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“Everything is difficult in a place where everything is foreign”

A study of female immigrants’ experiences of living in Denmark and suffering
domestic violence

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Abstract

This thesis is a case study exploring the experiences of female immigrants living in Denmark and of suffering gender-based domestic violence. Through a phenomenological analysis, the thesis investigates the stories told by female immigrants in interviews collected specifically for this thesis as well as for the podcast project Merantis. By investigating female immigrants' experiences of suffering gender-based domestic violence, the thesis aims to elicit the intersectionality of being a female immigrant and being subject to gender-based domestic violence.

Based on the stories told by both female immigrants and Danish health visitors, the thesis argues that the experience of being a female immigrant intersects with the experience of suffering gender-based domestic violence because both experiences are characterised by a feeling of losing identity and agency, and of feeling vulnerable and dependent on others. In line with theory on help-seeking processes and the critical path of survivors of domestic violence, the informants confirmed that to resist domestic violence, as well as to integrate into Danish society, empathetic and intersubjective interaction is needed.

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1. Introduction

Women migrate; they cross borders and settle in foreign countries. They do it for love, education, work or as an escape from something at home. Women migrate because they dream about a better life for themselves and their families. The number of women who migrate, and the independence with which they migrate have led to academic discussions of a feminization of migration. Despite the positive tendencies of a feminization of migration, female migrants are situated in a transitional situation, making them one of the most vulnerable¹ groups in society (IOM 2019, Maymon 2017, Stanciu 2018, Jones 2008: 761f). The question is then; why is this group in a vulnerable and insecure position?

To investigate that question the concept of feminization of migration calls for attention in several areas. One of these is gender-based violence and the protection of women's rights with a specific focus on migrating women and their narratives (Wibben 2011: 1ff, 10f). Due to the circumstances of being migrant and woman, a female migrant is at risk of being more vulnerable to violence than migrating men or non-migrating women in their country of origin, in transit and in the country of destination (Fleury 2016:29f). Studies on the vulnerability of female migrants and studies on their experiences with violence show that the insecurity of female migrants is not situated in a certain context. It is a global problem with, if not universal, then common and identical characteristics (IOM 2013:2). Feminist security scholars such as Laura Shepherd argue that because violence and insecurity "*marks and makes bodies*", it is important to study the global issue of gender-based violence and discrimination through the stories and experiences of the people involved (Shepherd 2008:1ff). Qualitative case studies are needed, studies in which the women taking part in the feminization of migration is heard through a narrative approach (Wibben 2011).

This thesis is a case study aiming to investigate the global issue of the vulnerability experienced by female immigrants on a global level by looking closer at the intersectionality of the experience of being a female immigrant living in Denmark and of suffering gender-based domestic violence. The amount of studies on female immigrants' and their intersectional experiences with violence in

¹ I use the concept of vulnerability to investigate and describe the situation of female migrants. Vulnerability should not be mistaken for "being fragile". Neither should it be mistaken for "being exposed", since I do not investigate the threats and risks female migrants are exposed to. As will be elicited in the literature review and the analysis, a line of varying factors strip migrants of agency, and identity and that is what makes them vulnerable when they migrate.

Denmark is minimal, although there is a growing focus on the subject. A few scholars and interest organisations have investigated this complex issue through different approaches and with different focuses. Additionally, a growing number of non-scientific writings are appearing. What these studies, reports and non-scientific literature have in common is that they give voice to a group who are often neglected and left voiceless. Furthermore, it identifies individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural barriers that place female migrants in vulnerable situations. Some of these barriers, such as lack of language skills, knowledge about the public system and rights in relation to Danish jurisdiction, are barriers which all female immigrants seem to experience no matter where they come from, or why they migrated to Denmark (Amnesty International 2006, Mosekilde et al. 2018, Mørck et al. 2011, Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006). Other barriers seem to be connected to certain types of female immigrants. E.g. women belonging to certain ethnic minorities in Denmark in general face barriers connected to the ethnic group they belong to. Whereas women who are either au pairs or married to an ethnically Danish man struggle with barriers connected to isolation (Mørck et al. 2011, Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006). All these dynamics characterising the Danish case is useful when trying to understand the intersectionality of gender-based domestic violence and feminization of migration on a global as well as local level. I aim to conduct an instrumental case study of the Danish case on a local level that can be used for analytical generalisation on a global level (Kvale et al. 2015: 333ff). I use a qualitative bottom-up approach in which I listen to and try to understand the complexity of the personal experiences and narratives of female immigrants (Hill Collins et al. 2016a: 11, Crenshaw 1989: 140, 167, Desjarlais et al. 2011, Jackson 1996). Furthermore, I use the experiences and narratives of Danish health visitors working with female immigrants to gain a triangulating approach to the subject from their professional perspective. This gives a more nuanced understanding of the negotiation of social practices and the cultural notion of women's rights in the encounter between female immigrants and Danish society.

To be able to grasp and make sense of the experiences of female immigrants, I use a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology as used in anthropology provides a framework that allows me to elicit the experiences of, and attempts to resist violence, and the vulnerable situation of being a female immigrant in Denmark (Bourgois et al. 2003, Jackson 1996, Jackson 2005,

Desjarlais et al. 2011). To understand the mechanisms in play when victims² of violence act and seek help, I draw on the holistic framework of help-seeking processes (Liang et al. 2005). Finally, I use the theory of intersectionality to explain how social structures of inequality, and hierarchies of power is shaped by many different factors, all of which affect each other in diverse ways (Hill Collins et al. 2016: 11).

This thesis will therefore be driven by these four research questions:

1. *How do female immigrants experience their situation as immigrants in Denmark?*
2. *How do female immigrants experience their attempts to engage with Danish society?*
3. *How do female immigrants experience the gender-based domestic violence they have endured?*
4. *How do female immigrants experience their attempts to resist³ gender-based domestic violence?*

By investigating these four research questions, I aim to examine whether the experiences of being a female immigrant and a victim of gender-based domestic violence intersects and affect the women's situation dialectically.

1.1. Disposition:

The thesis begins with a two-part literature review. One part focuses on the feminization of migration, the other on gender-based domestic violence. The literature review will be followed by an introduction to the health visitors and their relevance for this thesis. Hereafter I describe the methodological thoughts behind my data collection and analysis, and then explain and

² I have chosen to use the term victim, with the knowledge that many argue that the term survivor is more empowering. Whether one term or the other is a better fit differs from person to person, and in this context I hope by using the term victim I aim to include those not feeling like survivors, those who do not feel they have survived yet.

³ When using the word resist, in relation to gender-based domestic violence I aim at describing the negotiation of narratives and use of agency which lead victims of gender-based domestic violence on their critical path and out of the violent relation.

operationalize the theoretical framework of phenomenology, intersectionality, and the help-seeking process. The analysis is divided into 4 chapters, each investigating one of the 4 research questions. Throughout each chapter the intersectionality between the experience of being a female immigrant and of being a victim of gender-based domestic violence will be illuminated. Finally, the findings will be discussed and summed up in the conclusion.

2. Literature review

Even though the acknowledgement of the problems and severity of gender-based domestic violence is not new, and though the acknowledgement of the gender inequality of migration and the vulnerability of female migrants has already been stated, there is a lack of research in the overlap of these two areas (Fleury 2016: 30f, Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:471). This gap in the research might be an effect of what Kimberlé Crenshaw, lawyer, philosopher, and civil rights advocate calls the single-axis paradigm (Crenshaw 1989). The issues are dealt with as two singular issues in two different fields of study: migration studies and the studies of gender-based violence. In the following text I describe the main arguments of both fields and relate them to one another in order to reveal the intersectionality at stake.

2.1. Migrations studies

Migration studies is a field that describes an old phenomenon, which in relation to globalisation has grown and come to gain enhanced attention and importance on all levels (Fleury 2016:vi). Today women account for approximately half of the world's migration. There is a growing market and need for migrant women's labour in destination countries, especially in the sectors of care, domestic work, and manufacturing. It is difficult to say whether women are migrating because they have become empowered and more independent, or if these changes occur as an effect of the migration (Fleury 2016:1, Maymon 2017:1, Ehrenreich et al. 2004:8). Some scholars argue that migration under the right circumstances can empower women; that it can improve autonomy, human capital and self-esteem on a personal level in the community and on a national level in both the destination country and the country of origin (Fleury 2016:16ff, Bachan 2018). But a successful migration requires certain circumstances in relation to the context of the migration, the type of movement and the personality of the individual female migrant (Piper 2005:25). In cases where such circumstances are not in favour of the female migrant, migration can enhance gender inequality. This dynamic of migration as a transitional stage in which individuals have a change to improve their lives while at the same time risking intersectional discrimination is clearly illustrated by anthropologist Isabel Morais (2014). Morais describes how women from different African countries, and different social statuses migrate to China. They migrate as refugees, diplomats, students, and businesswomen. Morais illustrates how many of these women are successful in their doings as migrants, and how it

effects their families and home countries as well as the diaspora in China positively. But while doing this they continuously have to fight intersectional racism and sexism (Morais 2014).

I will now dig a little deeper and look more specifically at some of the difficulties female migrants deal with.

2.1.1. Labour market

The gender inequalities of migration exist in different areas and are extremely visible in the labour market. Migrant women generally have higher rates of unemployment than both migrant men and local women (Ghosh 2009:25). Among female migrants there is too a hierarchy of employment: Female migrants who move due to family reunion or marriage have the highest rates of unemployment (Fleury 2016:24). In the other end of the spectrum are highly skilled female migrants with good education and experience. Women in this group are doing better than other female migrants, but are still underemployed, work below their qualifications and are payed less than locals with similar qualifications.

Christine Ho, scholar of humane migration describes how in Los Angeles, Caribbean women break out of the private sphere because their husbands cannot find work due to the criminal stereotypes connected to Caribbeans. These women are empowered by becoming the providers for their families. Nonetheless, they are only able to find jobs in the domestic sector and are payed minimal wages (HO 1993: 33ff). It is not only stereotypes, which exclude female migrants. Many struggle to be recognized for personal professional credentials and experience (Piper 2005:2,8f). In some destination countries women are limited by restrictions on both education and jobs that are supposed to ensure that no migrant will take work or education from locals (Özden et al. 2008, Ghosh 2009).

2.1.2. Prostitution, trafficking, and criminality

At the bottom of the hierarchy of female migrants are women who are forced into prostitution, trafficking, and criminality. No matter how this force takes place, the women are often too afraid of the authorities to seek help from the police or other parts of the system (Ghosh 2009:61, Crush et al. 2009:61,81f). The dynamics forcing people into criminality, prostitution and trafficking should be understood as a deep-rooted connectedness of intersectional structures, structures of patriarchy and nationalism that supress female migrants (Hess 2005).

2.1.3. Financial abuse

One of the reasons female migrants might end up in a situation where they are forced into prostitution, trafficking, or criminality, is their dependency on agencies and other types of actors “helping” them. These actors “help” with everything from smuggling migrants over borders to recruiting migrants for jobs and/or personal relations such as marriage in the destination countries. Female migrants are often exposed to financial abuse from these actors. Some end up having enormous debts, and in many cases, this leads to trafficking, prostitution, and different types of criminality (Amnesty International 2013, Ghosh 2009:22).

2.1.4. The health care sector

Another crucial consequence of being a migrant is limited access to and help from the health care sector in the destination country. Anne Fadiman describes how the culture clash, lack of trust, understanding and communication, an overload of unconscious and conscious prejudice, and practical barriers such as lack of access to hospitals can have severe consequences (Fadiman 1997). Fadiman’s story shows how migrants often face factors such as lack of information, fear of the system, language barriers and limited services due to e.g. legal status. These factors keep migrants from getting the services and help they and their children are entitled to from the health care sector, thereby creating inequality in terms of health (Raj et al. 2002:386, Ghosh 2009:20, Fleury 2016:29, Crush et al. 2009:63).

2.1.5. Violence

Female migrants are more vulnerable to violence than both male migrants and non-migrant women (UNGA 2013, Fleury 2016:29). Depending on the context each individual female migrant lives in, she might be in higher or lower risk of experiencing violence. This is illustrated in studies on human trafficking and prostitution, and in studies on violence and social control among certain ethnical groups (Hagelund 2008, O’Neill 2001). What has not been investigated equally thoroughly is how the intersectionality of discrimination affects female migrants’ willingness and ability to leave violent relations (Menjívar et al. 2002:898f, Fleury 2016:30).

2.2. Gender-based violence

After having introduced some of the most central discussions of migration studies and touched on the discussion of violence in that specific field, I will now turn towards a more general examination of the subject of violence, and specifically gender-based violence.

One of the most prevalent human rights violations is violence against women and girls (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:470). This fact leads to an array of questions, but to answer any of them we must investigate the essence of the concept of violence. Anthropologists Phillipe Bourgois and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2003) argue that violence is a phenomenon defying simple categorisations and definitions. Violence can be physical or psychological, it can be direct or structural, it can be visible or invisible, and it can be strategic or impulsive (Bourgois et al. 2003: 1f). Even so, Jackson has tried to define violence and argues that: *"A person's humanity is violated whenever his or her status as a subject is reduced against his or her will to mere objectivity [...]"* (Jackson 2005:168). In other words, a violation is any act that has the effect of reducing another person's subjectivity against that person's will. Whether the violence was intended or not, Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes argue that the only way a victim of violence can resist violence and regain status as a subject is to encounter the violence through some sort of revolutionary act towards the source of the violence (Bourgois et al. 2003:2f).

Due to its abstractness, Jackson's phenomenological definition contrasts definitions of violence in e.g. legal and political documents. A document such as the Istanbul Convention is intended to act against gender-based violence and describes violence as physical-, psychological-, and sexual violence as well as stalking and harassment (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:471). By doing so the convention does what Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes argue cannot be done, simplifying the concept of violence to concrete categories. Such concrete definitions tend to neglect the invisible forms of violence such as psychological and latent violence. A concrete definition of violence therefore does not suffice. And as Jackson states, *"any reduction of a person's subjectivity is a nullification of that person as a being, as a person whose words and actions have a place in the collective"* (Jackson 2005:168). Broadening the definition to include invisible forms of violence, allow for forms of violence that otherwise would be invisible to society to be elicited (Renzetti et al. 2011:4f).

Violence, visible or invisible, conducted towards women should not be understood simply as an intended, direct, and harming act, but as an effect of patriarchal, cultural structures. Gender-based

violence is legitimized through norms in society (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:470). It is a result of normative roles and assumptions associated with binary perceptions of gender. It is based on uneven power relations between the genders and is not only committed by men, women also often take the roles as perpetrators (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:470). Violence in general is reproductive and constituted in the mediation of the implicit dichotomy of legitimate and illegitimate violence (Bourgois et al. 2003:2). In some countries, hitting a child is a parental right, and in other countries it is seen as traumatising abuse. When a husband hits his wife, some understand it as his right to lecture his woman, whereas others define it as a human rights offense. Not all forms of violence are understood as either legitimate or illegitimate; often violence is seen as a natural state, in that the victims are neglected (Bourgois et al. 2003:2f).

Research investigating gender-based violence often focuses on either the victims, the perpetrator, or professionals working with the victims (Isdal 2001, Isdal 2017). It investigates different types of violence such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, harassment at workplaces, and psychological violence (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019:476, Renzetti et al. 2011). When the perpetrators are in focus, the motives for violence and the legitimization of violence is investigated (Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006, Isdal 2001, Bourgois 1996). If the victims are in focus, coping mechanisms, the consequences of violence, and resistance is investigated (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2019, Arboit et al. 2019). Much psychological research has been conducted on what anthropologist Montserrat Sagot (2000) calls the critical path – in other words resistance, or the way out of violence (Liang et al. 2005, Arboit et al. 2019). Scholars from other parts of the social sciences have more structural and social perspectives on the issue and investigate how laws, policies, norms and culture affect women's exposure to violence, and/or their ability and willingness to exit the violent situation (Arboit et al. 2019, Semahegn et al. 2019, UNGA 2013).

