

# Escaping Intimate Partner Violence – a study of social work with victims of violence in an argentine slum.

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## **Abstract**

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Title: Escaping Intimate Partner Violence – a study of social work with victims of violence in an Argentine slum.

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The aim of the study was to examine social work with female victims of intimate partner violence in a slum in Argentina. The resources available and the methods used by the participants were studied. Feminist theory was used to analyse the hierarchical order in the society and an intersectional perspective was applied to the situation of the victims. Empowerment theory was applied on the working methods used. Six individuals working with victims of intimate partner violence in a slum in Argentina were interviewed, using semi-structured interviews. Some participants were educated and employed to work with victims of intimate partner violence, others were not. The results show that educational level and employment have a direct effect on the resources and methods being used while working with victims of intimate partner violence. Participants employed and educated to work with the issue tended to rely on formal resources and focusing their working method on empowerment of the victim. Participants that were not employed or educated to work with the issue tended to rely on informal resources and used a closer accompaniment when empowering the victim. The results also point out a lack of resources, especially shelters. During the study it became clear that the lack of economic resources, both for the victim and the local municipality, makes this social group especially vulnerable and the escape from intimate partner violence especially difficult.

Key words: intimate partner violence, female empowerment, economic empowerment, slum, Argentina.

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*Quiero agradecer a las mujeres del comedor.  
Sin ellas, el estudio no habría sido posible.*

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## **1 Problem definition**

Intimate partner violence (which I will refer to as IPV) is a major global public health issue, a social problem and a violation of human rights of women (Resko 2010:1; World Health Organization 2014). According to the WHO, 35% of the world's women have been victims of partner violence, in the European region 25.4% of women have been victimized and in the Western Pacific region 24.6% of women have been victimized. Focusing on Latin America, 29.8% of women in the region of the Americas have been victims of partner violence and 25% of the women in Argentina are victims of violence (Fundación Avon 2014; World Health Organization 2014).

There is a correlation between low income, unemployment, living in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and IPV (Renzetti 2010:171; Resko 2010:2). Risk factors for women becoming victims of IPV include low educational levels, witnessing violence between parents, abuse during childhood and an attitude of accepting violence and gender inequalities (Kishor & Johnson 2004; World Health Organization 2014). Sanz and Molina (1999) mention that gender inequality within the family is common in Argentina and according to the authors this facilitates for violence developing within the family.

This study will focus on IPV, which refers to violence perpetrated upon a victim by an intimate partner. Intimate partner include a spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-boyfriend, ex-girlfriend or a dating partner whether the victim and abuser are cohabiting or not or are of opposite or same sex (Basile & Black 2010:112; Resko 2010:1). The majority of IPV is committed by male abusers, victimizing females (Resko 2010:1). In my study I have limited myself to include only female victims of male perpetrators. The violence inflicted upon the victim can be physical (threat of or use of force to cause harm or death), sexual (threat of or use of force to engage victim in sexual activity without consent) or psychological (threats or actions that cause trauma or emotional harm) (Sylaska & Edwards 2013:3).

The focus of the study is on a slum located in Argentina where the socioeconomic and cultural circumstances makes it easier for IPV to occur since the risk factors

mentioned earlier are ever present. A slum area in Argentina, known locally as ‘Villa’ and more correctly called ‘asentamiento’ or ‘barrio carenciado’ is a residential, economically disadvantaged neighbourhood with high rates of poverty, low education and whose residents are stigmatized by the society (Cravino 2001). The residential area is characterized by unsatisfactory housing conditions such as poor access to clean water and sanitation services, poor quality and insecure housing and inadequate living space (Globalis 2014). Houses are usually made of waste materials and built on illegally occupied public land (Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires 2014). These neighbourhoods have limited resources available to perform social work. Therefore, informal resources and alternative working methods are used in the slum where the study takes place.

The participants of the study are working with women that are living in situations where the risk factors are present; these women are victims of IPV. The women living in these conditions have limited resources at their disposal when escaping IPV, such as economic, relational and educational limitations; this makes the escape more difficult (Hattery 2008:53). Included in the study are both professional helpers that are educated and employed to work with victims of violence and non-professional helpers that are not. Since non-professionals perform a lot of the social work in the slum and since according to previous research victims of IPV tend to turn to friends and family members when seeking help, I chose to include participants from both sides in the study to get a holistic view of the situation.

I base my study on feminist theory which explains the social order in society as a hierarchy based on socially constructed gender, where men dominate over women (Mattsson 2010:46; Mitchell & Anglin 2009:42; Resko 2010:39). In the Argentine society male dominance is clear and females are generally seen as responsible for domestic duties and children. Violence perpetrated by men upon women is seen as a tool to express and maintain power (Meeuwisse & Swärd 2004; Mitchell & Anglin 2009:42; Resko 2010:39:). I apply this theory on a micro-, meso- and macro-level to analyse order in society, institutions and between victim and abuser. I also use the term intersectionality to look at the consequences gender and class has for the victim. According to intersectional ideas, females and lower classes have less power in the

society, because of a hierarchy that gives males and middle- and higher classes domination (Winker & Degele 2011).

The top-three millennium goals for Argentina are reducing poverty, enhancing primary education, promoting equality and strengthening women's position (Globalis 2014). These goals indicate the issues and priorities made on a national level in Argentina, but how is it being applied on a grass-root level in an area with limited resources? Economic decisions made on a macro-level has an impact on a meso-level which means that social work in the slum has to be performed with very limited resources. On a micro-level slum dwellers live with limited resources of their own and are in need of a strong social security net. According to Hattery (2008:55) limited resources on a micro-level is one of the main issues when it comes to IPV and the reason a lot of victims choose to stay with the abuser. Because of the lack of resources on a meso-level, non-professionals perform a lot of the social work that is executed in the slum, with their own methods and resources at hand. How is social work with victims of IPV performed in the slum? This study will focus on who is performing this work, with what methods, with what resources and with what difficulties. It will try and demonstrate the grass-root perspective of social work being performed with very few resources and with a social group that due to circumstances mentioned earlier is especially vulnerable.

## **1.1 Purpose**

*The purpose of the study is to investigate how professionals and non-professionals work with victims of intimate partner violence in an Argentine slum and what resources are available to them.*

## **1.2 Questions**

- How do professional and non-professional helpers describe the victims' situation, when escaping IPV?
- What resources are available when working with victims of IPV in an Argentine slum?
- What methods do professional and non-professional helpers use when working with victims of IPV?

## 2 Previous research

Violence against women has been studied for centuries, mostly by feminist researchers. There is research made regarding victims support seeking behaviour and their reliance on both formal and informal resources and helpers. Reading articles made it clear to me that it is important to study both formal and informal resources and professional and non-professional helpers.

Sylaska and Edwards (2014) review the published literature on IPV and the victims' disclosure to informal supporters in their article 'Disclosure of Intimate Partner Violence to Informal Social Support Network Members: A Review of the Literature'. In their results they found that victims usually disclose to at least one informal supporter and that this disclosure can lead to both positive and negative social reactions, with positive social reactions having a positive psychological effect on the victim. Sayem, Begum and Moneesha (2013) investigates women's attitude towards informal and formal social support-seeking strategies and formal legal support-seeking strategies in the article 'Women's attitudes towards formal and informal support-seeking coping strategies against intimate partner violence'. The study shows that most participants had a positive attitude about all three support-seeking strategies but that demographic factors had an impact on the attitude. The study also shows that an improved economic situation for the victim can lead to the victim seeking help whereas previously they would avoid seeking help.

Previous research mentions the importance of the economic situation when it comes to IPV. It is a risk factor for both victim and perpetrator, it is crucial when escaping IPV and in the work of helping victims of IPV. Hattery, in her book *Intimate Partner Violence* (2008) discusses the role of capitalism and the economy in a situation of IPV and the difficulties limited resources and economic dependence brings. Resko (2010) also mentions the impact limited economic resources can have in a situation of IPV in her book *Intimate Partner Violence and Women's Economic Insecurity*. She mentions the difficulties in leaving when the victim is economically dependent on an abuser. Renzetti (2010) connects economic strain, unemployment and living in an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood to IPV in her chapter 'Economic Issues and Intimate Partner Violence' in the book *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women*.



