Intimate partner violence against immigrant women with temporary residence permit

- Interviews with professionals

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the situation of immigrant women with temporary residence permit who face intimate partner violence and are living in Mid-Sweden. The study had a qualitative approach and four professionals with experience in meeting this group were interviewed using semi-structured questions. The sample consisted of respondents from social services, a women’s shelter, a NGO and a law firm. Findings show that due to controlling behavior by their partners the women are often isolated from society. Economical violence is explained as frequently occurring. Furthermore, the findings show that having a temporary residence permit makes it difficult to leave the abusive relationship, since it is connected to the risk of deportation. According to the respondents the women experience fear and worries related to their legal status. Moreover, the help available for them include supporting conversations, protected living and legal guidance. The findings indicate that for the women’s situation to be improved they need to gain information on their rights.

Keywords: immigrant women, temporary residence permit, intimate partner violence
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1. Introduction

In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is considered “an international bill of rights for women” (UN, 2009). The 187 nations that have ratified the convention commit to ensure that women are not being discriminated on basis of their sex by for example eradicating laws that discriminate and creating new laws that legally strengthen women (ibid). Countries are obligated to protect women from violence, exploitation and trafficking, as well as providing opportunity for education and work (CEDAW, 2014). Furthermore, the United Nation’s Declaration on Human Rights, which has been ratified by all member countries, states that all people regardless of sex, race, religion or social origin have the right to life, liberty and security. Article 5 says “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (UN, n.d.). Despite the fact that almost all countries have signed these treaties, violence against women, which clearly violates the conventions is an immense problem around the world. Globally, one in three women have faced violence from a partner (WHO, 2013).

The term that will be used in the thesis is intimate partner violence (IPV), referring to behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner causing physical, sexual or psychological harm (WHO, 2014). It includes physical and psychological abuse, sexual force and controlling behaviors (WHO, 2014). For the victims it can lead to a series of negative health consequences, such as chronic pain, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (Campbell, 2002). Most often it is men abusing women (Population Reports, 1999) and due to this fact, we will in this study focus on violence against women with male perpetrators.

According to United Nations Treaty Collection (2016), Sweden was among the first countries to ratify CEDAW and the country has adopted laws to strengthen women within its legal system. For example, in 1982 domestic violence went from private to public prosecution, meaning the crime can be reported even if the woman herself does not want to press charges. Thus, the crime started to be seen as a societal problem, and not just as a private problem (Våld i nära relationer, n.d.). Moreover, in 1998 a law called gross violation of a woman’s integrity was created, focusing on repeated actions of violence towards a woman (Våld i nära relationer, n.d.). Despite such efforts, in 2013, according to statistics from Brottsförebyggande rådet (BRÅ) [Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention], over 27 000 cases of violence against women were reported in Sweden and more than half of them were committed indoors by someone the woman knows (BRÅ, 2014). Moreover, it is estimated that many crimes are not reported to the police. The extent of the problem, along with the
large negative consequences the violence causes for individuals, makes intimate partner violence an important topic to highlight. Furthermore, it is an issue that brings consequences not only to the abused women, but society as a whole. Figures indicate the socioeconomic costs in Sweden every year to between 2.7 and 3.3 billion Swedish kronor (Socialstyrelsen, 2006) [National Board of Health and Welfare].

According to Nationellt centrum för kvinnofrid (NCK) [The National Centre for Knowledge on Men’s Violence Against Women], violence can occur within all social classes and is a widespread problem. However, some groups are considered particularly vulnerable, due to factors such as the level of exposure to violence, especially serious consequences from the violence or if the abused do not possess resources to change the situation (NCK, 2014). One of these groups are immigrant women with a temporary residence permit, and for us as researchers studying international social work has created an interest to explore these women’s situation. According to NCK (2014), they constitute a particularly vulnerable group due to their legal status. According to the Swedish Aliens Act (SFS 2005:716), an immigrant who comes to Sweden to marry or live together with a Swedish citizen or a person granted permanent residence in Sweden, can gain a two-year long temporary residence permit due to attachment. If the relationship lasts, the immigrant can be given a permanent residence permit. If the relationship ends prior to the two years, the regulation known as the two-year rule causes the immigrant to lose permission to stay in Sweden (Wilén, 2010). The rule was incorporated into Swedish law as a way to prevent sham marriages. But according to Wilén (2010) it makes immigrant women facing IPV forced to stay in abusive relationships, or risk being deported from the country. A limited amount of research concerning violence against immigrant women in general, and immigrant women with temporary residence permit in particular, has been conducted (NCK, 2014). With the area being relatively unexplored the authors of the thesis concluded that it would be interesting to investigate this topic in depth, as well as bring awareness to this particular group of women.

### 1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to explore the situation of immigrant women with a temporary residence permit who face intimate partner violence and are living in Mid-Sweden.

1. How are the women’s lives described by professionals that are in contact with them?
2. What support do the women receive and how might their situation be improved?

1.2. Explanations of Concepts

**Intimate Partner Violence - IPV**

Intimate partner violence refers to any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship (WHO, 2014).

**Immigrant**

According to Pettersen and Ostby (2013) a person who is born outside the country to two foreign-born parents, and who at some point has immigrated, in this study to Sweden.

**Temporary residence permit**

A residence permit allows individuals to work and stay in Sweden. It can be time-limited or permanent. A temporary residence permit means that the individual may stay in Sweden for a limited period of time (Migrationsverket, 2015). [The Swedish Migration Agency].

**Residence permits due to attachment**

Residence permit on the grounds of having a family attachment to a Swedish citizen or a person with permanent residence permit in Sweden (SFS 2005:716). In this study the attachment is most often marriage. The person who come through attachment is granted a temporary residence permit for two years and if the relationship lasts after that time the person may be given a permanent residence permit (SFS 2005:716). In this study, it is wanted to make clear that the marriage could be between Swedish man and woman from other nationality, as well as Non-Swedish man who has a document for permanent residence in Sweden.

**Two-year rule**

The person coming by attachment to Sweden is granted a temporary residence permit for two years. If the relationship with the attachment person ends prior to the two years, the immigrant normally lose permission to stay in Sweden (Wilén, 2010).
**Permanent residence permit on basis of violence**

As mentioned above, an immigrant with a temporary residence permit due to attachment is normally only given a permanent residence permit if the relationship lasts. However, in the Swedish Aliens Act (SFS 2005:716) it is stated that if there are special reasons, such as violence towards the immigrant, he/she can receive a permanent permit for residence on the basis of those circumstances.

**1.3. Disposition of the thesis**

The *first* chapter of the thesis provides an introduction to the topic, followed by the aim and research questions, thereafter concepts used in the thesis are explained. The *second* chapter provides an overview of the previous research conducted within the field of women with temporary residence permit facing intimate partner violence. The *third* chapter presents the theoretical framework used in the thesis, consisting of the perspective of intersectionality and power theory. Chapter *four* describes the methodology, it includes the selection of respondents, how the interviews were conducted, tools for analysis, essay credibility, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. In the *fifth* chapter, the findings are presented and analyzed in relation to the theories and previous research. The last chapter, number *six*, presents a discussion on the findings, as well as suggestions for further research.
2. Previous research

In this section, previous research within the field of intimate partner violence against immigrant women with a temporary residence permit will be displayed. The aim of this section is to highlight what has been done before our study. Previous research pieces on the situation of immigrant women with temporary documents, who have faced IPV, are described as still being limited.

It was considered important to find as much information as possible for the aim of this study, such as books, research, articles, essays, and others, in order to choose the most relevant information source, and attempt to explain their significance. The chosen books were found in different libraries and the used online material was found in databases as follows, SAGE journal online, SocIndex, Web of Science, Discovery and Google Scholar. The search terms for this thesis paper were immigrant women, IPV, temporary residence permit and professional perspective. Additionally, Google was used as a starting point in finding information from Swedish organizations working to highlight the issue of IPV, such as Riksorganisationen för kvinnojouer och tjejjourer i Sverige (Roks) [National Organization for Women’s Shelters and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden] and (NCK).

As, will be discussed in the section limitations of the study, there are not huge amount of material for the investigated topic. Nevertheless, the most relevant literature was chosen, as well as the most recently published material. In addition, the authors wanted to gather more information about this topic for further researchers. According to Grinnell (2001), previous researches could help to create knowledge, or could give awareness provided that they inform others about their findings. Consequently, the authors tried to disseminate knowledge and facts about the discussed topic of this study.

