 1998; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005; Alaggia et al., 2009; Erez et al., 2009). Undocumented women are among those who risk being deported. In some cases the threat of deportation is ever-present for immigrant women, because it creates a situation of blackmail in which the abused woman fears she may be deported if she reports the incident to authorities and is thus forced to remain under abusive conditions.

Ultimately, such practices can confine immigrant women of lower socio-economic circumstances into remaining with their partner or having their immigration claim break down. Combined with immigration laws, pro-arrest and no-drop prosecution policies simultaneously affect immigrant women and their families of already low socioeconomic circumstances, as they fail to take into account women's lived-realities before, during, and

after arrest (Martin & Mosher, 1995; Singh, 2010; Johnson, 2013). It adversely affects women who are economically reliant on their spouses, seeking to establish themselves in the host country, or maintain other financial obligations, such as dependents within one's family (Lacey, 2011; Molina & Abell, 2011).

Members of immigrant communities are also placed at a disadvantage relative to Canadian-born communities due to the inflexibility of the government to recognize foreign diplomas or credentials. This can leave new immigrants under-employed and in low-paying service positions (Miedema & Waccholz, 1999; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Han et al.'s (2010) review of studies on abused Korean immigrant women revealed that many experience a downward step in the labour market upon immigrating to the US, having to work long hours to reach the point of financial security, relative to American born citizens (Han et al., 2010). Some immigrant women connect the stresses of adjusting to new socioeconomic circumstances as contributing to the abuse in their relationship. (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Bui & Morash, 2008; Han et al., 2010). Stresses related to poverty may contribute to IPA (Barnett et al., 1997; Yoshihama et al., 2006), especially if cultural norms dictate that masculinity is constructed through employment or earnings. Structural oppression that occurs through certain laws and policies can also contribute to women and their spouses remaining in low economic spheres. For instance, sponsors under the Family Class immigration category must support the sponsored partner for a minimum of three years and are obligated to repay the government for any earnings of the sponsored person, including social assistance (Alaggia et al., 2009).

In addition to the socioeconomic hardships faced by immigrant women, there are a host of cultural barriers experienced by newcomers to the host country. Among these include

language barriers, cultural insensitivity, and new dynamics that are often accompanied by pressures of acculturation. Racialized immigrant women that speak neither English nor French as a first language often experience language barriers that prevent them from effectively communicating with others and seeking help (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Bui, 2003; Crandall et al., 2005; Vidales, 2010). Lower literacy levels can impede women in their struggle to find work, trapping women in low wage jobs (McDonald, 1999; Thapa-Oli et al., 2009). While this is a frustrating obstacle for women entering a new society, it also applies for women that seek help at shelters or agencies and cannot find someone who speaks their mother-tongue (Bauer et al., 2000). Latta and Goodman's (2005) study of Haitian immigrant women found that a lack of Creole-speaking women was a reason respondents intentionally avoided shelters.

Immigrant women of various ethnicities also experience cultural insensitivity when accessing public services (Bach & Erez, 2003; Crandall et al., 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005). For some women, there is a perception that shelters are not for racialized women (Oxman-Martinez, 2002; Latta & Goodman, 2005). Racism mirrored in the wider society presents an even larger problem. Racialized immigrant women of various communities are reported as being afraid to call the police due to racist treatment or fear of the consequences on their community (Wachholz & Miedema, 2000; Gillis et al., 2006; Singh, 2010). Post 9/11 Abu-Ras (2007) found that for a community of Muslim women in the US, racial profiling of Arab men in the anti-Islamist climate was the main deterrent for contacting police, since women feared a backlash of brutality against male family members. Additionally, issues have been cited from within Diasporic communities as a response to societal racism. Mohammed Baobaid's (2002) research in London, Ontario has shown that Arab Muslim women who

seek formal assistance from Canadian institutions may lose respect from their families and peers, who instead prefer codes of silence for these issues. Such sentiments shared by members of a community can present the barriers that prevent immigrant women of various backgrounds from engaging in help-seeking behaviour.

For newcomers arriving to the host country, there are many new cultural norms and dynamics that are different from one's home country. Some of these norms come into play especially in immigrant women's ability to engage in help-seeking activities. Immigrant women of communal or collectivist societies may leave behind networks of extended families, making them largely isolated in their new environment (Kasturirangnan et al., 2004). Shui-Thornton et al.'s (2005) study on Vietnamese immigrant women in the US found that women expressed difficulty in not being able to talk to their neighbours like they could in the villages of their home country. Additionally, immigrant women may have not experienced accessing services in their home countries (Bach & Erez & Hartley, 2003; Sullivan et al., 2005; Latta & Goodman, 2005; Ingram et al., 2010; Vishnuvajjala, 2012). Even in circumstances where there is ample access to services, immigrant women unaware of the regulations governing their immigration status can still be subject to the control of their abusive partners (Miedema & Wachholz, 1999).

Oftentimes newcomers experience adjustment pressures while adopting new norms and roles of their adopted country. "Role reversal" as identified when men perceive lost power and status as relative to that of other men or their spouses, who may have gained status during the immigration process (Bhuyan et al., 2005). Through role reversal, men may seek to re-establish control or practice masculinity through violence (Yick, 2001; Brownridge & Halli, 2002; Kasturirangnan et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2005; Alcade 2010).

This has been the case when women transcend their role as domesticated women, whether through networking with others (Nwosu, 2006), being in control of a man's sponsorship (Abraham, 2005), or develop skills through employment and language training (Nilsson et al., 2008). Resource inequity and status inconsistency theories point to the fact that in systems of power, like the family unit, when a person does not have the requisite resources for what is perceived as power or status assigned to their role, force can be used to reinstate physical power (Goode, 1971; Stryker & Statham-Macke, 1978; Schneider & Cooke, 1995). Status inconsistency may also be attributed to the perception that men of immigrant status have lost social status relative to other masculinities (Bui & Morash, 2008). Hegemonic masculinities determine that certain men are subordinate to others based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, and religion, and immigrant men and men of colour often find themselves having to demonstrate masculine authority through means such as control of female partners when other resources are not obtainable (Frank, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

2.1 Critiques of policies responding to IPA of immigrant women

Critiques of policy initiatives that aim to support immigrant women suffering from IPA are similar to those of the liberal feminist agenda, in that "add-on" policies fail to acknowledge the underlying systems of domination in which immigrant women are embedded. Among these shortcomings include the failure to examine systems of discrimination and racism that underlie certain laws or regulations guiding policy.

Responses that are unfavourable or discriminatory to certain minoritized groups can serve as obstacles in immigrant women's help-seeking. For example, certain responses developed within the individualistic North American society fail to take into account the

collectivist nature of some cultures. In a study of South Asian immigrant women, it was found that housing programs fail to account for the fact that Indian women are dependent on their communities and rely on networking and communication as a means of ensuring their well-being in an alien society (Shiwadakar, 2004). The same criticism has been made of feminist therapies based on the experience of White women; which often fail to acknowledge that immigrant women have acute forms of isolation and powerlessness regarding the uncertainty of their immigration status and acculturation experiences (Sharma, 2001). Similarly, while the police are a potential resource for immigrant women, xenophobic sentiments in the wider society ignores the realities experienced by many racialized groups in their interactions with the police and wider public.

Despite legal recourse created for women of conditional and precarious immigration status, strict immigration policies can further exacerbate immigrant women's ability to obtain assistance. Immigrant and refugee women pursuing asylum claims to remain in Canada for fear of facing domestic abuse as gender-based persecution upon deportation are often rejected. In her study of 135 claimant cases to the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of Canada, MacIntosh (2009) found that 98% of claims were rejected and women were forced to return to their home countries. Federal courts found that the RPD adjudicators erred in their interpretations of the law and as well as their assumptions around victimized women. Research into policy initiatives thus demonstrates a need for understanding the structural issues of discrimination, racism, sexism, and classism while creating effective solutions for immigrant women experiencing IPA.¹

¹ In the US, American immigration law has created the *Violence Against Women Act* to circumvent the effect of the 'deportation trap' through a process in which women can self-petition to cancel an order of deportation.

3. Theoretical Foundations: Intersectionality Theory and Human Agency

Intersectionality as a theoretical foundation has been a cornerstone in the feminist approach to IPA and scholars continue to put forward more nuanced frameworks in which to further develop social science knowledge in this area. This segment of the chapter explores the theories expounded for improving social problems that are being studied from an intersectional approach, highlighting the different ways within which intersectionality can be viewed.

Nearly two decades after intersectionality emerged, criticisms between the categorical or structural approach of intersectionality in the American context were contrasted with the alternative European social constructivist approach. Critics like Butler (1990), Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002), Anthias (2005; 2009); Prins (2006), Oprea (2008) and Harper (2013) have all noted that within the categorical approach individuals are always-already locked into the profile of an oppressed subject. Prins (2006) points to the fact that the American version of study is more systemic, rigidly fixed on categories of oppression in a binary model (femininity versus masculinity; or blackness versus whiteness). In this model, the category often looks at “what” one is by the determination of their social location (Harper, 2013). “What one is” might signify one is always a victim of patriarchy, of racism, or classism, for example, or always vulnerable as determined by the cultural and environmental circumstances in which one exists.

The social constructivist model of intersectionality, on the other hand theoretically focuses on “who” one is and how they actively interpret their lived experiences, rather than

Despite these improvements, policies have been criticized as having unreasonable evidentiary requirements and ignoring women’s socio-political barriers to pursue such assistance (Orloff & Kelly, 1995; Franco, 1996; Villalon, 2010).

the category into which they are placed (Prins, 2006; Harper, 2013). As such, the European model is based on a constructivist interpretation rooted in ongoing interactive struggles over hegemony. In this model, there are no static views of race. Unlike the categorical approach, human subjects are not passive bearers merely inducted into categories. Instead, elements of agency or autonomy can be considered because human subjects are understood to be authors involved in the narration of their own lives. This is particularly important when acknowledging that some women may not always identify as a victim of racism or patriarchy for example, but might understand their experiences in a different manner (Harper, 2013). In VanNatta's (2005) study of shelters, she explored the problems with an idealized expectation of saving victims. Her research indicated that shelter workers often viewed the battered woman as an individual with a certain set of characteristic traits, experiencing low self-esteem and high passivity rates, rather than a woman with an individual set of experiences. Similarly, a study of Mexican immigrant women in the US revealed that a woman's immigration status and language barriers were not factors involved in her decision-making process when leaving abusive relationships; instead, the impetus to leave was a concern for children's well-being (Acevedo, 2000). This finding is mirrored in other studies where women's concern for their children, above other factors spurred the decision to leave the relationship (Morash et al., 2008; Molina & Abel, 2010). Such findings highlight that women's experiences may not always subscribe to the categories in which they could potentially be recognized. According to Prins (2006), the alternative model allows for human agency to be considered within the telling of an individual's story.

Canadian scholar Elizabeth Harper (2013) takes this one step further in her research on racialized immigrant women, adding that the categorical approach has had real implications

for how policy has been formulated. She asserts that cultural categories have become heavily embedded in social policy on IPA in which narratives about race, religion and ethnicity are woven into policy from several different institutions like the criminal justice or welfare systems for example. As such, immigrant women's vulnerability viewed as stemming from culture stigmatizes the community and can lead to a certain profile attributed to immigrant women, without comprehending the ways in which they interpret their own lives. The need to reframe such discussions is imperative. It has been noted that explaining violence within culture "Others" women as victims of their culture, making their agency less visible and their entrapment cultural in nature (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2002). This is the critique Razack makes about the social construction of the "Imperilled Muslim woman" who must be rescued from the "Violent Muslim Man" that adheres to cultural scripts (2008). It is within these discourses that women become marked as structural victims with little recognition of their agency. Frameworks from the social constructivist model of intersectionality thus offers additional and more nuanced ways of looking at IPA by getting closer to the lived experiences of immigrant women to understand the way in which they actively define and understand their lives, their choices, and the limits to those choices.

Given the limitations of solely relying on structural intersectionality, this research project seeks to additionally incorporate the social constructivist approach within its theoretical framework. In her book, *"Thinking about social problems"*, Loseke explains that society's conceptions around 'what a victim is and what it is not' (2003: 15) are informed by aspects of meaning creation and how we associate meaning to social problems. These questions point to the social construction of knowledge and how meaning is created. The social constructivist approach to intersectionality theory is connected to the wider paradigm

of social construction, which broadly assumes that reality is actively constructed by human beings and not through naturally occurring definitions (Berger & Luckmann, 1980). Berger and Luckmann, the forerunners of social construction theory explain that creations and meanings are constantly created and co-created on both the macro-social and micro-social levels. Thus theories within this paradigm are largely interpretivistic, wherein processes of socialization and learning are examined to develop and understand meanings given to objects and subjects (Althusser, 1971; Rosch, 1978; Bourdieu, 1990; 1991). Processes of typification construct victims of intimate partner violence as always-vulnerable and as a result, “victims become objects of sympathy rather than people highly regarded as models for how others might profitably live their lives” (Loseke, 2003: 135). Along similar lines of thinking, Russo (2001) advises that in studying experiences of victimization, feminists should not ignore the experiences of isolation and the lack of support that women experience. However, she cautions that solely interpreting their experiences as such reinforces the status of victimhood. Russo emphasizes that we must also acknowledge how women recognize abuse, the way they leave abuse, fight back or resist it, and how they seek solidarity or organize collective social change (2001, 27-28). Thus, the following subsections highlight the importance of exploring agency as a perspective that can offer new meanings to racialized women’s experiences of IPA.

3.1 Immigrant women, IPA, and agency

Criticisms charging that IPA research had under-investigated women’s autonomy and agency emerged almost simultaneously with the claims around the “battered woman” in the late 1970s. The term “agency” recognizes the choices that women are able to make based on their own free will or volition within multiple constraints (Dunn & Powell-Williams, 2007:

980). While early classifications of battered women focused on their victimhood, others worried that the social construction of women as helpless and purely victimized failed to acknowledge their ability to be active agents who are capable of exercising choices (Barry, 1979; Loseke, 1992; Campbell et al., 1998; Mehortha, 1999; Thompson, 2001; Picart, 2003; Dunn, 2005; Dunn & Powell-Williams, 2007; Dunn, 2010). While it is not a new criticism, many argue women's agency is still underemphasized (Hyden, 2005), particularly in the area of racialized and immigrant women (Mehortha, 1999; West, 2002; Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009).

Oftentimes, agency in abusive partnerships is equated with women seeking to extricate themselves from the relationship, particularly in the individualistic North American culture (Mahoney, 1994); however, it is clear that women's constructions of experiencing choice or entrapment can occur regardless of whether women choose to leave or remain with the abusive partner. For example, a participant in Ben-Ari et al.'s study stated, "I give direction to the relationship...I am the one who pulls the strings" (2003: 542). Such findings shed light on the fact that women experiencing abuse engage in conscious and evaluative decision-making processes that can lead to action (Campbell et al., 1998).

Conscious decision-making takes on a variety of reactions to violence and abuse. For instance, women have engaged in physically fighting back against their abusers (West & Rose, 2000; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001), or hiding weapons from their abusers (Goodkind et al., 2004). Migrant Thai women in Bangkok reported attempting to injure their partners; one participant admitted to attempting to cut the brakes on her husband's motorcycle (Han & Resurreccion, 2008). Immigrant Indian women in the US report several strategies to resist domestic abuse in their homes including refusing to cook, spitting in their husband's food, destroying clothing, covert help-seeking methods, and calling 9-1-1 in violent situations

(Mehoratra, 1999).

Attempts to facilitate peace during and after the relationship is yet another way in which women demonstrate their capacity as social actors. Strategies such as placating the abuser's demand for a period of time (Goodkind et al., 2004), or negotiating or making compromises within the relationship (Campbell et al., 1998), or even being able to predict and prevent attacks (Solveig & Bjorkly, 2010), are among the ways in which women of various social locations react to violence. Migrant women's ability to achieve some form of financial stability by hiding money, property documents, or secretly earning income to minimize financial abuse are ways in which women react to the structure or category in which they are embedded (Han & Resurrection, 2008). Hyden (2005) also interpreted acts such as researching services and preparing to leave as forms of agency that assist women in regaining control over their lives (2005). Similarly, Lee and Bell-Scott's (2009) study of Korean immigrant women in the US indicated that women acquired skills in preparation for independent living after leaving their partner. Some women learned how to drive, changed occupations, or divorced their husbands immediately after obtaining their immigration status. After leaving their abusive relationships, women further plan how to continue living independently. Migrant women in Bangkok sought security for their children by negotiating child care with others instead of returning to their home villages (Han & Resurrection, 2008). Similarly, in one study of abused Indian immigrant women in the US, one participant noted that after moving out of her home, she severed ties with her old community in order to mentally remain apart from the abuse (Dasgupta & Warner, 1996).

Of course, no single strategy can protect women from abuse. Goodkind et al. (2004) found that contacting victim service programs and staying at shelters were more likely to

improve the situation for women, whereas, physically fighting back made the situation worse, although 24% of participants found this made the situation better. They found placation-type responses to be associated with higher depression rates than others (Goodkind et al., 2004). In her research on how abused women survive in abusive relationships, Hoff (1990) found that women are evaluative, requiring different combinations of resources at different points in their abusive experiences. As such, women often use informal networks, like friends or family first and then progress to formal ones as the duration and severity of the abuse increases. This area of research can also help in understanding how agency operates within structural constraints. One migrant Thai woman in Bangkok reported that she informed police her partner had a weapon when he did not, in order to have them respond to the situation sooner (Han & Resurrection, 2008), demonstrating how one respondent “made” a resource work for her despite its constraints.