She points out that these three factors are crucial risk factors for both becoming a perpetrator and a victim of IPV. In the same book, Baisle and Black (2010) define IPV in their chapter 'Intimate Partner Violence Against Women'. They also discuss the different kinds of violence and intrapersonal risk factors for individuals to become victims or perpetrators of IPV.

If we turn to Latin America, where my study will take place, Frías' (2013) study regards Mexican female victim's help-seeking behaviour. It examines whether the victims turn to legal services or not and what help they received. The results of the study show that women are sometimes ignored or maltreated when seeking help from the police. The results show that less than half of the cases where the violence was reported had legal consequences such as an arrest or protection order. In my study, scepticism towards police was mentioned as common among victims, as maltreatment or rumour of maltreatment similar to the one mentioned in Frías (2013) study was present. Latin America is known for its rough police force and corrupt officers which also lead to scepticism towards the police, something that is expressed in both mine and Frías (2013) study. Lettiere and Nakano (2011) made a study in Brazil regarding relational and institutional support given to women living with domestic violence, 'Domestic violence: possibilities and limitations in coping'. Among the results of the study you will find that women living with domestic violence primarily seek help among family and friends. This study is performed in a Latin American country with a culture similar to Argentina's. The tendency of the victim to disclose to non-professionals such as friends and family members might be similar in Argentina as the family is a strong institution in both countries. Victims might also turn to friends or family instead of to a police officer, for the reasons mentioned above. This further motivates me to include non-professionals in my study.

My study takes place in a slum area; Elisabeth Swart (2012) made a study in a residential area with conditions similar to the ones where my study will take place. The article 'Gender-Based Violence in a Kenyan Slum: Creating Local, Woman-Centred Interventions' looks at women's attitudes towards and acceptance of gender-based violence in a slum area in Kenya and states that slum-dwelling women had less tolerance towards gender-based violence than the general population in Kenya.

Finally, I read an article regarding the economic empowerment of victims of IPV. The article ‘Back to Basics: Essential Qualities of Services for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence’ by Kulkarni, Bell and McDaniel Rhodes (2012) explores what qualities are essential in the help services according to victims. Providing empathy, supporting empowerment, individualizing care and maintaining ethical boundaries were factors that stood out as important for victims when seeking help, something that I will look at in the work of the participants in my study.

### **3 Theory**

In my study I have decided to use feminist theory as a perspective on social order and IPV. I have chosen this perspective as it reflects the unequal relationship between men and women and how power is distributed between the sexes. The perspective also explains violence as a tool of control over the victim. I have also chosen to use the term intersectionality to analyse the importance of class and gender for the victims of IPV and how it affects their situation.

I have chosen to use the term empowerment when analysing the helper’s way of working with victims of IPV.

#### **3.1 Feminist theory**

Feminist theory is based on the idea that society is a power structure with a strong hierarchy and unequal power relations between individuals. The society is divided into two gender categories – men and women – whom participate in this system of power (Ambjörnsson 2008:12). Gender is by feminists seen as socially and culturally created and not based on the biological sex (ibid.). This system of power leads to gender inequalities in our society, where men dominate and control women (Ambjörnsson 2008:12; Mattsson 2010:46; Mitchell & Anglin 2009:42; Resko 2010:39). The more power one of the sexes is believed to have, the more powerful is the hierarchy between the genders (Mattsson 2010:51-52). Men have economic domination and Cott (1987:117) refers to the feminist Crystal Eastman who in the beginning of the twentieth century stated that “economic freedom is a central fact and a fundamental aspect” of feminism. According to feminist theory the violence perpetrated by men and victimizing women is seen as an expression of gender hierarchy aiming to dominate, control and oppress women (Meeuwisse & Swärd

2004; Mitchell & Anglin 2009:42; Resko 2010:39:). I use feminist theory to explain the power relations between victim and abuser, victim and officials (such as police officer) and to explain the order in society. During the 1980s feminism was being criticised for only taking the gender factor in account when discussing power relations in society (Ambjörnsson 2008:24-25). Critics stated that it was hard to believe that a white, wealthy woman had the same power in society as a black woman with fewer economic resources (ibid.). From this critique the term intersectionality was created. With an intersectional perspective different oppressive characteristics of an individual is taken into account, and also how they interact to affect the individual's power in society (Ambjörnsson 2008:26; Winker & Degele 2011). The characteristics defined within intersectionality are usually gender, class, race and sexuality (ibid.). These categories can mutually strengthen or weaken each other and lead to social inequality (ibid.). In my study I use the categories gender and class and apply it to the situation of the victims. According to intersectionality females and lower classes are groups that have less power in society, something that became clear in my study.

### **3.2 Empowerment**

The term empowerment originates in power and involves the power within the individual (Oxaal & Baden 1997:1-4). According to empowerment theory one can enhance social functioning, life satisfaction and social changes through strengthening the individuals power within, facilitating social participation for the individual and resourcing her utilisation (Song 2011:1017). Empowerment of individuals aim to both enable the individual to make decisions on her own and to perceive herself entitled to make decisions. It is not only the ability to make choices that is defined as empowerment; it is also the ability to influence what choices are available (Oxaal & Baden 1997:3). Oxaal and Baden (1997:2) refer to the Human Development Report by the UN, which points out empowerment is participation, where the individual fully participates in decision-making and the processes that shape her life. This empowerment will, according to the report, not only help the women empowered, but also lead to overall economic growth and development.

Song (2011:1017-1018) divides empowerment into three levels: *individual*, *interpersonal* and *social-political*. On an individual level empowerment for the individual is to have self-esteem and the ability to set up goals and take action to

achieve them. On an interpersonal level the individual is able to form partnerships and gain respect from others. On a social-political level knowledge of one's own rights and pursuit of social justice defines empowerment.

Through encouraging women's participation, acquisition of skills, decision-making capacity and control over resources organisations and institutions can externally support the process of empowerment. They cannot empower women since it is a bottom-up process and only the women can empower themselves (Oxaal & Baden 1997:6). A central aspect of women's empowerment is economic independence such as secure employment and control over own economy (Oxaal & Baden 1997).

According to feminist theory and intersectionality women from lower class have little power in the society. The empowerment of victims of IPV is mentioned as central in previous research. I use empowerment to analyse the working methods of the participants in my study. I also compare the participants' way of empowering the victims.

## **4 Method**

To gather material for my study I used the qualitative method of semi-structured interviewing. I interviewed six different people. All are in some way working with victims of IPV in the slum where the study took place. I will now describe in more detail the methods used and the selection of the sample of the population.

### **4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

To make an inductive study means that you start with collecting data through interviews to then generate a hypothesis from the analysis of the data (Bryman 2007:20-23). I believe that an inductive study was appropriate in my case, as I wanted to examine the perception of the participants. I also wanted to take advantage of the relationship I had established to some of the slum dwellers and social workers in the slum from before. This gave me a unique opportunity to enter a field where few students have access and to interview people that normally would not agree to be interviewed.

According to Bryman (2007:301) qualitative interviewing is a flexible method. It enables the interviewer to focus on what the respondent believes to be important regarding the topic (Bryman 2007:301). I believe this was an appropriate method for my study as the idea was to capture how the respondent works with victims of IPV, the methods used, the perception of the victims' situation and the resources believed to be at their disposal.

I had no intention of making a study whose results were to be generalized to the entire population. Therefore I believe that a qualitative method, and semi-structured interviews were more appropriate than a quantitative method such as surveys or structured interviews. The way of working with victims of IPV, the methods used and the resources available might vary depending on location, institution, culture and other factors. It is therefore not a generalizable study with statistical data. Sending or handing out a survey to slum dwellers might also be problematic since the probability of getting responses is low due to various reasons such as mail handling, illiteracy, interest, returning of survey, scepticism towards unfamiliar surveys and people (a lot of these people have lived through dictatorship) etc. Because of these circumstances I chose to do interviews with slum dwellers that I knew from before, since I had already established a relationship to them and felt like they trusted me. The interviews also gave me an opportunity to explain questions that were unclear to participants that are not used to being interviewed for an academic purpose.