Throughout this section, the purpose is to give an overview of the abused immigrant women’s situation in Sweden, as well as to give more detailed information on their legal status, considering they only possess temporary documents. This section will further present the five themes, discovered during our critical review of the literature.

This study reviews previous research pieces through the prism of different themes that were found while exploring the articles. One such theme is legal immigrant status. The second theme is the relationship between Swedish policy and men’s violence in the country. The third one covers intimate partner and feelings in abusive relationship, followed by the fourth theme, which explores
the extent to which society is dominated by males. The final theme is how to improve the situation of these women, and what assistance is available.

All previous researches reviewed mention a lack of information on this specific topic, further strengthening our argument that attention on women in such a situation is needed.

### 2.1. Legal Immigrant Status

Immigrant women often fear and avoid contact with authorities in the destination country, and make little or no use of the criminal justice system altogether (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Many immigrant women are kept from seeking help for the abuse, or from leaving the abusive relationship, just because of their immigrant status (Raj & Silverman, 2002). The women’s lack of social networks and knowledge in the Swedish language is factors the abuser can use to isolate the woman and hinder her from seeking help (NCK, 2014). Also a report from Roks authored by Wilén in 2010, highlights the women’s small or non-existing networks and the risks they might face if returning to the home country as factors increasing their vulnerability. Wilén (2010) furthermore states that they lack knowledge about their rights in Sweden.

Due to the fact the legality of the stay of women with temporary residence permit in the receiving country, is often linked to the legality of their spouses, these women are placed in a vulnerable situation (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). According to Paat (2014) women in such situations simply do not report abuse or violence, due to the fact they believe this may lead to their deportation or a similar outcome on their legal immigration status. Similarly stated by Wilén (2010) women coming to Sweden through attachment and who are living with a temporary residence permit face the risk of being deported if the relationship ends. The regulation within the Swedish Aliens Act (SFS 2005:716) saying that an immigrant with a temporary residence permit who suffers abuse can gain a permanent permit, is followed by unreasonable demands of having to prove the violence, preventing the regulation from being a safety for the victims (Wilén, 2010). Additionally, failure to report abuse stems from either fear of their spouses finding out, or from procedures that government agencies, such as the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, have (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). For instance, about 300 men per year are deported from the USA as abusers, after violence or abuse reports, but paradoxically their wives are sent back to the original country with them as well (Ibid). Due to this fact, an abusive husband can use his wife’s fear of deportation as a form of blackmail, meaning the wife will avoid taking any legal action against her husband, because
her own legal status will depend on that (Ibid). However, in a study of intimate partner violence among immigrant women in the United States, it was found that even when immigrant women decide to take action and seek social services assistance, their legal status makes it difficult to obtain help (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). For instance, a husband with permanent legal status threatened his immigrant wife, who was with a temporary residence permit, to end the petition process for her legal residency and take away their daughter (Ibid). “She won the custody battle, but proof of her husband’s abusive behavior in court to obtain her legal residency is still pending” (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.909). This clearly shows that it is not very difficult for abusive partners to use their partners’ legal status as leverage (Paat, 2014). Additionally, Raj and Silverman (2002) also confirm that different agencies specializing in domestic violence are unable to help immigrant women, simply because these women do not have a legal resident status.

Moreover, women with temporary residence permit are often unaware of laws that may protect them from abuse, and they have a lack of awareness of IPV as a legal issue for which they can receive help (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Many more do not understand their legal rights, due to the lack of education, knowledge about domestic violence, immigration statute, and their bureaucratic procedures (Paat, 2014). In addition, immigrant women with temporary documents often have little knowledge of the legal status of their children, and there is always the fear of losing the children, because of these legal conditions (Ibid).

2.2. Gender Equality in Swedish Policy

Women with temporary residence permit are often in vulnerable situations, because the legality of their stay in the country is often connected to their spouses’ (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Stated by NCK (2014) this creates an equal power relation between the partners. In the United States, as well as in Europe, immigration laws often require that women stay for a certain number of years with the husband (Ibid). For example, the time limit for women who come to Sweden, is two years (Migrationsverket, 2015).

In Sweden, according to Öhman and Emmelin (2014), gender research on violence against women and gender inequalities need to be taken into account when developing policies on the topic. However, there seems to be a lack of debate on these issues, since most attention about gender equality and development policies is focused on economy, democracy, human rights, and political power (Ibid). Nevertheless, the Swedish government has launched a new policy for gender equality in Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida) [Sweden's International Development Cooperation Agency] for the years 2010–2015. The overall objectives of the Sida plan are to
contribute to a reduction of gender-based violence and to promote the rights as well as the economic and political empowerment of those subject to gender-based violence, mainly women and girls (Öhman & Emmelin, 2014). Consequently, Sweden, together with the other Nordic countries, ranks high in international comparisons regarding gender equality policies. The policy emphasizes that men's violence against women in Sweden should be eradicated (Öhman & Emmelin, 2014).

2.3 Intimate Partner Violence and Feelings

The experiences of immigrant women in intimate partner violence situations are often aggravated by their specific position as immigrants, for example by their limited host-language skills, uncertain legal statuses, lack of access to dignified jobs, even experiences in their home countries, and thus their alternatives to living with their abusers are very limited (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Intimate partner violence can be classified in different categories ranging from physical aggression and sexual invasion, to psycho-emotional abuse (Paat, 2014). Sexual abuse definitions include male control of sexual and reproductive decision making, for instance where and when to have sex, or for example the prohibition of birth control and even demands for female sterilization (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Furthermore, “other ways of sexual abuse are infidelity or threats of infidelity, as well as accusations of sexual inadequacy” (Raj & Silverman, 2002, p.377). Battered women also cite absolute male control of family decision making as emotional abuse, due to the fact this male control of the household is particularly difficult, as cultural norms require women to take primary responsibility for children and domestic chores (Ibid). Furthermore, this type of domestic violence has been commonly used to resolve disagreements, correct the partner’s behavior, gain compliance, or punish wrongdoings of a partner (Paat, 2014). In addition, verbal abuse, for instance, insulting the female partner by calling her crazy or stupid, was primarily cited as abuse when it occurred in the presence of others (Ibid). These assaults make the abuse particularly humiliating for these women (Paat, 2014). At least but not last, is the so called economic abuse, which is used to control the immigrant female partners, leading to women begging for the necessary funds to purchase even basic goods. (Raj & Silverman, 2002). By repeatedly using different forms of violence the abuser maintain control and power over the victim (NCK, 2014).

In general, critics argue that IPV creates feelings of confusion, embarrassment and blame (Paat, 2014). Moreover, it can lead to devastating effects such as physical injury, depression, posttraumatic stress, anxiety, sexually transmitted disease, substance abuse, poor health and health
care utilization, or even death at the micro-level (Ibid). In addition, at the macro-level, IPV is known to cause tragic outcomes including interparental discord, family shame, divorce, child maltreatment, child mortality, and breakdown of social control or community norms (Paat, 2014). Moreover Öhman and Emmelin (2014) support this, by claiming that poor self-esteem has been reported to accompany violence experiences. Furthermore, the group of immigrant women with temporary residence permit tend to face more emotional restraints about their encounters and cultural stereotypes that associate violence with particular shame (Paat, 2014). For instance, fear of drawing any negative attention on themselves and their family is often the prime reason of immigrant women’s reluctance in disclosing or reporting violence and abuse (Ibid). In other words, the very fear of focusing attention on their family was found to be, perhaps, the main reason why immigrant women do not report violence or abuse (Paat, 2014). Thus, the combination of other mixed emotions cause immigrant women responsible for the abuse, while harboring unrealistic hopes of eventually resuming their amicable relationship with the abuser. “These women experience a constellation of emotions revolving around the feelings of guilt, confusion, relief, and helplessness” (Paat, 2014, p.731). The struggle may alternate between the abusers asking for forgiveness, showing feelings of remorse, and displaying anxiety of separation, while the victims, who have developed mutual dependence on their abusing partner, may endure doubt about leaving (Paat, 2014).

Similarly it has been described by NCK (2014) how the victim experience mixed emotions towards the abuser due to periods of non-violence. NCK (2014) also presents the concept internalization, which describes how the abused person can start to believe the perpetrator’s explanations for the violence, and adopt his view of reality. A way to describe the many emotions that women feel towards their abuser is by calling it a traumatic bond. It is a concept reflecting how the woman is tied to the man by various strong feelings such as love, hate, fear, hope and compassion (Grände, Lundberg & Eriksson, 2009). Moreover, unitized bonds are constructed through the woman’s will to understand the abuser, internalization and if the woman is dependent on the man (Ibid).