In Denmark, statistics and reports from NGO's and battered women's shelters show that there is an over-representation of immigrants at the battered women's shelters in Denmark. These reports argue that it is harder for female immigrants to leave domestic violence than it is for non-migrant women in Denmark (Mosekilde et al. 2018, Amnesty International 2006). Unfortunately, there has not been conducted much research on female immigrants suffering gender-based domestic violence in Denmark, so the argument of the reports remains to be confirmed by other investigations. That being said, there are two central pieces of work investigating the Danish case: *Mænd i migrationsægteskaber (Men in Migration Marriages)* (2006), and *Familien betyder alt (The Family*

Means Everything) (2011). Both works investigate intimate partner violence in Denmark. *Mænd i migrationsægteskaber* focuses on Danish men married to female immigrants. The focus mainly lies on the perpetrators and the way they take advantage of the vulnerable situation of their immigrant wives (Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006). *Familien betyder alt* focuses on women from ethnic minorities who have been, or still are living in violent relations. Both studies conclude that as a female immigrant in Denmark you are faced with a situation where you are easier to silence, to control and to suppress than if you were born and raised in the country (Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006, Mørck et al. 2011).

2.3. The arts are one step ahead

As I have argued in this literature review there is a literary gap between the literature of female migration and gender-based violence (Menjívar et al. 2002). This gap is currently investigated by a wave of non-scientific writers and artists in Denmark. The authors use a broad range of genres, including biographies, fictive novels as well as poetry to portray the violence, discrimination and taboos the authors themselves have experienced and observed (Geeti Amiri⁴, Aydin Soei⁵, Ahmad Mahmoud⁶, Elmas Berke⁷, Yahya Hassan⁸). I mention this literature because it portrays nuances and complexities in a holistic fashion, which scientific research cannot. And the holistic although non-scientific portrayals of experiences with violence and immigration have in their own way brought about the discussion of intersectionality of discrimination.

⁴ Geeti Amiri: *Glansbilleder* (2016)

⁵ Aydin Soei: *Vrede unge mænd* (2011), *Forsoning* (2016), *Omar - og De Andre* (2018)

⁶ Ahmad Mahmoud: *The Neighbours* (2013), *Sort Land* (2016)

⁷ Elmas Berke: *Tavshedens pris* (2015)

⁸ Yahya Hassan: *Yahya Hassan* (2013), *Yahya Hassan 2* (2019)

3. The health visitors in Denmark

In the literature review I have approached the two fields of study, which this thesis aims to investigate the intersectionality of. Before I continue to the method section, I will take a closer look at the Danish health visitors whose professional perspective is used to triangulate the approach in my investigation.

The Danish health visitors are specially trained nurses, with expertise in the physical and mental health of infants and children, in the experience of being a mother, and in the social structures of families. They work with children and their families in the municipality's through a holistic approach. Their main task is to help families with new-borns by offering home visits, different social and educating group activities, and help to use and communicate with the rest of the public system (Uggerly 2008:20f). The health visitors also work with older kids at local schools and provide supervision to other key professionals such as teachers at schools and in the day-care (Jørgensen 2015:112f). They are the welfare state's attempt to create an organ, which takes on the supervising and assisting function that the family has in other societies. While having this function of care, the health visitors are obliged to be the eyes and ears of the state and report any concerns regarding a child to the authorities. The health visitors are given a defining power; the power to define what is normal, what a good life is and when a family crosses the line between normal and problematic (Uggerly 2008:20f) .

I focus on the perspectives of the health visitors because they represent the Danish society while having a very close relation to the families they work with. Their methods, and the broad group of different families they visit, give them a unique insight into the private lives of all sorts of families in Denmark. Due to the health visitors' defining powers, I see them as a source of information to what is accepted and defined as good and bad family structures, and as women's rights in the private sphere in a Danish context.

4. The Method

Initially, I wish to note how I have been affected by the isolation measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19, and by people's fear of contamination. I have been forced to cancel some of my interviews and observations. To compensate for this, I supplement the data I have collected through face-to-face interviews and participant observation with interviews collected and used by the podcast project Merantis⁹, telephone interviews and document analysis.

In the following section I conceptualize the field and describe how I entered it. I will present my material, the collection as well as my analysis. Finally, I discuss my own position, and the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the thesis.

4.1. Conceptualizing the Field

In line with Davis, I argue that anthropologists must abandon the neo-colonial dichotomies of *the primitive* and *the modern* world (Davies 2002:32ff). It does not do to travel to so called exotic places and make holistic descriptions of societies seen as closed entities. Instead, social, and cultural phenomena need to be studied in both own and other societies to embrace the complexity and interrelatedness of human beings and the societies we live in (Davies 2002:33f). To do this in an increasingly globalized world, anthropologists must understand their own position in relation to the studies to neither exotify nor go native. We must structure and design our studies in ways that enable us to give valid and reliable answers to questions that grasp the complexity of the globalized world. Appadurai suggests an alternative to studying societies as closed entities, an alternative to the centre-periphery models, when he describes the framework of “scapes” – five dimensions of global cultural flows. These five scapes are what Appadurai calls “imagined worlds”. These are the worlds in and between which all global cultural flows occur (Appadurai 1990:295f, 301). In this thesis I concentrate on the flows of ethnoscape and ideoscape. My field is situated in and between the ethnoscapes of female immigrants in Denmark and their encounter with the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark as it is practised by the Danish public system and the health visitors.

⁹ Merantis is a Danish podcast about battered women with foreign background living in Denmark. On their online platform women share their stories of suffering domestic violence, in their own language, and in English or Danish. The project aims to spread hope, inspiration and knowledge to women suffering domestic violence, and to professionals: <https://merantis.dk/>

To study the ethnoscape of female immigrants in Denmark means that the informants of the thesis belong to an imagined world in transit. Migrants are in transit; they have left their society of origin, their lifeworld and their imagined community but have not fully become part of the imagined community in the society of destination. Nonetheless, they are part of an imagined world – of an ethnoscape. The ethnoscape consists of shared experiences, feelings, and knowledge (Appadurai 1990:297, Anderson 2016). By studying the ethnoscape of female immigrants, I study my informants in the centre of their own lifeworld. To study ideoscapes means to study the imagined world of ideas. Ideoscapes are complex and conflicting, because ideas and the words used to describe them are almost never interpreted the same way by different people from different places (Appadurai 1990:299ff). The difference in the way people, societies, and cultures understand, express, and maintain their idea of women's rights becomes conflicting when people travel faster than they exchange ideas. I therefore conceptualize my field in the disjunction of an ethnoscape and an ideoscape. I investigate this disjunction by listening to both female immigrants' description of their experiences in Denmark, and to health visitors' description of their professional experience of working with female immigrants in Denmark.

4.2. Entering the Field

When I started investigating the disjunction between the ethnoscape of female immigrants in Denmark and the ideoscape of women's rights, I had a broad approach to the subject. Everything from scientific to non- scientific literature, podcasts and documentaries gave me insights and inspiration (i.a.: DR2 Dokumentar 2016, Merantis, Mørck et al. 2011, Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006). I found a lack of literature investigating the connection between the feminization of migration and gender-based domestic violence, and therefore hoped to investigate the intersectional experience of those who experience both – in other words, female immigrants suffering gender-based domestic violence in Denmark. I contacted several battered women's shelters and got the same answer from them all; that the women are too fragile to be interviewed by a stranger. Due to data security laws the shelters could not give me the contact information of survivors, and the shelters did not have the time and resources to contact survivors for me.

This experience was the first of many that revealed to me the complexity and difficulty of doing qualitative research about violence. Violence is experienced as taboo, as a painful and shameful topic, it is linked to stereotypes, and it is difficult to talk about without objectifying and victimizing.

Although being denied access to a group of informants I find both important and necessary to study was frustrating and a setback in my fieldwork, I personally admire the shelters for their respectful and uncompromising way of taking care of the women living at the shelters. After realizing that I would not be able to get access to female immigrants living at battered women's shelters, I broadened my approach to multiple methods. I chose to seek out female immigrants and examine their experience of engaging with their lifeworld in Denmark and to investigate their experiences with gender-based domestic violence. I furthermore decided to use the interviews collected by Merantis (this decision was also a result of COVID-19) to make sure that I had first-hand sources describing female immigrants' experiences of violence. I decided to supplement my approach with interviews with health visitors and observations at their mothers' groups meetings to investigate a place and relation where integration and engagement between female immigrants and Danish society was happening. The health visitors would also provide me with the Danish public system's perspective on women's rights and women's position in the family. The intention was for this material to reveal the possible pattern of intersectionality in the experiences of female immigrants suffering gender-based domestic violence.

The health visitors have worked as gatekeepers into the field. They have put me in contact with female immigrants with various backgrounds from different municipalities in Denmark. I contacted health visitors in most of the municipalities on Sjælland and Fyn and got a positive response from three municipalities. The health visitors gave me access to doing participant observations in the two active mothers' groups. They put me in contact with six female immigrants, gave me access to evaluations and other documents related to their work, and participated in interviews themselves.

Since there are not many of these specially designed mothers' groups in Denmark and most of them are called different names, I choose to anonymise them by calling them specially designed mothers' group 1, 2, and 3. All three were for mothers who were unable to participate in a typical mothers' group due to lack of language skills and other challenges. I did participant observations and conducted interviews in groups 1 and 2. As for group 3, the group was no longer active due to lack of resources in the municipality. So, I conducted interviews and was given documents from when the group was up and running¹⁰.

¹⁰ See section 4.4.4.

In the following section I elaborate on why I interview both female immigrants and health visitors, and how I found my informants.

4.3. Finding the informants and triangulating the field

As established in the literature review female migrants seem to be one of society's most marginalised groups, a group which like other vulnerable populations is often talked about, but rarely given the chance to tell its own story (Tutenges et al. 2015:173). By studying the ethnoscape of female immigrants in Denmark I strive to present the words of the women themselves, to pass on their stories as they are. While presenting the stories, I aim to investigate the disjunction of this ethnoscape and the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark. I intend to do this by triangulating my approach through the different perspectives of the informants.

I have with the help of the health visitors been in contact with 6 female immigrants. I met 4 of them during participant observations in the mothers' groups, and 2 I had to contact via telephone. I also got in contact with a female immigrant working as a translator by approaching the network called Bymødre (City Mothers¹¹). The female immigrants I spoke to represent a rather small, but broad and diverse sample of female immigrants living in Denmark, thereby not only representing a certain ethnic group, class, age, or geographical area. The interviews by Merantis also represent a diverse group of female immigrants with first-hand experiences of gender-based domestic violence. These are discussed further in the section 4.4.4.

Following Appadurai and investigating the disjunction of an ethnoscape and ideoscape, requires the perspective of the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark. As explained in section 3., the health visitors are an evident source when investigating the ideoscape of women's rights in the private sphere in Denmark. The disjunction of the ethnoscape and ideoscape is expressed through the informants' different narratives, as well as in the interaction and conversation in the mothers' groups (Davies 2002:37, Appadurai 1990:247, 301). It should be noted that group 1 was run by a health visitor, a social housing coordinator and a kindergarten teacher, and I talked with all three professionals.

¹¹ City Mothers is a voluntary network of female immigrants who help each other, and newly immigrated women integrate and feel at home in Denmark.

I have taken care of my informants' anonymity by giving them new names, by not mentioning their age or where they live in Denmark. The anonymisation of the informants is a difficult matter because my analytical methods require some level of context. To analyse the experiences and narratives of the female immigrants I need to discuss and reveal the context of the women's lives. Therefore, I have not anonymised the female immigrants' country of origin, and other information I find relevant for the analysis.

4.4. Collecting data

I have now entered the field and presented the informants of the thesis. In the following section I discuss the methods used to collect data. I will look closely at the interviews, participant observations, and the documents used.

4.4.1. Interview

The ontological and epistemological theory behind the scientific use of interviews lay the ground for a comprehensive and complex discussion. I will not enter that discussion in this thesis, only state that I aim to balance my use of interviews in the middle of the spectrum between interviews understood as reliable sources, as phenomenological description of reality, and interviews as social dialectic processes in which the interviewer and the interviewee create the narrative of reality, a reality that is transient and only truly exist in the moment (Brinkmann 2013:3, 25, 36ff, Kvale et al. 2015:17ff, 75ff).

Interviewing is a diverse discipline, and though the interviews I have collected are similar in many ways (they are all semi-structured, executed with informed consent, took 1 to 2 hours), they have all been designed slightly differently to fit the informants. The interviews with female immigrants have all been done one-on-one in the home of the interviewee, at a café they have chosen, or over the phone. Interviewing the female immigrants individually allowed me to focus fully on each of the women's personal stories. I used a receptive interview style with a thematic interview guide and made sure I had all the time I needed to hear my interviewees out (Kvale et al 2015:193ff). I was conscious about radiating intimacy and personal interest for them as individuals, and for their stories in the hope that they would take the invitation to expand on details and descriptions and thereby elicit their narratives, their experiences and feelings. I aimed for them to feel the freedom

and ability to object to my questions and/or interpretations of their answers if they felt the need to do so (Kvale et al. 2015:55ff, 183ff, 209ff, Brinkmann 2013:18f, 22, 27ff, 31, 38).

When I interviewed the health visitors, the kindergarten teacher, and the social housing coordinator, I used both individual interviews and two-person interviews. The reason I did the two-person interviews was initially logistical, but this type of interview with this type of informant showed to be incredibly giving compared to individual interviews. Since I am an outsider to the professional community of my informants, and because I did not have their specialist knowledge, I was not able to create as deep a professional discussion as they were among each other. The two-person interviews gave me time to focus on the discussion, how it was carried out, and their natural lines of association (Brinkmann 2013:26, Kvale et al. 2015:205f).

I used open and concrete questions. An example would be “When did you come to Denmark?” This concrete question would lead the informant’s memory back to the time of arrival. I would then ask an open follow-up question such as “can you tell me about the first time in Denmark?”. The informant could then choose for herself how she wanted to answer the second question. Being brought back in memory by the first question hopefully made the second open question easier to answer. The open questions led to an asymmetrical structure of the interviews. By listening actively and letting my informants follow their own narrative, details appeared which would never have been discovered with a survey or a structured interview (Brinkmann 2013:17ff, Crenshaw 1989, Kvale et al. 2015:189ff). When interviewing the female immigrants, I used questions about their life story to open the interview. I then took the role of the listener to let them tell their story in their own words. I would ask them to elaborate on topics, thereby using their narrative to frame the interview (Kvale et al. 2015:209ff). When they reached the end of their story, I would ask the questions from my interview guide that had not been answered through their story. I would also revisit certain subjects to discuss them in a theoretical context instead of in the context of the informant’s life story. Revisiting subjects revealed the conflicting and ambiguous feelings and opinions of my informants’ narratives (Brinkmann 2013:23f).

While interviewing I continuously worked with the balance between being personal, empathetic and sensitive enough for my informants to feel comfortable and open about intimate matters, without exploiting the asymmetrical power relation of the interview (Kvale et al. 2015:55ff). I believe that my informants felt my genuine fondness of them and enjoyed our conversations. However, for

ethical reasons it was important to me that all parties involved were aware that I was there as a researcher, and my intention was to use the conversation for research. In some situations, empathetic listening was not enough, and I had to draw on my own personal experiences (Brinkmann 2013:3f, 12, Kvale et al. 2015:119ff, Davies 2002:81f).

4.4.2. Telephone interviews

Two of my interviews were conducted over the phone. Due to the lack of multisensorial information and ability to pick up on social cues such as body language, this type of interview was not ideal. Furthermore, my ability to create a good and intimate environment were lessened over the phone (Opdenakker 2006:4f). Despite of this, the phone interviews gave me the advantage of accessing informants who lived in isolation due to COVID-19. To my surprise I experienced that my informants felt safe when we spoke over the phone. They brought up sensitive subjects on their own initiative in a way I have not experienced in my other interviews (Opdenakker 2006:4f). I also experienced that the phone interviews lessened the language barrier between me and the informants. When conducting face-to-face interviews with informants who either spoke Danish as a second language, or when I had to speak English, both the informants and I often tried to guess instead of ask when we did not understand each other. When conducting phone interviews, guessing was not an option. If we did not hear or understand what had been said, we had to keep asking until we did (Brinkmann 2013:28f).

4.4.3. Observations and participation

Field work and participant observations is more of a research strategy than a concrete method, because it can consist of so many different methods (Davies 2002:6f). I define my field as a many-sited field in the disjunction of the ethnoscape of female immigrants and the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark. The method I mainly rely on is interviews, but I was lucky enough to be invited to do participant observations in two of the mothers' groups. This was advantageous because I was able to broaden my perspective and raise the validity of my research by collecting different types of data (Davies 2002:85).