3.2 The perils of overlooking the role of agency and autonomy

Socially constructing women as being “victims-only” results in a discourse that fails to accurately capture the diverse experiences of abused women and produces, reproduces and normalizes the societal image of a pathetic victim. The effect of the “pathetic victim” narrative fails to acknowledge and also discredits instances where women’s behaviour falls outside the limited range of actions expected of a passive and submissive victim and expected by the policies built on this stereotype (Dasgupta, 2000). Oftentimes, the explanation for women who have “contradicted” gender codes is that she is either irrational or villainous, but rarely ever rational (Moe, 2004; Noh et al., 2010).

Denying women’s agency and autonomy has several implications with respect to policy implementation. For one, narratives of “pure victims” are found to serve as a basis for

identifying “worthy” and “non-worthy” victims in their eligibility for justice. It has been argued that stereotypes that ignore women’s capacity as social actors dictate that some racialized women are capable of sustaining “anything” and exclude women from being viewed as a legitimate victim (Collins, 1991; Sheehy, 1995; Kupenda, 1998; Kilty & Fabian 2010). This is particularly the case for black women (West and Rose, 2000) and Aboriginal women (Ammons, 1995) who are seen to fall outside the scope of legitimate victimhood. Sheehy contends that stereotypes of Aboriginal women determine they will not be viewed as “passive victims”. This narrative determines that Aboriginal women who drink are not “perfect” victims and are thus unworthy of using certain defences in court (1995: 174). The consequence is that many women are excluded from justice based on action that demonstrates agency, and as a result they do not fit the “worthy-victim” criteria (Berger, 2009; Bhuyan, 2008). This practice reinforces victim hierarchies by rewarding women who fit the narrative and punishes women who do not by excluding them from protection.

On the other extreme are women who are seen as having too much agency (Randall, 2004). When women’s autonomy is not taken into consideration, such as when they defy pro-prosecution policies, actors within the criminal justice system often construct the women and not the policies as the problem. In Johnson and McConnell’s (2013) study of domestic violence courts in Ontario, judges constructed women who exercised their agency by recanting in court to terminate the prosecution of their partners more negatively than “cooperative” women, stating that:

Expressions of agency in the form of recanting are often constructed as acts of defiance to the chivalrous and protective function of the court rather than an exercise in autonomous decision-making and recanting victims are often constructed as resisting the court’s benevolence and actively obstructing the course of justice. (2013: xx)

VanNatta's study on social agencies responding to IPA also found that social workers who do not view certain women as possessing all the ideal traits of a victim are less likely to view her as a legitimate client because "real battered women" are constructed as being desperate and in need (2005: 420).

There is also an implication for how the social construction of women as "always" passive victims affects women experiencing IPA themselves and how they perceive their situation or what the typical response should embody. Peled et al. (2000) argue that notions of victimization can absorb traditional gender stereotypes and may further foster images of the passive battered woman, accompanied by the belief that overcoming passivity necessitates leaving the abuser. Arguably, cultural beliefs can have detrimental effects on the limited options women believe are available to them. Challenging the view that women are helpless or in need of constant rescuing (Mehoratra, 1999) can help women to acknowledge that they have degrees of autonomy within their abusive situations and that some strategies may be more helpful to them than others. These are perspectives that, if implemented into policy can help service agents or community leaders offer valuable information that might help women in their immediate day to day lives. Put succinctly, if we listen to what women want and need, our policies might be more effective.

MacLeod and Shin (1990; 1993) argue that immigrant and refugee women should have their choices respected, instead of being romanticized as women incapable of making independent decisions. Such arguments maintain that we must move away from prevailing stereotypes of immigrant women as passive victims to appreciating the complexities of women as social actors (Parent & Coderre, 2004). Although the agency perspective is not a new one, this perspective must be explored in greater depth and particularly through the

examination of how agency and autonomy is manifested in various social locations from the perspective of women themselves.

Examining the constraints in which immigrant women experience partner abuse has ultimately led to policy recommendations that require service providers and institutions to re-examine and policies, services, and laws. Research has shown improvements in policy must consider the language barriers, socioeconomic status, and sociocultural barriers faced by immigrant women. As such, policies seeking to improve cultural sensitivity through bridge building between service providers for example, encourage more nuanced perspectives in creating policy. At the same time, investigation into women's agency and autonomy is essential for creating a more nuanced picture of life lived as an immigrant women surviving abuse. As Lee and Bell-Scott (2009) argue, it is important to move away from inquiring about the reasons for which women stay in abusive relationships and instead focus on the ways in which women survive. These inquiries aim at emphasizing women's autonomy and decision-making power, as well as the constraints in which women are able to make decisions. West (2002) particularly recommends that more research should be done on how racialized and minority women survive abusive relationships, how they prepare to leave, and cope with leaving.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter details the methodological framework and practices selected for the current project, including: its epistemological foundation, research questions, and the tools and protocols used to operationalize these ends. Following this, I explain how the data was collected and analyzed. Throughout, I examine the limitations of my approach and the obstacles I encountered while gathering data. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations put before me during the process of the research project and how they were addressed.

1. Feminist Standpoint Theory as Epistemology

The methodological underpinning of this project is guided by a feminist epistemology and feminist standpoint theory in particular. For Western philosopher Sandra Harding, feminist standpoint theory takes insights from marginalized perspectives and integrates them as a form of knowledge or a way of knowing the world (1991; 2008). The philosophy highlights that those outside an underprivileged location do not share the same set of experiences as someone within the location (Duran, 1991; Campbell, 1992). According to Harding, accounts from underprivileged social locations are likely to produce perspectives that are “less partial and less distorted” than perspectives generated from other locations (1991: 121). She maintains that taking the perspective of a marginalized group, such as from people of colour, racialized ethnicities, non-heterosexual orientation, and the working class is a starting point that seeks to produce a “strong objectivity” of knowledge. The concept of strong objectivity is to begin from the lives those who have been exempt from the production of knowledge in order to strengthen objectivity in research (Harding, 1991; 2001: 518; Hirsch & Olson, 1995). The epistemology does not equate a standpoint to

one homogenous experience, but recognizes complexities, tensions, contradictions, and multiple standpoints within a certain location. As indicated previously, African American women do not all share the same experiences by the very nature of their sex and race, but might experience a different standpoint when taking into consideration their social class or health status, for example. The philosophy is not unlike post-modern thought in that “strong objectivity” aims to redefine how “science is done” and to highlight the fact that there are “progressive possibilities” within knowledge production (Hirsch & Olson, 1995: 193). Unlike the modernist approach, the postmodernist approach of “objectivity” does not seek to eliminate biases of the social location itself within knowledge production. Instead, post-modernists find such biases epistemically useful for inquiry and maintain that this will better assist in producing knowledge that will serve the interests of the marginalized (Michaelian, 2007: 74-76).

The importance of standpoint epistemology is to incorporate feminist perspectives into social science knowledge and to critically challenge androcentric assumptions of the world. Feminist standpoint theory is described by Harding (1991) as being “historically located” and emerging from the science based tradition of Western thought and Marxism (Hirsch & Olson, 1995: 195). As such, feminist standpoint theory is part of an emancipatory framework that identifies how certain socio-political structures can marginalize particular groups (McDermott, 2002; Code, 2008). Standpoint theory seeks to debunk the myths and stereotypes around certain groups as the assertion of one’s identity adds to a body of knowledge. Whereas stereotypes of a certain group are used to reinforce the images that constrain and oppress the occupants of a particular social location; the process by which standpoint theory emerges allows the occupant of the standpoint to gain power and control

over the knowledge of their lives (Bowell, 2011) These foundations have been particularly useful in highlighting the lived realities and experiences in this study regarding abusive partnerships and the decisions women made responding to abuse.

2. Exploratory and Qualitative Research

This project takes a qualitative approach that explores an aspect of social life. The central aim of this project concerns how abused immigrant women express agency and requires an in-depth examination of the nature of abusive partnerships. As Frauley and Pearce explain, in-depth studies focusing on social phenomena can be largely interpretive and view the world as consisting of shared meanings (2007: 16). Such interpretive frameworks include a focus on process and an appreciation for subjectivity and complexity in order to obtain rich and nuanced descriptions of social life (Ezzy, 2002). Thus, looking closely at the subtleties and complexities of abusive partnerships could enable the investigation of the vague and abstract concept of “agency” within this social problem. This interpretive focus is meant to develop “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), a rich and detailed account of social phenomena, that is helpful in communicating experiences in a manner meaningful to an outsider (Franzosi, 1998: 531; Newman & Hitchcock, 2011). Data drawn from the accounts of abused immigrant women was one way to best “access” the lived realities of women living within these circumstances. The following section of this chapter explains how this undertaking was operationalized for the purposes of a small qualitative study. While the qualitative approach is useful in obtaining a sense of depth and detail in comparison to quantitative approaches, whose inquiry is focused on measurement and empirical observation, there are several limitations that will be highlighted throughout the chapter.

3. Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews

The research question concerns how abused immigrant women express agency. To operationalize this abstract concept, women were asked to discuss their experiences regarding their responses to their abusive circumstances. This would enable an analysis of the decisions and choices that were made by women in the sample. As such, data collection emerged through conducting semi-structured interviews.

The purpose of the semi-structured style interview was to enable participants to speak in a way that was natural, but guided by specific questions at the same time. Dunn (2005) identifies semi-structured interviews on a continuum between structured and unstructured interviews. For structured interviews, questions are asked in the same manner and order during each interview, like a questionnaire. Unstructured interviews are less guided, asking only one question, such as in the account of an oral history or biography, allowing one to explore their own experiences. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews ensure flexibility between the two styles, since they are guided by a few set themes or questions, but have the conversation-style ethic of an unstructured interview (Dunn, 2005: 80). This enables participants to elaborate on responses in their own words and pace and also allows the investigator to probe further (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Burk, 2005: 240). In this manner, the goals of qualitative research, which are inherently exploratory, are achieved by gaining an understanding of the social phenomena through the perspectives of participants.

Semi-structured interviews help facilitate a narrative from the participant about her experience. A narrative recounts one's past personal experiences in order to understand the meaning of these experiences (Riessman, 1993; Eubanks, 2004). An advantage of the narrative is that it can eliminate structural and sequential fractures (Reisman, 1993). For

example, a narrator can sum up in one sentence events that took place over a long period of time, or can dwell on events that lasted a few minutes. Narrators can also portray positive or negative reactions to actors or events as they recount their past experiences, an aspect that is limited in real time (Franzosi, 1998: 530-534). Narratives have the ability to present “ethnographic realism”, a way to describe moods, settings, or fix subjects in time and space and grant privilege to the overall experience (Denzin, 1990: 203). This approach allows the different layers surrounding abusive relationships of immigrant women to be investigated such as marriage, immigration processes, conflict, and separation, for example. It allows the researcher to obtain a sense of depth in addressing the research question. Exploring accounts through the interview process may also reveal abstractions such as gender, race, and class inequalities and add further detail to the data (Riessman, 1993; Franzosi, 1998).

There are additional benefits to employing qualitative methods that seek a sense of depth or thick description. Closed-ended questionnaires gather information across large data sources, but are incapable of capturing the features victimized women themselves find to be important (Rinehart & Yeater, 2011). Using a method that allows women to speak freely about the issues they identify as relevant can also be empowering for women (Busch & Valentine, 2000). Rinehart and Yeater point out that there is a need for qualitative research methods to identify the relevant themes and context behind perspectives within victimization experiences (2011: 928). This view aligns itself with standpoint epistemology in that it seeks to highlight women’s experiences of oppression under patriarchal norms through an emancipatory framework. Thus, the ability of the narrative within the interview to uncover “how what happened, happened” is critical for observing and highlighting the perspectives of participants within the sample and is helpful for the project’s contribution to social

science research in this area.

3.1 Limitations of the interview method

Despite the advantages of the interview method, there are several limitations that must be noted. One is the influence of the interview, which a participant can feel for any number of reasons, independent of the interviewer. The other concerns the interviewer's ability to influence the quality of the interview. Interviewees may undergo the Hawthorne effect, wherein participants may consciously or unconsciously change their behaviour as a result of being studied (Deifenbach, 2009: 880). Participants may change their responses in an attempt to answer questions in favour of what they perceive the interviewer wants or expects to hear. Responses may also be influenced by the rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, and that meanings can shift depending on who the listener is, their own identity and social location, and how they self-manage. Age, sex, and ethnic origins can influence "the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal" (Denscombes, 2007: 184).

The interviewer's skill and ability to interact with the participant is also of concern. Sosulski et al., who point out that for interviews to be conducted effectively, techniques must be appropriate to the questions asked and transparent enough for others to interpret and evaluate (2010: 37). The interviewer's ability to further probe participants will affect the richness of description from participant accounts, as does the articulacy level of participants. That is to say, the degree to which the participant is more or less communicative can also affect the nature of the interview. Thus, topics can inadvertently be missed, affecting comparability between interviews (Patton, 2002). Apart from this, there is the criticism of there being little veracity within accounts, as participants may forget, exaggerate, or get

things wrong in the telling of their accounts (Riessman, 1993). Similarly, accounts can change overtime and the telling or retelling of it can also change the participant's perspective of their experience, so that the narrative is different from previous versions. In response to this issue, however, Riessman (1993) highlights that this is not a concern for narrative analysts, as the subjective account of a participant is of primary importance for gaining insight into one's experiences.

The ability of language to capture all nuances of past experiences has also been marked as a major limitation of the interview method. Riessman emphasizes that there is an "inevitable gap between the experience as lived and any communication about it" (1993: 10). The ontological status of language must be considered when relying on language as the medium through which the account is expressed. Proponents of realist language assumptions which are rooted in a positivistic paradigm, understand language to be constitutive of reality and not just a way to establish meanings (Abbot, 1992: 440; Alasuutari, 1995). However, there is also the interpretive framework of language that understands meanings to be constantly created, recreated, interpreted and reinterpreted (Alvesson, 2002). Thus, depending on what ontological status a researcher attributes to the language, there can be marked differences in the interpretation of the data. For example, if a participant evokes a metaphor or a colloquialism there can be misinterpretation depending on the context.

Limitations are also present in the transcribing phase of the interview. The analyst must translate the account and represent it through a specific arrangement, which can be difficult since there is no single representation of spoken language (Riessman, 1993: 13). In this phase, careful thought must be dedicated to how to transform the discourse and what to include, for example non-lexicals such as "um", "uh" or silences, as well as conveying

rhythmic and line arrangements (Riessman, 1993).

4. Research Design

Recruitment and Sampling

As there are several methodologies to research on intersectionality, my research design was aligned accordingly. Leslie McCall (2005) identifies distinct approaches to research on intersectionality: (1) the intra-categorical or single case method adopted by feminists of colour, (2) the inter-categorical approach which focuses on the processes by which multi-group studies are simultaneously examined at multiple dimensions like ethnicity, class, and sexuality, for example. The case study method, otherwise known as the intra-categorical approach of intersectionality was used to study this particular subset of immigrant women. Accordingly through purposive sampling, the research sample was narrowed to a particular subset of abused immigrant women. Purposive sampling is a selection of specific sampling units within a total population that are expected to provide the most information on the research question (Guarte & Barrios, 2006).

The selection criteria for the study required participants to be: English-speaking women over the age of 18; emigrants from Guyana to Canada; and survivors of physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological abuse from an intimate partner which had ceased for a period of at least one year. Participants were recruited from various municipalities in Ontario. Women of Guyanese heritage were chosen, as they are an understudied cultural group and as part of my own shared heritage and networks, they are a population in which I anticipated greater ease in accessing potential participants relative to other cultural groups.

I created information sheets and recruitment scripts for two organizations to which I belonged from which to recruit participants [Appendix A]. These included a law firm and a

Hindu temple both located in the Greater Toronto Area.² These documents detailed the goals of the research project, as well as the roles of the researcher and participant in the study. For both organizations, an information sheet was provided if the candidates required further information before contacting me.

This study also relied on snowball sampling, a technique that involves asking participants to provide a referral for another potential participant that might be interested in the research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This technique is commonly used to access stigmatized or hidden populations of people (Streeton et al., 2004). In anticipating difficulty in accessing participants' referrals, recruiters from my personal networks were also used.

Upon being contacted by the participant over the phone, I confirmed that they met the selection criteria before explaining the nature of the study in depth. I would explain the consent form [Appendix B] and the fact that the interview would be audio-recorded and later transcribed. If requested after the initial phone call, I would email participants a copy of the necessary documents (information sheet, consent forms, interview guide). Once the candidate agreed to participate in the study, an appointment was scheduled for a specific time and location.

I initially sought to interview eight to ten women fitting the selection criteria and ultimately had eight participants in my sample. While this is a fairly small sample size, I adopted an inductive and exploratory approach, which does not require a large sample. The exploratory nature of such research is meant to “indicate rather than to conclude”; in this vein, it is necessary to distinguish the rich and detailed experiences of participants rather

² I formerly worked at the law firm as a summer student and have been involved with the Temple for over twelve years. I acknowledge the capacity for my involvement to influence candidates to participate and thus vitiate true consent. Accordingly, recruitment forms explicitly instructed recruiters to inform candidates they were under no obligation to participate as the study was unconnected to the institution.

than quantify the results (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006: 492-493). Procedures were followed according to ethics approval, which was granted through the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa [Appendix C].