Furthermore, as Raj and Silverman (2002) argue, many battered immigrant women may also not seek help because of feelings such as fear for their children’s lives, fear of loss of children in custody battles, and perhaps the most common reason, love for the male partner. All of these findings are similar to the study outcomes of different interpersonal violence research pieces. This only stresses the significance of various psychological attributes, for example self-esteem, self-confidence, self-determination and sense of autonomy, in formulating good judgment and avoiding
further abuse (Raj and Silverman, 2002). Good cognitive abilities not only increase the survivors’ understanding of their circumstance, but can also help them work through the complex issues they are facing (Ibid).

2.4. Male Dominant Society and Stigma

Patriarchal ideologies are general, and perhaps even universal, but their local expression is different depending on the social positions of the immigrants, and historical specifics of their migration (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Thus, due to the fact there are different forms of patriarchy, women have to bargain within specific sets of constraints in different sociocultural contexts (Ibid). In general, patriarchal culture, “which is all about male possessiveness, superiority, and dominance, is often associated with a power structure that justifies men’s beating and abuse” (Paat, 2014, p.729). This is especially relevant in very traditional households, in which the male partner is designated to provide economically, while the female partner is expected to serve and care, while upholding the highest family dignity through the maintenance of personal purity (Ibid). Thus, in order to preserve moral superiority and safeguard family honor, violence is endorsed under conditions when the female partner’s behavior threatens the family dignity or status quo, leading to the creation of a patriarchal subculture of violence that gives men permission to use violence as a means for achieving their goals, and conflict resolution with their wife (Paat, 2014). However, the stigma of domestic violence, and the fact that it usually occurs in the home, makes accurate information on the magnitude of this problem scarce (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002).

Paat (2014) further admits that in some cases, “inequality is rationalized based on religious reasons” (p.729). The centrality of the husband’s role to provide, and women’s obligation to obey, is for example reflected in traditional Muslim and Roman Catholic beliefs (Ibid). Furthermore, another example, which comes from findings in studies of Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant communities, indicates that both men and women feel that if women go out of the boundaries of their given roles, it is culturally acceptable for men to “discipline” them using physical abuse (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Another aspect of the situation, in which stigma occurs, is when the role of family responsibilities is placed on the female, and economic responsibilities are placed on males, reducing the options for women’s separation from an abusive male partner, and maintains the male economic control in relationship (Ibid). Paat (2004) agrees with this by stating resources increase power in such partnerships. However, when the female partner outperforms the male resource-wise, violence is adopted to reinstate male dominance (Ibid). Moreover, as language barriers further
decrease their chance of securing employment, limited financial options diminish immigrant women’s intention to flee their abusive relationship (Paat, 2004). Furthermore, the additional stigma of divorce appears to weigh heavier on immigrants, for instance, “Asians, Latinos, and Middle Eastern immigrants, divorced victims are often blamed for breaking up their families and taking the farther away from their children; both victims and children can be stigmatized and ostracized by their communities” (Raj & Silverman 2002, p.384).

2.5. Assistance and Improvement

Without institutional support, female immigrants, who still have a lot to learn about the new country and its societal differences, are susceptible to violence if their abuser becomes better adapted to the new environment and learns to “manipulate” the social system to their advantage (Paat, 2014). Öhman and Emmelin (2014) further elaborate on how Swedish laws operate, and how they work towards reducing the violence against women in Sweden, since the different social institutions use these laws in their day to day work as assistance. Since, improving legislations is the best form of assistance, Swedish gender equality policies are often viewed as progressive and effective (Ibid). However, according to Öhman and Emmelin (2014) there are improvements to be sought, for example, more sustainable dialogue among development institutions, activist movements and more researchers are recommended. It is very important who suggests and implements the said policies, and who defines the issues of IPV, as there is always the risk of a male perspective on the issue (Öhman & Emmelin, 2014). Additionally, interventions, such as changes in legislation to act against normative systems that suppresses and violates women, in order to decrease IPV, are another important step. Moreover, “changes in Swedish health systems so that IPV may be integrated into everyday clinical routines, as well as training of personnel to detect IPV, would be beneficial” (Öhman & Emmelin, 2014, p.119).

To avoid the continued occurrence of physical, mental, emotional, and economic violence against immigrant women and their children, the courts, as well as other community agencies that are part of the formal system, need to recognize that immigrant women in domestic violence situations have different needs from non-immigrant parts of the population (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Thus, laws, definitions, and channels of information need to be adjusted to recognize the increasing presence of immigrant women. More importantly, “studies need to be comprehensive, including the experiences of immigrant women who have entered through the formal system and through extralegal channels” (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.912). In this way, immigrant women will be
informed, in their own language, of community services that will educate them about their rights, empower them, and enable them to improve their immigrant-specific situation so that they can live dignified lives (Ibid). Paat (2014) further claims that the concept of resilience is an adaptation process, with which immigrant women regain their functioning after abuse. Resilience must be promoted, and risk minimized, and in order to achieve that, social service practitioners and helping professionals need to work together with immigrant women to understand the culturally based conceptions of violence and gender norms shaping their beliefs (Ibid). Roks presents a series of interventions that could better the situation of women living with temporary residence permits. These include providing the women with information on their rights and help they can receive, as well as to abolish the two-year rule which is said to force women to stay in abusive relationships (Wilén, 2010).
3. Theoretical Framework

The following section presents the theoretical framework used in conceptualizing the topic of this study, which investigates the situation of immigrant women with temporary resident permit, facing intimate partner violence in Mid-Sweden. This research operates within the frameworks of intersectionality and power perspectives, which were used to interpret the data and answer questions for the aim of the thesis.

3.1. Intersectionality

The concept intersectionality is based on the word intersection, which means crossroads (Mattsson, 2010). The term, as the authors of this study found, should be viewed as cross-reference from feminist theory. Reading more about intersectional theory, the researchers of this thesis paper discovered that it is more relevant than feminist theory, to their investigated aim. Bastia (2014) explains that “intersectionality emerged during the 1980s as a particular approach in feminist theory to analyzing the complex origins of multiple sources of women’s oppression” (p.237). In addition, Carastathis (2014) includes that in the feminist theory, intersectionality has become the predominant theory seen as the most important contribution that women’s studies have made so far. Indeed, as Carastathis (2014) confirms, the influence of intersectionality has extended beyond the academic sphere, to international human rights discourses. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2000) or U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which in their resolutions on the human rights of women recognized the importance of examining the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Ibid).

The theory finds its roots in Black feminism, and as Carastathis (2014) says “until the emergence of black feminism in the United States, not a single social theorist took seriously the concept of simultaneity of [race, gender and class] intersection in people’s lives” (p.304).

There are four main analytic benefits of intersectionality as a research methodology – simultaneity, as argued later, complexity, to capture the true nature of oppression, irreducibility and inclusivity. Simultaneity, refers to the idea that multiple equally important analytic categories simultaneously construct institutionalized practices and lived experiences (Carastathis, 2014). Complexity, refers to the fact the theory captures the true essence of complex social structures and subjective experiences. Rather than reducing oppression to one single separate category, for example gender, the intersectional theory shows one of its strengths – irreducibility and views oppression as an
interaction between multiple such categories. Inclusivity of intersectionality is an important strength, as lots of feminist theories and previous research presented constructions of “women”, often completely excluding certain categories (Carastathis, 2014). This strength provides corrective action against such elitism of categories, and selective research (Carastathis, 2014). According to Mattsson (2010) structures of power causing inequality and oppression are created in the crossing between for example gender and ethnicity.

As mentioned above, intersectionality refers to how “gender is intrinsically linked to and mutually constituted with other forms of oppression and social locations, such as class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, age, religion, and disability” (Sandberg, 2013, p.350). Furthermore, intersectional studies on domestic violence or IPV have focused primarily on the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender and to some extent on those of class, age, sexuality, and disability (ibid.) This idea that women’s lives and experiences are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression has become so common, that one can easily forget there are other approaches that separate systems of oppressions, isolating and focusing on one, excluding the others (Carastathis, 2014). Furthermore, the term intersectionality is so common that it is often used as a synonym of oppression, without specifying what is intersecting and how (Ibid). This theory is considered by many to be perhaps one of the most important contributions to women’s studies thus far, due to the fact a lot of earlier feminist theories focused on gender alone, for example, claiming women’s oppression could be captured only focusing on that aspect. Since “a real-life person is not, for example, a woman on Monday, a member of the working class on Tuesday, and a woman of African descent on Wednesday”, intersectionality helps read these categories simultaneously (Carastathis, 2014, p.307). These are the main reasons this theory was used in the thesis, in order to attempt to capture the experiences of immigrant women that face violence.