My participant observations were characterised by the fact that I could not stay in my field. I entered the field to observe and participate for as long as the mothers' groups' meetings lasted, afterwards I left the field and went home (Davies 2002:67). Another characteristic of my

observations was that in a mothers' group all participants have very clear and defined roles; there are mothers, their babies and the health visitor, and potentially other professionals. When I entered the meetings, I was clearly an "outsider" and was not able to be a part of the group, and therefore I was unable to observe the group as a participant. Therefore, I chose to tell about my reasons for being in the group, and that enabled me to participate as an observer in both cases (Davies 2002:72). I believe it was easy to participate in a natural way as an observer, because both groups had had health visitor students visiting before. It therefore seemed to be a normal and common event for them to have an observing guest in their midst.

The observations allowed me to observe the lived interaction of female immigrants and health visitors. It allowed me to listen to, observe and experience the interaction in the disjunction between the ethnoscape of the female immigrants and the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark. To use these observations as a supplement I keep a reflexive and critical discussion of my own position in relation to the data and my informants throughout the thesis (Davies 2002:74f).

4.4.4. Documents

Other than the interviews and participant observations described above, I have collected data in the form of documents from mothers' groups 1 and 3. I will work with this data in line with the methods described by sociologist Lindsay Prior (2003). According to Prior, documents can be anything; words, a picture, something that can be seen, heard, felt, or sensed. The documents used in this thesis are an invitation used to recruit women to mothers' group 3, an evaluation made by the women who participated in mothers' group 3, the notes from a meeting where the health visitors and an integration consultant discuss and develop the idea of setting up mothers' group 3, an evaluation made by employees facilitating mothers' group 1, and a video demonstrating what mothers' group 1 was about and why it was important. As mentioned, I also use 5 interviews collected by Merantis. They are centred around the domestic violence and/or social control, which the female immigrants have experienced.

All these documents are part of the timeframe and a social setting in which they were produced. But the documents also change and coexist in a dialectic process with the setting they are situated in in the present. (Prior 2003:2f). When analysing and interpreting documents it is important to investigate its past, its present and its content. When investigating the past, we ask who created the documents, where and with what purpose. When investigating the present, we ask about the actions

of the document, its function, and how is it used. And finally, when investigating the content, we ask what the message is what discourse is used and so forth (Prior 2003). This type of analysis goes hand in hand with the ethnographic content analysis. In other words when coding interviews as well as the other documents I am aware and make use of the knowledge that these documents have been created with another purpose than answering my research question. Therefore, it is crucial to understand their context for them to give valid answers to my questions (Altheide et al. 2013).

4.5. The “how” and the “what” – Analysing the data

In the sections above I have situated the field, discussed the informants, and described the different types of data collected for the thesis. In section 4.4.4. I have started the discussion of the analytical methods. I discussed how ethnographic content analysis makes the use of documents as valid sources possible. I will now expand on this discussion and describe the methodological thoughts behind the analysis of the data.

Not only “what” an informant or a document says is interesting, “how” they say it is, too. In this thesis I aim to balance my analysis between the “what” and the “how”. I do this by letting my analysis, my coding of the data, follow the ideas of interpretive phenomenological analysis and narrative analysis. As my research questions state, I aim to investigate the experiences of female immigrants, which is why a phenomenological analysis is an obvious choice. It offers a focus on the “what”, on what my informants have experienced. By using interpretive phenomenological analysis, I balance the ideal of not questioning my informants’ expertise in their own experiences, while allowing myself to take the position of the researcher and make sense of my informants’ sense-making. In other words, I allow myself to interpret the informants’ narratives, interpret their understanding of their lifeworld and experiences (Järvinen et al. 2020: 100, 102f). When interviewing the female immigrants, and especially when talking about violence or discrimination, it was important to be aware of the “how”. Of how they used the interview to retell their narratives and thereby discursively negotiate the role they played in their own story (Kvale et al. 2015:211ff, Brinkmann 2013:35ff, Gubrium et al. 2008:245). When interviewing the health visitors, the “how” was interesting in relation to them as part of an institutional setting. Gubrium et al. argue that in an institutional setting, such as the field of the health visitors, a shared narrative appears. This type of institutional narrative is continuously negotiated and controlled through interactional control, and through the organisation of narrative resources and restrictions. The “how” of the interviews with

the health visitors, tells something about the institution of the health visitors, not only about each individual health visitor (Gubrium et al. 2008:257ff). An example of such a “how” is when I realised that the health visitors would not answer generalizing questions. None of them were rude or openly denied answering. But, to a question such as “is there an atmosphere in the mothers’ group where the women feel comfortable enough to talk about difficult personal matters?” I got an answer such as “hmm I don’t know”, or “maybe sometimes, it depends on the women participating”. If I rephrased the same question to “have you experienced mothers talking about difficult personal matters in the mothers’ group”, I got detailed stories of specific experiences confirming that talk about difficult personal matters were discussed. This silent denial of feeding into a generalising narrative is an example of the health visitors’ non-generalising institutional narrative (Gubrium et al 2008:257ff, Polletta et al. 2011:115). Realising the non-generalising narrative of the health visitors helped me to not fall in the trap of using their narrative as what Polletta et al. calls non-narrative expert knowledge, as some sort of scientific truth (Polletta et al. 2011:117).

Using a phenomenological approach and focusing on the narrative in the data has so helped me in coding and analysing the data. When doing this, I have aimed to be reflexive and critical of my own position. In the following section I will shortly expand on these thoughts.

4.6. A discussion of my position in relation to the field

As a feminist with academic knowledge and a strong political opinion about women’s rights, and with a sister who works as a health visitor, I had some knowledge about the field of this thesis before I started my fieldwork. My connections to the field are as much the driving force of the thesis, as they are a challenge. In order not to let my own presumptions form the questions I asked, I have made an effort to be aware of and reflect on my personal position in order to understand how I directly affected the field and how my perspective affected my view and interpretations of the data (Davies 2002:73).

To encounter the bias of my own position during my fieldwork, it was important to me to get in contact with health visitor from other municipalities than the one where my sister works. I contacted all relevant municipalities and got in touch with other health visitors than my sister to make sure that the data I got from this group of informants was not shaped by our relationship. To encounter my own opinions about women’s rights, gender-based domestic violence, and issues of structural discrimination of immigrants, I have done my best to be transparent and be what Brinkmann and

Kvale calls *consciously naïve*. This means open to new and unexpected phenomena instead of being bound to predefined categories and theoretical frameworks (Kvale et al. 2015:51). During the process of the fieldwork I aimed to be transparent by telling my informants about my research and about their role in it. I have done this in a way that enabled my informants to object when they did not agree with me or my approach. My success in doing so was confirmed several times when both female immigrants and health visitors corrected me and made me aware of stereotypes they did not want me to use, generalizations they did not agree with or phenomena I defined as problematic which they themselves did not find problematic (Brinkmann 2013:21).

4.7. Reliability, validity, and generalizability of the study

This section is a discussion of reliability, validity, and generalizability of this thesis. I chose to discuss these factors, as I wish for my work to be as transparent as possible, and in order to encounter the critical voices which are often raised towards case studies, interview studies and qualitative studies in general, due to their lack of measurability and to the subjective position of the researcher (Davies 2002:84f).

4.7.1. Reliability

In qualitative case studies reliability is often questioned because it mainly relies on a single researcher, and on the researcher's ability to balance the notion of objectivity, and the researcher's own subjectivity. As mentioned, I have aimed to encounter my own subjectivity and bias, by being as transparent as possible. For descriptions of how I attempted to not let my own subjectivity lead the data collection, see the section 4.4. I am aware that following my informants and my empirical data blindly is as problematic as following a theoretical framework blindly. Therefore, I have tried to always have my research question, earlier case studies, my theory and the context of the data in mind, in order to be critical of, and contextualise my informants' stories (Kvale et al. 2015:318, 320, Davies 2002:86).

4.7.2. Validity

According to Davies, fieldwork as a method gains high validity due to the variety of methods used. I aim to approach the issue of women's rights in the lives of female immigrants from as many angles as possible to elicit the intersectionality of my informant's situation (Davies 2002:84f, Kvale

et al. 2015:320). The mixed methods approach is so intended to both elicit the informants experience from many angles and to raise the validity of the thesis.

Questions of validity in interview studies are often raised because it is hard to judge whether an informant is telling the truth or not. I believe the validity of an interview should not be judged by the validity of the informants' statements, but by the question the researcher asks. When I ask questions about how female immigrants experience integrating in Denmark, I do not claim to be able to tell the objective truth of what has happened to them in the past. I claim that what they tell me is a phenomenologically true narrative of their experiences (Jackson 1996:6, Kvale et al. 2015:318, 323). Furthermore, when my informants have contradicting narratives, it is not a sign of their statements not being valid, but of nuances of the complexity and changeability of social opinions and ideas (Kvale et al. 2015:323, Jackson 1996:38f).

4.7.3. Generalizability

Quality research requires more than reliability and validity. Knowledge production can be both valid and reliable and still be of absolutely no use to anybody. Good research has some sort of relevance. That relevance is in the social sciences commonly found in the generalizability of a study, and in global studies the relevance must be global. The question is then, how can a case study investigating the experiences of a small sample of female immigrants living in Denmark be generalizable to a global level? This study does not enable me to predict the experience of other female migrants. It does not provide a method to measure female immigrants' experience with gender-based violence questions (Kvale et al. 2015:333). This instrumental case study investigates the global tendency of feminization of migration and the global issues of gender-based domestic violence, by focusing on the details of the experiences of female immigrants living in Denmark. Thereby, the study is used for analytical generalizability. It can be used as a guidance in situations similar to the cases that have been studied – if the common features of the study and the present situation is critically examined (Kvale et al. 2015:334ff). By describing the situation of my informants, through a predominantly phenomenological analysis of their stories, I furthermore hope that the reader of this thesis will become aware of the intersectional challenges that female immigrants risk experiencing in Denmark. In other words; become aware of some of the unequal structures that majorities of societies are often blind to.

5. Theory

After positioning this thesis in relation to earlier studies in the literature review, after describing the field and informants as well as discussing the methods used to collect and analyse data, I will now focus on the theory. This thesis draws on phenomenological theory. As anthropologist Michael Jackson writes, phenomenology is essentially a scientific experience (Jackson 2013:24ff). Therefore, the theoretical framework is well-suited for my present purpose of elucidating patterns of experience and narratives among female immigrants living in Denmark. To supplement the phenomenological approach, I use the framework of help-seeking processes described by Liang et al (2005). The framework of help-seeking processes allows me to explain the more case specific processes of how women resist gender-based domestic violence through a holistic and intersubjective perspective. Finally, I use the theory of intersectionality as described by Crenshaw. The theory of intersectionality will help me illuminate the intersectional patterns of the experience of being a female immigrant and suffering gender-based domestic violence. Through intersectionality I aim to illuminate why it makes sense to study gender-based domestic violence and female immigration as interlinked.

5.1. Phenomenology in anthropology

Many anthropologists before me have used phenomenology for the inquiry of the lived life of human beings. What phenomenology does is letting detailed descriptions of people's lived reality lead the anthropological inquiry. And it helps us understand these descriptions in the light of the people's ordinary understanding of their lifeworld – the place of their experienced reality. Phenomenology in anthropology is used to encounter overly theoretical thoughts and ideological trappings. By accepting that reality is experienced, we accept that it does not make sense to investigate objective truths. Instead humans and their lives should be investigated as fleeting moments of experience (Desjarlais et al 2011:90, 92, Jackson 1996:1f., 10). According to anthropologist Byron Good (1993) these moments of experience can reveal links between social and historical structures, and the human consciousness. These links are furthermore revealed without devaluating local claims to knowledge, if they are approached with the right questions (Good 1993:62). I take this argument a step further and argue in line with anthropologists Abu-Lughod (1993) and Halliburton (2002) that it is not enough to ask the right questions. It is essential to also pay attention to the subjective narrative of the individuals whose experience of and position in the

world we are interested in understanding (Halliburton 2002:1125f, Abu-Lughod 1993:25ff). In this thesis I aim to ask the right questions and to pay attention to the subjective embodied experience and narratives of my informants, while not letting their stories lead me astray. I do this by balancing my focus in the dialectic reciprocal process between my informants and their lifeworld.

In the following sections I will expand on the discussion of phenomenology and explain some of the key concepts used in this thesis.

5.1.1. Lifeworld

The lifeworld of a subject is the well-known, unquestioned everyday life. It is the pre-theoretical domain where immediate social existence takes place. The lifeworld is socially and historically founded. It is the frame for all practical and social activity with all the culture and norms, the routines and crises, the language and the biographic particularity, strategies and arbitrariness that come with such a frame (Desjarlais et al. 2011:91, Jackson 1996:7f). The lifeworld is, as phenomenologist Alfred Schutz phrases it “the quintessence of a reality that is lived, experienced, and endured” by a subject (Schutz et al. 1973:1). The lifeworld is a phenomenological concept that differs from closely related concepts such as “society” and “culture” by being existential. The lifeworld is the reality of a subject and is therefore intersubjectively connected to that subject. Subject and lifeworld only exist because of each other. They are created and constituted in an intersubjective dialectic process (Jackson 2013:19f). Schutz evolve on the idea of intersubjectivity by describing the lifeworld as a reality which is mastered by subjective action. However, it is also the reality in which action fails, and the framework that lays out the preconditions for all actions (Schutz et al. 1973:1f, 5f).

The preconditions of the lifeworld can be described as boundaries of the subject’s experience, intention, and action. These boundaries can be both physical and imaginative. They can be spatial such as the borders between countries or temporal like the boundaries of time. These boundaries can sometimes be crossed in reality, sometimes they cannot, but they can almost always be crossed in mind, in memory or in our intention - our project of action (Schutz et al. 1973:99ff, Desjarlais et al. 2011:90, Jackson 1996:10f). Crossing the boundaries of the lifeworld requires certain agency-giving means. E.g. when crossing spatial boundaries such as the borders between countries, a passport is one of the necessary agency-giving means required. An agency-giving mean such as

language is furthermore required to experience and act freely in one's lifeworld in a foreign country (Schutz et al. 1973:101f).

5.1.2. Intersubjectivity and the emergence of the self

Jackson (1996) and other anthropologists (Csordas; Duranti; Desjarlais; Kleinmann, Miller et al.) have used the phenomenological concept of intersubjectivity to describe the dialectic process of the emergence of the self. In phenomenology, a human being is understood as an interacting, experiencing, conscious being. A being that experiences its own existence intersubjectively in relation to its lifeworld (Jackson 1996:16, 25ff). The individual becomes conscious of its own self in the dialectic, reciprocal relation between object and subject. American philosopher Mead describes the relation between the object and the subject by stating that subjectivity appears through the objectifying views of the other. According to Mead the self consists of two phases: the "me" and the "I". The "me" is formed in relation to the social organization of roles in society, it is formed in relation to the views of others and thereby becomes the objective phase of the self. The "I" responds on the objectification of the "me" and interacts with the lifeworld. The "I" so becomes the subjective phase of the self (Deininger 2000). Phenomenologist Theodor Adorno states that the experience of objectification is subjective. To use Mead's terminology; the feeling of and consciousness about the objective "me", comes from the subjective "I". This means that no matter how objectifying and degrading an offence an individual suffers, the experience of the offence constitutes the subjectivity of the individual. In the words of Jackson, with reference to phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, "subjectivity is in effect a matter of intersubjectivity, and experience is inter-experience" (Jackson 1996:26). That being said, it is important to note that although subjectivity is a matter of intersubjectivity there will always be an asymmetry of perspectives, even in the most empathetic, intimate and mutually attuned intersubjective encounters (Desjarlais et al. 2011:91).

Regarding intersubjectivity between an individual and its lifeworld, it is important to note that intersubjectivity does not only happen in between humans. Jackson (1996) and Miller (2010) both use the thoughts of Karl Marx to account for the intersubjectivity between humans and things, and between humans and the impersonal structures of the social world (Miller 2010:42ff, Jackson 1996:28f) Materials and social structures are part of the intersubjective creation and constitution of the experience of reality of the self and the lifeworld. Social and historical structures have

constituting powers and set preconditions in our lifeworlds. But these structures cannot act on their own; they act through subjects whether it is a person, a thing or another phenomenon carrying out the action intentionally or unintentionally (Jackson 1996:22).