The Interview

Interviews were scheduled to last between one to two hours and participants were instructed to designate a location that was both comfortable and neither too public, nor too private. Coffee shops, temples, or community centres were permitted; private dwellings were not encouraged for the privacy and safety of the interviewee as well as the interviewer. Allowing the participants to choose their location was meant to promote an environment in which they could feel comfortable to share their accounts. The interviews took place between August and November 2012.

Before commencing the interviews, I once again read the consent form to the participant in person. I explained the nature of the study, its risks, benefits, and aspects of confidentiality and anonymity [Appendix B]. I again explained that the interview would be audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed during the research process. After participants signed two copies of a consent form, one of which they kept, they were given an honorarium of \$25 to compensate any expenses incurred as a result of their participation. Participants were informed that they could refuse to be audio-recorded if desired. All participants consented to being audio-recorded. Ultimately, one of eight participants chose to have the audio-recording erased following transcription. In maintaining agreements of confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each participant. After each of these steps, the interview was conducted according to the interview guide [Appendix D].

The semi-structured interview was organized into four key sections with several

subsidiary questions. To operationalize the abstract concept of women's agency, Dunn and Powell-Williams's definition of abuse mentioned in Chapter One was used. "Agency" is recognized by the choices women make based on their free will (2007: 980). To make the concept more relatable to everyday life, participants were asked about how they responded to their abusive circumstances. Thus, the concept of agency was gauged through women's recognition of their choices and decisions. The guide was set up to explore immigration and marriage; the abusive circumstances; and how women responded to these issues arising in their intimate partnerships. As indicated on the guide, participants were asked about how they reacted and whether they confided in others, reported to authorities, or took precautionary measures or steps to protect themselves from impending abuse. Participants were further probed on how it was that they accomplished their goals, along with the rationales surrounding their decisions.

During the interview I took handwritten notes so that I could better probe the participant, as well as for creating points of reference during the transcribing phase. Before concluding the interview, participants were asked about their demographic information. Finally they were asked whether they would like to add or delete anything before the audio-recorder was turned off. Oftentimes, in wrapping up the interview, participants would recall things they had not examined during the interview. With their permission, these comments were also added to the record of handwritten notes.

The concept of theoretical saturation is used in qualitative research to indicate that no new concepts should emerge from the data set (Newman & Hitchcock, 2011). I found that by the time I had interviewed the eighth participant, I began to see similar topics emerging. While the experiences of each participant were different, there were no new emerging

concepts and I accordingly concluded that eight participants would be a sufficient sample size for my research question.

Transcribing

After each of the interviews were conducted, I transcribed them by listening to the audio recording and manually typing a verbatim script. Participants were given a one month period following receipt of the transcript in which they would be allowed to revise the transcript subsequent to their interview. Of eight participants, seven declined to review the transcript. For security purposes, the single transcript received was delivered in-person. Some participants stated they would contact me over the phone if there were any changes. One participant called to make some additions to her interview.

4.1 Limitations of the sample

There are several limitations of the sample used in this study. For one, the women were all Anglophones and spoke English as a first language. This requirement for participant eligibility thus presents a marked experience from immigrant women who face language barriers due to a lack of familiarity with the English language, and thus might face a different set of challenges in exercising agency. Second, a cultural subset of a broader culture was contacted and thus the sample is not representative of the diasporic Guyanese community. While there are several cultural groups residing within Guyana, the participants were reached through certain sites, through recruiters or referrals whose networks influence the sample. For example, participants recruited through religious congregations can yield women of a particular race and religion within Guyanese culture. This technique presents a limitation of the data-gathering and recruitment method. One disadvantage of snowball sampling is that it produces results that are neither generalizable nor representative, since

referrals may be clustered to one particular group or type of participant (Streeton et al., 2004). This raises the threat of selection bias within the sample. As such, there could be limited heterogeneity among participants, resulting in participants of the same age group, religion, or culture. It could also present a scenario wherein participants might have immigrated to Canada around the same period and could potentially share similar experiences or world views, for example.

5. Analysis of Interview Data: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is an inductive approach that identifies themes emerging from the data. Through meticulous readings of the data, thematic analysis is a form of “pattern recognition” where themes become categories for analysis (Rice & Ezzy, 1999: 258). According to Boyatzis, a theme, “at minimum, describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” being researched (1998: 161). This process allows analysts to organize aspects of the data and communicate it in a way that is understandable to audiences outside of the phenomena.

The strategy involved in thematic analysis is one that involves grouping and subgrouping based on a categorizing principle, which organizes and sorts sub-themes into corresponding categories of larger themes (Thomas, 2006). Thomas describes this categorization process as one in which the researcher observes how the text contains ‘meaning units’ and creates a label or name for a new category into which the text is assigned. Additional text segments are added into the relevant or corresponding categories. At some point, the researcher may develop descriptions of the category to demonstrate its relationship to a network, such as a hierarchy of categories or a causal sequence.

After transcribing each interview, I immediately read through the transcript and

began what is referred to as “open-coding” (Ezzy, 2002: 86) where I began to identify initial topics by making notes on the margins of each page. The more transcripts I read through, I began to see similar topics across interviews. I then created a separate document in which to organize and link these codes to one another. I organized occurrences and quotes that detailed events in groups based on the similarities in topics identified. In my document I later began “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 97), in which I could now organize categories. The goal of axial coding is to organize codes around the axes of a central category. Once this phase is completed, the categories can be further developed to identify different levels of abstractions (Ezzy, 2002: 91). This coding strategy follows an inductive model, allowing meaning to emerge from the text.

Grouping and regrouping themes involved finding similarities within various contexts and reassessing how certain participants’ experiences compared to one another. For example, in a round of open coding, I might have noted “talking to oneself” or “self-motivation”. Eventually that term or code was changed to “self-coaching” as I looked to the context in different interviews. I similarly refined quotes or anecdotes that signaled “faith/hope”. At a second level of coding, I was able to regroup the concepts of “self-coaching” and “faith/hope” as “coping mechanisms”. On a more abstract level, I could categorize them as “survival strategies”.

I differentiated themes by contrasting the context in which the anecdotes occurred. A participant who spoke of ignoring her spouse in order to avoid an argument would have been best categorized as an “aversion” strategy whereas, another woman who described ignoring her spouse as a form of negative reinforcement after having her fired might be better situated as a more proactive response, which seeks to challenge rather than avoid. Keeping a visual

layout of how the themes were related to one another assisted in minimizing duplications and differentiations [Appendix E].

5.1 The limitations of thematic analysis

A limitation of thematic analysis is that it is “hardly straightforward”, because it involves a time-consuming and tedious experimentation process before the themes can appropriately encompass all ideas emerging from the data (Ezzy, 2002: 89), and before reaching consistency across themes (Thomas, 2006). During analysis, it may become apparent that potential themes may not really be themes since there may not be enough data to support them or the data might be too diverse; some themes might need to be broken down into separate themes; or other themes may be enveloped into larger ones (Thomas, 2006: 91). As such, coding may continue for long periods of time since there is no fixed rule for what constitutes a theme, rather it is the richness of what is captured by the concept (Thomas, 2006: 83 & 93). Accordingly, there may be low generalizability, since other researchers may not arrive at the same themes as the analyst.

6. Researcher Reflexivity

A researcher’s background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of the investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate for the framing and communication of conclusions. (Malertud, 2001: 483-484)

The ability to be reflexive or mindful of how one’s decisions influence the outcome of research is fundamental to both the execution and presentation of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002). As the quote from Malterud (2001) indicates, in being reflexive, it is critical to acknowledge and explain the decisions made throughout my research. This section examines how I interpreted and addressed the limitations and obstacles encountered

throughout the study. Following this, I conclude the chapter by discussing the ethical issues of this research, the particular dilemmas I faced, and how I attempted to mitigate such issues throughout the development and execution of the study.

6.1 Researcher reflexivity and study limitations

Careful and deliberate decision-making was exercised through the development of the project. While there are many limitations to semi-structured interviews, where possible, I made certain decisions to engage with these issues during data collection. In response to the Hawthorne effect, the audio-recorder was placed to the side of the participant and myself as opposed to being directly in front of us. I also placed my notebook on my lap as opposed to writing on the surface in front of me and the participant. This was meant to avoid drawing attention to the act of being studied and being recorded. I maintained eye-contact as often as possible throughout my note-taking. I attempted as much as possible to react neutrally to all participant responses so as not to appear to favour a certain type of response over another and to minimize the possibility the participant might steer responses in a direction they perceived I favoured. It was also meant to facilitate an environment for participants' narratives to flow naturally as in a conversation. As a way to account for topics that were missed or guided only by my questions, a section in the interview guide was created so as to allow participants to speak freely on the topic. The notes added to the interview with participant consent after the audio-recorder was turned off were meant to capture details that were forgotten throughout the discussion or to minimize the effect of being studied. While I could not alter the demographic markers of my identity, I was aware of my role as a researcher, my position within the ethnic community and my normal rapport and dynamic with Guyanese women within the Diaspora. As such, I dressed casually, acted respectfully,

and became an active and supportive listener when listening to participants' accounts.

In order to account for the ontological status of language, I took on an interpretive model of language, where language was seen to be constructed, creatively authored and interpretive (Riessman, 1993: 5). During instances where I anticipated misinterpretation through language, such as through a certain expression, or where assumptions had to be made, I often probed the participant to elaborate on the issue being discussed. In this way, I could study more than one statement for evidence of an idea, or repeat what the narrator said to bring more clarity to the interview (Rogan & de Kock, 2005: 635). I also reformulated certain questions to avoid being misconstrued by the participant. In the representation of the language, I typed all utterances as I heard them in paragraph-like stanzas that would indicate a script between two individuals. If the participant took a long pause or switched to a new subject, I began a new paragraph. Short pauses, such as those in searching for words or how to convey an idea were recorded with ellipses. Actions such as hand movements, laughter and so forth were recorded in parentheses that described the action.

In the analysis phase of my research, I used a MS-Word document to re-categorize themes. While thematic analysis is a time-consuming process, it was useful to my ability to be organized in keeping track of existing themes and potential or developing themes as they were being categorized and re-categorized after the open-coding phase. This strategy also enabled me to be flexible and to dispose of themes that became irrelevant or redundant throughout the process.

7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are meant to promote knowledge, integrity, objectivity and the avoidance of misconduct or error. It acts as a code of conduct to

acknowledge and minimize the effects of harm or discomfort towards participants.

Throughout the design phase of my project it was critical to consider the effects of my research initiatives on participants: the insurance of informed and voluntary consent; the preservation and maintenance of privacy and confidentiality; and the degree of harm to which participants may be exposed. While I have previously explained the steps taken to ensure informed and voluntary consent through the research design, I will detail the ethical dilemmas faced throughout the project and how they were negotiated throughout the research process.

Privacy and confidentiality are essential to protecting the participant from stigmatization or possible conflicts based on the recognition of one's identity (Strohm-Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009). Pseudonyms were used during the interview, with only the researcher knowing the identity of each participant. It was necessary to preserve anonymity and confidentiality throughout the project as well. In the written representation of this account I anonymized events as much as possible, such as omitting the names of schools, workplaces, townships, addresses, and job titles from the interview transcript. I also generalized specific incidents that were discussed, so as to avoid revealing too many personal details within one's account. This precaution is taken throughout the written representation of the thesis in order to minimize the possibility of the participant to be identified and for other harms to ensue as a result.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, for participants previously victimized, the threat of psychological harm is an ever-present risk in recalling sensitive memories of painful events (DeLaine, 2000; Canella & Lincoln, 2007). In keeping with the principles of non-maleficence, the creation of the interview guide was designed with questions so as to

minimize the risks of eliciting such harms. As such, the interview progressed from basic questions about the partnership before discussing the nature and extent of abuse. While one cannot always anticipate what will come up in discussion, I was mindful not to dwell on events that the participant or I identified as emotionally challenging. As a precaution I emphasized the resources on the consent form available to participants should there be any emotional discomfort. Information services from a local help-line were recommended were there any emotional problems arising during or after the interview process.³ Participants were notified of the resources twice before the interview began, once over the phone and once in person. This was a necessary step as I acknowledged it was not within my role as a researcher nor within my ability to act in the capacity of a therapist. It became important to exercise those boundaries as amateur intervention could be detrimental to a participant. DeLaine asserts that researchers who cross the boundaries “into therapy and assume a counsellor role may, by virtue of evoking emotional displays for which they are not professionally trained to handle be labeled irresponsible and find her research agenda affected by role performance” (2000: 135). As such, it was important to continuously highlight the purpose and goals of the research while still balancing the role of being a sympathetic and supportive listener. In minimizing the discomfort and other emotional harms during the interview phase, intensity and duration were taken into consideration. Participants were encouraged to take breaks whenever they required them and were instructed at the beginning of the interview that they could skip any of the questions and

³ One participant visibly wept when discussing a topic related to her IPA experiences. Since the woman continued her story despite her tears, I did not interrupt. Neither did I dwell on, nor return to the subject once it was over. I did however, mention the help-line a third time once the interview had concluded.

return to them later, refuse to answer them entirely, or discontinue the interview if desired.⁴ Should participants have chosen to terminate the study, the honorarium promised upon consenting to participate in the study would have still been provided.

My ability to influence the research findings of this study did not end after data collection. As indicated, there were several decisions made regarding the presentation of the research, which may impact participants and other respective audiences. Accordingly, the concept of presenting “voice” within research is another ethical issue pertinent to this research project. The ability of the interview to act as a hybrid or “meta-story” of the participant’s account (Riessman, 1993: 13) is eventually retold by the researcher to respond to the research question. As such, it is important to take a stance and reflect on how this affects the participant’s role within data collection and generation. Alcoff raises an important question when she asks whether it is ethically appropriate for someone to speak for others (2009: 119). Accordingly, I realize that there are social markers and experiences that differentiate myself from my participants. I acknowledge that I am a first generation Canadian woman of Guyanese descent. Although I share a similar heritage as my participants, my experiences growing up in Canada may not be representative or commensurable with those viewpoints of Guyanese immigrant women. It is necessary for me to acknowledge my positionality and limitations in being able to relate to my participants. Still, there remain issues on how to present the data and whether or not to “speak for others”.

In response to these issues, Alcoff points out the possibility that not speaking for under-privileged or under-studied perspectives may result in one abandoning the political responsibility to speak out against oppression (2009: 119). As the philosophical

⁴ Breaks were taken during the interviews; however they were not related to reasons related to emotional distress. Only one participant skipped a question because she misunderstood it. Once question was clarified, she did not refrain from commenting on her experiences.

underpinning of this project is to be emancipatory in knowledge creation and to work towards the elimination of subordination (McDermott, 2002: 288), complete retreatment would be contrary to the aims of the project. There is also the problem of presenting a participant's account without undermining it or taking it for granted. Gayatri Spivak (1988) prefers a "speaking to" discourse, as one that neither compromises the goals of a researcher, nor "presumes the authenticity of the oppressed", but allows for a new historical narrative to be formulated (Spivak, 1988 in Alcoff, 2009: 127-128). Mirroring Spivak's resolution, I will take on a "speaking to the public" stance as opposed to one that "speaks for" participants. Thus, I have interpreted and presented the participants' comments as a third party. It is possible for those who are not marginalized to become a part of the process in reaching a shared critical consciousness. Despite this, it is difficult to ensure that participants will recognize my portrayal of their experiences as their own. Feminist standpoint theorists maintain that there are many different consciousnesses and thus many different standpoints (Harding, 1991: 127). Accordingly, while my representation may not be the same as the participants in the study, it may still offer valuable insights to the outcome of the project. As such, it should be expressly noted that any comments from the standpoints of participants are represented through the use of quotation marks, but have been delivered from the researcher's perspective based on the researcher's interpretation of these meanings.

Many ethical concerns accompany "voyeurism", or the single-sided aspect of research that gathers data at the expense of someone's private or personal experiences. Integrating notions of "ethics of care" and "reciprocity" into one's field work are meant to level the political and structural inequities between researchers and participants (Fox, 2009; Mander, 2010; Madlingozi, 2010; Pittaway et al., 2010). Reciprocal research involves some

type of value exchange between the groups (Pittaway et al., 2010: 241) in a way that is empowering to research participants and not exploitative. As an ongoing moral consideration post-research, a final version of the thesis will be offered to participants. In the future, a one-page bulleted summary of this research will also be provided to institutions in the Indo-Caribbean network in the Greater Toronto Area as a way to broaden the discussion in the community.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter displays the results from the study through the inductive logic of thematic analysis. The chapter is organized into three key sections: (1) demographic characteristics of participants in the sample; (2) the nature of women's relationships and the constraints faced by participants through their experiences of immigration and partner abuse; (3) participant responses to abuse, which are organized into four major categories: the identification and acknowledgement of abuse, daily survival responses, help-seeking strategies, and long-term solutions to partner abuse.

1. Sample Characteristics

The study involves eight women who emigrated from the South American country of Guyana to Canada and had experienced some form of IPA in the course of their intimate partnerships. The eight women will be recognized throughout the course of this study with the following pseudonyms: Amy, Bibi, Glory, Joy, Libby, Patsy, Rani, and Stefanie. The sample ultimately yielded women between 25 and 55 years of age with an average age of 44.4 years. Four of the eight women had immigrated at some point during the 1990s and the remaining four, during the 1970s and 1980s. Seven of the eight participants immigrated to Canada through a family-class level sponsorship, three through a fiancée or marriage type sponsorship, and four were sponsored by their own family members, such as a parent, or sibling. One participant immigrated to Canada on the basis of a study permit, under the temporary resident class visa.