During interviews I used an interview guide with topics and questions to follow through the interview. It was important that I was able to be flexible during interviews and able to let the interview follow the respondent, something that both Bryman (ibid.) and Ahrne and Svensson (2011:40) mention is key in semi-structured interviews. Therefore I moved freely between the questions but within the topic and changed the order of some questions. I also asked follow-up questions to catch relevant topics that came up during the interview. I used different guides for different interviews, as the interviews had distinct angles on the same topic. For three interviews I used a guide focusing on what resources are available when working with victims of IPV, how they work with the victim, the situation of the victim and what the person thought about the work with the victim (see Attachment 1). This guide was used for the participants that work with victims on a weekly basis, that have a lot of

experience of working with these victims and that handle a lot of first contact with the victim. It served to give me a picture of the situation in the slum, what resources were available and which ones were used, the situation of the victims and how it is to work with them and also what obstacles there might be in the work. For one interview I used a guide focusing on the help provided by the person interviewed, the victims situation and other help available (see Attachment 2), I also used this guide in another interview (although a bit modified verbally since I had to do the interview unprepared). This guide was used on participants that were unemployed and helped victims voluntarily. It focused more on their personal work with the victim (how and why they do it) than on the work in the slum in general. The guide I modified verbally was adapted to the situation where the participant had only helped her own sister, and focused on that situation in particular. I used a guide focusing on the characteristics of the programme 'Ellas Hacen' and it's participants for one interview (see Attachment 3) because the participant only worked with victims of IPV on that programme. The idea was to focus on the way the programme worked with victims more than how the participant on an individual level worked with the victims.

## **4.2 Material and coding**

All interviews were made in Spanish and then translated into English by me when coding. I believe language was not a barrier as I understood everything that was said during interviews and was helped by a native Spanish speaker when translating quotes to make sure no mistakes were made. My plan was to record all interviews to avoid having to make notes during the interview in order to put my full attention on what was being said. During the first interview I had technical issues and had to redo the whole interview while taking notes instead of recording. The second and third interview I was able to record without problem. By the fourth interview I had technical issues again and decided to take notes during the interview. Due to circumstances beyond my control I had to do the fifth interview without full preparation and didn't have my recorder with me so I took notes. The sixth interview I recorded. Not being able to record three of the interviews and having to take notes definitely changed the flow of the interview. The interviews felt less like a conversation and therefore less relaxed. I still feel I got full and frank answers to all my questions and could follow up on interesting topics.

My material from the interviews consisted of a mix with recordings and notes. I therefore decided to fill the interview guides with the answers and also added additional important information from the interviews so as to easier be able to code the material. According to Jönson (2010:56) coding is used to organize the material for a study and to see patterns in the results. Categories are created and used to organize and then analyse the material (ibid.). With the written material I coded the interviews, dividing the material into five categories;

1. Process
2. Resources
3. Methods
4. Victims' situation
5. Obstacles

These were categories that I formulated after having read the material a few times and noted what was important for my study and what was interesting in regards to the topic. While coding, as I started the analysing process I realized that I would not be able to use the category 'Process', as the process of a case varied a lot and in some interviews the topic was left without exploring it fully. I also realized that it was not an important part for my analysis. The category 'Obstacles' was used less in the analysis than the others as there was one reoccurring obstacle mentioned in all interviews, the lack of shelter.

### **4.3 Population and selection**

The population of the study are people helping victims of IPV in the slum in Argentina where the study took place. The people helping were either employed by a formal institution or helping voluntarily without any paid employment. Basically the population was professionals, neighbours, friends, family or anyone that dedicates or previously dedicated time to helping a victim of IPV in the slum. I decided to include both professional and non-professional helpers since my previous knowledge of the slum and previous research mentions that both groups perform social work. In my study I am also interested in both groups and the difference there might be between them. I divided the participants into two groups; 'professional helpers' and 'non-professional helpers'. I interviewed three professional helpers employed by a formal

institution and educated within social work. The non-professional helpers that participated were selected through contacts at the soup kitchen in the slum and is or has in some way helped victims of IPV.

To get a sample for interviews I used the 'snowball method'. When using the snowball method you start with one interview and then ask the person you interviewed for more contacts from the population (Ahrne & Svensson 2011:43; Bryman 2007:115). I decided to use this method of selection since I did my work placement at a local soup kitchen in the slum and through the contacts I made there, I got in touch with participants for interviews. I already knew the person that I wanted to do the first interview with. She was also a gatekeeper for me to get in touch with more people from the population to interview. According to Bryman (2007:313) this method of selection is appropriate to use when there is difficulty in setting a frame of selection of the population. Since I was not only looking to interview professional helpers this method of selection was a way of also getting in touch with the non-professional helpers.

I do realize that this is a selection of convenience, as it is the easiest way for me to get in touch with respondents. I have thought of alternative ways, such as finding respondents through an institution, NGO or similar. If I used an institution or NGO the sample will be one-sided and I would not reach the non-professional helpers. When I was looking for people to interview I also found it a lot easier to get interviews when being referred by someone, than when trying to get interviews without a referral. I believe this is because of the high level of confidence between slum dwellers and the scepticism towards strangers. It was a key factor that most participants knew me from before.

The snowball method is suitable for qualitative studies, as the result will not be generalizable (Bryman 2007:116-117). When using respondents to find more respondents, you risk getting data that is slightly one-sided, as respondents might refer to people that feel and think the same way they do in regards to the topic discussed (Ahrne & Svensson 2011:43). I believe this was not an issue in my study, as I interviewed both professionals and non-professionals working for different organisations, for different reasons and in different ways.



It is important to consider my role as the interviewer and how the participant perceives me. I already knew four of the participants, from when I did my work placement in the soup kitchen. Two of them I had never met before the interviews. I already knew the three non-professional helpers, in my opinion this was a factor that helped me a lot during my interviews with them. There is a high level of confidence between the group members in the soup kitchen and people in the slum in general. To come as an outsider and conduct interviews with slum dwellers can be difficult because they might not agree to participate due to scepticism towards strangers. If they do participate they might not trust the interviewer enough to open up and actively participate. I believe that my good relationship with the non-professional participants improved the interviews since I like to believe that they have confidence in me and could open up.

I also already knew the social worker at the soup kitchen. I believe this created a natural flow in the interview. I don't believe that there is the same need for a confident relationship with the social worker for the interview to be successful but I do believe it helped to create good communication between the two of us. I think that my role in regards to the participants I knew previously was helpful in the interview situation. Although, during my interview with the social worker from the 'Gender Team' I got the feeling that she perceived me as a part of the soup kitchen. I sensed this prohibited her in some parts of the interview. During the interview the participant seemed careful with expressing her (critical) opinion regarding the work performed in the soup kitchen with victims of IPV. If she had seen me as an independent student she might have expressed herself in another way. Although I do not believe this had important consequences in my study since I investigate the helpers different ways of working, not the opinion of the work performed by others.

I had not met the participant working with 'Ellas Hacen' before but I don't think it had a positive or negative effect on the interview. The participant didn't seem to have any difficulties in talking to me and he didn't seem to perceive me as anyone other than a student interested in the programme.

It is important to take into consideration that the data collected from interviews might not entirely reflect the truth in all aspects. As the data is collected from individuals being asked about their work, they might present themselves and their work in the best possible way. Participants presented their own work as an effective one and were more critical towards the work of other individuals or organisations. This is a risk in all interviews, although in this study focus is on what resources the participant believe is available to them when working with victims of IPV and the methods they use. To measure what they actually use is a larger project, which I could not include in this study.