Another way to view intersectionality, is through the works of Mattsson (2010), who provides background information on how society and its structures can be understood by explaining concepts, like construction, power structures, categories and power relations. These ideas are crucial to comprehend intersectionality. One aspect is the constructive perspective, saying that reality tends to become as we choose to interpret it, we see what we expect to see and explain things in accordance with our preconceptions (Mattsson, 2010). Consequently, we reproduce our own perceptions on how things are. In addition, humans are social creatures and individual perceptions will become shared perceptions, for example about what is male/female behavior and how to view immigrants (Mattsson, 2010). Furthermore, to understand intersectionality it is important to grasp the concept of societal power structures. It can be explained as societal forces creating categories
and groups, as well as placing these in hierarchal relations to each other (ibid). Some groups are being valued higher than others. An example of power structures concerning class and ethnicity, is how immigrants and/or people with low income live in other areas than ethnic Swedes and middle income earners, that being unsafe areas with small housing (Boverket, 2007) [National Board of Housing]. The dominant groups have precedence in defining how the world should be understood, and this is a reason power structures are being maintained (Mattsson, 2010). Affecting how everyone views the world, it is a foundation for unequal structures in society. Categories, another concept connected to the intersectionality is, according to Mattsson (2010), arranged groups of people who share something in common. For example, women, men, Swedes and immigrants are all different categories. These type of simplifications is something people use to arrange the world and with the help of them things are interpreted and understood (Mattsson, 2010). Moreover, the categories are connected to interrelated power relations where opposite categories are valued differently, something that is important when discussing ethnicity. Hall (mentioned in Mattsson, 2010) states that having opposite categories and differentiating others is central for developing a sense of “we” and “them”. We as subjects are created when meeting others, when reflecting on similarities and differences in comparison with others. Furthermore, groups are separated and limits are drawn between others and ourselves. According to Hall (mentioned in Mattsson, 2010), categories define and construct each other, for example Western is constructed when Eastern is constructed. In addition, one is seen as superior and one inferior which makes it relevant in understanding power relations. Durable inequality is a concept developed by Charles Tilly, which presents a similar view (Tilly, 1999). The concept focuses on how systematic differences between groups are created and maintained (ibid). Differences in relations between categorized people work to conserve power among the superior group, as well as building a foundation for subordination for the opposite group (Tilly, 1999). The presented concepts together seek to explain the intersectional perspective and how power structures and categories relate to each other.

Despite these strengths and important contributions, it is crucial to note intersectionality has its drawbacks, and have them in mind, considering it is a main framework for this thesis. As Carastathis (2014) mentions, authors like Alice Ludvid, argue intersectionality’s main weakness is exactly the attempt of the theory to capture the true complex aspect of the social world, and that it is impossible to distinguish the specific category or form of prejudice in an experience of discrimination at work. For example, it is hard to say whether a woman was discriminated based on her foreign accent or simply because of her gender (Carastathis, 2014).
3.2. Theory of power

According to Amnesty (2011) financial, social and political relations create the existing gender system where men as a group possess more power than women as a group. Women are subjected to violence on basis of their sex in a societal structure that subordinates women. Men’s violence against women is seen as the ultimate evidence of unequal power relations existing in society (Amnesty, 2011). Thus, another key framework for this thesis is the concept of power. It is viewed in this paper mainly through the works of Foucault, Weber and Munro, but also various other authors. One definition of power is offered by Weber, who says power is the likelihood that one party within a social relationship will be able to carry out his own will in spite of resistance (Allen, 2014). Weber’s definition talks of how the powerful one has the ability to get someone else to do what he wants them to do. Alike, Dahl (1957) explains the concept as an exercise of power, how one person is able to make someone else do something. On the opposite, power can be defined as the ability to do something. Pitkin (1972) points that the word power originates from the French term pouvoir, and the Latin term potere, both meaning being able to, and furthermore explains power as having capacity. Lukes (2005) develops the mentioned definition by emphasizing that power is not necessarily doing, but having the potential to do something.

Regarding Foucault’s theoretical framework it can be viewed by some as gender-neutral, which may be an issue, but it is in no way less valid (King, 2004). Women have been judged against the norm of men for a long time and the idea of men and women as opposites is supported by various gender ideologies and polarized categories such as mind/body, culture/nature, and spirit/matter (Ibid). King (2004) further argues these widely accepted categories show Man is the mind and represents culture in the aforementioned polarized categories, meaning man represents a rational thinking subject and woman is the body and represents nature, meaning irrational, emotional and driven by instinct and physical need. The aforementioned process forms social identity and social control, and is close to Foucault’s work (King, 2004).

Domination is another key aspect of Foucault’s work, a different form of power-relations where the relationship is transformed from a reciprocal exchange of power manifestations to a one-side ability to alter the other side’s behavior (Munro, 2003). Foucault thus recognizes domination as an oppressive and restricting process (Ibid).
4. Methods

As the aim of the study was to explore the situation of a particular group, a qualitative method was deemed the best way to construct the research. The interest for this study was to investigate how professionals describe the everyday lives of the individuals in the chosen group. Moreover, to gain knowledge on what assistance the women receive and what can improve their situation. The choice of method goes in line with Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) describing that using a qualitative method creates opportunity for deeper understanding of the aim. Furthermore, we wanted a research design that gave us opportunity to modify the structure during the process. As Rubin and Babbie (2011) mention a qualitative approach allows for changes during the data collection and that was deemed suitable for this study.

According to D’Cruz and Jones (2004, p.60), qualitative research “elicits responses in questionnaires, survey, interviews, observations and text analysis”. To be able to gain the knowledge that was aimed for interviews were estimated to be the most suitable method for the focus of the study. A semi-structured interview technique was used for each of the interviews. The following categories presents an overview of this technique as well as how the interviews were conducted.

4.1. Selection

The authors wanted to find professionals who were willing to participate in the study and had experience in meeting immigrant women with temporary residence permit who face IPV. Both of the researches took part in finding the interviewees. The first respondent was found by help of a relative of one of us, who suggested and provided contact information to a friend. After this a snowball sampling technique was applied. This kind of sampling technique is commonly used in studies aiming to explore, and refers to asking the interviewee if he/she can suggest others that might be possible participants in the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). The first interview generated contact information to two potential respondents. They were contacted and informed about the study, agreeing to participate. Moreover, a fourth interview was found by contacting an organization, informing about the study and asking for an interview. A letter for information on participation in interview was given to all interviewees before conducting the interviews (see Appendix II for consent form). All contact with the participants prior to the interviews was through
The correspondence regarded arrangements for the interviews, and if the respondents wanted, sending the interview questions beforehand (see Appendix I for interview guide).

Interviews were conducted with in total four women, working in social services, in NGOs and at a law firm, all engaged in improving the wellbeing of this particular group of women. Two of them work in NGOs with one being a women’s shelter, one within a part of social services, and one is a lawyer at a law firm. The sample consisted of respondents from two different cities in Mid-Sweden. Three of them work within the same city. The participants have different educational background, such as behavioral science, human rights education or education in law. The respondents were women aged between 27 and 51 and their working experience in their current working place, varied from eight months to up to twenty years. It is estimated that interviewing professionals from different actors in society broadens the picture of the target group’s situation, and that being one advantage of the study. Since we were interested in finding the perspective of the people who have as a profession to work with immigrant women with temporary residence permit who have faced intimate partner violence, the conducted interviews were with them, not with the women themselves.