Upon immigrating to Canada, six participants completed their high school education in Guyana, while two completed it in Canada. After immigrating, all participants continued some form of education or skills-based training. Five of the eight women were certified in

skills-based training for various fields, such as office administration or within the field of design, for example. The remaining three proceeded to pursue university or college degrees. In terms of work experience, after immigrating to Canada, five participants held factory-level or service industry type positions. Three were unemployed at the time of immigration. During the time of the interview, most participants were employed. Three worked within the service-industry of various fields and four continued within their fields or areas of specialization, such as health care and office management. The average length of relationship between the participant and the abusive partner was 15.6 years, ranging between 1 and 30 years. Two had relationships less than five years, while the remaining six had relationships of more than ten years. Four participants met their partners independently and four met through family or their own networks for the purposes of a marriage. All participants in the study had at least two children. All but one participant were married.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample
Figure 1.1

Socio-Demographic Category	Number of Participants
<i>Location of high school attendance</i>	
Guyana	6
Canada	2
<i>Post-secondary education</i>	
Skills based training	5
College/University	3
<i>Work experience at time of immigration</i>	
Factory/service level positions	5
Unemployed	3
<i>Work Experience at time of interview</i>	
Factory/service level positions	3
Positions in areas of training/specialization post-immigration	4
<i>Marital status during IPA</i>	
Common-Law	1
Married	7
<i>Number of children</i>	
Two children	7
More than two children	1

Figure 1.2

Socio-Demographic Category	Mean	Range
<i>Age</i>	44.4	25-55
<i>Length of Relationship in years</i>	15.6	1-30
<i>Children</i>	2	1-3

<i>Separation Status</i>	
Separation	5
Divorce Proceeding	3

2. Relationship with Partner: Constraints and Circumstances

This section describes the nature of the participant's relationship, immigration experiences, marriage, and establishing a new life in Canada. Combined with the multiple constraints accompanying these events is the exploration of several forms of abuse participants simultaneously experienced.

2.1 Immigrating to Canada and forming intimate relationships

As participants explained, some intimate relationships were formed independently while others occurred through their networks. In certain cases, there was no dating process, and it was a matter of meeting someone and getting married for the purposes of establishing themselves in Canada in order to escape poverty. Some women described the prospect of their marriage and immigration process as providing opportunities from a life of constraints in a developing country. Rani explained *“before the marriage, I maybe had a half-an-hour conversation. It was like, back in the days the country is hard...all girls wanted to be married and come overseas”*. For women who met their partners after immigration, marriage was a way to ensure economic security while establishing themselves in a new country. Patsy, who immigrated on a student visa, was given a choice between marriage at a young age or to return to a hard life in Guyana. Thus, marriage symbolized opportunities for a more stable and secure future. Marriage after immigration signified security and the possibility of a new life, independent of one's parental household. For those sponsored by members of their own families, a partnership or marital union was favourable for expanding on the next phase of their lives.

Participants who emigrated from Guyana in their late teens or early twenties described the newness of moving to a new country. Glory, Bibi, and Libby described being isolated in a new country while living with a partner they soon discovered to be abusive. Glory explained that not having her family or friends nearby during this time was particularly challenging because she was constantly surrounded by her partner and his family and was unable to communicate openly with them about what she was experiencing. Having to rely on her spouse, who was her sponsor, further complicated matters as she had to trust everything that he was saying about the norms and laws in Canada:

For me, not having no family here, it was very, very, very hard, no one to talk to no one to interact with, no one to socialize with. It most likely felt like I was living in a prison. Because custom to the life I had lived, there was freedom, and so it was a big transition for me, and also having a young child and having nowhere to go, nowhere to turn, not even knowing the law.

In this quote, Glory points to the fact that being reliant on her spouse for information was a major limitation in establishing herself in Canada, particularly because of the restrictions within which she lived. Similarly, Bibi added that despite immigrating to Canada through her own family, she did not know that help for partner abuse was available in Canada at the time she married her partner.

Participants explained that in the process of immigrating and settling into a new country there were other priorities occurring at the same time. The struggles involved with finding a new home, a career, school and so forth were higher priorities than were learning about the rules, laws, and support programs available to newcomers. In looking back at her transitioning experiences, Libby stated “*I think a lot of this had to do with the fact that maybe because I was a little new, not just to Canada, but to marriage, and a relationship had something to do with it... It just takes a lot of figuring out*”. Similarly, Bibi and Glory

both explain that being young mothers also complicates the entire process because many new priorities occur simultaneously.

2.2 The impact of intimate partner abuse: types of abuse and their effects

Participants in this study experienced one or more of the following types of abuse: physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, mental, and financial. Women reported physical abuse that included slapping, grabbing, pushing, choking and strangling. Two reported severe abuse in which they sustained serious injuries from assaults with weapons or attempts on their life. One participant described being repeatedly beaten with various weapons, including machetes, knives, and tools. Another participant described her partner's attempt to run her over with a car. Two also spoke of severe sexual abuse and confinement.

All participants identified some form of verbal abuse, defined by the women as swearing, insulting or "trash-talking" either to themselves directly or indirectly to a loved one. Several discussed neglect or abandonment, absenteeism and refusal to do chores and, or parental duties. Rani expressed the difficulties in her relationship as she described her husband's interaction with her children, "*...he never went like, to their graduation, never went to meetings. Like he never. Schools, like, I was the one to go to all of these things.*" For others, it was the lack of attention to things in the household that signaled forms of emotional and mental abuse. Patsy's partner would consume alcohol and disregard the realities of daily life. Other women described a lack of communication with their partners that was emotionally damaging. Three participants spoke of child abuse as being emotionally damaging.

By these descriptions, it may be apt to describe emotional abuse as exploitation of the woman's emotions on something about which they cared strongly. However, participants

also described emotional abuse in the form of neglect to the well-being of the participant herself. One woman described her partner's blatant disregard for her well-being after a suicide attempt. Patsy described selfish attitudes of her partner as he would force her to sit in a theatre for hours with him watching films while she was pregnant and pursuing her studies. Extra-marital affairs were also sources of such neglect and emotional abuse: five study participants recounted their experiences after uncovering their partner had been having extra-marital relationships.

Similar to emotional abuse were instances of mental abuse, which involved themes of control and power over the women or aspects of their lives.⁵ In terms of controlling behaviours, some participants were restricted from communicating and interacting with others. Several described not being allowed to speak to others outside of the household or having contact with friends or family, and consequently being largely isolated because they were constantly surrounded by the partner and his networks. Joy, Stefanie, and Rani, being new to the country, had moved in with their in-laws to help with newborns and noted that this dynamic often interfered with their ability to communicate with others outside the household.

Women also spoke of their partner's tendency to restrict their movements and their ability to participate in wider society. Amy and Rani described a situation in which they were unable to visit their relatives because of the rules their partner had in place. Rani describes other events in which she was unable to participate. *"Stopping me to go to my brother and sister home. Like I can't. At this point in time, I can't go. Yeah, and even if I*

⁵ Emotional and mental abuse are related to one another (Basile & Hall, 2011). However, the two concepts are separated to show different dimensions within psychological abuse. Emotional abuse highlights the effect the exploitation had on the participant herself. While some of these could stem from acts of mental abuse, mental abuse on its own signified active steps taken by the abusive partner to achieve a certain end, through positions of power or manipulation.

can't go to temple, like this is the one place I go and get my peace of mind. He stop me from going, I was limited. I had limited time to go there." Similarly, Libby and Joy were unable to participate in other events or speak to other men because of their partners' jealousy and accusations about extra-marital affairs.

In terms of mental abuse, participants also described types of power exercised by their partners. Participants spoke of relationship dynamics in which their partners exhibited behaviours of entitlement or having strict expectations or rules within the marriage. Some partners monitored the participants by physically stalking them, screening phone calls, or by conducting body and property searches. Other forms of entitlement were expressed through expectations around servitude. For two participants, there was an expectation of sexual servitude in which they were rendered powerless and were meant to operate as "slaves". Similarly, another participant described the practices of servitude in her home, where she waited on her partner:

[He] would come in and curse you, and wanted to be served. The way a priest was being served, you'd put their glass of water and make sure their hands were washed, and get a towel for their hands and all the B.S to go with it. And to pick up their dishes after they were done... And you were supposed to do all of this crap...And would not communicate or thank you or 'that was good' or whatever.

Positions of superiority were described in which male partners could exercise power over the women because of their newcomer status or the perceived lower status of the roles of women and mothers. One woman explained how her partner would drive her to remote areas and abandon her, knowing she had few means of returning. Another described a situation in which her ex-partner had purposefully gotten her fired by brandishing a weapon in her work environment. Instances were also described in which partners withheld children

as a way to control the women. For some, the threat of deportation was a way in which partners communicated their power. For Amy, the threat of deportation was against a sibling that had some complications in their immigration process, on whom her partner threatened to call immigration.

For other participants, male partners used manipulation as a form of power to change the rules of the relationship or household around others. Rani explained that when her in-laws moved in without her consent, she and her children had to adapt to a host of new rules. Patsy explained her ex-partner would change his demeanour in public to cover up his behaviour at home. In one instance, she described her reaction when her husband kissed her on the cheek in front of some friends, *“I just went blank. I thought, ‘he’s really sick’... Cause as a couple at home, there’s no communication. And here in public, look at what he’s doing.”*

Participants also reported financial abuse under which controlling behaviours often dictated restrictions and rules. For several participants, their partners restricted finances for both earnings and spending within the household. Some of these women also reported having small allowances for the week, from \$2 to \$20. One spoke of her partner’s negligence in leaving her in a considerable amount of debt due to his spending habits. Another participant described how her partner stole thousands of dollars from one of her relatives.

Respondents reported that abusive behaviour was not only derived from their partners, but from their partners’ networks as well. Several described the difficulty in establishing themselves in a new country and had lived with their in-laws and extended family as a first step to self-sufficiency. Stefanie stated that because she was so often surrounded by his networks, during abusive incidents, family and friends would witness

abuse, but were unable to respond or challenge the abusive partner due to their allegiance to him. Apart from witnessing abuse, some members of male partner networks were said to have both indirectly and directly contributed to domestic abuse. For one participant the threat of deportation and immigration calls were made not by the partner, but by members of the partner's network. *"She threatened me so many times, because she knew I didn't have my papers and her brother wasn't legally married to me. She actually called immigration on me"*. Rani's in-laws monitored her phone calls and her whereabouts both before and after immigration. Some participants also described circumstances of direct physical attacks from their in-laws.

The effects and severity of abuse were reported as leaving physical effects such as scars, cuts, and wounds requiring medical attention, physiological effects such as low blood pressure and sleeping and eating disorders and psychological problems like nervous breakdowns and depression requiring medical attention such as anti-depressants.

3. Responding to Abuse

This section identifies the themes that evolved from participants' descriptions of how they responded to their partners' abusive behaviours, in light of constraints and circumstances as described above. As discussed in Chapter Two, responding to abuse is viewed through the choices and decisions exercised by the participant. The women's responses to abuse are examined through four major categories: the recognition and understanding of abuse, survival on a daily basis, help-seeking strategies, and long-term solutions [Appendix E].

3.1 Recognition, identification, and conceptualization of abuse

For many participants, the recognition of their partners' behaviour as being abusive

was not instantaneous. While some could retrospectively point to an initial incident that now signal verbal abuse or extra-marital affairs, at the time they often believed these to be isolated occurrences and discarded them for the sake of moving forward in their relationship. As these behaviours were repeated over time, it became clearer to identify it as abuse. Several women stated that it took many years for them to acknowledge this behaviour as abusive. They often recalled noticing something in their partner that was contrary to their upbringing or their understanding of relationships and marriage acquired in their household of origin. Libby and Glory both compared their marriages to their parents' relationships and the family dynamics of their household of origin. Certain participants stated that the recognition of abuse often accompanied a transition point in their lives, such as the birth of a child. For Amy, Glory, and Libby, the introduction of a child in the home enabled these participants to view such behaviour as unacceptable. Other participants pointed to increased exposure to these new norms to fully understand their husband's behaviour as destructive. Six years into her marriage, Patsy realized she was "petrified" of dealing with such behaviour on a daily basis. She further explained "getting out in the world" and meeting people enabled her to discredit the types of things he would say to her, "*getting on the bus, meeting people, talking to other people, and listening to him tell me 'You can't get a driver's licence. They're for prostitutes.'*" Thus, she learned that certain aspects of his information were untrue. Similarly, Libby indicated that a lack of exposure to dating may have clouded her ability to identify abuse as she stated, "*there was no dating. It was a marriage and that was it. But in time, I got to understand that it wasn't just a 'man' thing. This was abuse.*" Thus, the more time that was spent in the marriage along with exposure to different norms, the clearer it became to some that they were experiencing abuse, not that this was typical of

men or of marriage.

As time progressed, the participants began to further gauge their partners' abusive behaviour. This includes finding patterns in his behaviour and exploring reasons for his behaviour. Some women reported being able to anticipate moments of attack by identifying their partners' visible mood changes. At least three reported being able to detect changes in their partners' mood due to alcohol, while two detected altered behaviour when they suspected extra-marital affairs. Stefanie and Joy stated that being around their partners' families and networks was also known to prompt such behaviour. While some participants identified patterns, these participants also stated that sometimes there could be random attacks for which they could not understand the reasons.

Several women offered theories for their partners' behaviours. Four underlined aspects of what Stryker and Statham-Macke (1978) refer to as "status inconsistency", where they surmised their partner experienced certain emotions around a woman's newly gained status. Joy and Glory noticed behavioural changes in their partners after the women had gained employment. Joy explained "*when he heard that I'm going to get hired; that's when he start to act out now and come in there...knowing I'm going to get fired...Knowing that I'm going to make more money than him.*" Being more social in certain situations or among mutual friends were also cited as reasons for their partner's abuse. Some women pointed to family dynamics as having a role in their partners' behaviours. One woman distanced herself as being different from her partner as she pointed to the fact that the partner lived "in culture", attributing some of his religious beliefs to his behaviour. While some women recognized that abuse occurs for all ethnicities and all cultures; a minority of women cited the Guyanese culture as being problematic, attributing their partner's abuse to the broader

society. Participants also speculated that their partner had psychological problems due to a tendency to evaluate a situation far differently than the women themselves. Stefanie explains this as she says, *“It’s like it never happens to him, in his head. It never happened. It was not, to him, like it was like he never did anything wrong.”* One woman blamed herself for her partner’s actions, thinking that her actions may have altered his moods.

3.2 Surviving abuse on a day-to-day basis

Participants described how they survived abuse on a daily basis. For women in this study, becoming a mother and simultaneously struggling in a new country meant they could not readily leave their relationships. In the interim, it became necessary for women to come up with effective short term strategies for dealing with abuse. Within this category, three overarching themes emerged: finding immediate solutions to impending abuse, the careful deliberation and assessment of the restrictions and constraints faced by the women, and the coping mechanisms used to endure their circumstances.

Immediate solutions

Participants in this study used various defence strategies to protect themselves from impending and occurring abuse. Some used physical defence strategies to protect themselves from physical abuse, using a strategy they called the “shield” wherein they used someone or something as a shield to limit the level of physical abuse they were experiencing. During explosive episodes from her spouse, Glory would carry her son in front of her body to move around the house, knowing her partner would not hit her child: *“I would use my son like a shield, it was more like a bargaining chip.”* Stefanie often remained around her mother-in-law to avoid being physically beaten after an argument. Similarly, Amy often had company around to divert her partner. Participants stated that while this did not stop their partners

from approaching them, it was effective as a very short-term solution.

Some women used the physical response strategy thematically recognized as “seeking refuge”, where they would escape from their partners’ presence for safety, for example by locking themselves in another room, fleeing to a neighbour’s or friend’s home, or sleeping in the children’s rooms to be away from their partners. These strategies were not always effective, as their partner would often follow them to their places of refuge and become verbally assaultive in front of others or apprehend her to bring her back home. One woman indicated that her strategies to physically protect herself were sometimes compromised by her wish to keep her abuse private. Amy explained that, in order to decrease the level of noise coming from her home, she would reevaluate her strategy, *“Sometimes I would lock the room door... Sometimes I would leave the door open. I don’t want no neighbour to hear, I’ll open it and whatever, and when he hit, I’ll just take it.”* Two participants stated that they would often go to a public place, like a religious institution or a library to avoid a scene if their partner followed them.

Participants also engaged in strategies to protect themselves from mental, verbal, or emotional abuse. These responses included what has been categorized as “aversion” strategies (Goodkind et al., 2004), in which the participant seeks to avoid the escalation of a potentially volatile situation through several techniques. At least three women purposefully worked longer hours to avoid being around their partner. Some would often disregard incidents or ignore them for the sake of avoiding an argument. Stefanie often tried to change the topic of discussion so as to steer conversations in directions that would not result in her partner becoming angry. Others would avoid being around their partners’ networks where they identified in-laws, relatives, and friends as contributing to the overall process of abuse.

As part of these aversion strategies, participants often acquiesced to their partners' behaviours for other purposes. For example, Bibi and Patsy explained that in instances of servitude, they followed through with these behaviours because there were other individuals involved that they did not want to make feel uncomfortable, such as children, in-laws and other guests in the household. Glory describes how difficult this was, noting that she would "melt down" to her partner's level, *"just for the children's sake, to protect them"*. For other women, acquiescence came out of other obligations. Patsy explained that she had to tolerate the marriage before becoming a Canadian citizen and before her parents could be sponsored, *"I knew that I didn't have a choice. I tolerated it, because like I said, I had another goal"*.