#### **4.4 Validity**

To ensure the quality of the study Bryman (2007) refers to a few criteria that are important to take into account while researching. It is important that the study actually investigates what it is said to be investigating. If it does, the study has validity (Bryman 2007:257). As the purpose of my study is to investigate the perception of the people participating it is important that their point of view is presented without any classifying, adding or removing of data, as this could manipulate the result. Bryman (2007:258) also mentions the importance of the study being trustworthy, a criteria which he divides into four subcriteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility involves executing the study in an appropriate way but also presenting the data to the participants to ensure that the result is presented fairly (ibid.). To give the participants a chance to revise what I presented in the study and to present the results in a way that is easily accessible for the participants I organized a workshop with four of them. At the workshop I presented the results of the study and the conclusions I made in verbal and written formats. I also gave them the opportunity to change any information that they perceived to be incorrect (in the data from their own participation). I chose to conduct a workshop because I believe it is the best way of making the information available to participants who are not used to reading academic literature. I sent the remaining two participants an email presenting the data used from their participation asking if they wanted to change or remove anything and presenting (in short) the results and conclusions made in the study. According to the ethical principals drawn up by the Swedish Council of Research (Vetenskapsrådet 2014) it is for ethical reasons advisable to present the result of the study to the participants.

Transferability regards to till what extent the study can be transferred to another environment (Bryman 2007:258). Since a transfer is more complicated in a qualitative study Bryman emphasises the importance of presenting full descriptions of the culture where the study is executed. By defining slum in the beginning of the thesis I give a full description of the culture and socio-economic situation where the study takes place.

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations**

In my study I rely on the ethical guidelines setup by the Swedish Council of Research (Vetenskapsrådet 2014). The first, very basic requirement for a study to be ethically correct is the protection of the individual. This requirement is the fundamental guideline on which four, more specified requirements are based. The protection of the individual includes protection from physical or psychological harm, protection of the private sphere and protection against humiliation (ibid.). The people I interviewed for my study talked about their work and their perception of the situations of others. I therefore believe that the interviews did not put the respondents at any risk. All the information collected and personal data such as name has been kept confidential.

The first of the four more specified requirements is the information requirement. This means that the researcher must inform the participant of the purpose of the study. The second one is the consent requirement. Here the researcher must get the consent of the participants and has to inform participants that their participation is voluntary and can be suspended at any time. It also declares that participants are able to decide in what way, for how long and under which conditions they wish to participate. The requirement of confidentiality specifies the importance of all personal data being kept secret and in a safe place so that it is not available to others. The requirement of usage states that the data collected cannot be used for any other purpose than the study (ibid.; Bryman 2007:440). Before every interview I handed out a paper to the participant with this information regarding the participation. It stated the topic and purpose of the study, where the study will be presented, that participation is voluntary and can be suspended, how participation would take place, that all personal data is confidential and that material collected will only be used for this particular study. I also informed them that there would be an opportunity to revise material used from

their interview before it is published. To ensure that this information reached the participant I also explained these conditions (verbally) before starting the interview. All names used in the paper have been changed to protect the participants.

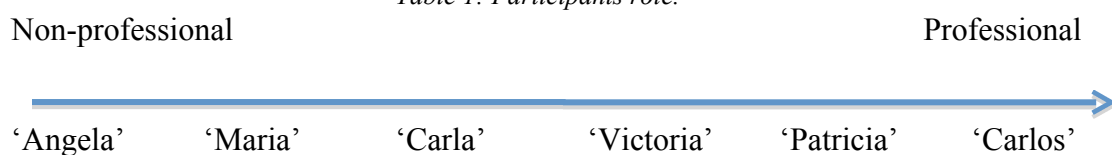
## 6 Results and analysis

The research for the study resulted in a few central areas of interest for analysis. I will present the results of the research and apply the theory to analyse the material and make conclusions. I will also compare the results to previous research and the consensus there might be between previous studies and this study. I will start by presenting and analysing the participant's roles. I will then apply feminist theory on the descriptions of the victim's situation and the social order in the slum and the society in general. I will then look at resources and methods used when working with victims of IPV and any obstacles there might be in the work.

### 6.1 Participants

The helpers participating had different positions and worked with the different resources believed to be at their disposal. To structure the material and organize the participants I made a scale of non-professional to professional roles, where I placed the participants to show how they and their work are formed. Whether they were professional or non-professional helpers would relate to both the resources they believed to be at their disposal and the methods used when working with victims of IPV. All names have been changed.

*Table 1: Participants role.*



'Angela' is a non-professional helper, part of the victims' social network. 'Angela' had helped her sister escape IPV and had this far only been involved in this particular case.

'Maria' has helped various female victims of IPV, most of whom she did not know before helping them. She has no education in this area and is not employed anywhere

working with this matter. She is a volunteer in the slum, helping women with whom she is in contact with. She helps for personal reasons such as solidarity and conscience.

'Carla' is the head of the local soup kitchen in the slum and has a lot experience of working with victims of IPV. She is employed by the municipality but has no education in social work or working with victims of violence.

'Victoria' is the social worker employed by the municipality to work in the local soup kitchen. She is a licenced social worker and has a lot of experience of working with victims of IPV in the slum. Because of her placement in the soup kitchen she works on a grass root level, regularly interacting and initiating contact with victims.

'Patricia' is a licenced social worker employed by the municipality. She's working for the specialized 'Gender Team', which mainly focuses on female victims of IPV.

'Carlos' is a social psychologist working for the governmental programme 'Ellas Hacen'. The program aims to educate and employ women victims of violence and women with three or more children.

All participants' work involves helping victims of IPV in some way. Three of them have education on the matter and five of them are employed. One of them are unemployed and three of them uneducated on the matter. 'Angela' is placed on the far left of the scale because she has the least experience of helping IPV, no education or paid employment regarding IPV, and was part of the victims' social network. 'Maria' is placed to her right because she has no education or paid employment regarding IPV but a lot of experience with helping victims. 'Carla' is employed by the municipality at the soup kitchen but has no education regarding working with victims of IPV. Although, she has a lot of experience and is therefore placed a bit to the left of the middle point of the scale. 'Victoria' is educated and employed to work with victims of IPV (amongst other types of social work). She works in the slum on a grass root level and is therefore placed a bit to the right of the middle point on the scale. 'Patricia' is educated and employed to work mainly with victims of IPV with individual cases and is therefore placed next to 'Carlos', who is on the far right of the scale. 'Carlos' is educated and employed to work with victims of IPV but works on an institutional and group-level. He does not use any informal resources and is therefore placed as the most professional participant. All participants were asked to describe the situation of the victims. I will now analyse these descriptions using feminist theory.

## 6.2 Women and violence

Violence against women is a constant issue in the slum. It is a social problem that is omnipresent. Almost everyone has their own experience of it, either as a victim or as a friend or family of a victim. The interviews I did for the study pointed out a difficult situation for the women in the slum, living with male dominance and having few resources of their own to live independent lives. There were patterns in descriptions of both the abusers and the victims throughout all interviews. The patriarchal dominance was described on a micro- and meso-level.