5.1.3. Agency and intentionality

Agency is a person's ability to engage with the surroundings, it is simply the freedom and ability to act, and therefore an empowering concept. Agency is an individual's subjective ability to not only be an objectified "me", but to be a subjective "I" and be in charge of her/his life by interacting with the lifeworld and thereby recreating and constituting the lifeworld and the self (Desjarlais et al. 2011:88, Schutz et al. 1973:1ff). To use one's agency intentionality is crucial. Intentionality is the directed experience of something. As Jackson phrases it "Belief is always *about* something. Feelings and thoughts are always *of* something." (Jackson 1996:29). The intentional experience of violence can be a wish for the violence to stop, anger about the injustice of the violence, or guilt and the feeling of shame if the violence is understood as legitimate. As these examples of intentional experiences illustrate, the type of experience, e.g. anger or guilt, can change and is not determined by the object, the intentionality is directed towards. It is determined by the individual experiencing the violence, as well as by the narrative of that same individual (Dahlstrom 2003:99, 115f). When an individual has the right intentionality, as well as the agency-giving means (e.g. knowledge or skills) needed to act in a given embodied position in the lifeworld, action can be taken.

Agency is empowering, and the lack of agency is an exposure to vulnerability. Without the agency to act, an individual becomes dependent on its lifeworld and is limited to accept any preconditions of the lifeworld. Violence is a force taking away agency, both physically and through the deconstruction of the victim's narrative and intentionality. When Jackson describes violence as an interaction in which "[a person's] status as a subject is reduced against his or her will to mere objectivity [...]" (Jackson 2005), he defines violence as interaction in which a person's "me" (status) is forcefully reduced to objectivity. If the narrative of a victim of gender-based domestic violence is defined by the violence and the reduction of the "me", then the victim's intentionality and agency will be affected and limited (Jackson 1996:36f). Here it is essential to remember the argument of Adorno. The argument that a victim of violence has not been reduced to an object but is subjectively experiencing objectification.

5.1.4. Embodiment

The experience of existing is to be understood not only as intellectualised meaning expressed through a narrative, but also as embodied experience. The sensory, embodied feeling of physically being in the world, is as much a part of human existence as the mind's intellectualised, communicative narrative. Put simply, the body is the locus for all experience of, and action in, the world (Halliburton 2002:1123f, Desjarlais et al. 2011:89, Good 1993:55). It is important to note that embodiment is not only the feeling of pain when we fall and scrape our knees, or the thrill when we get a kiss from someone we really like. A person's embodiment is also that person's position and perspective in her/his lifeworld, and the embodied ability to act in relation to the surroundings. Embodiment is therefore central to any individual's experiences, actions, and sense-making.

Embodiment – physically being in the world is filled with meaning. The body is an intersubjective domain in which agency and meaning is constructed and carried out through being, moving, positioning, speaking, being silent etc. (Jackson 1996:32f). The embodiment of a subject so becomes a link between the lifeworld and the subject when one tries to understand and investigate the experiences of people.

5.1.5. Empathetic processes

Peoples' intersubjective experience of reality can be mutually attuned, sometimes it can even be empathetic, but it can also take the form of positioning. It can become a negotiation of power, which is when violence is used. In both cases the intersubjective process creates and constitutes reality and the identity of the people involved (Desjarlais et al. 2011). Bourgois et al. argue that the only way for a victim of violence to regain its status as a subject is to fight back, to encounter the violence through a revolutionary act (Bourgois et al. 2003). I argue in line with Liang et al. that before this revolutionary action can happen, the victim needs to reclaim its identity, narrative, intentionality, and agency (Liang et al. 2005). This can happen in an empathetic process. An empathetic process is an interaction in which person 1 is able experience and gain from the empathy person 2 feels for person 1. Person 1 can only experience and gain from the empathy felt by person 2 because person 1 can imagine person 2 understanding the situation of person 1 (Hollan 2008:483, 487). The empathetic process is described as the diametrical opposite of violence, and might therefore be the type of interaction in which a victim of violence can reclaim what the violence destroyed (Liang et al. 2005:72f., 75, 77).

I have now examined some of the key concepts of phenomenology, but how is this ontological understanding of the world, and the self as emerging intersubjectively going to explain the experiences and narratives of female immigrants? And how will it make sense of these women's experiences with gender-based domestic violence? When using the concepts of phenomenology to listen to people's stories, their narratives reveal a complex and nuanced picture. If we listen closely, they might reveal their embodied experiences of a lifeworld consisting of preconditions and agency through a narrative that elicit their personal meaning-making. People's narratives so work as maps, showing us how they make sense of their lifeworld, how they define and experience themselves, and how it all becomes real intersubjectively in the interaction with their surroundings (Jackson 1996:38ff).

5.2. Help-seeking

To explain the more case specific processes, of how women resist gender-based domestic violence, I draw on the framework of help-seeking processes made by Liang et al (2005).

According to Liang et al. social support is crucial for victims of domestic violence, be it formal or informal. Social support seems to improve both the mental health and physical safety on the long term. This is due to the effect that social support has on the mental state of victims of violence, and on their willingness and ability to seek the help that is needed to live a life without violence (Liang et al. 2005:72). In relation to the phenomenological concepts described above, the ability to seek help could easily be defined as agency, and willingness to seek help as intentionality.

The framework of the help-seeking processes consists of three stages: 1) Problem recognition and definition, 2) the decision to seek help, 3) selection of help provider. The three stages should not be understood as a linear process but as a dialectical one in which each stage can affect the others, and where individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural influences affect the actions taken by the victim of domestic violence (Liang et al. 2005:73ff). The three stages are all part of a process of reclaiming agency and can be described through the above-mentioned phenomenological concepts. Stage 1 is the negotiation and definition of a narrative in which the violence is understood as a problem. Because narratives are created and constituted intersubjectively between the subject and its

lifeworld, a victim of domestic violence is dependent on interaction with someone, or something else that the perpetrator to create a narrative that defines the violence as an illegitimate offence (Liang et al. 2005:74ff). Stage 2 is the moment in which the victim rewrites his/her narrative; the moment subjectivity and identity are reclaimed. And the moment when the intentional experience of the violence turns into a wish for the violence to stop. Furthermore, the victim will on this stage be able to take part in an empathetic process and imagine the empathy and help given by others. Without the ability to imagine help, a victim will not seek it (Liang et al. 2005:76ff). Stage 3 is the stage in which the victim engages with the lifeworld to find help. This is the stage where the victim attempts to resist the violence by selecting and seeking help from empowering and empathetic actors of the lifeworld (Liang et al. 2005: 78ff).

The phenomenological theory and the framework of help-seeking processes enable me to make sense of and understand the experiences of female immigrants. To broaden the investigation and reveal the complexity and connectedness of the experiences of the female immigrants, I will use the concept of intersectionality and the arguments of Kimberle Crenshaw.

5.3. Crenshaw's Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a critical feminist theoretical framework which I use to illuminate the complexity and interrelatedness of the experience of suppression. Intersectionality as a framework is intended to elicit the situation of marginalised groups, and suppressing structures legitimizing the marginalisation (e.g. gender, ethnicity, race, class, disability, age, sexuality, and religion) (Hill Collins et al.2016:11, Tyler et al. 2017:37f). Crenshaw's early definitions of intersectionality, the need for the theory and her arguments for the uses of the framework are all based on her critique of the dominating single-axis analysis of discrimination (Crenshaw 1994). The single-axis analysis is a concept defining western societies' understanding of discrimination as something happening on a single axis, be it gender, ethnicity, class, or another axis. The single-axis analysis is problematic because discriminating structures rarely work alone. According to Crenshaw, the people at the lowest stages of social hierarchy, those who are marginalised the most, are multiple-burdened – they experience discrimination on multiple axes (Crenshaw 1994:140, 151, 166). Being discriminated on multiple axes makes the experience more intense and complex. The experience might spread to several arenas of the lifeworld and one discriminating structure might legitimize the other. This is problematic because society is often blind to the fact that more than one

discriminating structure can be in play at a time, and therefore often fails to help the victims and to encounter the discriminating structures. It is as if the people oppressed by multiple axes become invisible because their complex experiences of oppression do not fit into the dominating paradigm of the single-axis analysis (Crenshaw 1994:145, 149). Through the lens of intersectionality, I aim to abandon the single-axis analysis and be open to the intersectionality of the experiences of my informants.

6. Analysis

The analysis will be divided in four chapters each investigating one of the research questions driving the thesis. Throughout all four chapters I will discuss the intersectionality of the experiences of the female immigrants. And in the end of each chapter I sum up the central conclusions of the chapter and draw lines between the chapters.

6.1. How do female immigrants experience their situation as immigrants in Denmark?

I investigate the experience of being a female immigrant in Denmark through the stories told by female immigrants and health visitors. These are stories about the experience of loss of identity, feeling deprived of agency, and feeling vulnerable and foreign. Stories of how the embodied position of an immigrant can result in an experience of being invisible, and of being unable to interact with the surroundings – with their lifeworld. The research covering the feminization of migration presented in the literature review shows that the issues described in the informants stories are not particularistic traits of the experience of being a female immigrant in Denmark, or of this specific group of informants (Fleury 2016, Ghosh 2009, Crush et al. 2009, Piper 2005, Amnesty International 2006, Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006, Mørck et al. 2011).

According to my informants, the feeling of being invisible and unable to interact with the surroundings is expressed through an experience of being deprived of one's lifeworld as it was before one came to Denmark, and being in disharmony with their lifeworld as it is in Denmark. In this chapter the feelings of disharmony and deprivation is investigated through a focus on loss of identity, lack of agency and on the vulnerability caused by the former two. In the end of the chapter, I open the discussion of the intersectionality of the experience of being a female immigrant and of suffering gender-based violence.

6.1.1. A loss of identity

The self and the identity emerge in the intersubjective dialectic process between an individual and its lifeworld (Jackson 1996, Desjarlais et al. 2011, Schutz et al. 1973, Deininger 2000, Miller 2010). Many of the female immigrants, clearly express an experience of a disjunction in this dialectic process. A disjunction between their identity in their country of origin and in Denmark. This

experience is caused by their difficulties of engaging with their lifeworld in Denmark. The dialectic process in which their selves emerge is challenged because the female immigrants are unable to do what they used to do and be what they used to be to others. Their embodied position in their lifeworld separates them from their surroundings and hinders them from engaging with their lifeworld. This loss of identity is expressed by Amanda, a well-educated, amiable American woman, who does not use the term “immigrant” about herself, but who identifies as an international expat. I met Amanda at a meeting in her mothers’ group and we decided to meet up for an interview at her home. We did the interview in Amanda’s living room while she kept an eye on her baby Preben who was crawling around on the floor. Amanda described how she had always known that by leaving her country of origin, she would enter a period of being a foreigner. A period in which she in the Danish setting would not have the knowledge and skills allowing her to do what she is passionate about and, thereby live the life she identifies with:

Amanda: [...] That is why I went into education, because I thought: that’s the grassroots kind of thing, and I want to work with vulnerable populations [...]. But when I decided to come to Europe I knew that I would have to end that really, because in order to help [...] my job was to help them get into the community, to help find resources for them, and I’m in the exact opposite position right now. I can’t provide them with anything other than comradery [...]. I can’t provide solutions, and that is quite a frustrating place to be. I’m actually on the receiving end of services. I’m on the receiving end of things, so I can’t do what I’m quite passionate about. And I won’t be able to [do it] for quite some time.

When Amanda became an immigrant, she went from being the one who provided solutions and helped vulnerable population, to being a vulnerable person who needs help integrating and engaging with society. To act like the person she identifies with, Amanda needs to acquire the agency-giving means of knowledge about Danish society, of a network, and of language skills (Schutz et al. 1973). In the words of Mead, she will not be able to change the “me¹²” from having the identity of the vulnerable immigrant who receives help, to the identity of the helper if she doesn’t obtain the required skills that enable agency as listed above (Deininger 2000).

¹² The “me” is the phase of the emergence of the self that is object to others, and the phase which the “I” is constructed and reacts in relation to (Deininger 2000) .

Sana, a quiet and very thoughtful Palestinian woman has an experience comparable to Amanda's. I talked to Sana over the phone while she was taking care of her twin daughters, who due to the COVID-19 lockdown was not in kindergarten. When I asked what Sana had been doing in Denmark since she arrived nearly 6 years ago, she rattled off a long list of language schools, internships, and lower levels of education. When I asked why she took all this education she explained:

Sana: I was a civil engineer assistant, Ingrid. For 9 years I worked for the same company! I would help them sketch out drawings for houses and so on.

Ingrid: ... and you wish to go back and do the same kind of work?

Sana: Yes! (Own translation)

Sana's career is identifying for her. She was a civil engineer assistant, she felt like she was something. In Denmark she feels like nothing in terms of career, but she is slowly working on changing that. When Sana talks about her work in Syria, she sounds proud and her work seemingly gave her status. For Sana, having an education and a certain job, which she was able to stay in for 9 years, is defining for the identity she had in her country of origin. For Amanda, her education and job title were not as important as the fact that she was helping people in need, people needed her. Both women experience a loss of identity. They experience the loss differently, but the solution for both is to gain the agency that will give them access to being something and someone in relation to their surroundings.

6.1.2. Lack of agency

As stated in the chapter on theory, agency is the subjective ability to act. It is empowering to have agency whereas lack of agency cause vulnerability (Desjarlais et al. 2011). Lack of agency can be caused by a lack of agency-giving means. It can be caused by an individual's embodied position in her/his lifeworld. And it can be taken forcefully from an individual through structural or direct violence (Desjarlais et al. 2011, Jackson 1996, Jackson 2005, Schutz et al 1973). Female immigrants experience lack of agency in many ways and are, as illustrated in the literature review, therefore often limited in their private and public sphere (Fleury 2016, Ghosh 2009, Piper 2005, Raj et al. 2002, HO 1993, Özden et al. 2008, Crush et al. 2009).

Natalia is a Polish woman who, when I met her, overwhelmed me with her enthusiastic and responsible approach to life, the people surrounding her, and her own happiness. We met at a café, and while we were talking Natalia's babyboy was sitting all quietly in his mother's arms. Natalia describes how she did not have her own bank account during her first time in Denmark, because it was easier to make an account in the name of her Danish husband. She so lacked financial independence. She also relied on her husband and his car, if she wanted to go somewhere. And she never really learned to deal with the electronic systems and online information systems in Denmark on her own. Even though she has been part of a mothers' group facilitated by the health visitors and of other activities, she still has trouble finding the information she needs to participate:

Natalia: It is difficult to get out of the house, and it is very difficult to know where and when the group meets [...]. It is difficult to find it on the website [...]. People get lost in the electronic system and it is the same with a lot of other activities [...].

Natalia's frustration with electronic systems is connected to her difficulties of getting out of the house. She lives in the countryside, and her husband normally uses his car. So Natalia's agency is limited by her lack of knowledge of the electronic systems and by not having an easy means of transportation to her disposal. Similar challenges are broad up by several of the informants. Not knowing where to find the practical information about an activity, not understanding the online systems of the bank or different authorities have kept several of the informants from gaining agency. It has kept them from taking control over their personal accounts and their economy, from contacting the authorities when needed, and from using offers from the public system which they were entitled to.

The health visitors¹³ explain how they sometimes get involved and try to prevent complications caused by the female immigrants' lack of access to and understanding of electronic information. Line, the coordinator from mothers' group 1, explain this to me with a thoughtful look in her eyes: during an interview:

¹³ The voice of the health visitors are, as mentioned in the methodological discussion, used in the analysis to triangulate the perspective of the situation of the female immigrants, as well as enable the study of the disjunction between the ideoscape of women's rights in Denmark and the ethnoscape of female immigrants living in Denmark.

Line: *We had one [mother], who was very much in doubt whether her child should start in kindergarten. She was alone with him and wanted to wait. [So we had to explain] that she had to send him to kindergarten if she wanted to stay on unemployment benefits, because if you are on unemployment benefits you must be available for the labour market [...]*
(Own translation)

What Line explains here is an example of how a female immigrant is nearly rejecting an offer from a kindergarten for her child, and thereby jeopardizing her unemployment benefits, because she did not understand the rules of the system.