Apart from defensive responses, there were also pro-active types of strategies that were used. Participants in this study engaged in "communication" type strategies, in which they attempted to speak to their partner about his behaviour in an open and constructive manner. Libby explains how she would attempt to speak to her partner to curb his behaviour:

I would say, 'You don't know where this is going? Let me help you. Let me stop it now. Let me stop it while—let me stop it before it gets to where it is, because you're going to be sorry after for it.' I tried that, I tried to let him see, you're doing something wrong, and to let him be aware of himself. He goes, 'Okay, okay. I'll stop it.' And sometimes, that would work. But sometimes it wouldn't.

Like Libby, three others tried to speak to their partners about their behaviour and all three reported minimal success. After hearing rumors of an extra-marital affair, Bibi approached her husband and asked him to talk about it, but that he was resentful and "shut" her out or did not take her seriously. Joy pointed to the limitations of this strategy, even when her partner did agree to speak to her: *"His answers is always like 'I don't know why I'm doing it.'"* Some women found that this strategy could be counterproductive, making the men angry as a result of being approached about their behaviour.

The women would also use tactics to “challenge” their partner about his behaviour, for example, using anecdotes in which their partners were seen as going “too far” and elicited some type of response on their behalf. Here, two related subthemes emerged: confrontation and retaliation. When participants confronted their partners it was often because they had acquired proof of something he was lying about, like finances or extra-marital affairs. In one case where Bibi confronted her spouse about his spending, she stated that he would continue to “blindfold” her, as to where her money was going. Other women questioned their partners about relationships with other women. In one case, a woman collected her husband’s e-mail correspondence with another woman and left it in plain sight to confront him about his affair. At least two women who experienced emotional abuse by way of extra-marital affairs reported that this strategy was not always effective in countering violence, as it often increased their partners’ agitation resulting in verbal or physical assault.

Respondents also described how they retaliated or rebelled against their partners’ abusive behaviour. In this category, they spoke of physical or verbal types of retaliation to respond to certain situations. Two women reported physically fighting back against their abuser. However, one stated that it would only escalate the situation, *“I used to fight, but that wouldn’t help. It wouldn’t help, just get worse, because when I start to fight, then he going to get more upset and he going to curse and behave [badly].”* For one woman who rebelled against her partner’s behaviour, physically breaking his property was cathartic, because it helped her feel better at the time. Verbal challenges on the other hand, included insults, pointing out their partners’ behaviours or prompting their partner to execute the threats he had communicated. Joy and Rani explained that sometimes responding to their partners in this way would be counterproductive as the abuser would react negatively to being

challenged, resulting in physical attempts to regain control. One woman found that confronting her partner through acts of defiance, such as arguing or crying was effective, because it allowed her to negotiate things her partner had initially restricted, such as visiting certain family members, for example.

To further challenge their partners in certain situations, some women invalidated their partners' actions and behaviours, by changing the rules and dynamics of the relationship or their household and refusing to make negotiations around such changes. Participants would reject themselves as the problem and instead focus on the faults of their partners, thereby neutralizing their partners' threats. After one particular incident where Joy felt her partner had gone too far, she invalidated his actions by ignoring him: *"I start to blow my top. I start to go out of my mind, I stop listening to him, I stop come home. I come home when he's not here. I send my kids to school, I pick them back up and then I leave, so that I'm not around him."* Stefanie also reported using aversion-type strategies as negative reinforcement: *"I used to cook, clean, do all that stuff, and I wouldn't do anything. Nothing at all. I wouldn't talk to him."* Two women reported changing their financial accounts and one refused to give her partner her paycheque any longer. Participants also reported that they would find their own forms of transportation and communication devices.

Some women temporarily ejected the abusive partner from their homes, or left their homes to live somewhere else for a few weeks or months at a time. Inevitably, this altered the power dynamic within the relationship, as women were able to exercise a degree of control over living arrangements. Joy reported that after she kicked her partner out, she refused to give into his negotiations *"After then he kept begging me to take him back. But I kept saying 'No', 'I don't want you', 'I don't want you nowhere near me'. And every time he*

keep on asking I say 'no, no'. Cause he never gonna change. Every time he say he change, he never will."

Women found innovative ways to resist in both defensive and reactive response strategies. In terms of challenging their partners, they found ways to assert both their independence and non-dependence on their partners through the following strategies: hiring a nanny in order to avoid being stuck with housework; secretly using contraceptives and/or having surgical sterilization to avoid having more children and more obligations; purchasing their own cell phone; duping their partner into thinking they were speaking to approved individuals on the phone when they were speaking to those under restriction; and defying their partners by going to restricted places. Other participants used certain strategies to negotiate and circumvent abuse. One woman requested a legal marriage from her partner so that she could avoid the threat of deportation from his family members. Stefanie used a negotiation type of strategy in which she would sacrifice physical pain for having some time to herself:

So like, I would agitate him, he would either raise his hand at me, or get upset, then he would either leave the house, or go find something to do. And then I would be by myself. So to make it easier, if I wanted to be alone, and he was agitating me, I would let it happen and then I get the time to myself.

At least one other woman described similar acquiescence strategies in order to obtain another goal. Patsy intentionally avoided going to events at which alcohol would be served in order to avoid her partner's abusive tendencies.

Two women devised ways to creatively engage in investigation in order to help uncover truths about their partners. One participant seeking proof about her husband's extra-marital affairs took on the identity of another person when speaking to the woman with

whom she suspected he was having an affair. Another participant who had been taken to a country in the Caribbean for a short period of time to live with the abusive partner and his family coordinated phone calls between a third party to help conduct research about the country's laws in a manner that would be undetected by her partner.

Deliberating and assessing constraints

When engaging in some of the response strategies described above, the women also experienced tensions in how and whether they could or should react to their partners' behaviours. Some participants evaluated the effectiveness of the strategy and how much it could help them in a certain situation. Often they would anticipate both short and long term consequences. Many of these constraints concerned the women's role as a mother or her immigration status in Canada. In discussing some of the reasons that informed her decisions for a marriage, one woman described the situation as being caught between limited options: *"I had baby number 1 and baby number 2 on the way. And I still wasn't legally married to him to achieve my status"*. Rani explained that she could not leave her children behind because she was afraid of child welfare laws and being charged with abandonment. For others, it was their socioeconomic status that compounded their decisions to remain in their relationship and in their current living circumstances. After ejecting her partner from her home, Joy was caught between several constraints, as she was pregnant with her first child, *"So, I de had to bring him back. And I wasn't working."* Personal values and ideals for their children also affected their decisions. Libby stated, *"I had to stay. And I stayed as long as my children were in school."* Considerations on the constraints and personal values of the participant affected the methods and degrees through which they could respond or react to their partners on a regular basis.

Coping mechanisms

In order to effectively cope with the circumstances in which they were living on a day-to-day basis, participants developed several strategies. At least six women appealed to faith or hope, others prayed or attended places of worship, and some relied on belief in their faith as an explanatory framework for the abuse. Stefanie and Glory felt that divine intervention dictated their partners to be part of a larger plan. For other women, it was not necessarily adherence to a particular faith, but their ability to have hope in their situations. Similar to having hope and faith, another coping strategy was “self-talk” or what Stefanie termed as “self-coaching”, the act of speaking to oneself as though coaching oneself through a difficult time. Stefanie would constantly try to encourage positive thoughts: “*It’s temporary, you’ll get through it’. You know that was the main action. ‘God loves me. He wouldn’t allow it to happen unless it was for a reason.’ I guess, to make me a stronger person, to teach me something. Just things like that.*” Bibi also used this strategy to wean herself off of the antidepressants she was prescribed as a result of the abuse. Other participants reported talking themselves out of suicide or trying to be a better role model for their children. Self-coaching was sometimes intermixed with aspects of faith or hope, but could also be independent of these narratives.

Some women engaged in emotional purging as a way to cope with the emotions resulting from their abusive circumstances. These behaviours included crying, writing, or seeking comfort in friends. Oftentimes, where writing or documentation was discussed it was for the dual purposes of releasing emotions and keeping a record for others in the event that fatal injuries or death occurred. Two women kept a hidden journal or diary so that their partners would not uncover them. Participants also confided in certain individuals for

emotional support and comfort. Women also used distractions to help themselves avoid dwelling on their everyday realities and to precipitate some form of healing or soothing. Such activities included going for walks, meditation, or going to places of worship. They often included substances like sleeping pills or alcohol to help calm feelings of nervousness and to facilitate sleep.⁶ Participants reported having fantasies or daydreams to distract themselves, such as fantasizing forms of escape or retaliation on their partners. Five women had either fantasized about attempting or had attempted suicide and/or forms of self-harm. Such incidents included trying to kill herself or her children, drugging or poisoning herself, or the application of external sources of pain to facilitate a numbing sensation. While respondents discussed their circumstances around these events, they pointed to these instances as being at the crux of their abusive experiences and at a difficult time that they were uncertain of how to cope on a daily basis.

3.3 Help-seeking strategies

The third category identified from participants' responses to abuse involves looking at the use of both informal and formal sources of help. This section first explores the relevant themes emerging from informal help seeking and then explores participants' reasons for avoiding public or formal sources of help. Finally, it explores the themes that emerged around the usages of formal sources of help.

Informal sources of help

In a subtheme identified as "disclosure and privacy management", many considerations were involved in participants' decisions to disclose their experiences to

⁶ The participants in this study that engaged in substance consumption for these purposes explicitly stated that these behaviours were not part of a daily substance abuse, but a temporary solution to instances of abuse occurring earlier the same day and were meant largely to divert their attention from dwelling on the events and to act as a sleep aid.

someone else either as a source of comfort or for help. For some women, disclosure came as an element of confession. The act of telling another person or confessing to them occurred due to a specific incident after which it became difficult to avoid addressing the abuse. In other cases it emerged because the woman believed her circumstances to be too overwhelming to keep to herself any longer. After Amy's partner physically and verbally abused her, he then wielded the threat of deportation against a close relative living with them at the time. As the relative fled to another relative's home, she was left to explain what had happened. Similarly, when her husband decided not to attend an important family function, Rani was left to explain to her family as it became both unavoidable and overwhelming to cover up.

Before moments of confession, however, most participants in the study expressed a general tendency to keep what was occurring in their households private. Such privacy management was a deliberate and ongoing act that was informed by many considerations. For one, the fear of repercussions or retaliation by the abusive partner or by others was ever-present. Glory explains that after being forced out of the house, she told her neighbours she had accidentally locked herself out for fear of what her husband would do. Some women did not tell others due to the fear of social consequences, such as the judgment or stigma of being a victim. Patsy stated that in working with a religious institution as well as the government, the decision to tell her colleagues would not yield positive results. *"They saw me as strong, very well put together and I would have been humiliated and shattered for them to see the background of what I was dealing with."* For others, it became the fear of consequences that would ensue as a result of their decisions. At least three women did not want their loved ones to worry, especially if they were older or resided in a remote location.

Some women felt that because they were in a relationship with a partner their networks had initially disapproved of, it meant they were left to bear the consequences of their actions. Amy summed up these sentiments with a metaphorical statement on purchasing clothing when she said *“I never complained to nobody...Because I said I choose that. What I buy I have to wear, right?”* Stefanie similarly described being ashamed of her situation, *“I did not want anyone to think, ‘Oh this happened to you when you can easily get out’, ‘cause it’s not as easy as they say it is.”*

Apart from embarrassment and ridicule, Rani questioned the extent to which a person would be able to help and how productive it would be to voice her complaints: *“...What can they do? They will just listen and laugh... So why tell anybody and bother anybody? Everybody have their own problems to deal with.”* For all participants, there were constraints of a practical nature around disclosing. Patsy highlighted the realities of immigration and the act of telling her networks during the time she had immigrated to Canada, *“Only family was in Guyana, and uh, I couldn’t afford to communicate with them ‘cause it was expensive on the phone. We didn’t have phone cards at the time.”*

When the women did voluntarily disclose their experiences of IPA, it occurred through a gate-keeping process in which an individual was chosen on the basis of a trust-based relationship, confiding in relatives, friends, or co-workers. They found these disclosures to be effective in garnering emotional support. Still, the practice of non-disclosure was maintained for those perceived as the general public, especially for sources that were perceived to exacerbate their situations. These sources also included co-workers who knew little of the women’s private lives or their immigration circumstances and in-laws that could use such information to their detriment. Oftentimes, there was a practice of

censorship in what they decided to tell those in whom they had confided. One woman explained the rationale behind this process, *“I can’t tell them everything as much as I love them and trust them. Certain things are just too humiliating. And for people who don’t know and they’re not going through it, they’re never going to get it.”*

“Appealing to authority” was another theme found within the category of informal help-seeking. Oftentimes, in-laws, family members, or mutual-friends would be the types of individuals participants appealed to in order to communicate with or challenge their partners’ behaviours. Participants would often speak to their mothers-in-law if they were available, sometimes brothers-in-law, or they appealed to other relatives to ask them to approach their partners about their abusive behaviour. Some women found that while this strategy could be helpful in the short term, there were several limitations to its success. One described the difficulty in the extent to which authority figures could help when they were also trying to establish themselves: *“I spoke to his brother who was a priest at that time...He too was a new immigrant to Canada and he wanted to spread his wings and get going, so it wasn’t a priority. But he was upfront and honest and said there was nothing that could be done about him.”*

Participants also expressed frustration in not being able to communicate effectively with their in-laws. The refusal of others to recognize abuse made their situations appear somewhat more hopeless. This was particularly the case for those who experienced IPA as well as abuse from their partners’ networks. For one woman, appealing to her own networks was particularly ineffective, as her partner physically retaliated against this source, further expanding his target of violence.

Avoidance and inability to engage in formal help-seeking

Avoiding formal help-seeking was an intentional decision on the part of several women for reasons related to social values, personal objectives, or the constraints entrenched within the participants' everyday lives. Certain participants cited social values that mirrored both sides of the Diasporic community. For example, Patsy did not want to call the police to her home which was located in an upscale neighbourhood as it would draw attention: *"I lived in a really nice neighbourhood, nice neighbours, so calling the cops was not [an option]. Didn't, because everybody thought it was a pretty picture, and we kept it that way."* The social conventions of Patsy's neighbourhood dictated that police presence was stigmatizing in a seemingly quiet neighbourhood. Similarly, she referred to her partner's revered caste within the Guyanese-Hindu community that would also result in a negative reaction from those who upheld the caste system if she spoke against him.⁷ Other participants sought to avoid divorce due to societal values of marriage on either side of the Diaspora.

Participants also cited personal wishes as influencing their reluctance to explore formal help-seeking avenues. Such wishes included sometimes not wanting to get specific individuals involved. As one woman's partner took her back to the Caribbean for a few months, she stated that contacting Canadian authorities would be counter-productive as she did not want to have her family members involved in the situation. For others like Amy, who had been forced by relatives to contact the police, she described this as being against her wishes. Some women discussed feeling pity for their partners as one reason for not wanting to refer to either informal or formal sources of help. Stefanie described her initial reluctance

⁷ The Caste system is four-tiered social stratification system inherited by Guyanese Hindus, whose ancestors from India introduced it to Guyana through colonization. This system is not as strictly adhered to in Guyanese-Hindu society as other Hindu communities. However, this specific male partner used the "Brahmin" status within the system (reserved for priests, teachers, and scholars) to legitimate acts of mental/ emotional abuse and control.

to tell friends and family about the abuse, because she was hesitant to hear the advice from others when she still loved her partner. This portrays the complexities within the relationship and decisions around help-seeking.

Other women were unable to engage in formal help-seeking practices because their partners' actions restricted them from being able to do so. Women discussed instances during which their partners would confiscate the phone or would blackmail them with threats against their children or their immigration status. For women who were misinformed of immigration laws, their partners further used this as a control tool. One participant explained, *"I think he would try to embed it in me...It was putting fear into me, and no one would listen to me. The police wouldn't listen to me: 'They would take your children away if you go and tell them.'"*

It seemed to be a combination of social values, personal wishes, and possible negative consequences that affected Libby's decisions, *"I'm well aware of the fact that he would be charged and he still has a job and a life here. He is still the father of my kids. Despite him doing all of that and the police being recourse, he's still a father of my children."* Thus, it seems that deliberate weighing of consequences for the women, their children, and their partners affect participants throughout their decision making, as similar themes have been cited throughout their ability to respond to their partners' behaviours.

During the interview, participants were asked whether being a minority or a newcomer to Canada ever affected their ability to seek help. While many did not point to racist reactions or fears from service providers, they did highlight that aspects of their newcomer status, such as conditional immigration status, and fewer resources as affecting their help-seeking activity.

Formal sources of help

In this study, three participants interacted with police, two sought assistance through information help-lines or related sources, and one went through a formal divorce proceeding in which she had retained counsel. Some called the police to diffuse a particular incident, including one incident where a woman's partner had called for an ambulance; while another had called as a final response to dealing with her abusive partner. One participant stayed at a shelter during her process of acquiring a long term solution.

There was a marked difference between two women who had called the police, both related to a charge of assault with a weapon. One respondent who spoke of voluntarily calling the police, reported being able to exercise choice in the arrest process. During this incident, the police had exercised discretion and did not lay a charge according to her wishes. The respondent stated that she was pleased with the way the situation was handled. On the other hand, another participant reported not being able to exercise any choice in her interaction with the police and clearly expressed that this was not the way that she wanted to handle the situation. *"So, soon as they walk in the house, they bangle him and they take him out and I told them I don't want him to go, I just want my daughter and I'll go. And they didn't bother, and said, 'No, he has to go.'"* The participant found that she was unable to exercise choice and that this hampered her everyday living, eventually bailing her partner out of jail so that no one would have knowledge of this incident. While this woman expressed annoyance in her choices being ignored during the initial incident, she found that she was satisfied with police responses in subsequent incidents when they did listen to her requests on how to manage the problem. She explained that while the authorities gave her multiple resources to assist with her circumstances, she did not use any of them because she did not

desire to handle her problem in that manner. She did however, express satisfaction in these incidents because the police appeared to be more advisory than compared to the initial incident. A third participant who called the police as a last resort reported satisfaction in the restraining order that was consequently put into effect.