According to feminist theory there is a patriarchal gender hierarchy in our society, where men dominate over women (Mattsson 2010:46; Mitchell & Anglin 2009:42; Resko 2010:39). This patriarchal order is, according to Sanz and Molina (1999), a common hierarchy reproduced within families in Argentina. During my interview with 'Carla' she pointed out this patriarchal hierarchy and a male dominance that according to her is affecting all women, not only the abused ones. 'Carla' refers to the male domination in the society when she states that:

*“The thing with the men here is that they are very sexist you see, they are not going to back off. Because there are those that hit you and those that insult and humiliate you, as they want. Sometimes you would prefer a slap, you don't want them to insult you, to call you useless (...) I think we also experience that, maybe we don't let them raise a hand towards us but in one way or another they put you down”*

(Author's translation)

Looking at this statement and comparing it to previous research, Mattsson (2010), Mitchell and Anglin (2009), Resko (2010), Sanz and Molina (1999) and 'Carla' all agree that the society is organized by a patriarchal dominance of male over female, affecting all women. Seen from an intersectional perspective, according to Ambjörnsson (2008) and Winker and Degele (2011) being a woman is one of the characteristics that combined with coming from lower class make victims of IPV in the slum have less power in society. On a micro-level, a woman that ends up in a situation of IPV has limited opportunities to escape a violent relationship that is

dominated by the man. The violence used by male abusers works as a tool to exert power and control over the victim on a micro-level. Looking at previous research on IPV, the typical abuser is described as the controlling, jealous man who uses manipulating techniques to take away the victims' self-esteem, independence, resources, social support network and sense of safety (Mitchell & Anglin 2009:21). In the material I collected through interviews these descriptions were present in describing the behaviour of the abuser and the situation of the victim. The victim was often portrayed in previous research and in interviews for this study as isolated, which was explained as the abuser not letting her see friends or family. In some situations family was said to have tired of supporting a victim who keeps returning to the abuser, therefore the victim is left without a social support network. The abuser was said to be manipulating the victim, this leaves her with a low self-esteem, a weakened sense of self-value and incapable of making reasoned decisions. The lack of economic independence was also explained both in interviews and previous research as a central factor in the unequal power structure, something that I will analyse further. According to Hattery (2008:55) the male dominance on a micro-level, the manipulation, the isolation and the dependence create a situation where it is difficult for a woman to escape on her own, and even more difficult to escape with her children. In interviews this was explained as the reality for many victims.

The patriarchal hierarchy on a meso-level was also expressed during interviews. Victims have to escape a violent relationship dominated by the man, and seek support from a society dominated by men. In several interviews it was described that victims had been maltreated when seeking help by institutions such as police or had heard rumours about maltreatment by police, and this had resulted in victims having little or no confidence in formal institutions. Police were said to not take the victim seriously, to flirt with the victim or to advise the victim to endure the violence, something that has been shown in previous studies performed in Latin America (see Frías 2013). My conclusion is that this expression of power has led to a further oppressed victim being sceptical and reluctant to seek help amongst formal resources. The victim is also being controlled in the way that she is not being allowed to execute her rights, from an intersectional point of view, because of her being a female in a system of gender hierarchy. The power that comes with a formal position such as a police officer is abused and used to strengthen and reproduce patriarchal hierarchy, as it was also

proven in Frías (2013) study regarding Mexican women's support seeking behaviour and attitude towards legal services.

In my conclusion, using an intersectional perspective there were two characteristics making the victim a powerless individual in the situation. As I mentioned earlier, being a woman in a patriarchal society means having less power than men. The victims in my study are also slum dwellers and therefore from the lower classes. These two characteristics, being female and lower class, result in the victims having little power in society.

All participants were asked what resources were available to them when working with helping these victims, and I will now present what they mentioned having at their disposal.

### **6.3 Resources**

The main topic of all interviews was the resources believed to be at the disposal of each participant. Since the study takes place in an area with limited resources, it is interesting to investigate how this kind of social work is executed under these particular circumstances. My interest was also in searching for any variety in the resources believed to be available and if the position of the participant affected the resources used. I also wanted to explore if any informal resources are used.

During interviews and coding of the material I have divided resources available when working with victims of IPV into *informal* and *formal resources*.

- ***Informal resources*** include the victims' social network such as family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, community and acquaintances. During the interviews it became clear that there is a group of about five women in the soup kitchen that are neither educated nor paid but still work with victims of IPV. They are not part of the victims' social network and most of the time they do not previously know the victim. They are classified as an informal resource since it is a form of voluntary, non-professional work. Informal resources also include material and economic resources distributed by informal resources. For example collections of clothes and furniture, lotteries



to collect money, using private money, private sheltering, providing food etc.  
– all are included in informal resources.

- **Formal resources** include legal services, police, social workers, therapists, mental health institutions, healthcare, governmental programmes, shelters (in other suburbs), departments of the municipality, NGOs, the Secretary of Women and the National Women's Council. It also includes material and economic resources by formal institutions such as welfare and material supply.

**'Angela'** named family as the main resources when helping her sister to escape IPV. She said that there were formal resources available but since her sister didn't want outsiders to get involved she never sought help from them. 'Angela' also mentioned that her sister had called the police but their response had been that her abuser was mentally ill therefore they could not detain him. Her sister also went to see a therapist a few times but stopped going after a while, something that 'Angela' believed had a negative affect on her. The family had provided housing, food, childcare and emotional support when her sister escaped IPV, all informal resources.

**'Maria'**, who has helped a lot of victims of IPV with informal resources such as sheltering, protecting, accompanying and supporting them emotionally and economically said that the formal resources that are available are useless. She expressed a critical view of the municipality and their work with victims of IPV and says that they see a case and not a person and therefore don't work hard enough to solve problems within the work. She said that the genuine care, accompaniment and protection that she and the other women of the soup kitchen provide is the only real help available for victims of IPV in the area and informal resources is the only thing she relies on when helping someone. The reason for her helping she says is not being able to 'do nothing' when you see that someone is being abused. She also mentioned that she has daughters herself and would want someone to help them if they ever ended up in a similar situation.

**'Carla'** named both formal and informal resources that she uses when working with victims of IPV. She named the soup kitchen and the victims' social network providing accompaniment, emotional support, accommodation, food and security for the victim.

The police, municipality, healthcare, legal services and therapist all provide forensic examination, police reports, economic resources, material resources and therapeutic resources for the victim. She pointed out the informal resources as doing the most important part, the accompaniment of the victim. She uses a mix of formal and informal resources but mainly rely on informal resources and non-professional helpers.

**‘Victoria’** mentioned the soup kitchen, the social network of the victim and the social network of the people in the soup kitchen as the informal resources used. They provide accompaniment (of both the victim and her social network) and informal resources such as economic support and accommodation of the victim. They also make collections of material or lottery to gather economic resources to use in the slum. In the soup kitchen they also provide help with reading the documents given to illiterate victims (from police, social and legal services). The formal resources she uses are the ‘Gender Team’ (to help out or take over some cases), police, therapists, the municipality, the programme ‘Ellas Hacén’ and specialists. They provide police reports, accompaniment, economic resources, medicine, material resources, interventions and therapeutic resources to the victim. ‘Victoria’ said that the human support of the victim (non-professionals close accompaniment) is the most important of all resources used, although she does rely on both formal and informal resources.

**‘Patricia’** mentioned formal resources: lawyers, therapists, social workers, shelters (in other suburbs), the municipal department of children, disabled, health, elder (all of the municipality), the municipal emergency unit, police, NGOs, mental health institutions, AVM-programme (a first-level contact programme for female victims of violence) and Ayuda Mutua (a group of women with experience of IPV, supporting each other). These resources help the victim with therapeutic resources, informing the victim of her rights, accompaniment, articulating the victims needs, job search, childcare, recovering social network, economic resources (in emergency), material resources, accompany decision-making and empowerment. She also mentioned that she cooperates with and articulates the needs of the victim to family, community and soup kitchens. ‘Patricia’ relies mainly on formal resources and professional helpers to perform social work with victims of IPV.

**‘Carlos’** cooperates with other formal resources such as social workers, the Secretary of Women and the National Women’s Council within the programme ‘Ellas Hacem’. Their formal resources provide education, employment, social insurance, information regarding gender violence, healthcare, intervention and empowerment of the victims. They do not cooperate with informal resources. The programme works independent and does therefore not rely on other formal or informal resources. Even though, the programme itself is a formal resource and in that way ‘Carlos’ relies entirely on formal resources.

The results from the interviews showed a clear association between education, employment and the resources believed to be at the helper’s disposal. The further right on the scale (the more professional the helper is and thereby more educated on the topic and employed to work with the problem) the more the work relies on formal resources. ‘Patricia’ was the participant with the most formal resources named during the interview. ‘Carlos’ stated that they do not cooperate with any informal resources. They are both employed on projects that are specifically targeting female victims of violence. ‘Victoria’ expressed a balance between formal and informal resources used when working with victims of IPV, while pointing out human support as a relevant part. ‘Carla’ named both formal and informal resources to be at her disposal, but uses an informal working method, something I will analyse further in a while. ‘Maria’ named no formal resources being used when helping victims of IPV, she said that the resources that exist are useless. ‘Angela’ said that her sister did not want to turn to formal resources and gave an example of when they were maltreated by police. The further left on the scale of the participants (and thereby less education on the topic and paid employment to work with it) the more scepticism was expressed towards formal resources. The non-professional helpers also rely on informal resources more than the professional helpers. In my conclusion it is the lack of formal resources or the lack of access to them that seems to make non-professionals use what is at their disposal, such as informal shelters, social networks, private economy, collections of materials and other informal resources.