Just like access to and understanding of information gives agency, so does the ability to move around, having control over one's own finances, and being able to communicate. Language, and the ability to communicate is an essential agency-giving means when engaging with the lifeworld. As Layla's story exemplifies a lack of language skills and a lack of the cultural knowledge connected to a language, which in turn causes a lack of agency in the private as well as public sphere. Layla is a graceful woman from Iran, who has lived and worked as a translator in Denmark for many years. When we met it was initially to talk about her work as a translator, but I soon realised that the story of her own life as an immigrant in Denmark was far more interesting. Layla told her story with a pride that was stunning, although it sometimes felt a little illusive. Her pride was directed at her ability to overcome all the challenges, life had laid at her feet. After being divorced from her aggressive and unreliable husband, Layla hoped to find love again, but she did not know where and how to meet a man. Her children then helped her set up a dating profile. But as Layla explains, setting up the profile was not enough:

Layla: *[...] then I was missing a whole lot of words – how do you show affection? First of all, I have never experienced much of all of those things [dating and flirting], secondly, he [her former husband] only spoke Farsi, so we never used Danish words. But then my girl helped me. Every day we would sit and read all those mails together. And one day she said, “mom that guy is really bad!” “How do you mean?” I asked, “he has started writing that you should wear specific cloths, and why does he start talking about that before he asks about you, about your religion, your nationality or something else? (Own translation)*

Layla used this experience to describe how she learned that her lack of language skills and knowledge about the norms and the cultural codex when dating in Denmark, deprived her of agency

and left her vulnerable to the intentions of the men she came in contact with. Like Natalia who was dependent on her husband and his car, or the female immigrant, the coordinator Line referred to who depended on Lines advice, Layla experienced dependency on her children and their help. The female immigrants experience a lack of agency-giving means as boundaries limiting their freedom to act as well as their ability to succeed when they try to act.

6.1.3. The experience of being vulnerable

Vulnerability, which can be an effect of lack of agency, is understood differently by the female immigrants and the health visitors. Some are looking back, missing their old life; others are looking forward in frustration with all the things they do not yet know how to do in their new life. What is interesting is that the female immigrants' definition of vulnerability is based on their personal experiences, whereas the health visitors define vulnerability in relation to their professional understanding of what a good and balanced life is.

Sana, the quiet and thoughtful Palestinian, told me about her experience of vulnerability during our interview. Her Danish was not fluent, but she uncompromisingly took the time she needed to find the words that satisfied her. One word she struggled to find was the Danish word for vulnerable. A word describing a ubiquitous feeling defining her first time in Denmark. The feeling of vulnerability had, according to Sana, nothing to do with her situation in Denmark, the feeling appeared because:

Sana: It was so difficult to leave Syria; it was difficult to leave my family and leave it all behind. You know, Ingrid, the family is very, very important for Arabs. That is why it felt so unsafe, I did not have any of the things that usually made me feel safe, and everything was new. (Own translation)

In Sana's narrative, the experience of vulnerability appeared because she was deprived of the agency-giving means that made her feel safe in Syria, because she was deprived of her family. Like Sana, the health visitors recognize the vulnerability that comes with missing friends and family. Katrine, one of the health visitors, describes her observations of and engagement with the loneliness of female immigrants during a focus group interview with her colleague, Vibeke. I interviewed Katrine and Vibeke in their office. It is an open office landscape like so many others, but this open office landscape has lost its sterile, cold atmosphere to a torrent of houseplants, candle lights, a table

filled with cups, tea and coffee, and smiling women walking in and out. Katrine explains that the female migrants she has met through her work are not just lonely, in line with Sana's experience Katrine meet women who have a specific need for close female relations:

Katrine: I believe that we fill out a gap that has appeared because they don't have their family around. [...] we are professionals and provide advice on how to be a mother and take care of a child. Before they had their mother, or mother in law, who probably had a lot to say and do in relation to that subject [...]. (Own translation)

In opposition to the experience and observations of Sana and Katrine, Syrian refugee Tara explains her feeling of vulnerability as an effect of the challenging preconditions of her lifeworld in Denmark, not by the deprivation of everything she had in her life before migrating. Tara is a talkative and unsentimental woman whose only real complaint about her life in Denmark is the constant worry for her parents, who still live in Syria. Even though Tara's life is good today it has not always been easy:

Tara: After 3 months, I was not able to speak Danish at all, and both me and my husband had to start in different internships. I had to drive a very long way and came home very late. My husband was doing his internship at a bakery and had to show up at 02.00 in the night. It was very difficult, especially because I could not sleep when he had left. It was so difficult with all the new rules, roads, the school, and a totally new and very dark country with snow. (Own translation)

All the unknown facets of her lifeworld in Denmark made Tara feel vulnerable. Tara's intentionality was directed at the unknown facets of her present and future, whereas Sana's intentionality was directed at her past and the safety she felt there. According to Schutz, longing for the past is an intention that cannot be acted upon since the past is unreachable behind a temporal boundary (Schutz et al. 1973, Jackson 1996:10f). Even so, longing for the past is an experience containing a memory that can be used to define an imaginative ideal scenario for the future, and this imaginative scenario contains an intentionality that can be acted upon. Tara's intentionality is directly leading to action because her vulnerability is directed at her experience of lacking agency-giving means in her present. The second chapter of the analysis will expand on the discussion of intentionality and the female immigrants' use of agency when interacting with their surroundings.

In line with Tara, the health visitors observe the vulnerability, which in Tara's narrative is connected to the unknown of the present. The health visitors mention examples of how something as basic communication and moving around becomes an obstacle so difficult to overcome that some female immigrants just stay at home. The health visitors from group 2 and 3 explained how they had experienced female immigrants trying to participate in the activities offered by the public system had been excluded socially and on an educational level due to their lack of Danish skills and other agency-giving means.

All the above-mentioned examples illustrate that the experiences of feeling vulnerable can cause different types of intentionality and therefore different reactions to the experience of vulnerability. Similar for all the informants are their descriptions of how their lack of agency-giving means cause their experience of vulnerability. Acquiring the right agency-giving means might therefore be a way to encounter vulnerability.

6.1.4. Violence and lack of agency

I now enter the discussion of how violence and the experience of being an immigrant intersects. In the examples discussed above, the lack of agency is mainly caused by the lack of agency-giving means that naturally comes with being an immigrant. In other cases, lack of agency can be enforced through violence (Jackson 2005). Either the violence limiting the female immigrants' agency can be enforced directly or through social structures. According to Bourgois et al., agency is the foundation for resisting violence (Bourgois et al. 2003). Lack of agency-giving means therefore becomes a vulnerability and a boundary for resisting gender-based domestic violence, as it is a barrier to integrating in a new country.

Jugnni is an Indian woman, who came to Denmark to marry her husband who is also Indian of origin. In her story, which is told on Merantis, Jugnni tells about her experience of suffering gender-based domestic violence and lacking agency due to her status as an immigrant. Jugnni's husband has used both physical, economical, psychological, and latent violence against her. He took her money and threatened to send her back to India – back to the wrath of his family if she did not submit to his will.

Jugnni: *He said that "Punjabi women are witches and Punjabi women are bitches". Then I said, "your ex is also Indian!" But he said, "she is from another state, she is an educator,*

she is Danish now, she has a Danish passport and I have a Danish passport. My kids are Danish. And you are not! You are Indian stupid girl! If you want to stay here¹⁴, you have to tolerate that I am going to sleep with my ex in front of you. And she [...] has to control you. I am not giving you anything! Not you, not your child! If you want something you have to work. [...] you have to pay the rent! You have to give your money for my ex, for my kids, for me – for my family. If you don't then go back and then my family will see you in India. And I will send you back.”

This part of Jugnni's story exemplifies how her husband legitimized the violence through Jugnni's lack of Danishness, and how he gained power over her by threatening to send her back to India – something he could potentially do, due to Danish jurisdiction (Udlændingestyrelsens 2020). Jugnni's experience illustrates the intersectionality of gender-based domestic violence and of being an immigrant. The violence Jugnni experienced is legitimised through her gender and ethnicity, and it is depriving her of the agency of safely leaving her husband by the Danish jurisdiction.

6.1.5. Summary

The female immigrants' stories are stories of loss of identity, lack of agency, and feelings of vulnerability. The stories demonstrate what it feels like when the dialectic interaction between the subject and its lifeworld is not flowing in a balanced manner. The female immigrants experience deprivation of the life they knew before migrating, deprivation of the interaction they once had with their lifeworld. And they experience disharmony with the new and unknown life they have in Denmark. A disharmonic interaction with their lifeworld in which they experience failings, misunderstandings, and confusion. The migration is in its essence a movement of the women's embodied position in their lifeworld. This embodied shift in position cause the female immigrants' loss of identity and lack of agency-giving means and place them in a vulnerable position in their lives in Denmark. The experience of losing one's identity and of losing the ability to interact with the lifeworld is an experience of separation: what was before the migration is gone, what is now is new and cannot be combined with what was before.

¹⁴ The fact that Jugnni came to Denmark to marry her husband means that her residence permit was granted on that specific reason. If the couple got divorced and Jugnni left her husband without being able to document the violence she suffered, she would be sent back to India.

6.2. How do female immigrants experience their attempts to engage with Danish society?

In this chapter of the analysis the investigation of female immigrants' experiences will be expanded through my second research question. The focus of the examination thus shifts from the female immigrants' experiences of being an immigrant in Denmark, to how they attempt to engage with Danish society. As illustrated in the previous chapter the informants share experiences of identity loss, lack of agency and vulnerability, but their experiences take place in varying settings and are made sense of in different ways. In this chapter I demonstrate that female immigrants encounter their experiences of loss of identity, lack of agency and vulnerability differently. Their intentionality points in different directions and their actions and the consequences of these are varying. This will be illustrated through an investigation of the dialectic process of female immigrants' failing and succeeding attempts to engage with Danish society and their surroundings. I examine the initiation and the responsibility for initiating engagement as well as the elements that make attempts to engage and interact successful. Furthermore the intersectionality of violence and the female immigrant's ability to engage with their lifeworld in Denmark will be integrated into the discussion.

6.2.1. "Action is interaction" – the experience of failing when trying to engage with Danish society

I divide the female immigrants' attempts to engage with their lifeworld in Denmark into three stages: intentionality, action, and consequences. The intentionality of the female immigrants' experiences is a product of each subject's experiences and narratives. The intentionality can lead to action, and that action in turn can lead to the consequences of the action and the negotiation it evoked through an intersubjective dialectic process (Jackson 1996, Desjarlais et al 2011). In other words, the women's engagement does not solely come from themselves; it is also to some extent initiated by and negotiated with their lifeworlds; by their husbands, families, or by social structures e.g. stemming from Danish society and culture.

Amanda, the amiable American woman, expressed frustration over the outcome of her attempts to integrate and engage with Danish society on a local level. Amanda's story illustrates how female

immigrants risk ending up in an isolated and segregated situation, even though they are extremely ambitious in their attempts to integrate. Amanda and her husband, who is also an immigrant, among other things chose to give their son the Danish name Preben. They present Preben to all sorts of socializing activities from a very early age to let him socialise and grow up as an integrated child in Denmark. Amanda has also been proactive in the neighbourhood and has introduced herself and Preben to all their neighbours. Additionally, she and her husband try to keep up to date with local news and participate in local events. Despite these attempts to socialize and engage with Danish society, Amanda's spontaneous reaction when I ask if she has made friends or any acquaintances here in Denmark, is:

Amanda: No! No Danish people... I mean you are my first Danish person [laughing].

And when I ask how she feels about integrating in Denmark, in comparison to the other countries where she has lived, she laughs and says:

Amanda: Uh, I can't say that I totally understand it [laughing], I feel like I'm right at the beginning, so... But I'm getting a lot of inputs from other expats who are here, just via Facebook groups, and what people are posting [...].

It is striking how Amanda on one hand mentions all her attempts to engage with her local community, but when I ask about socializing, and becoming a part of Danish society she does not refer to any of those attempts. Instead she refers to other expats on Facebook. Amanda's attempts to interact with her local community have not given her the desired results yet. This might be explained by what Amanda has experienced as her neighbour's insecurity and surprise when she approached them, and by the lack of available information about social activities for herself and Preben. Despite the fact that Amanda acts with a forward striving intentionality, by a wish to gain agency-giving means through network and cultural knowledge, the neighbours' reserved behaviour and the information she cannot find prevent her from being and feeling integrated. As a result, she experiences herself as isolated from Danes and she gets her inputs in a segregated way, from other expats – people with whom she identifies.

As Amanda's story illustrates, the intentionality and actions of an immigrant can simultaneously be directed at an imaginative scenario defined by integration, and at a scenario of segregation. Amanda is driven by an intentionality striving for an imagined scenario in which she has a relation to her

neighbours and where Preben is an integrated child equal to ethnic Danish children. But she also seeks help and understanding in the comfortable familiar circles of expats on Facebook. Amanda's story furthermore illustrates how crucial it is to look at any form of action as interaction. The fact that Amanda's intentionality and actions are directed towards integration does not mean that she is successful in her attempt to engage. In fact, she fails because the neighbours do not engage positively in her attempt to interact. Through interaction with her lifeworld, Amanda tries to encounter the loss of identity, lack of agency and vulnerability she experiences, but her attempt fails in the negotiation with the lifeworld, and therefore she keeps identifying with the expats on Facebook and feels lonely.

Intentionality and actions striving towards integration seemingly is not enough to succeed in engaging with the surroundings. The surroundings (people, institutions, things etc.) need to be willing to interact. Camilla, a smart looking, young health visitor I met for an interview and during observations in the specially designed mothers' group she facilitated, explained how she as a health visitor can affect the female immigrants' agency through her work. She explained how she observes female immigrants fail in their attempts to engage with their surroundings, like Amanda. Camilla also explains that she is aware that she can prevent, or help the female immigrants understand the failing interaction. She demonstrated this while I did my observations in the mothers' group. A Chinese woman named Chun, her husband and her child showed up to the meeting late, and Chun seemed extremely frustrated. She explained that they had been to a doctor's appointment with their child. Chun felt that the doctor had not taken the time to examine the child, and that he had neglected her concerns, had acted rude and given useless advice. She had experienced her engagement with the health care system fail and made it clear that this could only be the doctor's fault. It was difficult to understand Chun, who did not speak a fluent English and, due to her frustrations, talked fast and a bit incoherent. My spontaneous reaction was to sympathise with the doctor and think that it could not have been easy to please Chun. But Camilla walked over to the frustrated mother, listened until she had no more to say, while examining the baby with a professional and concentrated look at her face. When Chun had finished talking, Camilla started to explain what she thought the doctor had meant and why he had acted in the way that Chun found rude and unprofessional. This way Camilla tried to ease future interaction between Chun and the doctor, while respecting the concerns of the mother by assuring her that the doctor was right when saying that her child was alright. What Chun experienced was a fail of interactions in one arena of her lifeworld – at the doctors. In the arena of the mothers' group, Camilla then tried to negotiate the

narrative of the experience in the hope that Chun's intentionality of her experience would be less defensive in the future.

6.2.2. "It is up to you to move your butt and call someone!"

The experiences of Chun, Camilla, and Amanda show that intentionality and actions striving for integration are not enough to succeed in the attempts of engaging with Danish society. Amanda needed her neighbours to engage in the meeting she tried to create, and Chun needed the explanation and understanding from Camilla. Where does the need to have someone to interact with leave the female immigrants? What is their part in the interaction?

Natalia married a Danish man several years ago. She moved to Denmark to live with her husband and today they have two children. For Natalia, the engagement with Danish society is working out in the sense that she has a job, and she expresses gratitude for her life in Denmark. But she is frustrated with being dependent on her husband, frustrated that she does not have the security of having her own friends. Meanwhile her time in Denmark has taught her one important lesson:

Natalia: It is really hard to find your own friends! People are very isolated, [staying] at home, so it is up to you to move your butt and call someone. [...] you cannot be lazy, you have to do something, you have to get out!

Natalia's words of wisdom "*it is up to you to move your butt and call someone*", is defining for how she has interacted with her lifeworld since coming to Denmark. She believes that her part in the interaction is to take initiative and to be available for others. The mothers in Natalia's mothers' group, and the health visitor facilitating the group describe Natalia as a key person in their group. Although Natalia finds it difficult to find friends, she has succeeded in creating a perceived identity, a "me", and an agency that makes her meaningful to the other members of the mothers' group. Her talkative, welcoming, and engaging attitude has become important to the other mothers and the atmosphere in the group.