The two women who used resources such as help-lines found satisfaction in their experiences as they had been able to conduct research before making decisions. These participants described these resources as helpful because they were able to evaluate what types of choices or decisions to make. Libby explains: *“Like I had asked about the restraining order and how I would have to do things, and I guess in sort of figuring out the information I would need and what would happen, what things I might want to do, what things I might not want to do.”* This was similar to the woman who stayed at a shelter, as she reported taking the time to evaluate her situation and plan ahead, as a medium-term solution. At the same time, she pointed to the stigmas of staying at a shelter, stating that it was “embarrassing” and that she was not proud of it, but ‘did what she had to do’.

Other formal sources that were used included anger management classes to assist the male partner in overcoming his abusive behaviour, as well as divorce proceedings. Women who considered these options pointed to structural issues within these sources. One participant expressed frustration in the fact that anger management classes were dependent on the user’s consent to attend and that while her partner would continuously promise to attend, he never actually did. The woman who resorted to legal proceedings expressed satisfaction with her decisions as she was seeking closure between her and her partner.

3.4 Finding long-term solutions

There were several themes that consistently appeared throughout the interviews in

finding long-term solutions: experiencing turning points, deliberating consequences, making decisions, and creating a plan after the decision. It is not the case that all participants necessarily had an exact incident that led them to make a decision, but the course of the relationship with their partners led them to react in this manner. These incidents sometimes, but not always included moments that were signified as a turning point. Some participants highlighted moments of severe physical abuse as well as mental abuse in which they had experienced some form of humiliation. Bibi expressed her frustration when her partner refused to help carry groceries when she was injured, and chose instead to continue speaking to another woman. *“I guess something snapped and I just came out of the car.... I said ‘Get the hell out and don’t come back.’”* For other participants, these turning points were absent of any particular incident.

Participants described weighing choices and deliberating about how to handle their situation for the future. These included deliberating about their futures and their children’s futures and well-being. Four women explicitly stated that it was in the best interests of their children that they leave the relationship. There were several pushes and pulls within Stefanie’s deliberations, as she did not want to leave her partner when she was pregnant with her first child:

I thought maybe I should stick it out. Or maybe things will change, but at the same time, I didn’t want to stay here and lose my child, because I was crying a lot. And I didn’t want us to fight, like he hit me and I had a miscarriage or anything like that. So the welfare of my child came first and I actually decided to leave.

For others, it was knowing that their children were old enough and they no longer had to protect them and were thus able to leave the relationship. After this stage, participants made the decision on how to handle the situation, whether this meant leaving the household or refusing to compromise with their partners any longer. Glory explains the difficulty in her

decisions when she said *“I had to leave the children. They were two children, I knew all my life, I had grew with them, they were my friends. So it did took a toll on me after that. It was a tremendous aftereffect on my life.”* Several women reported that the separation process was an ongoing and active process, in that there were multiple acts of separation, or that they communicated with their ex-partner post-separation for the sake of their children. All participants reported separating from their partners, whether formally or informally. One woman reported that, for the sake of her children, she lives in the same house as her partner, but they maintain separate lives and households. By making physical modifications to the house to live independently, she said *“It doesn’t bother me now, I’m out of it. I just say, ‘I’m busy’. If it’s a concern with the children, I leave it between him and the kids, and try my best to be neutral and just stay out of it.”*

After reaching a solution, participants engaged in active and ongoing processes to survive post-separation. This included finding physical security, such as acquiring and maintaining a new home, which included sacrifices such as being flexible and adaptable to new circumstances, in the case of women who moved into smaller homes. For others, it meant always having someone like a friend at their home to ensure safety from their ex-partners. Participants also reported attaining financial security through working several jobs at once and seeking child support where possible to survive economically.

The women also sought mental and emotional security by actively distancing themselves from sources of pain, such as limiting their interaction with their ex-partner and their in-laws. They reported new priorities, such as supporting their children and grandchildren, finding new hobbies, and new intimate relationships. Participants experienced catharsis or a release of their emotions through forgiving their ex-partner, through prayer,

and by becoming a resource to others in their community. They described the emotions that accompanied their choice to leave their partners, including freedom, happiness, and sadness. At several points in her interview, Joy took comfort in her freedom, *“I was doing fine without him. And that’s basically how my life goes on. I’m making money and keeping busy. Going to the movies, go to the club, have a little bit of fun.... I’m living happily ever after with my three kids and nobody to hit over my skin.”* In contrast, Stefanie found it upsetting to leave her ex-husband when she was pregnant with her first child. These emotions point to the complexities of their abusive relationships and the level of composure required during their active decision-making and exercise of choice.

When asked about their most difficult challenges throughout their experiences of IPA, several women pointed to the well-being of their children. For many women, getting through the struggle of being a single parent post-separation were large parts of their overall struggle to escape abuse. One woman’s most challenging experience was getting reacquainted with herself and finding a new identity, *“I always felt suppressed, looking back at everything. But I feel like now I’m getting to know who I am. I think that’s kind of a challenging reality to me.”* This experience may shed light on how the immigration process, combined with a short period to acquaint themselves with a new partner, and the role of motherhood might have acted as additional constraints that hampered participants’ abilities to respond to IPA. The remainder of this thesis discusses how these findings support or fail to support the research literature and makes policy recommendations towards this issue.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION: STRUCTURE AND AGENCY: IMMIGRANT WOMEN RESPOND TO ABUSE

The narratives captured in this study indicate that the lives of each woman are uniquely positioned and serve as a reminder of the complex realities lived by immigrant women experiencing intimate partner abuse. Analysis of the interviews displays a broad range of choices and decision-making women faced when responding to their abusive partners in the context of the constraints under which they lived as newcomers to Canada. The women in this study emerge as active agents who resist abuse by exercising both short and long term strategies. The available choices vary for each woman, based on the circumstances within which she lived, for example, the nature of her networks, support systems, available resources and her personal objectives towards resisting or avoiding the violence, protecting herself and her children from harm, obtaining assistance and support, and deciding how best to accomplish these ends. This chapter considers the policy relevance of the study results by examining the constraints these women experienced, and their ability to respond to violence under these circumstances.

1. The Constraints faced by Immigrant Women in the Study

Intersectionality theory serves as a useful tool for understanding the lived realities of immigrant women who survive abusive partnerships. Multiple axes of oppression and power relations were identified, demonstrating that abuse within the context of immigration and racialization manifests itself in various forms, which can present challenges to women who occupy the social spaces of these intersections (Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). The conditions immigrant women find themselves in are especially marked from the broader group of abused women in general. While some of the experiences might be shared with

abused women living in poverty or who experience racism from the wider culture, women outside of this particular social location are not subject to the same experiences involved with acculturating to Canada. The constraints emerging from this study include: sponsorship and immigration laws, the disruption of personal networks, low socioeconomic strata and the struggles involved in acculturating to Canada, all of which reflect findings widely reported in previous research (Bui, 2003; Latta & Goodman, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont 2005; Alaggia et al., 2009; Erez et al. 2009).

Sponsorship and immigration law

From the onset of the interviews, concepts of socio-economic opportunities, security, and stability were evident in decisions to migrate to Canada through family class sponsorships. These concepts were heavily intertwined with the doctrine of “coverture” or the recognition of a couple as a single unit (Sinha, 2001; Erez, et al. 2009). For some participants, marriage accorded the most viable means to securing citizenship in Canada. Immigration regulations place prospective immigrant women in scenarios where marriage or engagement is often necessary to ensure eligibility for immigration, and potentially places some women in difficult circumstances with limited options should they be faced with a violent partner. It also presents the need for an expedient process in the “marriage-immigration-security” equation. In her analysis of the Indian Diaspora facing domestic violence in the United States, Margaret Abraham (2005) outlines that there is often little time for the partners to really get to know each other, with much of the background work being done by family or friends and where inadequate information or gender role assumptions can lead to marital abuse and conflict. Clearly, the regulations around family class sponsorship present the potential for abuse and few mechanisms to ameliorate conditions for the

sponsored party until it becomes too late.

Post-migration challenges: networks, income, and learning about the rules

After immigrating to Canada, participants described the challenges of adjusting to a new country. Not unlike other studies, the women in this study described feeling isolated post-migration (Kasturirangnan et al., 2004; Shui-Thornton et al., 2005). Women identified having little to no personal contacts post-migration and were cut off from family and friends in countries of origins because of the expense involved in communicating with relatives overseas. Being monitored and controlled by abusive male partners further constrained the women's ability to seek help and confide in others. This situation was exacerbated if in-laws or partner networks were also abusive.

Being new to the country and of relatively low income, several women shared living arrangements with their partner's networks, in-laws and extended family. In these situations the women were forced to depend not only on the abusive partner for economic survival, but on their partner's networks as well. Women's experiences with abusive in-laws resonate with those reported in the literature by immigrant women from other communal cultures. This is consistent with other research studies where the partner's siblings or relatives have had economic power or played a key role in sponsoring family members which gives them the perception of impunity to perpetrate abuse on female partners (Abraham, 2005).

In terms of confronting new socio-cultural dynamics, one participant saw the adverse effects of "role reversal" (Bhuyan et al. 2005), where she believed her partner lost power relative to her when he realized she would be earning more money than him. As a result of this, her spouse ultimately proceeded to have her fired from her place of employment. Here, status inconsistency explanations for IPV (Yick, 2001) are helpful in recognizing the

pressures that accompany the post-migration and acculturation processes. Gender performance theories add colour to these findings, demonstrating that abuse or aggression are often used as mechanisms for attaining power and status where it is perceived to be lost (Connell & Messchersmidt, 2005). This is a pertinent consideration for newcomers adapting to new norms in North America.

Several women who immigrated to Canada at a young age emphasize that they were not well-acquainted with the laws surrounding their immigration status and with help-seeking in Canada for domestic abuse. Women given false information by their partners as a form of remaining under their control is similar to Miedema and Wachholz's (1999) study of immigrant women in New Brunswick, who did not know about the regulations concerning their immigration statuses. However, women in this study pointed out that several different priorities simultaneously took precedence over learning about these rules. These included the role of motherhood and getting settled into the country and finding housing, work, and so forth. The implications that emerge here may be comparable to Eli Clare's concept of the "upward scramble" (2009: 40) where rural identities can be lost through the pursuit of the American dream or the struggles of modernization. Ultimately, in an attempt to obtain economic security and stability in an urban setting, some values and identities associated with rural life are displaced. In this context, the displacement can jeopardize the safety of immigrant women as this becomes subordinated to establishing oneself economically, post-migration.

Intersectionality theory further assisted in identifying the ways in which immigration status as a specific social location colours a woman's experience of IPA. The "deportation threat" (Alaggia et al., 2009) was wielded against women both directly and indirectly in this

study. For a woman on conditional immigration status, the threat became ever-present and was communicated by not only the abusive partner, but by the partner's family members as well. Furthermore, the threat of deportation was not limited to the female partner, but was further extended to members of her own networks. This shows how immigrant women can be controlled on the basis of conditional or temporary immigration status. Such constraints restrict how immigrant women are able to respond to the threat of impending abuse when the threat of deportation looms over their daily lives (Raj & Silverman, 2002).

Racism and cultural insensitivity

When asked whether they felt that their race and ethnicity as immigrant women from Guyana or the West Indies limited their access to obtain help, the women in this sample did not point to cultural insensitivity as other researchers have found (Bach & Erez, 2003; Crandall et al., 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005). While some women explicitly stated they did not find that their Guyanese heritage affected their ability to access help, they did identify their newcomer status and associated factors such as the socio-structural barriers of being isolated, having various financial obligations, family priorities, and immigration regulations as affecting their daily lives and ability to resist or escape abuse. It could be speculated that this displays a difference between some American studies and the fact that these women immigrated to Canada before 9/11 and thus were not subject to the same types of racist or prejudicial attitudes as Arab communities in some studies (Abu-Raz, 2007).

A minority of women in the sample engaged in "culture blaming", in which they attributed the abusive behaviour of their partners to West Indian culture (Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 2008). Such attitudes may reflect stereotyping and prejudicial behaviours as held in the wider society. Narayan's criticisms of the "death by culture gaze" (1997) can be seen by

contrasting the norms and values aspects in West Indian culture to those of White North America. One woman's inability to complain to her community about the abuse she was experiencing due to her partner's status within a revered Caste can be likened to a woman living in an upscale Canadian neighbourhood similarly inhibited from calling the police. It is clear here, that the norms and codes around silence are upheld where certain values are revered within different cultures and cannot be attributed only to immigrant communities on the basis of race or ethnicity. It is not difficult to see that in any of these situations social norms affect the level of credibility and "worthiness" awarded to victims. As indicated by Miedema and Wachholz (1999), although patriarchy was identified through various religious and cultural practices, it was similar to the experience of non-immigrant Canadian women who were subject to patriarchy through various social institutions and norms.

2. Racialized Immigrant Women and Agency: Responding to Abuse

The social constructivist model of intersectionality theory does not automatically deposit individuals into a category of oppressed subjects, but examines human agency in how subjects actively define and understand their choices and limits (Anthias, 2005; Prins, 2006; Oprea, 2008). Accordingly, it assists in understanding that the women in this study exercise a broad range of choices when responding to abusive partners. They were evaluative and strategic in their decision-making and displayed varying degrees of agency in actively responding to the abuse within the constraints within which they lived (Dunn & Powell-Williams, 2007). Most responses were largely reactive until the end of their relationships, where women became more pro-active towards their abusive situations. Certain strategies were better suited as short-term or employed on a daily basis to respond to specific immediate situations at hand, while others were oriented for longer-term solutions.

2.1 Daily survival

In the deliberation of their daily survival, help-seeking activities, and long-term solutions, the women in this study displayed an active and evaluative process of decision-making in response to IPA. Analogous to Campbell et al.'s study of women's responses to battering, it was found that women were conscious and evaluative of their decisions, choosing new strategies when previous ones failed, particularly when it came to strategies meant to stop or avoid abuse (1998: 754). In assessing different stages of their relationships, women in this study described evaluative reasoning behind their decisions. Like many women experiencing IPA, the women in this study used available defensive strategies when facing physical assault (Hoff, 1990; Lempert, 1996; Hyden 2005). Such responses meant quicker calculations in order to react to an immediate threat to safety. These strategies included using someone as a shield or finding temporary refuge to escape the violence. While this may have been effective as a short-term or immediate strategy, it is not always a feasible option, since women typically do not have others present at the time of a violent episode. Similarly, fleeing for safety was effective in terms of evading abuse, but was ineffective as a long-term strategy for ending abuse since partners were often able to track the women down.

All women in this study described aversive types of strategies in which they would use acquiescence or placation to avoid the escalation of various forms of IPA, including physical, psychological, and emotional abuse. Focusing on the behaviours of women who coped with their partner's abuse, Lempert (1996) redefined seemingly "passive behaviours" into those that enabled women to survive abuse. Correspondingly, expressions of women's agency can be seen not only in the proactive strategies that seek to challenge their abusers,

but in the “mundane” behaviours that include aversive or defensive strategies in which they seek to avoid violence and abuse. On the other hand, Goodkind et al.’s (2004) study of battered women’s safety planning found that placation-type responses were associated with higher depression rates than other types of responses. This has important implications, especially if immigrant women as a social group largely rely on such strategies as a result of the constraints within which they live. In the context of newcomers seeking to establish themselves in Canada, these responses may also vary based on the nature and duration of the circumstances (immigration status, severity of the abuse, or other), and how long it takes to acquire resources (human or financial). These implications evoke concern for the mental health of newcomer women experiencing IPA.

Women employed more proactive responses as they described a need for longer-term solutions. These included communicating with their partners, which some explained had minimal success and could worsen the situation. Similar to Mehotra’s (1999) study of immigrant Indian women in the United States, seven women in this sample also deliberately challenged their partners’ behaviours through negative reinforcement. Some of these responses included desisting in household duties, refusing to communicate or negotiate, or destroying property. For the most part, confrontation was viewed as ineffective, often increasing their partners’ aggression, resulting in physical or verbal assault when their partners sought to regain control. In Goodkind et al.’s (2004) study, physically fighting back was understood as worsening the situation; however for a minority of women fighting back made it better. Verbal confrontation or similar challenges might thus be compared with fighting back, due to their ability to increase aggression in the male partner. As such, it should be noted that these responses present a potential risk for triggering abuse.

Women also found innovative ways to accomplish their objectives of resisting or ending abuse, as they understood the limits to their choices. The interplay between structure and agency is seen in one participant's decision to proceed with a marriage in order to avoid constant threats of deportation. Participants devised other clever ways to loosen their responsibilities to the family unit through surgical sterilization, abortion, and hiring a nanny. Reflective of other research findings, women in this study had covert ways of conducting research or gathering information (Hyden, 2005; Han & Resurrection, 2008), such as instructing a friend to conduct searches or taking on a new identity while investigating an extramarital affair. Some women would make negotiations and sacrifices at the expense of physical pain or avoiding socialization. Despite the effectiveness of these strategies for certain women, there are harmful drawbacks where the compromise might result in a physical abuse by the male partner.