The results of the interviews show that being educated on the matter and being employed by the municipality gives access to more formal resources when working with victims of IPV. Although the goal of the municipality and social services is that

the help they provide and the resources they have are supposed to be available to the victims. 'Victoria' mentioned that she thinks some victims are sceptical towards professional helpers and formal institutions because they can't relate to them. According to 'Victoria' there is a gap between the slum dwellers and professional helpers. There are victims that doesn't understand the language being used by officials, can't read the papers they are handed, and don't have a phone to call the number they are given. In the soup kitchen they are aware of this situation and provide help by reading papers, making phone calls and explaining to the victim. The soup kitchen is in that way making the help available to the victims and therefore a lot of them feel more comfortable seeking help there, rather than going to the municipality. 'Victoria' describes the way they work in the soup kitchen:

*'It's a way of working that has to do with the respect for the person (...) I speak with you and I know you understand everything and if I speak in the same way to another person that hasn't finished primary school, I don't know if he knows how to read or write. Those are the ways, when I explain something to someone I ask 'Do you know how to read?' 'Do you have someone to read for you?' because you give them everything written and how do I know if (that person) comes home and (thinks) 'What do I do with this?' (...) I think a lot of people come here for that reason.'*

(Author's translation)

The working method of the soup kitchen aims to make help available to the slum dwellers. Some of the women working there are slum dwellers themselves, which in my opinion might make it easier for them to see the client's perspective. Informing a victim of her rights on a level which she understands is important when working with empowerment to avoid paternalism and talking over the victim's head. In my conclusion, this is a way of informing the victim of her rights and making sure that it is actually communicated to the victim, a way of empowering.

Another relevant aspect of the work with the victims is the methods being used by the participants, which I will now continue presenting.

## 6.4 Working method

The goal of every individual that I interviewed, when working with a victim of IPV, is to successfully help that person escape the violence and create a sustainable, independent life. The ways to reach that goal varied depending on where the individual was placed on the non-professional-professional helper scale. Results show that the further left on the scale (the more non-professional), the more accompaniment was used as a tool within the method of reaching an independent, sustainable life separate from the abuser. 'Angela', 'Maria' and 'Carla' emphasized the importance of a very close accompaniment of the victim and being available to the victim 24 hours a day, every day of the week. Letting the victim know that they will be there no matter what happens. 'Victoria' pointed out the importance of the human support of both the victim and the victim's social network. Results also show that the further right on the scale (the more professional), the more empowerment was used within the method of escaping the violence and creating a new life. 'Patricia' and 'Carlos' pointed out the importance of giving the individual tools to 'make it on their own' and creating a space where the woman herself can get an independent life. Mentioned by 'Patricia' as an example is that they usually inform the victim that they have to go to the police and make a report and then take it to the judge to get a trial whereas non-professionals mentioned that they would accompany the victim to the police and judge to make sure the legal parts are being done correctly.

A study made by Kulkarni et. al. (2012) investigates what qualities were essential to victims of IPV when being helped to escape the violence. One of the essential qualities found was to support empowerment by reinforcing victims' rights, reinforcing victims' ability to make decisions, identifying options and making a new life plan (Kulkarni et. al. 2012:93). In the interview, 'Patricia' emphasized that they inform the victim of her rights and the importance of executing rights such as accessing legal and health services. This, according to Song (2011:1017-1018), is empowerment on a social-political level. 'Patricia' also said that they inform the victim of how and where to seek such help, but prefers that the victim does this by herself. The non-professional helpers ('Maria' and 'Carla') stated that they accompany the victim to institutions such as the municipality, therapist and the police where the rights of the victim are being upheld. My doubts here are if it is enough to

inform the victim of what needs to be done to empower her. The conflict between the two working methods is that only informing the victim of her rights might leave her to on her own with her problems, and accompanying her to execute them, might result in further helplessness, with the victim relying on others and not being empowered.-

‘Patricia’ explained that when they work with a case, throughout the process the victim makes the decisions. ‘Carla’ said that the victim bit by bit makes the decisions that regard herself. In ‘Patricia’s’ method of work, the victim herself has to identify the options in making a new plan for her life, with the support of professionals. In ‘Carla’s’ case, the victim does not identify the options herself, but she has to make a new life plan. My conclusion is that the way of working for professional and non-professional helpers is similar but the methods differ. Non-professional helpers work closer to the victim with available accompaniment. Professional helpers have a more distant relationship to the victim with a limited accompaniment and focus on empowerment.

The end goal of the process is the same for all interviewed, to empower the women to live independently. Although in my opinion, empowerment can also be seen as a method that leaves the victim to solve her problems on her own (with already limited resources and a delicate situation). This might be difficult for the victim, since the characteristics of the situation defines her options and limits the means of escaping. ‘Patricia’ mentioned that some women seeking help either go back to the abuser or lose contact with the ‘Gender Team’. According to me, these victims might be left in a situation where they are not helped and no social service is performed. ‘Carla’ and ‘Victoria’ also mentioned that some women they help do go back to the abuser. In that case they maintain contact with the woman in case she decides to leave again. ‘Maria’, ‘Carla’, ‘Victoria’ and ‘Patricia’ all stated that there are no interventions or resources being spent on a woman that has gone back to the abuser. My conclusion is that the difference between the professional and non-professional helpers in a situation where the victim returns to the abuser is that non-professionals maintain contact with the victim and therefore still have some insight in the situation.

Results from interviews show that non-professional helpers closely accompany the victims they help. The goal of the victim is to leave the situation of dependence on

others to make decisions, being insecure and feeling incapable of reaching goals. In my opinion, close accompaniment by the helper might take over the role of the abuser (although the helper is not violent) as the decision-maker and thereby not let the victim develop the abilities that are needed when leading an independent life. This might lead to a replication of the paternalism that is present in society and that has dominated the woman's life as a victim of IPV. In that way the non-professionals way of helping might actually lead to further domination of the victim, by not giving her access to lead an independent life.

The empowerment method used by professional helpers gives more freedom to the victim making it on her own and developing an independent life. Although, as I see it, it might also leave the woman in a situation with limited resources and personal abilities, where she receives little or no help. Informing the victim of her rights is a part of empowerment but if it is not done in an accessible way (for example taking illiteracy into account) it is also a way of replicating paternalism. According to my conclusion the limited support provided by the professionals might lead to a situation where the victim is not given the help she needs, and is therefore again dominated by the limited opportunities the society has provided for her. The economic obstacles on micro-, meso- and macro-levels also limits the victims possibilities to escape, something I will now analyse further.

## **6.5 Economic obstacles**

As I mentioned earlier, interviews showed that the economic situation of the victim plays an important role when escaping IPV. In fact, the economic situation is central in more aspects of the violent situation. According to previous research, there is a strong correlation between low socio-economic class and IPV. Low-income, financial strain, unemployment and poverty are risk factors both for becoming an abuser or becoming a victim of IPV (Renzetti 2010:171; Resko 2010:2). The economic situation also affects both the possibility of escaping IPV and the means of escape (Frías 2013:35; Sayem et. al. 2013:3; Resko 2010:27). According to Hattery (2008), a woman with access to economic resources has an advantage compared to a woman without economic resources when escaping IPV. A woman with no resources might have to rely on shelters (if there are any available) and welfare for accommodation

and survival and is therefore more likely to stay in an abusive relationship (Hattery 2008:53; Resko 2010:27).