4.2. The interviews

The data of this study was generated through semi structured face-to-face interviews. The strategy of the semi-structured interview is “to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewees with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 2007, p. 51). The authors concluded this will give them openness to change the questions, in order to find the best possible answers for the investigated topic. Nevertheless, an interview guide was created for all of the interviews, as supporting points during the entire process. Since one of the interviews was conducted in Swedish, the interview guide was translated. In addition, the interview guide with open-ended questions was formed in a way to underline general themes that were discussed with all participants. These themes were constructed keeping the aim and research questions of the thesis in mind and were the following: background information regarding the respondents, background information about the abused women, the life situation of the abused women and the assistance. The participants were, when having scheduled a date for the interview, offered the opportunity to receive the interview questions beforehand enabling them to prepare.
Both of the researchers were present during the three interviews conducted in English. Furthermore, one interview was conducted in Swedish by one of the researchers and afterwards translated to the other researcher. The settings for the interviews were chosen by the participants. Three were conducted in the working place of the participants and one in a café. During the interview process the researchers changed their roles. As one asked the questions, the other wrote notes and asked some additional questions in the meanwhile. Each of the interviews lasted between 30 – 90 minutes. All four interviews were audio recorded with a digital recorder, the participants were asked beforehand if they agreed the interview be recorded.

4.3. Tools of analysis

The four interviews were transcribed, for the contents to be collected in paper documents. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) highlight, making a transcript is a translation from one narrative mode into another narrative mode, which is the case in this study – oral conversations from the interviews were converted into written source that was used later as a tool for analysis. Since four face-to-face interviews were conducted, two of these interviews were transcribed by each researcher separately, while the third interview was a joint transcription. Furthermore, the interview conducted in Swedish was transcribed by one of us. The transcriptions were prepared as soon as possible after the interviews were conducted. During the transcription procedure, each of the researchers took the needed time to listen carefully and present the interview word by word.

After transcriptions were done all of the text was read through again. Thereafter, with the research questions in mind, sentences were highlighted in order to find themes. The tool for analysis used is what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describes as ad hoc, meaning to adopt a mixture of ways to analyze findings, unlike following one specific technique. The authors went through the transcriptions and choose parts from the interviews where respondents presented answers which were of interest to meet the aim of the study. To make the work clear and facilitate the process of analysis each code was marked with a different color. According to Punch (1998) codes are labels and coding is the activity of placing labels on parts of the data. The intention of coding is to attach meaning to parts of the data (Punch, 1998). Therefore, the data loaded with meaning was coded. Furthermore, it “enables the summarizing of data by pulling together themes, and by identifying patterns” (Punch, 1998, p. 205). Accordingly, in this study, the meaningful units were put into themes by which the findings will be presented.
Additionally, in order to protect the interviewees’ identities their names were not displayed in the transcriptions or in the paper. Therefore, in the presentation of the findings the participants are marked A, B, C and D chronologically following the order in which they were interviewed. Respondent A is working in social service since 2007, respondent B is working in a women’s shelter since 2012, respondent C is working in a law firm since 2011 and respondent D is working in a non-governmental organization since 1995. Furthermore, repeated words in spoken language are not included in the written quotations.

4.4. Essay Credibility

4.4.1. Pre-understanding
Before conducting this study one of us had studied two University courses in the subject “Violence against women”. They provided basic knowledge on reasons for men’s violence against women and factors that works to keep the woman in the abusive relationship. It was helpful to have some prior knowledge when analyzing findings in the study related to factors working to maintain the women with the abusers. Moreover, the authors of this study were aware of domestic violence but had not heard the term intimate partner violence. The term intimate partner violence was chosen for the thesis because it is narrower, not including all violence within the home, such as violence against children. Temporary residence permit was a known concept. However, the topic of IPV against women living with temporary residence permits was a new area. The only pre-understanding related to international relationships was from Swedish media. It has during the past years been reported about Swedish men going to Thailand and meeting women. The reports have mostly been negative and portrayed the relationships as being unequal. This created an assumption that the professionals we were to interview most often meet Thai women coming by attachment to Swedish men. Since it was considered important that assumptions did not influence the research process the interview questions were created to be open and allow the respondents to tell us how it really is.

4.4.2. Reliability
Reliability refers to the “consistency and trustworthiness of the results” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.281). Furthermore, the concept concerns how well the study can be replicated by other researchers at other times (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The open-ended questions from the interview guide
were used, in addition leading questions were sometimes used when asking supplementary questions and to check that the interviewers had accurately understood the answers. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the use of leading questions can enhance the reliability of a study. Nevertheless, the authors are inexperienced in the field of qualitative research, and it may affect the reliability. Both authors were involved in making transcriptions which might reduce the reliability of the study since styles of transcribing differ and might cause misunderstandings while reading the texts. However, to minimize this risk the authors were in close contact regarding the content of the interviews.

4.4.3. Internal validity

Validity according to Rubin and Babbie (2011) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) concerns the question of correctness. It involves whether a study investigated what it set out to investigate (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is estimated that the study has reached its aim of exploring the situation of women with temporary residence permits who are subjected to IPV, and therefore investigated what it intended to. Moreover, Kvale (2007, p.123) explains that “validation rests on the quality of the researchers’ craftsmanship throughout an investigation, continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings”. This was taken into consideration when conducting the research. The research design was chosen because it was deemed suitable for the purpose of the study. The interview guide was put into themes estimated to generate broad knowledge on the investigated topic. Furthermore, following the first interview and before interviewing the respondent employed as a lawyer, the interview guide was slightly modified. It was done in order to increase the focus on the aim of the study and ask questions relevant for the respondent’s occupation. During the interviews spontaneously asked questions came up, which brought unexpected answers from the interviewees. Nevertheless, the structure of the interview guide was always referred back to.

D’Cruz and Jones (2004) describe objectivity as “a principle that aims to minimize the influences of the researcher's’ values, beliefs and potentially vested interests in the topic being researched” (p.71). The authors of this study took this into consideration and tried to separate their own values from the facts during the research process. Additionally, Kvale (2009) highlights that cultural differences during the interview can affect the communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Therefore, in order to avoid cultural biases, this was taken into consideration during the interviews, since one of the researchers of this study has a non-Swedish cultural background.
4.4.4. Generalizability

Generalizability refers to the external validity of a research, explained by Punch (1998) as the question of how far the results from a study can be transferred to other settings and contexts. Since this study is based on a small group of four professionals from Mid-Sweden, the results cannot be generalized. Furthermore, as mentioned by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), it is difficult to draw general conclusions from a qualitative research. However, had the sample been larger it might have been possible, with help of previous research, to make cautious generalizations on some aspects of the investigated group’s situation.

4.5. Ethical considerations

According to Rubin and Babbie (2011), ethical considerations are especially significant elements when carrying out research with human beings. In order to protect the participants’ rights and interests, the ethical principles and guidelines according to Vetenskapsrådet (2002) [Swedish Research Council] as well as the ethical advices found in Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) have been present during the research process.

The consent form was given to all research participants in this study before conducting the interviews, where they were made aware about the overall purpose of this investigation. Furthermore, the information letter gave a clear understanding about how the collected material will be handled. The respondents were also informed that their rights involved them participating voluntarily and that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. As D’Cruz and Jones (2004) states, interviews require the participants to be asked to sign consent forms agreeing to participate. Such forms were made for each of the interviewees and handed over along with information on participation in the interview, three in English and one in Swedish.

This study was independent and no one was compensated in monetary or any other terms for it. The settings for the interviews were chosen by the respondents, for their convenience and safety. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) explain that since a qualitative study may involve private information, the researchers should take the needed precautions to protect it. Each of the interviews was recorded with the consent of the participants, and kept in a secure place, where no other persons than the researchers could access it. To maintain confidentiality, the names of the respondents and cities where they are active are not presented in the thesis.
4.6. Limitations of the study

During the research process some difficulties in finding interviewees for the study occurred. Consequently four interviews were conducted. Although they provided in-depth knowledge on the subject the study might have benefitted from a larger number of participants, possible from authorities such as Migration Board and police. Since the authors of this study are inexperienced in the field of qualitative research it might have facilitated the interviewing to practice the situation beforehand. By video recording some practice sessions, important aspects when conducting interviews, such as body language and tone of voice could have been reflected upon prior to the actual interviews.

Furthermore, there were some language limitations. Except one in Swedish, the interviews were conducted in English which is neither the researcher’s nor the respondents’ native language. This might have limited the respondents’ ability to speak freely and find the correct wordings. However, the respondents were given the opportunity to receive the interview questions before the actual interviews, enabling them to prepare their answers.

Due to the time frame of the thesis, and out of economic reasons, the geographical area the sample was selected from was restricted to Mid-Sweden.
5. Presentation of findings and analysis

Four themes, relevant to the aim and research questions, were discovered from analyzing the data: 1. Men’s control over the women, 2. Legal situation, 3. Emotional bonds, 4. Interventions to amend the women’s situation.