It should be noted that many newcomer women cannot afford contraceptive surgeries, in-house caretakers, independent transportation or personal communication devices when immigrating to Canada. Thus, these are not realistic options for many immigrant women. The matter is further constrained if the woman is also experiencing financial abuse and is restricted in spending or has no control over the household income (Mejivar & Salcido, 2002; Kasturirangnan et al. 2004; Salcido & Adelman 2004; Orloff & Sarangapani, 2007). Thus the extent to which these women could be innovative in responding to an abusive partner may take not only extra resources, but the time to develop them, and the time to become established in their new country and become better-acquainted with their partners.

All participants in this study engaged in coping mechanisms for daily survival in

their abusive relationships. Some can be viewed as constructive social habits, such as having hope or faith, self-coaching, emotional purging, or mental distractions, while others, however cathartic can be potentially destructive, such as self-harm or suicide attempts. Coping mechanisms are understood to be an individual resource and act as “self-preservation” strategies that offer relief to their situations (Lempert, 1996: 282).

The resistance and survival strategies used by the women in this study are comparable to the broader context of VAW research. Beyond the context of violence in the domestic sphere, women around the world have similarly found clever ways to survive and resist oppression and violence. One example includes the strategies young women used to survive violence when recruited into rebel groups like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. Similar to the findings of this study, Denov and Gervais (2007) found adolescent women negotiated violence and oppression through strategies of acquiescence. These strategies included: using weapons to shield themselves from attacks by male RUF members, perpetrating acts of violence themselves; or marrying a powerful commander to avoid gang rape. The women in this study are not a collectivist group like the adolescent women in the RUF, who faced a greater certainty of death in defiance of the rebel group norms. While the two situations differ in many important respects, the similarity of resistance strategies in violent situations suggest that even in situations where is little room for defiance, acts of resistance nonetheless are used by women to challenge and survive violence.

2.2 Help-seeking activity

Most women in this study engaged in help-seeking activity, whether formal or informal. Participants displayed evaluative decision-making and exercised a great degree of

control in their determination to manage disclosures. The women in this study described at length the need to maintain privacy over their relationships. Of primary concern were fears of retaliation, social consequences of embarrassment, stigma, and the usefulness of telling others. Voluntary disclosure was still met with acts of gate-keeping or censorship as they tried to maintain privacy and control over what was disclosed. Lee-Ann Hoff (1990) found that abused women use a variety of help-seeking sources, often using informal resources before turning to formal ones. This was the case with participants in this study, as many referred to friends, family members, relatives, co-workers and other individuals they trusted. Some women also turned to in-laws to appeal to their partners about his behaviour. Having a poor or abusive relationship with in-laws, relying on coverture, and being simultaneously isolated in a new country, can adversely affect women's choices. Conversely, as identified through other participants' narratives, helpful in-laws or partner networks may enable the process of informal help-seeking to proceed more smoothly.

The women in this study described intentionally avoiding formal sources of help. Considerations of stigma and a lack of control were cited as reasons for avoiding institutional resources. However, it could also be argued that the desire to avoid state institutions may have been shaped by the constraints of living with an abusive partner, such as misinformation about laws in Canada. Help-seeking strategies within this study mirror the results in the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey, in which a representative sample of 12 500 women were interviewed regarding their experiences with IPA. Data reveals that just over half (51%) of women who were assaulted or threatened so severely they feared for their lives did not call the police, 24% used social services, while a minority (8%) called a shelter. Half of all women who suffered IPA (51%) relied on the aid of friends and neighbours

(Statistics Canada, 1993). Women therefore tend to rely on informal resources before proceeding to formal resources such as social services or law enforcement.

Five of eight women in this study decided at some point in their abusive relationships to engage in formal help-seeking. The most commonly cited reason for proceeding from informal to formal sources of help were that they were generally “overwhelmed”, “fed up”, or that the opportunities presented themselves after a certain violent incident. The findings in this study for women who either called or interacted with the police displayed clear evidence of their need to have their choices respected. For one participant, police discretion was used and the police did not lay a charge against the abusive partner, according to her wishes. This participant expressed that she was pleased with this process. She was not the individual who called the police and the incident acted as a catalyst for her to eventually leave her partner. This runs contrary to Hwang and Shwim’s (2005) finding that arrest acts as a turning point for women to leave abusive partners in their study with Korean-American immigrant women. In this case, it was not that an arrest enabled this study participant to leave her abusive partner; it was her interaction with the police. However, the other incident in which a participant’s wishes were ignored clearly reflects the fact that pro-arrest policies fail to take into women’s lived realities before, during, and after arrest (Parent, 2004; Gillis et al., 2006; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Johnson, 2012). Due to the consequences the participant would have to face, both socially and economically, she eventually bailed her partner out of jail. While she disliked having her choices ignored when she called the police to diffuse an incident, the same woman was satisfied in later incidents when officers became advisory. This incident demonstrates that there were clear social and financial repercussions that could have been avoided had law enforcement initially respected her decision. The participant’s

testimony further demonstrates that law enforcement is more favourably perceived when it accords with the wishes of the victim than when it is inflexible and interventionist in nature.

Other participants displayed agency in their research skills that enabled them to evaluate information on their immigration status or in preparation to leave the relationship. As in Hyden's (2005) study, such acts demonstrate that the women utilizing these resources were evaluative in scrutinizing the information they received. As previously mentioned, Goodkind et al. (2004) found that contacting victim services and staying at shelters were more likely to improve the situation for women. This may have been the case because the women were more prone to contact such services during what they identified as a difficult point in their relationship, as opposed to the earlier or middle stages of the relationship where they would use placation or other resistance strategies. As such, certain types of strategies are better suited towards longer-term solutions.

The social image of the shelter became a recognizable issue in one participant's testimony. In Shirwadkar's (2004) study on Indian women's use of housing programs in Canada, women perceived shelters as a place for transient women with "loose morals". One woman similarly emphasized the stigmas associated with using a shelter. Despite the shelter being a source of assistance as a long-term solution, such perceptions point to an important reason women do not often want to use such a resource. It should also be noted that this participant had severed ties with her family during this point. One might thus speculate that the temporary nature of a shelter might be more conducive to those who do not rely on extended networks on a daily basis.

2.3 Long-term solutions

It is clear that "having agency" or being "autonomous" in an abusive relationship

does not necessitate leaving the relationship (Mahoney, 1994). As women decided how to handle their abusive situations in the long-term, whether through divorce proceedings, restraining orders, or separation, they also had to develop long-term plans to continue living independently. By this point in time all of the women in this study had become Canadian citizens, were further acculturated to Canada, and more economically secure than when they had first immigrated. Despite this, there were constant and ongoing challenges that followed once they arrived at their long-term solution. Similar to Han and Resurrection's (2008) study, negotiating with their partners on matters related to childcare and the challenges of being a single mother were frequently reported by several participants.

One woman's solution mirrored Lee and Bell-Scott's (2009) study, where participants divorced their partners immediately after receiving their immigration status. For this woman, the opportunity became possible when she reached her goals of "chain migration", a process in which one individual would be sponsored and they would subsequently sponsor more relatives to immigrate to the host country (Abraham, 2005). Thus, once the participant became free of these constraints, she saw it as possible to leave her partner and begin living independently.

Becoming "free" of abuse also led to greater levels of confidence and conviction among participants. While women described difficulties associated with being a single mother, they also described joy and happiness post-separation. Having to unlearn certain habits and regain control over one's own life is similar to the broader research on post-victimization resistance (Faulker & MacDonald, 2009; Gervais, 2010; Gervais & Estevez, 2011). After experiencing violence in Honduran machista culture, Gervais (2010) reports that women came to learn about their rights: understanding the importance of their decisions

and the freedom of expression. In comparison, experiences drawn from this study demonstrate women's capacity to move beyond victimization by acknowledging their self-worth and reworking their identities and daily lives without an abusive partner.

It is difficult to determine precisely what separates daily survival from long-term strategies. The average relationship in this study lasted 15 years and one might speculate that it took time to develop resources before considering these long-term options as viable choices. The growing tension of the overall relationship might signify a "turning point" (Hwang & Shim, 2005) in which they believed no more could be done to assist their situations of living with their partners. In some cases women could point to specific incidents that led to their decisions; however in others it was not as momentous.

For others, it was that the appropriate conditions existed. Women pointed to either their immigration status or the role of motherhood as being more "complete" than in the past, because their children were now older. In the event of chain migration, it could also be that the woman has a broader support system on which she can now rely in lieu of exclusive reliance on her partner. As such, newcomers through chain migration, namely a woman's parents, might act as caregivers in the home for her children, or as security for the woman herself. These women can be recognized as authors of their own lives (Prins, 2006), aware of the constraints in which they live and the options upon which they can rely. It should be noted that waiting for secure immigration status or for goals related to chain migration are acts of self-sacrifice which place additional stress on the constraints faced by immigrant women experiencing IPA and can limit their ability to seek help. Accordingly, these considerations lay the groundwork for policy recommendations in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The women who participated in this study described engaging in active decision-making processes in responding to their partners' abuse. Whether a conscious or unconscious evaluation at the time of their decisions, financial resources played a role in the women's decisions. The nature of one's social capital is another limitation in which the women in this study actively balanced against their ability to respond to abuse. Social capital included the availability of support systems, and the nature of these relationships. These factors were embedded within immigration status and the simultaneous and sometimes conflicting priorities involved with adjusting to Canada post-migration. The "ongoing struggles of human agency" over structure (Harper, 2013) appear in the women's personal objectives when considering how they would respond to the abuse. As such, women can be viewed as active knowers of their situations. Accordingly, policy considerations should be formulated around this dynamic. This chapter begins by summarizing the main findings from the study and outlines its contributions to the literature and study of criminology. It further explores the policy recommendations that can help ameliorate the social problem of wife battery amongst immigrant women. It concludes by reminding readers of the study limitations and provides future directives for related research.

1. Overview of Findings and Study Contributions

The eight women who participated in this study described their experiences of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, mental and financial abuse. In responding to IPA as a newcomer, it can be established that it took time, the exposure to different norms and marriage before identifying their experiences as abuse. Women offered theories and explanations in understanding their partners' abusive behaviour. They engaged in daily

strategies that sought to both protect from and challenge or resist abuse. Women devised immediate solutions to limit physical abuse, such as shielding themselves or escaping to a neighbour's house. They also used aversive strategies to diminish the capacity for an abusive incident, such as ignoring insults or acquiescing to specific demands. The women used proactive responses such as confrontation or retaliatory reactions when partners were perceived to have gone too far. Innovative strategies, such as lessening their ties to the marriage or creating escape plans further demonstrated the women's capacity as social actors of their own situations. The participants described actively evaluating how they could accomplish these ends given their social circumstances, whether financial or immigration-based. Various coping strategies further demonstrated how women created distractions for themselves in an abusive marriage.

When it came to seeking assistance for their experiences of IPV, women in this study described a tendency of non-disclosure for reasons related to privacy, stigma, and fear of jeopardizing their relationships and immigration claims. Women described first referring to informal networks, such as friends, family, or relatives before resorting to formal or institutional sources. Again, the women were evaluative about their individual situations and desired to have the solutions produced with their consent. Women's long-term solutions to abuse often involved considering the well-being of their children as well as ensuring appropriate conditions for separation were in place, such as: Canadian citizenship, chain migration, or that their children were old enough to be on their own. Long-term solutions also involved meeting the challenges associated with being a single mother post-separation.

The findings from this study contribute to the disciplines of sociology, women's studies, and criminology within social science research. Sociologically speaking, it helps

chart the IPA experiences of newcomers from the perspective of an underexplored group within the West Indian/ Caribbean demographic. The intersectional approach paired with narratives of women's agency and autonomy and the current state responses to IPA add another dimension to criminological research on female survivors of woman abuse for newcomer women. It also connects to the broader literature on violence against women as understood in mainstream policy and research in Canada. It stresses the need to challenge myths of victimhood and racial stereotypes of newcomers within wider Canadian society.

2. Policy Recommendations

Based on the experiences of the women in this sample, several recommendations can be made concerning reform of Canadian immigration law and practice. The doctrine of "coverture" should be revised so as to avoid the automatic need for marriage before sponsorship is possible under family-class immigration. The change could help minimize the expediency of the "marriage-immigration-security" equation that may pressure some women to marry as a condition for family-class sponsorship (Erez et al., 2009). This should especially be the case for those applying for citizenship while occupying temporary or conditional status, like student visas or work permits. While Canadian immigration law supports family reunification, marriage should not serve as a requirement within these circumstances if other elements such as full time work, volunteer work, contributions to a community or family unit could suffice. Such regulations amount to gender discrimination if it is typically the case that women are more often sponsored by men, especially since women are more likely to be victims of IPA (Ansara & Hindin, 2010). Avoiding the automatic presumption of marriage to remain in Canada may minimize the potential for IPA through threats of deportation or other forms of blackmail. These recommendations are particularly

important where circumstances of chain migration exists for some newcomers.

There are also several considerations when it comes to women's help-seeking practices. Research consistently shows that the state institutions such as the justice system or health and social services are not typically the first form of recourse immigrant and non-immigrant women use in responding to IPA (Hoff, 1990; Statistics Canada, 1993; Shirwadkar, 2004; Latta & Goodman, 2005). Critical examination of pro-arrest policies is warranted as one woman clearly expressed that having her choices ignored had negative effects on her social and private lives. As described earlier, women face social and financial consequences after their partners' arrests (Sheehy, 2002; Parent, 2004; Gillis et al. 2006; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Johnson 2012; 2013). This however, does not imply that all women were unhappy with the response of law enforcement. Three women who interacted with police expressed satisfaction when they emphasized that their personal objectives for handling their situation were respected. Accordingly, this implies that women should be presented with an array of options suitable for their individual circumstances (Parent, 2004). There should be more emphasis on respecting the choices and decisions of the women as victims, and acknowledging them as experts of their own situations. Since many women call the police to diffuse violence and abuse, a more advisory role could be investigated as a central response to calls on IPA. Thus, women could be given options to have an in-house social worker visit, execute a restraining order, have officers speak to the abusive partner to diffuse the incident and threaten arrest if the violent behaviour persists, or arrest the man, all according to the individual circumstances and consent of the victim. Furthermore, women should have the option to halt prosecution without facing charges of mischief, or being treated more negatively than cooperating women who do not recant (Johnson & McConnell,

2013). Such flexible options should be promoted only if the woman is well-supported and connected to available resources. Her safety and well-being should be accordingly assessed through risk-management and similar supports to ensure that her vulnerability does not persist as a result of her decisions.

Sources should continue to make information acquisition more accessible for newcomers to Canada. In February 2013, the City of Toronto extended city services to undocumented immigrants. This initiative was meant to create safer methods through which non-legal residents could access information and learn about the laws (Stall, 2013). The policy is important in light of recent federal initiatives to limit access to health care for refugees and particularly in the wake of Bill C-43 and the loss of appeal rights for legal permanent residents who have been convicted of an offence (The Canadian Bar Association, 2012). In a political climate that seeks the quick removal of “foreign criminals”, the extension of such policies are important for both male and female partners of migrant families. Thus, institutions that offer safe havens for immigrants to inquire about their status should be replicated where possible. It might be beneficial to have a mechanism within this body to complain about threats of deportation, especially against those who have conditional immigration statuses.

Many social services exist throughout Ontario, but must actively be sought by newcomers who require such assistance. Promotion of these services can be achieved through the simplification of government resources and current immigration practices. Currently, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) does not proactively provide materials to newcomers about social services. There may be practical considerations underlying this protocol. However, implementing the CIC contact information onto custom forms with the

policy that customs officers direct newcomers to the website (by verbal mention or even a highlight), might be helpful in promoting social services and other information necessary for newcomers.

The CIC website itself should also be made accessible through a diverse range of languages, a simplified layout, and search/browse options. Contact information such as a phone number for a call centre should be easy to find on the site. Hyperlinks to external sites such as “Settlement Workers”, “Culture Link”, and programs funded by provincial and territorial employment agencies should be made explicit and accompanied by a description of the services provided. If outreach is difficult to achieve, perhaps a middle ground can be attained through the promotion of consolidated resources.

As participants in this study point to a need for mobilized community efforts, Mohammed Baobaid’s (2002) initiatives for working with community groups to ameliorate the conditions of domestic abuse are useful. His model focuses on involving men within the community to engage in the discussion of intimate partner abuse. While his current initiatives were developed with Arab-Muslim communities in London, Ontario, extending this practice to other immigrant communities would be beneficial. Community leaders and social workers of various ethnic minorities would help to establish comfort by having relatable experiences in language and custom. In this vein, it will be important to better understand and incorporate the lived realities of newcomers into current immigration policies. Thus, it is important to gauge which priorities are paramount and how to weave the initiatives of community support into immigrant women’s daily lives, both safely and conveniently.

Friends and family members are most often called upon for support, yet they do not

have the knowledge or personal resources to provide assistance. Thus it is useful for them to be educated on acting within these capacities. In 2004, the Ontario government developed “Neighbours, Friends, and Families” to educate the general public on IPA so that informal networks can be better organized to support victims of IPA (Learning to End Abuse, 2013). The program has been extended to immigrant communities in various cities and should continue to be promoted across Canada. Public service messages and advertising in this area could help to establish that individuals have the ability to act within these capacities if consulted. The initiatives should emphasize that immigrant women experience constraints within their lives, but also have the ability to choose how to best handle their situations.