Many women living with IPV are unable to leave successfully because they lack the economic means to do so; essentially, they can either choose to stay with the batterer and feed their children or leave and not be able to provide food or, in some cases, even shelter for themselves and their children.

(Hattery 2008:55)

The economic situation and difficulty that Hattery (2008) is referring to is present in the slum. Because of the circumstances of the slum such as poverty or having an economy that depends on the abuser, most women who live there and are victims of IPV have limited economic resources at their disposal when escaping. The combination of being a woman and living in poverty also leads to the victim having little power in society and on a micro-level, which further complicates her escape.

The lack of economic resources is also present on meso- and macro-levels. On a meso-level there is not a lot of economic welfare available for the victims and there are no shelters in the area. The reasons for this are political decisions regarding in which areas the country's economic resources should be spent, the country's limited economy, a discrepancy between political decisions and practical implementation and corruption, all macro-level factors. In interviews, the obstacle that was mentioned the most, by all participants except one ('Carlos', who's interview did not regard the topic) is the lack of a shelter in the slum. 'Carla' explains the situation of the victims, where the lack of shelter limits their possibilities to leave the abuser:

*'They go to the police station and then they have to go back to the house because they don't have another option. One or two times the (victim's) family will offer them to stay at their house, but it gets to a point where it bothers them. And they will also feel uncomfortable because it's not the same as staying at your own house. Sometimes they (the victim's family) will make them feel uncomfortable (...) because they can't take it anymore, because she went back to the guy a few times. (...) To have a shelter would be a great thing. Until the judge does all that has to be done and gets the*



*guy out of the house, meanwhile they would have a place where they feel comfortable. (...) I would love to have it, I asked for it and they (the municipality) told me I couldn't. They told me it's a lot of problems, that they (the women) get installed and don't want to leave (...) I don't think anyone wants to stay in a place where they are sleeping and sharing everything. But they see it like that.'*

(Author's translation)

It was clearly expressed in most interviews, as in the quote above, that there is a need for a place where the women can stay with their children in the first stage of the escape, when legal actions are still in the process of reaching a decision, and while finding a new home. This could according to me lead to more women deciding to leave the abuser, since they would have a place to escape to, where support and help is available. The lack of a place like that has resulted in alternative solutions such as informal shelters (for example 'Maria's' house or a family members' house) or as 'Patricia' mentioned in the interview, using shelters that are located in other suburbs. The space at shelters in other suburbs is limited and informal shelters are commonly used in the slum. As 'Carla' says in the quote above, family members often get tired of supporting a victim that returns to the abuser. It can also be straining to live together for some time, with limited space. Informal shelters such as 'Maria's' house are not receiving any economic help for food, electricity and rent; these costs are in 'Maria's' case paid by herself. This is a complicated situation since 'Maria' has limited finances. Participants pointed out that the ways of sheltering victims in the slum today is not a satisfactory solution.

During the interview with 'Carla' she gave me an example of a case where the lack of resources became clear. She referred to a case where a pregnant mother of seven children escaped her violent husband with no economic resources at her disposal and no social network to rely on. She lived with her children on the street for a couple of months before the municipality was notified and she could get help. When help reached her there was still a lack of resources and no shelter available. For a while the family stayed at 'Maria's' house, but because of the limited space they moved to a room in the soup kitchen where for a while they slept on mattresses on the floor. Since the soup kitchen is not supposed to shelter anyone, the family moved to another

woman's house. This woman, also a part of the team in the soup kitchen, lives in a small slum shack with her eight children. They all shared the limited space. Six months after the escape the family could finally rent their own house. During these six months 'Carla' received money from the municipality to use for food and care of the family but the money she received was not nearly enough and the women in the soup kitchen used their own money to care for the family. This kind of informal solution is a strain on the victim and her children, who escape IPV to begin an unstable life with no home, changing shelters every so often until they can finally rent their own home. The solution is also a strain on the helpers, whose finances and living space are also very limited. 'Victoria' described the solidarity that exists in the slum, which is the base of the informal social work that is performed:

*"In our classes you give away what you don't need and here they give away what they don't have"*

(Author's translation)

'Victoria' pointed out in the interview, shown in the quote above, the difficulty in working with the limited economic resources available in the slum. The limited economy and slow bureaucracy sometimes makes formal resources difficult to obtain and informal solutions are ad-hoc. She pointed out a strong solidarity between the slum dwellers, a creative way of working and people in poverty helping each other with what they have, or in many cases, don't have.

As mentioned earlier, the goal of all participants is to empower the victim. Previous research suggests that economic empowerment might lead to a chance of an independent life for the victim, something I will take a closer look at.

## **6.6 Economic empowerment**

As mentioned earlier, there are two relevant characteristics of the victims of IPV in the slum that makes them have less power in society. Being female and lower class makes this group a vulnerable one from an intersectional perspective. Belonging to these categories gives the victims less power in society on micro-, meso- and macro-levels. They have difficulties in leaving the abuser due to lack of resources, they are maltreated by the police force and they are not a strong group for political influence

on a macro-level. To defeat this powerless situation, much of the literature regarding women's situation in IPV points out the relevance of economic empowerment by the victim and women in general to both eliminate and prevent IPV (Oxhaal & Baden 1997; Hattery 2008; Resko 2010; Renzetti 2010). Renzetti (2010:176) mentions the possible protective effects that employment can have for a victim of IPV. Not only does employment provide economic resources for the victim, it might also provide psychological resources such as a raised self-esteem and an increased independence which both form a part of individual empowerment (Song 2011:1017-1018). A workplace might also give access to a social network, an important part of the interpersonal empowerment (ibid.).

The top-three millennium goals of Argentina are reducing poverty, enhancing education and strengthening women's situation. The local response to the millennium goals is the national, governmental programme called 'Ellas Hacen', where 'Carlos' is employed. The programme started in April 2013. Its goals are empowerment, economic independence and social inclusion through employment (Lanús 2014, Desarrollo Social 2014). The target population is women with three or more children, and/or women that are or have been victims of violence (domestic or IPV), who are unemployed and live in a slum or emergent neighbourhood (Lanús 2014). Through the programme, which is free of charge, participants get an opportunity to finish primary and secondary school, create and work in a cooperative and get qualified for other jobs (Desarrollo Social 2014). Through participation in the programme the women also get social insurance for themselves and their children.

This programme can also be seen as a response to previous research on the relevance of empowering abused women economically for them to create an independent life. It targets women who are or have been victims of violence to give them a chance to work and educate themselves and start earning their own money, break isolation and create an independent life, without the abuser. During the interview 'Carlos' pointed out that the programme does not offer a complete solution to these women but it does create a space for them to start questioning their situation and start seeing opportunities in leaving the abuser and living an independent life. He also mentioned that if the coordinators or anyone involved with the programme suspects that a

woman is being abused they report it to the National Women's Council (Consejo Nacional de Mujeres), who can deal with the situation.

By entering the programme the women are given the opportunity to finish their education. From an empowerment perspective this could be seen as giving the women tools to help themselves. The programme also offers workshops in gender and cohabitation, informing the individual of her rights. By creating or forming a part of a cooperative the women get to make decisions and also influence what choices are available at her workplace. The employment contributes to economic independence and it might have the previously mentioned protective effects on the individual. The cooperatives work with improving their neighbourhood, in that way the programme also contributes to overall economic growth and development. The women are being paid (2000 ARG pesos/1370 SEK per month) for working in the cooperative. They can only be paid to their own, personal account. This gives the women control over their own money, an important factor of economic empowerment according to Oxaal and Baden (1997). Carlos told me that they had problems at the programme with husbands and boyfriends that wanted the salary of the women to be paid to their account instead of the women's, something the programme does strictly not allow.