In the following chapter the themes will be presented one by one. Parts of the findings from the interviews will be presented through quotations when it is suitable. Within each section the themes will be analyzed with the help of previous research, the perspective of intersectionality and power theory.

5.1. Theme 1: Men’s control over the women

The first theme is called “Men’s control over the women” and the two patterns are: 1. Lack of knowledge and isolation 2. Economic abuse.

5.1.1. Lack of knowledge and isolation

If a woman is abused, she has the right to contact the authorities for help. However, the women in this group do not have good knowledge on the Swedish legislation and therefore many of them do not communicate with jurisdiction. That is clearly evident, when in the following quotation respondent C confirmed:

“They do not have so much, at all ... So they do not know anything assistance, economic situation ... So they do not know so much. No.”

It was explained by the respondents that the women lack knowledge on their rights concerning several issues, such as women’s possibilities in Sweden, laws against violence and that assets are divided equally in case of a divorce. Some of the issues involve the women’s children, the man may have made her believe that social services will take her children if she tell about the abuse or that he can take the children and move to another country. Further, she might be able to stay in Sweden on basis of attachment to her children but be unaware of this option. Moreover, all of the respondents added that the lack of knowledge about their rights or Swedish legislation is because the women are controlled by their abusers, and usually men keep them away from any information. An example of this is the following quotation from the interview with respondent D:
“they become isolated as soon as they come here. They are not allowed to meet relatives, they are not allowed to go out, to have contacts outside the home. Because of fear, I mean the men’s, the women should not know what is going on, what are my rights in this country, they are afraid they will come out, and often they are not allowed to go to some education in Swedish from the start. “

The same respondent explained the consequences it can bring:

“They are alone and it could be they are isolated for two-three years because they do not know anything, what their rights are and what resources there are. “

Respondent B also said that the abusers keep their victim away from information because they may become more independent:

“often the husband control them so much, you know, you cannot go out ... men do not want the women to learn Swedish, because if she does she gets more self-esteem and she can go out more and she can speak to more people about how it is at home and stuff like that. She is learning more how it works in Sweden and about her rights.”

Each of the respondents emphasized that the men forbid the women taking part in Swedish for immigrants (SFI) education. Consequently the women lose both the chance to learn the language, and a channel to meet other people and gain knowledge on their rights in Sweden. The women’s shortage of knowledge on their rights is a finding in line with information previously presented by Paat (2014) saying that abused immigrant women commonly do not possess knowledge on their legal rights.

The respondents in the study talked about how this group of women are isolated, and that it is due to controlling behavior by the man, as well as lack of language skills and knowledge about the Swedish society. The control the abusers exhibit is related to power, defined by Weber as the likelihood that one party within a social relationship will be able to carry out his own will in spite of resistance (Allen, 2014). Thus, the dominant actor is in position to make the subordinate one do what he wants them to. In this case the respondents’ view is that the men wants the women not to do and are in the position to keep them away from information that could enable and empower them. In line with Tilly (1999) the superior group possess the assets to control the inferior group. When men as a group are constructed as the superior group, their opposite group: women, are constructed as the inferior one (Mattsson, 2010). Stated by King (2004) man is seen as the norm which woman is measured against, evidently placing men in a favorable position. In these abusive
relationships the perpetrators are not only in a superior position due to their sex but also because they are either Swedish citizens or have a permanent residence permit. It enables them to increase their control over the woman and dictate her behavior, as she is dependent on him for her residence in Sweden.

The findings of this study clearly show that abused immigrant women, living in a foreign country, are facing a varying degree of obstruction and difficulties in social integration, due to their beliefs, social and cultural differences, and the language barrier. The abuser does not want to get her rights or any information about how it is in Sweden. As long as the victim is unlearned, or not informed, the threats of deportation of her or her children can continue and isolation increase. Additionally, these factors help batterers maintain the abusive relationship, as well as create oppression (Raj & Silverman, 2002). Within intersectionality, oppression conceptualizes the idea of hierarchies of power and privilege. Carastathis (2014) notes that in many societies, the oppression that is visible, is premised on centering the essential experiences of relatively privileged members of oppressed groups. Thus, intersectionality can be used to explain the oppression on the macro level. Moreover, that oppression, which stays invisible on the micro level, is understood as gender oppression, where the victim is oppressed for being ‘a woman’. Carastathis’s concept (2014) for intersectionality aims to render visible phenomenological experiences of women, who face multiple forms of oppression. In this way, as the respondents observe during their working experience, if women, who are oppressed by their abuser, psychically or physically, share their personal experience, more women will get help from the authorities.

5.1.2. Economic abuse

Economic violence was a topic present in all of the interviewees’ answers, as a type of violence where the woman is forced to ask for money in order to buy the item she needs. The respondents explained how this type of violence is an effective and easy way to control the woman, and emphasized how dependent of the man the woman becomes. As respondent D noted:

“Most often they do not even have a back account of their own, there is a lot of economical violence, and psychological and physical, occurring.”

Moreover, respondent B explained:

“They do not have any money, because they cannot work, because they cannot speak the language. The husband is promise to the Migration Board that, he can take care of her, because
he has to do that. “If she comes here, I can take care of her and I have money. I have a work”. But he is not. I see the problem a lot. And the women are going to social service and they are like “We cannot give you anything because he is working; he is getting these a lot of money. He can pay for your rent, he can buy you food”. But he is not.

The results demonstrate that, this is another way that the abuser can control the victim. The results of this study, in line with previous research by Raj and Silverman (2002) shows that, battered immigrant women do not leave abusive partners, mostly because of threats related to financial dependence. In addition, Raj and Silverman (2002) explain this economic control in the relationship reduces the options for women’s separation from an abusive spouse, and maintains the gender inequality, which is the abuser’s interest. In a sense, the abuser presents to the authorities that, he can provide to her enough financial help, since she is an immigrant just come to Sweden and therefore, she cannot work, because she does not know the language and cannot support herself. Nevertheless, the results show that, the victims suffering from IPV are vulnerable and the lack of money make them helpless. Since, the authorities do not believe their stories. The same respondent B continues explaining the reasons for the occurred claims between the victim and the authorities:

“Often these men, they are maybe drinking. I know one is doing drugs and has three jobs and the social services are like “You are rich. You are middle class in Sweden” and she is like “No.”. And you know sometimes they do not get a shampoo or they do not have tampons or something like that. They do not have any money because they cannot work, because they do not know the language. And they cannot go to school, because he won’t let them. You know, it is just an even circle”

Respondent A also tackled the topic of economic issues, as follows:

“She must ask for money all the time if she buy something she must show everything what she is buying, and even such a thing like, you know, for menstruation...It is terrible, you must beg your husband to buy.”

It is apparent, as the findings show, that in most of the cases, physical violence is connected with by economic violence. This economic violence could be seen as a humiliation for the women, because they must request for basic materials for their everyday life. Therefore, this means that, the economic dependence also prevents the victims from leaving the abusive environment. Furthermore, the previous research done by Paat (2014) brings up the view that the lack of money could be an explanation for staying in the abusive environment. Having access to the financial resources one need can be related to power as explained by Lukes (2005), saying that power is
having the ability to do something. Without money, one does not have ability to live a dignified life.

In addition, Sandberg (2013) notes that intersectionality refers to the intersections of gender inequality and several of intersectional studies on domestic violence or IPV have focused primarily on money as the source of power. The results of this study indicate that gender is intrinsically linked to and mutually constituted with other forms of oppression, such as economic violence. The results clearly emphasize that it is a huge issue for the victims, not only for their own economic situation after the separation, but for the children as well.

5.2. Theme 2: Legal situation

The second theme is called “Legal situation”. When the respondents were asked about the immigrant women’s legal situation, four patterns were found: 1. Possibility to get a permanent residence permit due to abuse, 2. Consequences of legal status, 3. Feelings related to the risk of deportation, 4. Risk connected to origin country.

5.2.1. Possibility to get a permanent residence permit due to abuse

All respondents talked about a part of the Swedish Aliens Act (SFS 2005:716), which makes it possible for women to receive a permanent residence permit before their two year-long temporary residence permit has passed, on basis of having been subjected to violence by the attachment person. It was described how difficult it is for the abused women to make use of this paragraph in the law. An example of this is the following quotation from the interview with person B:

“They say, in Migration Board, that if you have been abused you can get a permanent residence [permit] before the rule for the two years, but it does not work that way so much! Is a few percent that can stay even they are getting abused because they have so much to do and I do not think that they are so well educated about these questions. It has to be a lot a lot of violence! ... I see that problem a lot. Yeah, it sound good but it is not working!”