Tara has a similar approach and is also recognized for her engaged attitude in the mothers' group. It is remarkable how the difference in the two women's backgrounds and current lives does not lead their intentionality and actions in different directions. Natalia is from Poland, has studied psychology, has a Danish husband, speaks Danish to her children, and came to Denmark for love. Tara is a Kurdish refugee from Syria, who does not have an education. She runs a pizzeria with her

husband, and she still does not speak Danish fluently after around 10 years in the country. Still, the two women agree that the responsibility for engaging with Danish society, for meeting people and creating good relations lies solely on them. Tara expanded on the understanding of responsibility in the interaction with other people when I asked if she had ever felt discriminated against in Denmark:

Tara: But Ingrid, it is all up to us! It is all a matter of how we behave and meet people. If you are nice to people, then people will be nice to you. If you smile and talk to people, they will also smile and talk to you. [...] I'm very good at asking, and at learning, and giving advice. That is why the kindergarten teachers in my daughter's kindergarten really like me. I saw that they in the afternoon were setting the table for next day's breakfast. I thought it was unhygienic, but I just asked why they did it. They explained that they did not have time to do it in the morning and then I suggested that they covered the table and everything on it with a tablecloth so there wouldn't get any dust, insects or such in it. They still do it! And they really like me (Own translation).

With this story Tara demonstrates that she believes it is not enough to approach people. It seems important for her to behave in a certain way when she interacts with her lifeworld, because she believes that this way she will be recognised and respected as a subject. What Tara argues is that interacting with people is not automatically giving agency but being able to interact with people in a certain intersubjective manner is a way of being recognised as a subject and thereby gain agency. Even though Tara and Natalia have succeeded in gaining agency through their interaction with Danish society, all interaction with the lifeworld is dialectic, and it is therefore impossible to foresee if the interaction will succeed or fail. As Amanda's story illustrated, *moving her butt* was not enough. According to the coordinator Line, the health visitors and the mothers' groups are an institution with the ability to build bridges to Danish society that female immigrants need in order to follow Natalia and Tara's example and engage with their surroundings in a successful way.

6.2.3. Resisting domestic violence while being a female immigrant

It has now been established that when attempting to engage with Danish society in spite of the loss of identity and lack of agency female immigrants experience, the female immigrants are most likely to succeed if their intentionality and actions are met and understood in an intersubjective encounter. This section takes up the discussion of intersectionality and illustrates that the experience of being

and acting as a female immigrant is not a separated, enclosed experience; it is an experience that intersects with domestic violence among other things.

Sara, a woman who moved to Denmark from Lebanon with her husband, shared her story through Merantis. Sara explains how her husband and his violent behaviour became a barrier that hindered her in intending to try to integrate into Danish society. Not until Sara left her husband, did she gain the agency that allowed for her experiences and narrative to have an intentionality striving for integration:

Sara: I feel very strong now because I'm more independent. I understand my credit card and my NemID¹⁵ now. And I can take my daughter shopping! We can go for walks and do things together. And it gives me such a feeling of strength that we, that I, can do it by myself. Now I'm no longer caught behind four walls, I'm no longer alone at home in a foreign country, with a foreign language and a foreign culture! The worst thing is that I did it all for him, but to him it meant nothing. He did not value what I did for him at all. There were things he didn't want me to do, and then I didn't do it, just to please him. Now I'm free. Everything makes me happy now, although there are still things holding me back, worrying me... Finding a place to live, go through the divorce so I can be completely independent. [...]. I wish to learn the language, find a job, and see my daughter growing up to be a beautiful woman. (Own translation)

What Sara is telling demonstrates how her violent relationship controlled her intentionality and made her isolate instead of engaging with Danish society. Sara's husband prevented her from gaining agency-giving means such as language skills, financial independence, socializing freely with her daughter, and so forth. Sara's lack of agency was so caused both by her husband's objectifying behaviour and her situation as an immigrant. Since agency in one's lifeworld is what enables resistance against violence as well as change of position in the lifeworld, Sara's lack of agency is what stopped her from leaving her husband and what hindered her from changing her position and integrate into Danish society.

¹⁵ NemID is a secure login on the Internet. It is used for online banking, finding out information from the public authorities and engaging with businesses that use NemID.

The intersecting barriers that Sara experienced can take the form of anything from a violent husband to reserved neighbours, a specific bus you don't know how to find, or a webpage you cannot read because you do not understand the language. But like these barriers intersect and amplify each other, so does the agency and resistance of the critical path. Elizabeth grew up in Greenland and since she was 13 has she been in a couple of violent and abusive relationships. For Elizabeth, education and work became the agency giving means that made the difference in her life. It gave her a positive narrative of her own identity, the feeling of being strong, and of thriving in her lifeworld. It became a way towards a life without violence:

Elizabeth: I got educational training as a constructional blacksmith [...] and got a job offer at a company [...]. And that became the driving force for me. I became stronger and stronger both mentally and physically. I found out that nobody could be violent to me anymore – I wasn't afraid of men any longer! (Own translation)

Through her training and work, Elizabeth found an embodied feeling of mental and physical strength. She gained the agency not only to earn money, be an active part of her group of colleagues, and take care of herself, but also to have social relations to men without being afraid of them. This emphasises that there is an intersection of the experience of being a female immigrant and living in a violent relationship. It also shows that there are intersections between agency-giving means that allow female immigrants who suffer domestic violence to meddle with their narrative and intentionality. The right narrative and intentionality are the first steps towards the interaction with the lifeworld that work as resistance of violence and integration into society. In other words, an agency-giving mean such as a job can be the factor that helps resist both the violence and the difficulties of being an immigrant.

6.2.4. When intersectionality becomes visible

At the office where I interviewed Katrine and Vibeke, the two health visitors made it clear to me that they were frequently confronted with the intersectionality of female immigrant's experiences. They both looked at me with a silent laughter and a subtle twinkle in the eyes when telling me how they in a "screwed" manner encountered the intersecting issues challenging the specially designed mothers' group that they facilitated. What Katrine and Vibeke mostly dealt with was female immigrants who were subject to social control and therefore were not allowed to participate in any social encounter without their husbands. Due to the restrictive nature of these women's private

lives, they were not allowed to participate in the mothers' group if it was not a mandatory request from the municipality. Therefore, Katrine and Vibeke tried to make invitations, and information about the mothers' group look as official and nonvoluntary as possible (although it was). They did so while trying not to intensify the intersectional cross-pressure of the women. This cross-pressure consisted of the expectations and requirements from Danish society on one hand and the unquestionable responsibilities and restrictions in their private lives on the other. Katrine and Vibeke attempted to help the women deal with this cross-pressure in cooperation with the integration office at the municipality. To take some of the pressure off, they arranged for the mothers' group to be a legitimate excuse for not participating in language school and other mandatory activities facilitated by the municipality. This measure was, according to the two health visitors, necessary because the female immigrants experienced pressure:

Vibeke: We talked a lot about how these women felt too busy after arriving in Denmark [...]. In their homeland they typically had their mother who would [...] help them with the children. They were typically housewives [...]. And when they came to Denmark they still had to cook, take care of the children, do laundry and so on [...]...

Katrine: And they had to go to language school and do internships...

Vibeke: exactly [...] having to get out of the house and then home again - to do all the things that we just take for granted in Danish families, that was just really, really hard. I don't think they understood why we would prefer to do things that way! So, we had to talk a lot about how they had to redistribute the responsibilities in the home to their dear husbands. The men simply had to take responsibility for the domestic work because the women did not have the time to do it! [...] on top of it all, their husbands were very interested in an extra income, so they really wanted their wives to get a job [...], but we had to explain to them that in that case the men had to take care of some of the domestic work [...]. (Own translation)

Katrine and Vibeke's reflections show how they observed and understood the intersectionality in the female immigrants' experiences of the cross-pressure between their private responsibility and what was demanded of them by the public system in Denmark.

When listening to the informants it becomes clear that the health visitors in most situations have understood not only the intersectionality of the female immigrants' experiences, but also the dialectic nature of the interaction between the female immigrants and Danish society. The specially designed mothers' groups seem to be a place that breed ground for identity building and empowerment. This happens through the acquirement of agency-giving means, and empathetic processes. When Katrine and Vibeke describe the environment of the mothers' group, they illustrate what an empathetic process can look like:

Katrine: It is a special encounter in which you have the opportunity to talk, - talk about the meeting [between different people and cultures]

Vibeke: Yeah! That talk about all the things that are at stake. All the different values that are at stake. You look around the room at realise that there are things you agree on and things you disagree on, but that is alright! It is not dangerous! (Own translation)

The encounter Katrine and Vibeke talk about is characterised by the trust and understanding that appears when individuals understand each other in a way that enables them to imagine and trust the empathy of the others. This type of empathetic process is illustrated even clearer by Sana's description of her health visitor:

Sana: We became friends. I could always call and ask questions if there was any kind of problem. I'm actually not entirely sure how to explain it [she is silent and thinks for a long time] – she was a sister to me, because sisters are there when you need help (Own translation).

Sana describes her health visitor as a sister because she, in the empathetic process, has understood the empathetic intentions of the health visitor. Sana is feeling the empathetic intersubjective process and understands the experience and her own role in it. But when asked about the experience, she does not have the words to describe the feeling in a way that fits into my Danish understanding of caring relations. Instead she uses her own cultural language and uses the metaphor of a sister and describes her narrative of the responsibility of a sister. This empathetic interaction is crucial in the intersectional resistance of domestic violence as well as being a female immigrant, as it helps the female immigrants regain the identity they experienced losing either due to the migration, the violence or both (Hollan 2008, Liang, et al. 2005).

As established, a strong feeling of identity is not enough to gain agency and resist violence or integrate into Danish society; agency-giving means are a necessity as well. According to Natalia, the mothers group gives her exactly that – it empowers her through the agency-giving means of the social relations she has in the group:

Natalia: We have a nice thing going here as you saw, and we have fun but also help each other. [...]. Because I think in the group itself maybe it's tricky to ask for help with real big issues, but at home visits and as you become closer overtime, I think it does help us with our struggles. And definitely makes you feel like you are not alone with whatever you are dealing with at the time.

In addition to Natalia's point about the mothers' group making her feel like she is not alone. The specially designed mothers' groups in general seems to have an open environment where the women take any chance they get to ask questions, and sometimes even request educational sessions about whatever agency-giving means they might desire:

Katrine: [...] The women wished to talk about puberty and how to communicate information about puberty and sexuality to their older kids who had started asking questions such as: Where do kids come from? etc. I think they [the female immigrants] had become aware that the knowledge they had with them from their homeland, and where they were now [in DK] was very far from each other. And they therefore needed a new... needed new knowledge and culture to be integrated into the knowledge and culture they already had. (Translation by the Author)

Katrine and Natalia's comments exemplify how the women acquire agency-giving means in the mothers' groups. How they experience feelings of not being alone. How they use the mothers' groups to gain knowledge and communicative skills. The mothers' groups and the practices of the health visitors thus exemplifies how succeeding engagement between female immigrants and Danish society can take place. It happens when the intersectionality of the female immigrants' experiences is recognized along with the dialectic nature of the interaction that is integration.

6.2.5. Summary

In the first chapter of the analysis I established how female immigrants experience an identity loss, lack of agency and vulnerability. This chapter has expanded on those conclusions and investigated

how female immigrants are challenged by their loss of identity and lack of agency in their attempts to engage with Danish society. Furthermore, how female immigrants regain their experience of identity and their agency when their attempts to engage with Danish society work. The female immigrant's engagement was analysed as consisting of three stages; intentionality, action, and consequences. The analysis showed that any form of engagement, no matter how well meaning, is part of a dialectic processes in which the lifeworld affects the subject and vice versa. An intentionality striving for integration is not enough. Trying to integrate is not enough. The action must be met by the lifeworld; it must be an intersubjective interaction in which all actors involved participate actively. When looking at the intersectionality of the experience of suffering domestic violence and being an immigrant, it was clear to me that the two experiences amplify each other. The cross-pressure that the female immigrants feel between their private and public sphere is intersectional and keeps them in the vulnerable position. In this chapter, I illustrated how the agency-giving means and the empathetic processes that empower female immigrants are also intersectional. They strengthen the female immigrants' position both in their private and public sphere, towards both domestic violence and the challenges of being an immigrant.

6.3. How do female immigrants experience the gender-based violence they have endured?

In this and last chapter of the analysis I take a closer look at female immigrants' experiences of suffering gender-based domestic violence. More specifically, the chapter will examine female immigrants' narratives and experiences of different types of gender-based domestic violence. The different forms of violence discussed in the following sections are psychological and latent violence, economical violence, and physical violence. The suppression and violence described in this chapter is both structural and direct. Gender-based domestic violence is executed directly and legitimised through patriarchal structures. Along with communitarian structures of Danish jurisdiction and the sentiment in some circles of the population, these patriarchal structures create an intersectional cross-pressure (Bourgois 1996, Jackson 2005). In the final section of the chapter, the informants' history of violence and its relevance to their present situation is discussed.

When reading the stories of this chapter it is important to be aware that the informants as well as the female immigrants participating in Merantis, all have entered the critical path and that shapes their narratives. A part of being in a violent relation is to not recognise the illegitimacy of the violence

and therefore the violence is either kept a secret, or not talked about at all. When a victim starts talking about the violence and defines it as illegitimate, the first step on the critical path has been taken (Liang et al. 2005). The women have been ready to tell their stories to me and to Merantis, because they have taken the first step in the help-seeking model, and defined the violence as illegitimate – as a problem they need to get away from. The female immigrants' negotiation of the legitimacy of the violence they experience help demonstrate the intersectionality of the experiences of gender-based domestic violence and the experiences of being a female immigrant in Denmark.

6.3.1. Psychological and latent violence

Psychological and latent violence are invisible forms of violence; they do not leave marks on the body but on the soul and the mind of the victim (Renzetti et al. 2011). Because they are invisible, manipulative, and often not acknowledged as being as problematic as physical violence, psychological and latent violence are difficult to recognize and resist. The recognition of violence, psychological as well as physical, as illegitimate changes the victim's narrative of the violence and lays the ground for an intentionality striving for a life without violence (Liang et al. 2005).

The graceful Iranian Layla, whose pride gives me a feeling of facing a woman who will overcome almost any obstacle put in front of her, is in her very first email to me writing:

Layla: I have never really had any of such problems [domestic violence and social control] while being here in Denmark, but if you like to hear my story, I'll be happy to help. (Own translation)

When I met Layla, she kept underlining what she wrote in the email; that she had not experienced any form of violence or social control, neither had she had any issues with integrating in Denmark. But when I asked questions about her ex-husband and their experience of migrating to Denmark, she told about events I would define as social control, and psychological and latent violence. She also told about the cross-pressure laid on her in the intersection of her private and public sphere. Layla's conflicting stories and narratives do not make her statements unreliable or invalid. On the contrary, they are a look into the different nuances of Layla's complex experiences, feelings, and understandings of the world (Kvale et al. 2015:323, Jackson 1996:38f). Layla describes her ex-husband, the man she was married to in Iran and the father of her two children, as an aggressive, unreliable man with an addiction to both alcohol and drugs. According to her, he was psychologically damaged after being imprisoned in Iran. Layla argues that even though he was a

tyrant who made life difficult for her, she never had any problems, because she never felt like a victim. Layla argues that she was always smart enough to manipulate her husband to believe that he had the final word in their disputes. By telling her story this way Layla uses her narrative and memory of experiences I would define as psychological and latent violence as well as social control, to create a narrative of a strong identity. Layla continued and told me about her dream of going back to university. In Iran she got a Bachelor of Arts and when she came to Denmark, she was accepted for a master's programme at Aarhus University, but did not accept it:

Ingrid: *Did you ever follow your dream and go back to University?*

Layla: *No. I couldn't, because he [my husband] was never well enough. And also... In all places, all the cities [where they lived], all the time he came into conflicts with other people. And then he was like "this is a stupid city! We have to move!" [...]. I was so sad because I was just like... I wanted to do what he wanted, listen to what he would say, while at the same time protect the kids. [...]. I always felt suspicious... he never learnt how to speak Danish, never got a job, so it was always me!*

Ingrid: *so even though you say that you never had "such problems" with for example social control you still had a husband who somehow determined that you could not go back to university even though you had been accepted, is that right?*

Layla: *[...] I was never prohibited from going back to university.*

Ingrid: *okay, so you could have done it if you wished?*

Layla: *but he always said "it is you! It is going to be your problems, because you are the one who have to take care of the kids!" [...]. So, I was reasonable and thought "if I go to university, I lose a lot! I lose contact with my kids and they will be mentally injured by him and his damaged psyche". I could not let that happen and though I can always go back to university! (Own translation)*

Layla described several events that I would define as an experience of social control and latent violence. But when I mention social control in the interview, Layla explains that she was never directly prohibited from doing anything. What Layla did not consider was that her decision was based on the fear of letting her children be alone with her husband. The latent violence consisted of

her fear of the psychological and potentially physical violence her husband might commit towards her children. The fear was therefore enough to socially control Layla. Layla told me stories of how her husband utilized her labour privately and for business. Of how he one day left her and the kids while he travelled around in the US without telling her when he would come home and what he was doing there. Stories of how he was never able to get a job and instead lived on whatever she could earn from her many jobs as a translator, cleaning lady etc. Of how he always criticised her. And stories of how he after their divorce still controlled and isolated her from her friends by forcing her not to tell anyone about their divorce.