Seen in this way it seems that the programme 'Ellas Hacen' can fulfil all the requirements of empowering an individual. Although the programme is a counterpart programme, which means that some of the participation is mandatory in order to stay in the programme. Finishing primary and secondary school and working 20 hours per week is a must for participants in 'Ellas Hacen'. Seen in that way, there is a cogent factor involved in the programme, which according to me argues against the idea that the only one that can empower the women are themselves, and outsiders can only support and encourage the empowerment. If the principles of empowerment are that the individual has an influence on what options are available as well as being free to choose from those options, then the programme does not follow empowerment principles according to me, as it leaves little opportunity for the individual to pick and choose employment and education. I also think that there is a lack of individual care and an individual development plan for the participants, as the conditions of the programme applies to all participants. To me it seems simplified that employment is supposed to lead to empowerment, social inclusion and economic independence. The

salary that participants in the programme are being paid is quite low and does not lead to economic independence. It is not enough money for a woman to live alone with her children if she starts a life without the abuser. If the victim has employment and education important obstacles such as a shelter are still present. According to me the programme does not apply a holistic view of the situation. There are numerous factors that affect an individual's life and the target group is a vulnerable one, with multiple social issues. There is still a violent and complex situation present, which has psychological and social issues that are not solved by employment and education. I think no one would say that unemployment leads to IPV, although in this case, the lack of other actions to complement employment leaves the observer to think someone might. Employment is an important factor but one might argue that more interventions and resources are needed from the municipality to reach an actual social change and empowerment of individuals.

## **7 Conclusion**

The ever-present obstacle for social work being performed in the slum is the limited resources at disposal. Limited resources are seen in the lack of shelters for women escaping violence, in the lack of economic welfare for people living in poverty, in the lack of social workers and other necessary resources when helping a victim of IPV escape. This situation has led to non-professionals performing social work in the slum using informal resources to do so. Private economy is used for food, collections of clothes are made, informal shelters are created and slum dwellers help each other for reasons of solidarity. During the study I was surprised by the amount of people living in poverty and dedicating their life to helping others. In the interview with Maria, who has helped a lot of victims previously unknown to her and with few economic or material resources at her disposal, I asked her about the reason for her dedicating time, space and money to helping victims. Her answer reflected solidarity and a sense of not being able to 'do nothing'. I got the feeling that the non-professionals participating in the study knew that if they didn't help the victims then no one would.

The results of the study show that the limited resources in the slum has led to a divide of social work. Social work is being performed by professionals and non-

professionals and both formal and informal resources are being used to make it possible. Professionals are employed and educated to work with these issues and use formal resources and empowerment when helping victims of IPV. Non-professionals more often turn to informal resources and closer accompany the victim when escaping IPV. According to me both methods of working can be questioned as they can lead to paternalism and further domination of the victim. But without these two kinds of social work being performed the situation in the slum would probably be a lot worse. My impression is that the two areas of social work to a certain extent complement each other. The non-professionals had also reached a level of professionalism without studying social work, but through working with victims of IPV for a lot of years. Their experience had made them into professionals in the area. However, as is so often the case for those with little or no voice in the political arena more money and more structured help is needed.

According to previous research economic empowerment is a key factor in helping victims of violence. The idea is that the victim creates an independent life through economical independence and in that way will be able to leave the abuser but also regain self-confidence and power in the society. The governmental programme 'Ellas Hacen' can be seen as a response to this research, and as a response to Argentina's top three millennium goals regarding reducing poverty, enhancing education and strengthening women's situation. The programme gives its female participants an opportunity to finish primary and secondary school, to be employed and thereby empower their own situation. But according to me the programme does not solve the situation from a holistic point of view. The victims of IPV in the slum have many factors working against them and the limited resources on micro-, meso- and macro-levels makes this social group an especially vulnerable one. According to feminist theory this group is also dominated by men in a system of gender hierarchy, leading to an even more powerless situation. From an intersectional point of view, being both woman and from the lower class are the main characteristics that makes these victims vulnerable and with little power to escape the situation on their own. The network of different kinds of formal and informal resources, professional and non-professional helpers all work alongside each other to try and help this vulnerable social group and to strengthen women's position in the society. Although the limited resources

available creates a situation where non-professionals, motivating their work with solidarity, are executing a lot of the work.

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## **9 Attachment 1**

### **Escaping intimate partner violence - Interview guide**

#### **A. Background information**

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Education
4. Title
5. For how long have you worked at your current job?
6. What have you worked with earlier?
7. To what extent do you work with female victims of IPV?

#### **B. Describe the process of a case (what happens from start till end as long as it is in your hands).**

#### **C. Are there any formal resources available to you when working with a case?**

1. What are these resources?
2. How are they designed?
3. What are the criteria for a client to access them?
4. Are they time/economically limited?
5. How do you obtain them?
6. Is there any practical difficulty in the process of obtaining these resources (such as bureaucracy or alike)?
7. How do you use these when working with cases in field?

#### **D. Are there any informal resources available to you when working with a case?**

1. How do you find these resources?
2. How do you contact these resources?
3. How do you mediate between the victim and the informal resources?
4. To what extent do you control the help given from informal resources?

5. Are informal solutions time limited or permanent?
6. Is there any practical difficulty in the process of obtaining these resources?
7. How do you use these when working with cases in field?

**E. Are there any other resources available when working with a case?**

1. What kind of resources?
2. How do you find these resources?
3. How do you contact these resources?
4. How do you mediate between the victim and these resources?
5. To what extent do you control the help given from these resources?
6. Are these solutions time limited or permanent?
7. Is there any practical difficulty in the process of obtaining these resources?
8. How do you use these when working with cases in field?

**F. How is the clients' situation?**

1. Is help accessible to clients?
2. What are the clients' obstacles?
3. What are the clients' problems?
4. How do clients feel about formal help?
5. How do clients feel about informal help?

**G. Do you believe your way of working to be effective?**

1. What works?
2. What doesn't work?
3. What should be changed?
4. What should formal resources do?
5. What should informal resources do?

**H. Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't talked about already?**

- Do you have any questions?
- Thank you for participating!

## **10 Attachment 2**

### **Escaping intimate partner violence - Interview guide – Community help**

#### **I. Background information**

8. Age
9. Sex
10. Education
11. What do you do for a living?
12. What have you worked with earlier?
13. To what extent do you help female victims of IPV?

#### **J. How do you receive a case?**

1. From where do you get notified about a case?
2. How do you decide to intervene or not?
3. Who do you help/not help?

#### **K. How do you help a case?**

1. In what way do you help a case? (Material/emotional/economical support)
2. What resources do you use when helping a case?
3. Is the help you provide limited? (Time/economically limited)
4. Do you cooperate with other resources when helping a case?

#### **L. Why do you help a case?**

1. Why do you help a case?
2. What are the difficulties in helping a case?
3. What are the benefits from helping a case?
4. Do you ever get any compensation for helping? (Economical/material etc.)

#### **M. What do you think about your way of helping?**

1. Do you believe the help you provide is effective?

2. Do you believe the help you provide is accessible?
3. What are the positive qualities of the help you provide?
4. What are the negative qualities of the help you provide?
5. What do you think about your role in the situation of helping a case?
6. Has your way of helping affected your personal life in any way?

**N. How is the clients' situation?**

1. What are the clients' obstacles?
2. What are the clients' problems?
3. How do clients feel about the help you provide?

**O. What do you think of other help that is available for these victims?**

1. What other help is available?
2. What works?
3. What doesn't work?
4. What should be changed?
5. What should formal resources do?
6. What should informal resources do?

**P. Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven't talked about already?**

1. Do you have any questions?
2. Thank you for participating!

## **11 Attachment 3**

### **Interview guide – Coordinator of “Ellas Hacen”**

#### **Data:**

1. Age
2. Education
3. Title
4. For how long have you worked at your current job?
5. What have you worked with earlier?

#### **About Ellas Hacen:**

1. How does the programme work?
2. What is the goal of the programme?
3. What institution is responsible?
4. Do you cooperate with other institutions?
5. Where is the programme being executed? (Cities, localities)
6. What methods do you use? (Accompaniment/Empowerment)
7. Are there any results so far?
8. Have you had any difficulties so far?

#### **About the participants:**

1. Who is the target participant?
2. How is the participants' situation?
3. How many participate?
4. How long is the participation for one individual?
5. What does the participants think about the programme?