Respondent C explained that her experience is that even though this part of the law exist, she still has to argue for why these women should be allowed to stay in Sweden. The fact that the violence has to be proved was explained as a reason for why most women are not granted permission to stay on these grounds, respondent D said the following:
“It is a long process; a hard process to prove all that, it is really hard. It is not something obvious. Even if the woman has experienced violence for months or years you have to make the person prove”

The answers provided by the respondents display the difficulties the immigrant women have to be granted a permanent residence permit on basis of having been abused by the attachment person. This goes in line with previous research displayed by Wilén (2010) saying that the requirements to be given a permit to stay due to violence are preposterous. As presented in the quotations above, the victim has to be able to prove severe violence. Moreover, Wilén (2010) states that the prerequisites are for the violence to have occurred repeatedly and that the partners should have lived together for more than a short period of time. Consequently, the results shows that the law described as a regulation which could help the women leave the abuser sounds satisfactory on paper, but in reality is not.

5.2.2. Consequences of legal status

It was described by the respondents how the women remain in the relationship and try to cope with the violence during the two years they have been granted residence permit, in order to be allowed to stay in Sweden. Respondent B clarified:

“I had one woman and I ask her “For how long have you been married?” and she told me “one and a half year.” And I said “Okay. Can you stand out for 6 more months?”. Because it is so sad, either you stand with him or you have to go home.”

This finding goes in line with Wilén (2010) describing how women endure violence until they are able to apply for a permanent residence permit. Generally, it seems that immigrant women who have faced IPV are forced “to hold” their lives in a pause until they get documents for permanent residences. There are cases where the authorities have obstacles to assist, and as respondent B added emotional support is sometimes the only way the women can get assistance. Therefore, because the victims are with the status as immigrants, they are in more vulnerable situation. First they should fight for their long term legal stay and at the same time they are suffering from different kind of violence.

Moreover, as described by respondent B the men are aware of the two year rule, knowing that the women risk deportation if they separate. The same respondent explained how the men use this to threaten the women. The finding goes in line with Wilén (2010) stating how the man uses his
position to threaten the woman that he can get her sent from the country, if she does not do what he wants her to. It can be related to Weber’s definition of power saying how, despite opposition, one person in a relation has the ability to carry through his will (Allen, 2014).

5.2.3. Feelings related to the risk of deportation

The respondents were asked about their experience of how the women feel about living with a temporary residence permit. Respondent C spoke about the worries connected with the risk of deportation:

“They have worries … of course, they have worries that the Migration Board may decide that they have to go back.”

Respondent B also talked about the feeling of stress coming from the fear of deportation:

“They have a lot of stress. They are not sleeping, they are not eating, and sometimes they even do not have someone to talk to, so they have everything this inside. Yeah, I can see that, it is really hard for them.”

The results of this study indicate that the women’s insecure legal status affects their lives and the fear of deportation is inevitable. Raj and Silverman (2002) describe that battered immigrant women will always have the fear of deportation for them or their children until their legal status is changed. Generally, it seems that these feelings keep the immigrant women, victims of IPV, from communicating with the authorities. Since, there are thousands of immigrant women with temporary residence permit who are facing IPV, and as claimed by respondent A, never seek assistance or support because they are afraid of deportation of them or their children. Moreover, in a previous research piece on the topic done by Paat (2014), it is mentioned that although migration provides a lot of opportunities not available in the immigrant’s home country, such a change of countries usually requires a significant social transformation and political struggle, which can be a very stressful process as a whole. Thus, it seems that the stress and worries are automatically “put” in immigrant women’s lives because of their temporary residences permit, as well as the IPV they are facing.
5.2.4. Risk connected to origin country

Findings from the study indicate that women from some parts of the world face large risks if sent back to their home countries. During the interviews the respondents stated that although varied, most of the women they meet have origins from the Middle East or Asia. The women from the Middle East live with men from the same country or area, while the Asian women cohabitate with Swedish men. The situation for the Middle Eastern women was described by one of the respondents as they carry the family honor and therefore what they do is judged by the extended family. The finding reflects what is brought up by Paat (2014) saying that in homes with deeply-rooted roles, using violence against the woman is approved as a way to maintain the family honor. In connection, Wilén (2010) has described that some women have left everything in their home countries and risk reprisals if they return. Women from cultures where divorce is not accepted risk being disowned or even killed if they are deported (Wilén, 2010). Respondent D explained her experience of the situation for Middle Eastern women:

“If a woman comes here, gets divorced and is deported, she has nothing, she has already lost everything there, maybe she is divorced once there, and then comes here and marries someone else, gets a divorce and is sent back, many times that means death, they are threatened.”

Similarly, respondent A said her experience regarding women from the Middle East is that the family’s view of the woman is that she should not divorce, but instead stay in the marriage even if it includes to endure violence. Further the same respondent explained that since the woman is seen as a family belonging divorce is a disgrace to the family honor, and that she has had cases where the woman is at risk of deportation while receiving death threats from the family in the home country.

5.3. Theme 3: Emotional bonds

This theme is called “Emotional bonds”, reflecting how the women are emotionally connected to their partners.

There is a cycle of emotional impact that keeps women in their abused conditions. Respondent A explained how the women experiences a mixture of feelings towards the abuser:

“you have a lot of, how to say, guilt and shame... They come back and forwards because it is someone that they liked, they loved, they have feelings, you have children together. And all
the description from respondent A is reflected in previous research by Grände et al. (2009) explaining the traumatic bond as a bond of strong emotions that tie the woman to the man. Described by Grände et al. (2009) feelings such as love, hate, compassion and fear are all existing in the violent relationship. Furthermore, respondent A explained that the women retain hope of the relationship to improve:

“you always have hope that ah, it will be better...He will change. If I do that, he will change, if I not say like that he will change... The abuser says “next time I will never do that, I will never hit you anymore, I will never threaten you, we will start from the beginning”

The findings reflect what has been presented in earlier research by NCK (2014). The abuser maintains control over the victim by using different forms of violence. However, periods without violence occurring makes the women hopeful about the possibility the violations will stop and the relationship improve. The combination of these two opposites works together to keep the woman in the relationship. Paat (2014) has similarly stated that the abusers might show remorse and ask for forgiveness, while the women have doubts about leaving. Furthermore, explained by respondent A it is usual for the women to blame themselves for the violence. It is in line with the term internalization, saying that the victim starts agreeing with the abuser’s reasons for the violence and adopt his view on reality (NCK, 2014). The immigrant women with temporary residence permits are as earlier mentioned dependent on their partner in several ways. The results indicate that their dependency, in combination with the emotional bond they share with the abuser, makes it difficult to leave the relationship and seek help.

In addition, the findings of the study indicate that, according to interviewees working with immigrant women with temporary residence permit who face IPV, men who threaten their partners understand that they are the dominant power in their relationship. Previous research done by Paat (2014), highlight that when the abuser psychically attacks his victim it gives him power over her. Power, according to Weber, is defined as the ability of the more powerful one to get someone else do what they want them to do. Therefore, it seems that the man uses his power through the emotions of the woman, keeping her in the abusive relationship.
5.4. Theme 4: Interventions to amend the women’s situation

This theme is called “Interventions to amend the women’s situation” and reflects the second research question for the thesis. Two patterns were found: 1. Support; 2. Suggestions for improvement.

5.4.1. Support

Respondents from NGOs and social services all provide supporting conversations, enabling the women to talk about their situation. Practical issues such as protected residence can be arranged by the social services and the women’s shelter. The same actors provide information on legislation and rights the women has. Respondent B, occupied in the women’s shelter described how supplying information is part of her work:

“we have these “Grownup school” and there they have groups for women who are newly arrived in Sweden so they can learn about their rights and how it is works in Sweden and stuff like that. And they often invited me to talk about the law in Sweden, their human rights and there I meet them. And they have translator who translate what I say to their language”

In line with the answer provided by the respondent B, Menjivar and Salcido (2002) describe it as important for immigrant women to gain knowledge on society and their rights, in order to be able to change their situation. Furthermore Menjivar and Salcido (2002), state that the information should be provided in the women’s native language.