It is evident from the narratives of these women that there remains much social stigma to being a victim of woman abuse. This was especially evident for those describing the drawbacks of disclosure within professional and social circles. Thus, there is a need to change public attitudes towards “victims of IPA” and “immigrant victims”. These are, of course, slower changes achieved through time, but may simultaneously be helped through changes in policy that provide both immigrant and non-immigrant women more social options and choices in order to actually be autonomous actors, capable of making their own decisions. Social and economic policies must strive to achieve gender equality since inequality and stigma exist at the root of IPA. Accordingly, job acquisition, training, and continuing education for single mothers should be made easier, as financial resources were an ever-present factor in women’s ability to resist and respond to partner abuse.

3. Closing Remarks

In conducting this exploratory study, I have attempted to provide a more nuanced understanding of the concept of agency within immigrant women’s responses to intimate

partner abuse. Both the structural and constructivist branches of intersectionality theory enabled me to examine both the socio-structural barriers faced by immigrant women, as well as the ways in which the immigrant women in this study actively understand and interpret their own actions and autonomy. To this end, the narratives drawn from the standpoint of the women enabled them to assert their identities and experiences to add to the body of knowledge about immigrant women who experience IPA. Participant responses varied based on the circumstances of their relationships, networks and immigration status, the resources available to them at the time, and their personal objectives for handling their situation. Materialized from this research project is a snapshot of the material realities of immigrant women in Canada who face IPA and the importance of recognizing women's ability and capacity to respond, regardless of the structural constraints they face.

This project raises ideas for further research in the area. Limitations of this study are seen in the small sample size, the method of recruitment, and the selection criteria, all of which limit the generalizability and representativeness of the results. Quantitative and longitudinal qualitative studies involving larger sample sizes and women of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, spoken-languages, age, immigration status, and socio-economic levels would yield a more complete picture on the effects of the current policies on the lived realities of immigrant women experiencing IPA but without the in-depth insights and nuances that are possible with small qualitative studies. The importance of further study in this area would help to challenge the stereotypes of IPA victims as passive bodies in the immigrant context in a multi-cultural society. Of value is also the ability to recognize a woman's role as a mother, her connections to the private sphere, and the shifts and transitions involved in post-immigration to North American society. It is important that

future research situate women of both the immigrant and non-immigrant context as “active-knowers” of their situations and to tailor public policy to align itself with respecting women’s choices and decisions and supporting and not undermining them. Such steps may contribute to acquiring a balance between recognizing the constraints immigrant women face and providing the resources and information that respects their decisions in responding to intimate partner abuse.

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APPENDIX A

“ABUSED IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF AGENCY”

University of Ottawa, Department of Criminology

Principal Investigator: Christeena Lucknauth

Supervisors: Professor Holly Johnson & Professor Colette Parent

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX, Email: XXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

Participant Information Sheet

This script/guide to be used when participants have contacted me about their interest in the study.

This script will also be provided to recruiters, if candidates have questions that they would like to ask them before contacting me.

Hello Mrs./ Ms. _____,

Thank you for contacting me about the study. The purpose of this study is to examine how immigrant women respond to experiences of domestic violence. I would like to examine how women who have emigrated from Guyana to Canada and who have experienced forms of abuse at the hands of their partners make decisions in these circumstances. These decision may include deciding who to tell and who not to tell, and decisions about seeking help from social agencies. Little is known about this topic, and your views will help us better understand the challenges migrant women face, which may help to improve services to make them more culturally sensitive. My study is also important because it focuses on how women make decisions and the barriers they face. No matter what decisions you made, I want to hear about your experiences.

The reason I am choosing Guyanese women to study, is because the experiences of women in our community are not well known.

The main activity involved in the project, and where your participation is concerned, an interview that will take between one and two hours. I would like you to share some of your experiences as an abused woman who emigrated from Guyana. Mainly my questions will be about the decisions and choices you made. You can choose to not answer any of the questions I pose or redirect the conversation to subjects that you would prefer to stick to.

All of your information will be kept confidential. If you choose to schedule an interview with me, I will ask you to select a name (not your own) that I will use during the interview and when I write up the results of the project. In this way, no one but me will be able to link your identity to the fake name and no one will have knowledge of your identity. The data collected is also not affiliated with **name of organization** and members of these organizations will not have access to any information you provide me. They have only been used for the purpose of recruiting participants.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which states that

you understand the risks and benefits of participating in the study. I will go through the form with you, if you have any questions about the study. Please remember that you are not obligated to participate and you may choose to stop the interview at any time.

If you agree to participate you will receive a compensatory amount of \$25 as a token of appreciation for your assistance and to assist you with the cost of transportation or child care.

If you agree to participate, I will require you to:

- 1) Schedule an appointment with me for your interview and to choose a safe place to conduct the interview. Such places may include coffee shops, food courts, class rooms and so forth. The interview will also be scheduled according to your personal schedule; so whatever time works best for you, is also fine with me. Interviews will begin during the month of August onward.
- 2) Once at the interview location, I will require you provide me with the signed consent form.
- 3) The interview will be minimum one hour, but may proceed beyond this, depending on your desire to provide information.
- 4) Interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. My supervisors and myself will be the only individuals privy to this data. I will deliver a typed version of the transcript to you. You will have the opportunity to add, delete, or clarify any statements made from one month after the date that you receive the transcript.

If you like, I can send you an example of the type of questions that I will be asking. I should once again state that you are not obligated to participate; and that there is no consequence for not agreeing to participate or from dropping out of the study at any time.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about the project.

Feel free to contact me anytime by phone or email:

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX

Email: XXXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

Recruitment Script

Recruitment scripts are a guideline to ensure that recruiters are given basic instructions on how to ethically contact participants and let them know about the study. They may or may not be followed verbatim, as some of the conversations may take place in person or over the telephone. The language used in this document is at a grade 8 education level to ensure maximum clarity when approaching participants.

(a) * NAME OF LAW FIRM *
(via phone):

Hi Mrs./Ms. _____,

How are you today?

I am calling to find out whether you would like to be part of a study being put together by a graduate student. The study has nothing to do with **name of organization**. The reason I'm calling you is because the student is studying an area in domestic abuse and is looking for women who have emigrated from Guyana to Canada that have experienced some form of domestic abuse to tell their side of the story in an interview. The questions in the interview will be about women's decisions and choices throughout their experience. The student's name is Christeena, you may/may not be familiar with her from the office. You are under no obligation to participate at all. Anything that you say in the interview will be held to be strictly confidential and will have no bearing to our offices. Your identity will be protected in the course of her research. If you choose to participate, there is a small amount compensation for your time provided by the student.

If you are interested I can give you Christeena's phone number and email address. She can provide you with all of the details about her study. Please remember that you are under no obligation to participate and that the data in the interview is being collected for academic purposes only and will not available for public access. It is up to you if you would like to contact her.

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX

Email: XXXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

Recruitment Script

Recruitment scripts are a guideline to ensure that recruiters are given basic instructions on how to ethically contact participants and let them know about the study. They may or may not be followed verbatim, as some of the conversations may take place in person or over the telephone. The language used in this document is at a grade 8 education level to ensure maximum clarity when approaching participants.

(b) * NAME OF HINDU TEMPLE *
(Organization member in person or via phone):

Hello _____,

May I speak to you privately/briefly for a moment?

I wanted to ask you if you wanted to participate in a study that is being put together by Christeena for her Master's program at the University of Ottawa. She is doing a project on Guyanese women who have immigrated to Canada and have previously experienced some form of spousal or relationship abuse. The study is going to interview women about the types of decisions and choices they made during their experiences of relationship abuse and to introduce Guyanese women into the discussion in the literature. You don't have to agree to participate, it is completely up to you, it has no bearing on **name of temple** or the congregation. You can refuse and it will be completely fine, because that is part of the guidelines Christeena must follow for her research. But if you would like to participate, I can give you Christeena's contact information by phone number or email. She is looking for a small group of women for her study and all of the information is confidential. If you have any questions or are interested you can call or email her. The information given to Christeena will only be used for academic purposes and will not be published. You will be compensated for your time, but you are reminded that you are not obligated to participate if you do not want to.

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX
Email: XXXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

Recruitment Script

Recruitment scripts are a guideline to ensure that recruiters are given basic instructions on how to ethically contact participants and let them know about the study. They may or may not be followed verbatim, as some of the conversations may take place in person or over the telephone. The language used in this document is at a grade 8 education level to ensure maximum clarity when approaching participants.

*(c)Participant script: snowball sampling
(Snowballing via phone/in-person/email etc.):*

A student I had spoken to informed me of a study that she was doing for the University of Ottawa on domestic abuse. She is interviewing women who have emigrated from Guyana to Canada (that currently live in Ontario) and have previously experienced some form of relationship abuse. She is looking for women who have been out of violent relationships for a period of at least one year.

(You may choose whether or not you want to disclose to your friend/acquaintance that you participated)

The study is going to examine women's decisions and choices around their experiences of how they responded to abuse and allows them to share their side of the story. People that participate will have their identities protected with a fake name. You don't have to participate, but I thought I would mention it to you as she is looking for a couple of women that may be interested in doing an interview. She asked me to pass on her information. If you want, you may contact her, by phone or email and she can tell you more about the study. There is no obligation to contact her if you do not want to.

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX

Email: XXXXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Title of the study: Battered immigrant women and their expressions of agency

Name of researcher: Christeena Lucknauth

Name of supervisors: Professors Holly Johnson and Colette Parent

Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences

Professor Holly Johnson

Department of Criminology, 25 University Private

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Professor Colette Parent

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Ms. Christeena Lucknauth

Department of Criminology, 25 University Private

Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Phone: XXX XXX XXXX

Email: XXXXXXX@uottawa.ca

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by the student researcher Christeena Lucknauth, as supervised by Professors Holly Johnson and Colette Parent.

Purpose of the Study: The study examines how Guyanese immigrant women make decisions and choices while responding to abusive situations in their relationships with male partners. This study will contribute important information about immigrant and women of ethnic minorities, who are abused, particularly Guyanese women.

Participation: My participation will consist of attending an audio-recorded interview session with the researcher. Participation in the face-to-face interview session will take between one and two hours and will be set according to my schedule, at a location I have chosen. During the interview, I will describe of the decisions I have made during my experiences with a former violent partner.

Risks: My participation in this study entails volunteering very personal information, which may cause me to feel emotional and/or psychological discomfort. Some of these risks include: regret for sharing personal information and reliving painful memories that may bring on emotions such as sadness, anger, or anxiety either during or after the interview.

I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. I

understand that should there be any emotional discomfort after the interview, I can contact the Toronto Distress Services at 416-408-4357, or via email at info@torontodistresscenter.com, or visit their website at www.torontodistresscenter.com for further information. I can also contact the Chanderbhan Counselling Services if I find it helpful to minimize any discomfort or potential risks by participating in the study. I also understand that I can ask for breaks to limit the discomfort I may feel during the interview. I may also refuse to answer any questions or discontinue the interview at any point. I understand that my identity will be protected through the use of a fake name. I also understand that if there is anything that I would like to be changed in the content of my interview, I will have the opportunity to amend the transcribed interview one month after the transcript has been delivered to me. During this time, I may correct any inaccuracies or add or delete any comments that I am not comfortable with. I also understand that I may tell others that the purpose of the study is for an unrelated issue (ex: immigration experiences to Canada) in order to avert social repercussions for participating.

Benefits: My participation in this study will allow me to share my insights and opinions around the choices I made with respect to my experiences of domestic violence in a manner that can be liberating and/or empowering to my experiences as a domestic violence survivor. As Guyanese immigrant women have not been studied, I understand that I am providing a voice to abused women who share my cultural heritage. I also understand that the content of my interviews may help to broaden what is known about immigrant women's experiences that may help to improve the services available to abused women and help ultimately, to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purposes of a Master's thesis and that my confidentiality will be protected by substituting pseudonyms/ fake names for my own. I understand that this consent form is the only document that contains my true identity. I understand that the researcher be the only person that will have the ability to match the pseudonym/ fake name to my identity. I also understand that any information used to specify other individuals or locations will be removed from the published thesis. I understand that quotes will only be used to demonstrate major findings and that my name will not be linked to anything I say.

Conservation of data: The data collected in audio-recorded interviews, a typed-transcribed version of the interview, and the summarized/analyzed version of findings in the written report will be kept in both soft and hard copies during the process of the researcher completing her thesis. During this period, data will be kept either by Christeena Lucknauth or her supervisors. All soft copies will be kept on computers that are password protected and used by its owner only. Such devices will be located either at locked residence of the researcher as well as the locked offices of her supervisors. Christeena and her supervisors are the only individuals that will have access to the material. After the researcher's thesis has been completed, I understand that data will be conserved on a disc for a period of five years at the University of Ottawa. During this period of retention, the data will be stored in the Department of Criminology, in the locked office of the researcher's supervisor, Holly Johnson. I understand that these documents will be kept in a secure manner, and after the period of five years, they will be deleted and destroyed in a secure manner.

Compensation: I understand that I will receive \$25 for agreeing to participate in the study.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. I understand that based on the recruiter's position I am under no obligation to

consent. I further understand that based on Christeena's role at the institutions from which I was recruited, I am also under no obligation to participate. Should I withdraw from the study at any point, I understand that the data collected will be destroyed and will not be used in the research, unless otherwise authorized by myself in writing.

Acceptance: I, _____ (*name of participant*) agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Ms. Christeena Lucknauth of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Professors Holly Johnson and Colette Parent.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisors.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: (*Signature*)

Date: (*Date*)

Researcher's signature: (*Signature*)

Date: (*Date*)

***NB:** The consent form was printed on University of Ottawa letterhead.

File Number: 06-12-12

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/30/2012



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Role
Holly	Johnson	Social Sciences / Criminology	Supervisor
Colette	Pouart	Social Sciences / Criminology	Co-investigator
Christiana	Luckanath	Social Sciences / Criminology	Student Researcher

File Number: 06-12-12

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Battered Immigrant Women and Their Expressions of Agency

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

07/30/2012

Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

07/29/2013

Approval Type

1a

(ix: Approval, Ix: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A

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<http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/index.html>
<http://www.research.uottawa.ca/deontology/index.html>

File Number: 06-12-12

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/30/2012



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed in the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: <http://www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/forms.html>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5337 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

Kim Thompson

Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

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APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Questions will be asked as they arise in the form of the participant's conversation. In this manner participants will answer only what is relevant to the flow of the conversation. The numbered questions are basic areas that will be covered in the interview. The subsidiary questions that emerge beneath are questions that may or may not arise, depending on the context and content of the interview.

I am interested in the experiences of immigrant Guyanese women who have had to deal with abuse from their intimate partners. I would like to explore the context of this experience and how you have dealt with the issue. I would like to remind you that you are not obligated to answer any of the questions, that you may skip any of the questions and return to them later, or refuse to answer them entirely, you may also choose to discontinue the interview if you desire.

1. First I would like to know how you have met your partner, and/or about your immigration process to Canada.

(a) Can you tell me about when you first met/began your relationship with your partner?

- How old were you at the time?
- How was your family/social network with respect to your partner?
 - Did you meet this person independently or was it from an arranged situation?
 - Did you have your family's approval with your partner? / Did that change?

(b) Can you tell me about your immigration process to Canada?

- Approximate year/ time period you moved to Canada:
- Approximate time period you applied for/and or obtained residency / Canadian citizenship?

2. I would like to discuss how you became the target of abuse from your partner, how you reacted initially, and how you have dealt with the problem. I would like you to share, if you can, the details of how you responded to the abuse.

(a) Can you tell me about how the abuse started?

- How did you react?
 - In retrospect did you recognize this as abuse at the time?
 - Did you get help or think of getting help at the time?
 - Did that affect your ability or how you sought help afterward?
- Did you tell anyone about what was happening?
 - Who/ How/ Why or why not?
 - Did they do anything to help you?

(b) How did you react to any of the violent incidents that happened after the first one?

(If applicable)

- Did you have any strategies to protect yourself from the attacks?
- Could you tell when an attack was coming?
- Did you talk to anyone else about it? /How?
- Did you avoid reporting it to certain institutions or agencies? /Why? Why not?
- How were or weren't these individuals helpful to you?

(c) *(If applicable)* Was there a particular incident or situation that convinced you to notify police or other authorities?

- How did you do this?
- Why was it different from other times?

(d) *(If applicable)* What was the reason you joined *[Name of Organization 2]*?

- Were community leaders and volunteers helpful to you?

(e) Can you think about why you made these decisions? What were you hoping they would do to help you? *(According to conversation: if based on notifying friends/authorities/ joining agencies or organizations/ going to shelters or not)*

(f) Did you ever feel that being Guyanese/ West Indian or an immigrant to Canada limited your access to obtain help? Or was that an advantage in any way?

(g) What would you identify as some of your most difficult challenges?

- How did you deal with it?

(h) Are there any decisions you made that had an unintended effect (either positive or negative?)

(i) *(If applicable)* How did you eventually leave your partner? Was anyone particularly helpful to you?

3. I would like to give you the opportunity to speak freely on the matter: If there are any additional comments you would like to make or anything that you would like to further clarify that we spoke about earlier.

4. Lastly, before concluding the interview, I have a few final questions that will help me compare and/or contrast your experience to those of other women that we may not have covered over the course of our interview.

(a) What year were you born in?

(b) Have you ever been married or in a cohabiting relationship for a period of more than 6 months?

(c) How long was your relationship with the abusive partner?

(d) Do you have children? If so, how many?

(e) What is your current occupation?

-What occupation did you begin with upon moving to Canada?

(f) Highest level of education?

-Please indicate where.

-Please indicate where you received/ are receiving your most recent level of education?

APPENDIX E