Layla's narrative of her not having any of "such problems shows how she was still negotiating whether the violence was a problem or not. She defines her husband's behaviour as problematic, but not as a problem. Her way of handling him somehow undid the violence. Her narrative is cementing that she has not experienced any form of violence or social control because she did not let it happen, she handled it all on her own and did not need any help. The pride Layla shows while telling me her story seems to be related to her self-perception, she describes herself as the protector who singlehandedly shielded the world and her kids from her husband. As the protector, she did not need help from others. Liang et al. states that social support is not only a means to get out of domestic violence, but also a way to improve the mental and physical safety of the victim after leaving the violence (Liang et al. 2005). It is impossible to foresee what would have happened if Layla had had social support, but after leaving her first husband, she found a boyfriend who exploited her economically. Social support would potentially have helped Layla to not enter a relationship with a man who did not treat her with respect once again.

These stories illustrate what Layla was dealing with in her private sphere. When I compare this to her experiences of being a female immigrant, the intersectionality of her situation becomes clear. Layla's experience of learning the Danish language, of getting the extra education that enabled her to get a job so she could provide for her family, and of learning to engage with Danish society, while also shielding her kids from an aggressive and unreliable father, is intersectional. Basic issues such as the time pressure Layla lived under put her under a cross-pressure that was never acknowledged by anyone, not even herself. What Layla's experiences illustrate is how important it is to recognise the complexity of female immigrants' experiences. According to Crenshaw, to do this is the only way to abandon the single-axis analysis of discrimination (Crenshaw 1989). By abandoning the single-axis analysis, Layla's situation might have been acknowledged and that

could have made it easier for Layla to recognize the violence she experienced, and to define it as a problem.

6.3.2. Economical violence

Latent and psychological violence are typical forms of violence used to socially control others. As Layla's story illustrates, the violence can hurt and do damage although the narrative and the intentionality of the victim's experience do not recognize the violence as illegitimate. Economical violence has the same grey areas as psychological and latent violence, making it difficult to define when it is illegitimate. Economical violence also has the same controlling effects through its reduction of the status and agency of the victim (Mørck et al. 2011, Baagøe Nielsen et al. 2006 et al. 2018).

The Lebanese woman Sara who told her story of gender-based domestic violence to Merantis describe how she realised that she had lost control and status as a subject, after she regained control of her credit card and NemID:

Sara: [Now] I want to live a normal life, live like people are supposed to live [...]. I feel like I'm worth something, like I have become my own person. There is no one who controls me anymore! (Own translation).

By describing what she has gained and what she wishes to do with her life, Sara illustrates the control her husband had over her, and the effects of the violence he committed. By taking control of Sara's economy her husband reduced her status as a subject, as a person with the right to her own economy. He reduced her status to an object belonging to him, and therefore her property also belonged to him. What the husband did was to reduced Sara's "me" - the objective phase of the self, into a person who is his property, and Sara's narrative of her own identity is affected by this. His violence also had very concrete effects on her agency. Without the control of her own account and credit card, Sara did not have economic agency. In a case like Sara's, something as simple as taking the bus becomes problematic if you must ask your husband for money for the ticket. By controlling Sara's economy her husband controlled where she went and what she purchased. And because so many of the social and educational activities that give enable one to engage with the Danish society cost money, Sara's husband controlled her integration in Denmark. The intersectionality of Sara's

experiences, of the violence she suffered and of the limited access it gave her to integrate into Danish society, held her in a position, which she needed strength to break out of.

6.3.3. Physical violence

Psychological and latent violence are effective forms of violence, tools that without being physical can be used to control other human beings, by frightening them and defining their status in the collective as objects instead of subjects. Economic violence is a material form of violence, it is not physical in the same way as when one person hits another person, but when Sara's husband controls her economy, the violence is still more physical than psychological. Physical violence is the most visible form of violence, the actions as well as the marks it sets on the body are visible, and this form of violence is easier to recognise, define as illegitimate and therefore also to encounter (Renzetti et al. 2011).

Elizabeth: It was too much! I was in pain all the time, no matter where I went. [...] The fact that they [her neighbours] could see me walk around with two bruised eyes and a swollen lip! I was limping and looked like a traffic accident almost all the time! (Own translation).

As Elizabeth describes, the physical abuse she suffered was visible and a constant embodied reminder that she was a victim of violence. This embodied experience of pain is something Elizabeth has dealt with on and off, since she as a kid was sexually abused. In this quote she refers to the 5 years she was together with a violent boyfriend. The feeling of pain and of being something men had the right to abuse violently and sexually became a state of normality for Elizabeth as well as it became part of her identity. The intersubjective domain of Elizabeth's body became the physical battleground for the violent negotiation of her identity. A negotiation that for a big part of her life has led to her being the subordinate - an objectified being subordinate to the will of the men in her life. Given that the body is the locus for all experience and consciousness, the physical violence Elizabeth has experienced in intimate relations since she was a young teenager has affected her self-perception and identity. It has changed the two phases of her own self. Her "me" has become equivalent to someone without the value of being treated well, and her "I" has been pacified so she does not have the agency and strength to leave the destructive situation (Deininger 2000).

The intersectionality of Elizabeth's experience was linked to her isolation, her invisibility as an immigrant. With her family and network living in Greenland, she did not have anyone who automatically felt responsible for helping her resist the violence she suffered. Like Amanda, Elizabeth experienced her neighbours being reserved and distant. Unlike Amanda, Elizabeth did not actively reach out, but when her neighbours heard the noises of her boyfriend beating her, they called the police. That happened a couple of times, but when the situation did not change, the neighbours stopped calling for help. They started ignoring the battered woman when they meet her. Both Amanda and Elizabeth were met by their neighbours as if they were someone the neighbours did not really wish to engage with or feel responsible for. The two women experienced being left on their own, but in different situations. This experience made Amanda look back at her past and dream about getting the same agency and identity in Denmark as she had in America. Elizabeth on the other hand has a history of suffering violence, and when the neighbours reacting on her screams and bruises, it was not much different from when her parents did not see and acknowledge her suffering when she was abused as a child. Elizabeth did not have a past in which she could find inspiration for her future. Amanda had memories forming her intentionality and actions in the direction of a better life. Elizabeth who experienced violence and neglect from her surroundings as a state of normality only had her imagination and the comparison to others, to negotiate her narrative of the future. When Elizabeth managed to leave the violent boyfriend, she was not driven by the dream of a better life, nor the hope that someone would help her. She was driven by the shame she felt when her neighbours looked at her battered body. Her story illustrates how even though physical violence is the most visible form of violence, it is – in Elizabeth case – not recognized because she did not have any close relations who reacted on her suffering. The intersectionality of Elizabeth being an immigrant, an outsider who does not know the neighbours, intersects with the violence she suffers. In opposition to Amanda who is an immigrant but does not suffer from domestic violence, Elizabeth does not have a narrative and intentionality driving her towards help, resistance of the violence, and integration into Danish society.

6.3.4. Having a history

This last section of the chapter is a little different from the others in that it does not examine any form of violence but focus on how the history of female immigrants affect their present situation. As the comparison between Elizabeth and Amanda illustrates, it is not only the women's status as female immigrants that intersects with the experience of suffering gender-based domestic violence.

Their previous history of violence is equally important and determine their ability to integrate into Danish society, as well as their ability to resist domestic violence. As illustrated in the previous research presented in the literature review, not all female immigrants are equal; they experience their situations differently due to factors such as nationality and ethnicity, educational status, work experience, their status in the asylum system, etc. It furthermore seems to be essential whether the female immigrants have experienced violence, and if they have, when and how it happened. Amanda has a lifelong catalogue full of memories as the foundation for imagining possible good scenarios for her future. Although she lives with a lack of agency and the vulnerability of a female immigrant, she has a loving husband, a nice comfortable house, financial stability, and the possibility of moving back to America. All of this becomes breeding ground for Amanda's intentionality and interaction with Danish society. Elizabeth on the other hand lives under the conditions of a female immigrant, and her past mainly consist of neglect and abuse. When Bourgois et al. state that violence is reproductive they state that; victims of violence who have never known anything else, do not have the memories, or other inputs such as other people's indignant reactions to violence, letting them imagine a life without violence (Bourgois et al. 2003). Elizabeth is challenged by this lack of happy memories and a lifelong narrative of herself as subordinate to the men in her life.

Zainab is a young Iraqi girl who came to Denmark with her father and siblings. Zainab's history is different from Elizabeth's, but their challenges with a problematic narrative and a history of violence are alike. When Zainab lived in Iraq, she was forced to marry an older man at the age of 13. Zainab explains how that first night after the wedding, she experienced her life being destroyed. Her husband was not satisfied with her as a wife and demanded a divorce. This freed Zainab from the marriage but made her a "ruined woman". These are the circumstances Zainab highlights in her interview with Merantis. It is the events and experiences that shape her narrative and under which she has negotiated her identity and agency in Iraq as well as in Denmark:

Zainab: I hated myself and I hated my life, because it was nothing more than just violence
(Own translation).

The self-hatred that Zainab expresses and defines as an effect of the violence in her life, illustrates the power that perpetrators can have over their victims, in their past, present, and future. The power of the violence Zainab suffered is elicited in her internal discussion of whether it is right or wrong

of her to have fled her father and the rest of her family and taken refuge in a battered women's shelter.

Zainab: I know it is wrong of me to wish to get away from my family. But when they don't treat me well.... Then again, they are my family [spoken in a tone that states that she should be able to put up with their terrorisation of her]! It's not that I don't want to be with them, it's just not an opportunity. (Own translation)

After having been beaten her whole life, forced to marriage an older man, and received death threats she believes to be valid, Zainab still negotiates the legitimacy of the violence she suffered. She furthermore negotiates the illegitimacy of her own resistance. The patriarchal narrative in which she has been raised, forces her to believe that she is obliged to tolerate her father's violence and to stay with her family no matter what.

6.3.5. Summary and the negotiation of the narrative

Like the experience of being a female immigrant, suffering gender-based domestic violence is an experience of losing identity and agency. Gender-based domestic violence in all its forms, psychological, physical, sexual, material and all the forms in between, are issues of intersectionality because they intensify the experience of vulnerability due to loss of identity and agency. It furthermore cuts off the women from engaging with several arenas of their lifeworld. The violence the informants have experienced have reduced their subjective status to mere objectivity and has been used by the perpetrator to control and possess them. Gender-based domestic violence can therefore be described as an embodied negotiation of the victim's identity. The female immigrants' descriptions show that they continuously take part in the negotiation of the legitimacy of the violence they suffered as well as of their own identity. This negotiation happens through engagement with the lifeworld and is by M. Sagot called the critical path – the way out of violence (Arboit et al. 2019).

6.4. How do female immigrants experience their attempts to resist gender-based domestic violence?

This thesis' investigation of the intersectionality between being a female immigrant and suffering gender-based domestic violence points to the conclusion that intersections between the experiences

of being a female immigrant and suffering gender-based domestic violence intensify the female immigrants' experiences of vulnerability, loss of identity and agency. This chapter expands on the previous conclusions and focus on female immigrants' attempts to resist gender-based domestic violence. This will be done through an examination of the structure of the process of resistance e.g. the critical path (Arboit et al. 2019). The chapter then investigates the victim and the importance of identity building, and of the intentionality and agency needed to resist gender-based domestic violence. Finally, the chapter focuses on how to create an environment in which the dilemmas of the cross-cultural talk about domestic violence and women's rights can be encountered to address the intersectionality of the female immigrants' experiences.

6.4.1. The critical path is not linear – the process of resistance

As illustrated by Zainab's story, a victim of gender-based domestic violence can successfully flee the violence and still not be free of the power and damage caused by the violence. Resisting violence and following the critical path and the help-seeking process therefore does not seem to be a linear process (Liang et al. 2005, Bourgois et al. 2003).

Many victims who have exited domestic violence often return to the violent environment. This happens because the critical path is a constant negotiation between the victims and their lifeworld, in which an infinite number of intersectional factors on an individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural level affect the process (Arboit et al. 2019, Liang et al. 2005, Mørck et al. 2011). Jugnni, who was terrorised by the man, she came to Denmark to marry, left her husband for the first time when he hit her during her pregnancy. Jugnni explains how she jumped out the window and ran over to her neighbours who called the police and helped her go to the battered women's shelter. After a month she started speaking with her husband again:

Jugnni: [he said] you must come back for the sake of our child, because Indian society is not going to accept him [...]. At that time, I did not have the visa, so I also had the fear that I would go back [to India] maybe.

Both Jugnni and her husband knew that if they did not stay married, Danish law states that Jugnni would not be able to stay in Denmark because her permit of residence was based on their marriage (Udlændingestyrelsens 2020). Therefore, she would be sent back to India, where her husband argues that their child would not be accepted due to their divorce and her living as a single mother.

Jugnni's situation is not only determined by her mixed feelings for her husband, but also by her status as a female immigrant caught between Danish laws and Indian culture. In the end the negotiation between Jugnni and her husband turned out to his advantage and she choose to trust him. She trusted him in a way that enabled him to convince her of the narrative that he had never done anything wrong. He even convinced her to try and take back the charges and medical reports that had been filed against him when she fled. The police did not let Jugnni withdraw the charges and this became an advantage for Jugnni when her husband soon after returned to his violent behaviour. At this point Jugnni did not have the strength to leave her husband. Not before a stranger who was passing the couple's house heard Jugnni being beaten and called the police.

Jugnni: [The police came]. Then the police said "you have to go to the battered women's shelter, and you have to think now! You can't do all that stuff to your child!" I'm really, really thankful for the Danish police. Every time they arrived on time! And they saved my life and my child's life. [...] Danish government and Danish people they helped me a lot at every step. [Especially at] that time when he started that stuff again and I was helpless again.

Jugnni describes herself as helpless, and she highlights the police's words; "that she should not do this stuff to her child". She does not describe exactly what the words made her feel, but it is central that the words contain a recognition of Jugnni as a subject. It is an intersubjective interaction in which the police remind Jugnni of the agency she has, and of her responsibility as a mother. Somehow these words, as well as the police's denial to withdraw the charges on her husband's violence, and the neighbours who helped her, became determining factors in the negotiation of Jugnni's narrative of the violence she was a victim of.

What is essential to understand is that the negotiation of Jugnni's narrative is not linear but jumps back and forth on the stages in the help-seeking process. The help and recognition she got from the Danish authorities started her negotiation of the narrative of her husband as an offender, and of herself as someone who had responsibilities, rights, and possibilities. And throughout the process, Jugnni's intentionality and actions were determined by her narrative of the legitimacy of the violence as well as of her identity and agency.