The respondent employed at a law firm describe that they help regarding custody feuds and regulation of visitation rights in case of divorce. Moreover, the women are encouraged to seek legal help regarding decisions on their residence permit. When the woman's two year-long residence permit has ended she waits for a decision regarding if she will receive a permanent permit to stay in Sweden. During this process, which can be a long procedure, she might be asked to prove why she should be allowed to remain in the country. Therefore it is important that the women get information before the two years has passed on what will happen and what to do. Respondent A explained:

“we inform women always that, in such a cases, that go to the lawyer, how to say, that she should get a, eh, information, before this two years. What is your right, what will happen, what to do”
5.4.2. Suggestions for improvement

The respondents gave suggestions for how to improve the situation of women with temporary residence permit who face IPV. Several of the respondents bring up how they co-operate with actors such as police, different departments in social services and NGOs, and how that is important to be able to change the women’s situation. Furthermore, for municipalities to have a well-planned agenda in handling cases where the woman is at risk of severe violence is emphasized by respondent C. She explained that in the area she is active everybody knows what to do in these cases due to a carefully developed plan. For the well-being of the women it is something other municipalities should aim for as well, as explained by respondent C:

“It would make it so much easier for the women, they do not have to fight for everything. They are already in a very stressful position and they have to fight for everything and if they do not have the authorities with them it makes them even more vulnerable.”

Respondent B talked about how school is a way to reach these women, and that it would be good if they were more knowledgeable on the issue of IPV. The same respondent added that also the Migration Board should learn more about these issues. Respondent A spoke of how SFI education should not just be about learning the language, but also involve information on rights and responsibilities in Swedish society. This was further explained by respondent D who said that the women lack guidance and are in need of correct information:

“They often get the wrong information from the man and they need somewhere, some kind of education or information that is the truth”

The findings as well as earlier research by Wilén (2010), indicate that enhancing the women’s knowledge on their rights is a key factor in improving their situation. It goes in line with Paat (2014) saying that if left with no institutional support, immigrant women will have a disadvantage in relation to the abusers who are educated about the society and its social system. It is further related to power theory explained by Pitkin (1972) as having capacity. Knowledge and information can be seen as equipment for being able to influence one’s situation and making one capable to change. In these relationships the capacity is unequally distributed, placing the abuser in a dominant position where he can influence both his and the woman’s situation.
6. Discussion

Findings from this study show that the situation for abused women with a temporary residence permit is difficult in a series of ways. The study indicate that a combination of factors related to their insecure legal status and controlling behavior by the man makes the women vulnerable and dependent on their partners. The support the women receive include legal assistance, supporting conversations and protected living.

Related to power theory, the findings from this study show that women are in a subordinate position in relation to the men’s dominant position. As explained by Foucault, domination is an oppressive and restricting act placing power in the hands of only one person within a relationship (Munro, 2003). According to King (2004) men are seen as the norm which women are judged and valued against, placing women in an inferior position. This is further reflected by Mattsson (2010) saying that opposite categories of people such as men/women, Western/Eastern, are valued differently creating unequal power relations. A clear sign of the difference in power between the women with temporary residence permit and their partners is the women’s dependency of the men. It has been showed in this study the women experience economic violence which forces them to rely on their partners to fulfill basic needs. Furthermore, due to their legal status they are dependent on the men to be able to stay in Sweden. In line with research previously displayed by Wilén (2010) and Paat (2014), the results from this study also indicate that the women are controlled by the men which ultimately isolates them from the Swedish society. The components creating isolation are interrelated, the women are being controlled by the men, hindered to learn about their rights and to require language skills, factors contributing to isolation. In the other direction, as stated by (NCK, 2014) the woman’s inability to speak Swedish and her small social networks are factors the abuser can use to further isolate her and prevent her from leaving the relationship. The results from the study show that consequences from IPV and from having an insecure legal status are reciprocal in creating vulnerability and dependency. This group of women face double obstacles in attempting to leave their abusive environment which makes it significant to highlight their particular situation.

According to the intersectional perspective power relations within multiple categories interact in creating oppression (Carastathis, 2014). Explained by Mattsson (2010) power structures which cause inequality and oppression are created in the intersection between for example gender and ethnicity. Within these individual women lay different sources to oppression, such as gender, class, age and ethnicity. To acknowledge not only the fact that they are women but also immigrants in a foreign country is important to grasp their vulnerability. Further, it seems as long as categories of
people are valued differently unequal power relations will remain, explained by Tilly (1999) as durable inequality. Thus, the situation of immigrant women with temporary residence permit who face IPV is related to societal power structures which places some groups in higher positions than others.

Moreover, the authors of this study acknowledge a problem in how these women are granted permission to come to Sweden, but thereafter are left without guidance from authorities and expected to manage their situation much on their own. The findings from this study indicate that in order to facilitate the women’s living conditions they are in need of direction and knowledge of their rights. Furthermore, authorities that might get in contact with them, such as Migration Board, schools or social services need more knowledge on the specific circumstances of the women’s situation. It has been displayed that the women are subjected to economic violence. Findings from this study show that when the partners are living together and the man has money, the woman is unable to receive economical support from the social services, increasing her dependency on the abuser. In addition, this study and previous research by Wilén (2010), show that the women’s difficult situation is connected to their legal status. Therefore, lawmakers in Sweden need to take into consideration consequences parts of the Swedish Aliens Act can have on immigrant women coming by attachment.

6.1. Suggestions for further research

This study generated its findings through interviewing professionals in Mid-Sweden about their experiences and knowledge on the situation for immigrant women with temporary residence permit who face IPV. Making a study in a different geographic spot could give an interesting comparison between the studies. In addition, a study in which the women themselves are being interviewed about their feelings and experiences, would be an addition to the current research on the topic. To increase the knowledge on IPV, it is further suggested that qualitative research with perpetrators be conducted.
Reference list


Appendix I: Interview guide

Interview questions

I. Background questions

I.I. Background questions for professionals and their work

1. Could you tell us your education, age and how long you have been working as a social worker?
2. Why did you choose to work as a social worker?
3. Could you tell us about your work tasks at the moment?
4. What kind of clients do you work with?
5. Why did you choose to work with this group(s) of people?

I.II. Background questions about the immigrant women with temporary residence permit

1. Where do most immigrant women come from?
2. How old are the women who contact your organization?
3. What are the reasons these women arrived in Sweden?
4. Could you tell us about the women’s social situations (friends, work, networks)?
5. Could you tell us more about the background characteristics of the women? Ex: race and ethnicity, education, marital status (never married or divorced)?

II. Questions about the immigrant women with temporary residence permit faced with intimate partner violence

II.I Intimate partner violence

1. How did the abused women contact your organization?
2. What do the women think are the main reason why they are getting abused?
3. Who is usually the abuser?
4. Are there any cases that the women go back to their previous, abusive environment? Do you know why?
II.II. Their challenges

1. Could you tell us about any language challenges for these women?
2. What is the women’s knowledge on Swedish legislation and their rights in Sweden?
3. How do the women feel about living with a temporary residence permit?
4. Could you tell us about any other challenges that these women face?

II.III. Questions about the assistance

1. What are barriers for these women to seek help?
2. What are the most common turning points to ask for help?
3. Do the women have support by family members or friends?
4. Reading more about the feminist theory, we are relating it to analyze the women’s circumstances. Could you give us information if it is a relevant theory and how?
5. Could you tell us which other theories could be helpful to explain their situations?
6. Please describe how you think these women’s situation could be improved.
7. What is your view on why violence against women in general, and violence against immigrant women especially, occurs?
8. Could you tell us about the support your organization provide for these women?
9. Could you tell us how social services help these women?

Is there anything more you would like to add to this study?
Appendix II: Consent form

Information on participation in interview

The purpose of our study is to explore the situation of immigrant women who have been subjected to intimate partner violence, with a special focus on women with a temporary residence permit. The work is conducted within the international social work program at University of Gävle and is a thesis project.

Participation in the study is voluntary and the respondent is free to withdraw from it at any time.

The interview will be recorded. The material will be used only in research purposes and it is only the researchers, the supervisor and the examinator that will have access to the material. Furthermore, the material will be destroyed once the thesis has been passed. All information that is revealed in the study will be handled confidentially, the information will be presented in a way that makes no one able to understand whom it is written about.

Thank you for reading this letter.

With this background I agree to participate in the study:

Date ______________________________________

Signature ____________________________________________

Name__________________________________