6.4.2. The importance of identity – being worthy of a life without violence

As Jugnni points out, the people who she interacted with were essential for her in the negotiation of her narrative and therefore also in relation to her taking agency and leaving her husband. Zandra, a Filipino woman, tells a story like Jugnni's in which she does not realise the violence committed against her before she sees herself through the eyes of a person who is not involved in the violence. Zandra met her husband when he travelled as a tourist in the Philippines. Her husband and his children turned on Zandra and treated her violently when she arrived in Denmark. But when she got a child, she started getting visits from the health visitor and she helped Zandra renegotiating the narrative of the violence she suffered. The health visitor started talking with Zandra about things she noticed in the house and around her. Things such as why Zandra was always doing everything in the house on her own while she was also taking care of the baby. The health visitor also asked why Zandra did not have enough winter clothes for herself and the baby, why Zandra never went out of the house, and why she did not have a bus card, or even her own money. She also asked Zandra about the bruises on her body. Seeing herself through the eyes of the health visitor made Zandra realise that something was wrong. As described, violence is an interaction in which the victim's status as a subject is reduced. What happens between Zandra and her health visitor, as well as between Jugnni and the police, is the diametrically opposite kind of intersubjective interaction to violence. It is recognition of the subjective status of the women, of their value, their identity and their rights and responsibilities to take agency. And in both cases the women believed the people recognising their status as subjects and acted on it.

As Zandra and Jugnni realise, they cannot resist the gender-based domestic violence they suffer before they acknowledge their own subjectivity and identity. In the words of Mead, they need a "me" that is worthy of a good life (Deininger 2000). The narrative of the "me" of one's identity can be negotiated through interaction with other people. It can also be negotiated through comparison with other people, people with whom the victim of domestic violence identifies. Amal is from Egypt and moved to Denmark with her Egyptian fiancé. The couple married in Denmark and soon after the wedding Amal's husband started to be violent. Amal illustrates how she due to her isolation in Denmark lost her sense of what was normal, what was right and wrong, and what she as a woman and a wife was obliged to tolerate:

Amal: It all affected me in a very negative way. He told me again and again “you can’t do anything! You can’t do anything! You can’t do anything!” And I thought that maybe he was right, maybe I can’t do anything... But now I say “NO! He is not right!” I have been in doubt, a lot! I asked my self “is this a normal life? Are all people like this? Or is it just me?” (Own translation).

Amal then explains how she renegotiates her narrative by relying enough on her own experiences to tell her sisters and her mother about the violence. They believe her and reaffirm that according to them her life is not normal, that her husband is not behaving properly, and that she deserves better. By turning to the women in her family, Amal found someone in whom she sees herself, someone with whom she identifies. This shared identity enables her to renegotiate the narrative of her own identity and the legitimacy of the violence, and thereby her intentionality changes and enables her to act and leave her husband.

6.4.3. The importance of intentionality and agency – being willing and able to resist violence and ask for help

When victims of violence have started to negotiate the narrative of the violence they experience and begun to define it as wrong, as well as started to see themselves as worthy of a life without violence, they can start taking agency and resist the violence (Arboit et al. 2019). According to Liang et al. it is done most sustainably if the victim gets help and social support. In other words, it is not enough for the victim to define the violence as wrong. The victim also needs to have the identity of someone who is worthy and has the will (intentionality) and ability (agency) to seek help (Liang et al. 2005).

In her interview with Merantis the Iraqi girl Zainab underlines the sociocultural difference between her life in Iraq and in Denmark. When she came to Denmark, she realised that the law states that domestic violence is wrong. She realised that this was a country where she would be able to get help. Nonetheless she was unable to ask for help for herself, but helped her sisters escape their own situations. The patriarchal narrative in which she was raised duty-bound to her family and had such a power over her that even though she knew help was available, she was not able to ask for it. Though she had the ability, the potential agency to escape her father’s violence, her narrative dictated her intentionality and she was not willing to ask someone to help her.

Whereas Zainab got help passively because the violence against her became so severe and visible that the Danish authorities acted and made sure she was sent to a battered women's shelter, Elizabeth sought out the help herself. Elizabeth intentionality was as mentioned defined by shame, and with that as a driving force and her agency-giving means, she sought out help from a battered women's shelter. At the shelter Elizabeth placed herself in a position where she could continuously negotiate her narrative with good influences anytime her past caught up with her:

Elizabeth: they were good at taking care of me, and of listening. [...]. More than once I was ready to leave the battered women's shelter to go back to him [the violent boyfriend] – many times! [...]. But then I went down to talk with the woman who was on duty that night and told her “I need someone to talk to, otherwise I'm going to leave and go back to him.” And they were really good at helping! I started to open up... nothing major, I just started talking more – about my feelings and such. [Laughs tiredly] and you know, I haven't had those since I was a kid! (Own translation)

Except from being a place where Elizabeth could easily ask for help to renegotiate her narrative, the shelter was a place that helped her get an education and find a job. This all helped her feel mentally and physically strong, as well as overcome her fear of men. The battered women's shelter became the steppingstone from which Elizabeth gained the agency-giving means she needed to be happy in her own life.

Agency-giving means can be anything in the form of resources, skills and knowledge and are essential in order for the female immigrants who suffers gender-based domestic violence to be independent enough to leave the violent home and start a life on their own. The agency-giving means the female immigrants needs are intersectional in the sense that they also enable them to integrate into Danish society. The informants of this thesis are aware of this and express strong wishes to acquire the specific agency-giving means they believe they need to make a good life for themselves and their children:

Amal: I am on my own! Like totally alone! That is the thing that is most difficult – to be alone. But I won't lose hope. There is always hope. I have my children, I won in court [...] and that is all I dreamt of [...]. I have been in an internship and I hope that I can get a job soon. (Own translation)

Amal is longing for a network to end her loneliness and for a job. These are agency-giving means that could make her feel safe, sociable, maybe even loved.

Like Amal Sara considers the agency-giving means of language, a place to live and a job the key to a life like the lives of other people in Denmark. But most important for Sara is the agency of being free of control:

Sara: Now I have a much better self-esteem and I feel like my own person. There is no one who controls me [...]. (Own translation).

Zainab who is younger than Amal and Sara and does not have any children, has dreams of agency on a more basic level, she dreams of getting the agency a permanent residence permit would provide her:

Zainab: If I get a residence permit, I would like to ... I would like to study, I would like to work, I would like to be something. And I would like to have a life in which I am in control.
(Own translation)

I suggest these women dream of agency, identity and of engaging with their lifeworld as something more than objectified victims of violence. That they have all come to a stage on their critical path where they realize that their narrative and experience of identity is important – they believe they are somebody. They have understood that help is essential, and that getting help is a way of using their agency. And they are now wishing and fighting for the agency that will give them independence.

6.4.4. Cross-cultural talk about violence

This last section of the chapter will turn away from the female immigrant's experiences of resisting gender-based domestic violence and examine the sort of interaction in which female immigrants are able to negotiate their narratives of violence, and to ask for help.

The health visitors who have participated in this project are all aware that some of the female immigrants they visit suffer social control and gender-based domestic violence. But they do not agree on how this issue should be approached. Some argue that talking about violence might stigmatize and create problems if they project their own personal understanding of women's rights and a good family life on to the families and the mothers they visit:

Ingrid: [...] is the fact that in Denmark it's illegal to hit a child, a topic that comes up often?

Camilla: No not really, I don't think so. [...]. It's not something I go in and just tell people out of the blue. It would be stigmatizing if I just went in and said "well here in Denmark you are not allowed to hit children. (Own translation)

Camilla and some of the other health visitors argue that that the assumption that female immigrants do not know about or agree with children's and women's rights is a stigmatization and alienation of the women. It might hold the female immigrants from engaging with Danish society. In opposition to this argument Katrine and Vibeke state that there are no subjects that cannot be addressed if they are addressed with humility, interest, and sincerity:

Katrine: I can't help thinking that it is important not to be afraid of addressing any subject when being with these women. They are from another culture and it is okay to talk about how things are different. As long as we remember we can't take hold of the truth. [...] as long as the parties involved stay non-judgmental it is alright to talk about things such as ... yeah you know all the difficult subjects and private things. (Own translation)

Katrine and Vibeke argue that if the relation between themselves and the female immigrants is empathetic, respectful, and driven by the genuine wish to spend time with each other, they are able to talk about anything and be critical of the condition under which the women are living.

What Katrine and Vibeke describe, and what I see all the health visitors do during my observation, is what Hollan calls empathetic processes. An empathetic process is an intersubjective interaction in which the female immigrants are enabled to imagine that the person sitting next to them can understand them, their situation, and experiences (Hollan 2008: 483, 487). The empathetic process is necessary for a victim of gender-based domestic violence to ask for help (Liang et al. 2005). According to the health visitors empathetic encounters are, in their work, created through unprejudiced, curious, and caring behaviour, a clear communication of the health visitors' wish to spend time with the women they meet, as well as practical circumstances such as sufficient time and confidentiality.

The two arguments of whether or not to talk about domestic violence and women's rights presented by the health visitors, underline the intersectionality of female immigrants' experiences of suffering gender-based domestic violence. If the discussion of violence is addressed wrongly, the women

might feel stigmatized and alienated and question their engagement with Danish society. If it is not addressed at all the female immigrants who experience gender-based domestic violence might be invisible and not get the possibility of negotiating their narratives. They might also miss the opportunity to acquire the agency-giving means that are essential when integrating in Denmark and when resisting violence.

6.4.5. Summary

I have established that the critical path is no linear process. On the contrary, it is a constant negotiation of narratives, of the legitimacy of the violence that female immigrants suffer, as well as of the identity of the victims. This negotiation happens between the victim and the offender and between the victim and the victim's surroundings. For the victim, to see oneself through the eyes of someone who is not involved in the violence is a way to regain identity which is necessary to resist the violence. Another way to regain identity is having a shared identity with someone whom the victim identifies with. Except from having the identity of someone who has the right to a life without violence, it is essential to have the right intentionality and agency to resist gender-based domestic violence. The right intentionality provides the willingness to resist and agency provides the ability to do it. Agency furthermore gives the female immigrants the ability to be independent of the perpetrators, to live on their own and to engage with Danish society.

For the Danish society (here represented by the health visitors) to engage with the female immigrants and to encounter the intersectional issue of the gender-based domestic violence they might experience, it is essential to be able to talk about the issues. According to the health visitors, this is problematic because the cross-cultural talk about violence risks being experienced as stigmatizing and alienating. Although, not having the conversation at all is equal to turning a blind eye to a marginalized group in society. Seemingly the best approach to these dilemmas is attempting to interact through empathetic processes.

7. Conclusion

The feminisation of migration is a global tendency shaping the lives and possibilities for women. It is a tendency of social mobility for the female population of the globe, and it is a tendency accompanied by insecurity (Fleury 2016). I have investigated the insecurity of female immigrants living in Denmark, the women's experiences of being female immigrants in Denmark, and their experiences of suffering and resisting domestic violence. I have done this with the intention of eliciting the intersectionality of female immigrants' experiences, and the amplifying effect the two kinds of experience have on each other. Through a phenomenological theoretical perspective, I have analysed the experiences of female immigrants as they have been presented in my own interviews, and in Merantis. To triangulate the study, I have included the experiences and observations of health visitors. This has revealed the dilemmas that appear in the disjunction of the global cultural flows of the ideoscape of women's rights and the ethnoscape of female immigrants. In line with the arguments of Appadurai I have aimed to investigate the global issue of the insecurity of female immigrants by conceptualizing my field through the "imagined worlds" of ideoscape and ethnoscape, instead of through the idea of an enclosed society or community (Appadurai 1990).

To follow the arguments of Crenshaw, it has had its implication to abandon the single-axis analysis of suppression and investigate the intersectional experiences of suffering gender-based domestic violence and being an immigrant (Crenshaw 1989). The broad focus that aimed to reveal the cohesion of multiple experiences made it necessary to resign a thorough in-depth understanding of the experiences investigated. The length and timespan of this thesis, and the implications caused by COVID-19 have affected the investigation. More participant observation and follow-up interviews would have enabled the collection of detailed life stories, and intimate conversations that could have been used to contextualise and explain the narratives of the informants (Abu-Lughod 1993, Kvale et al. 2015). But the choice to resign the detailed in-depth investigation was deliberate and a necessity to examine the intersectionality and amplifying effects of the experiences of being an immigrant and suffering gender-based domestic violence.

The investigation was made through an analysis structured and driven by the four research questions and so focused on the experiences of being a female immigrants in Denmark, as well as the experiences of suffering and attempting to resist gender-based domestic violence.

Based on the empirical data I argue that the experiences of female immigrants living in Denmark are characterised by a loss of identity, lack of agency and the feeling of being vulnerable and dependent on others. These characteristics showed to be a result of the embodied position of the women's migration. (Halliburton 2002, Good 1993, Desjarlais et al. 2011, Jackson 1996). When migrating the women were placed in a position in their lifeworld, where interaction with their surroundings became difficult due to their lack of agency-giving means, and therefore they felt a loss of identity and agency (Schutz et al. 1973). When investigating female immigrants' attempts to engage with Danish society it became clear to me that their loss of identity and lack of agency often caused them to fail in their attempts, or to not even try. The interviews showed that the main challenge for the female immigrants when attempting to engage with their surroundings was to meet someone or something they could interact with. When the female immigrants experienced success in their attempts to engage with Danish society, they seemingly regained both agency and identity little by little (Jackson 2013, Bourgois et al. 2003).

As with the experience of being a female immigrant, suffering gender-based domestic violence is an experience of losing identity and agency. The stories showed how violence worked as a forceful degradation of the victims status as subjects, and how they in this violent interaction with the perpetrator took part in an embodied negotiation of their identity and humanity (Bourgois et al. 2003, Jackson 2005). They described how engaging with someone or something else than the perpetrator enabled them to renegotiate their identity, agency and thereby the legitimacy of the violence. This negotiation is by Sagot called the critical path, it is the path a victim take when attempting to resist gender-based domestic violence. The critical path showed to be a non-linear process that requires the victim to interact with others than the perpetrator, and to regain the identity, the self-perception of someone with the rights and responsibilities to live a life without violence (Liang et al. 2005, Arboit et al. 2019, Bourgois et al. 2003, Satyen et al. 2018).

These descriptions of being a female immigrant and suffering gender-based domestic violence reveal the intersectionality of the experiences (Hill Collins et al. 2016). The experiences share characteristics and takes place in the female immigrants' private and public sphere; therefore, the experiences amplify each other. Suffering violence in the private sphere and not being able to interact with their surroundings in the public sphere, places the female immigrants in a situation that could be described as a deadlock. But, as shown in chapter 6.4. the informants of the thesis have all succeeded in entering the critical path. The willingness and ability they use to resist the gender-

based domestic violence intersects with the willingness and ability they use to engage with Danish society. Resisting gender-based domestic violence and integrating are situations in which the female immigrants depend on interaction with their surroundings to regain identity and agency. Doing this is an accelerating process that strengthens the female immigrants' position in their lifeworld and empower them in their public and private sphere (Liang et al. 2005, Arboit et al. 2019).

The perspective of the health visitors provided the analysis with an outside perspective on the female immigrants' experiences of engaging with Danish society. They described how interaction with the female immigrants, and especially talking about domestic violence, was problematic due to cultural differences. According to the health visitors, the cross-cultural talk about domestic violence was problematic because it risked being perceived as stigmatizing and alienating. Not having the conversation was equally problematized, as it would signify turning a blind eye to a problem and a marginalized group in society. In their meeting with female immigrants, the health visitors experienced that they had to work through empathetic processes when discussing domestic violence and the culture-clash between Danish society and the female immigrants (Hollan 2008).

These findings illustrate how female migrants can be more vulnerable than other groups in society due to the intersectionality of their experiences. They contribute to the general argument of the literature review, namely that female migrants in most arenas of their life are one of the most oppressed groups of society (Fleury 2016). Furthermore, my findings underline the argument that female migrants not only deal with problems of different kinds in different arenas of their life, the problems they deal with are intersectional and must be approached as such academically and in praxis (Crenshaw 1989).

This study is an instrumental case study and does not provide any predictive social rules; the findings of this thesis only provide analytical generalizability (Kvale et al. 2015). Therefore, it should be understood as part of a bigger field of literature, as a supplement to the literature on the feminization of migration, on gender-based violence, and of feminist security studies. It should be read as a descriptive investigation of the experiences of a small group of women, and the findings should be seen as an attempt to study the global issue of female insecurity through a local and narrative approach as well as through an intersectional perspective (Wibben 2011:4,7). My study does not provide final answers but encourages the reader to ask more questions.

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