

**THE ROLE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL
NETWORKS IN PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR
ABUSED IMMIGRANT WOMEN**

BY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Social Work

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**The Role of Personal Social Networks in Providing Support
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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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I would like to dedicate this study to women from all over the world who are suffering in silence from abuse, with the hope that one day they will be free. Thinking of their situation inspired me to do this work.

I also would like to thank and honour the immigrant women who told their life stories and shared their experiences of how they broke free from their abusive situations. I am grateful for their interest in participating in this research and hope that the results of this study can help other women who are still struggling with abuse.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of personal networks within the ethno-cultural communities in providing support for abused immigrant women. A qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach was utilized in this study. In addition, a social network mapping technique was applied to reinforce the findings from the interviews.

The findings indicate that the networks play an important role in maintaining women within their abusive marriages, as well as in assisting them to leave the abuse. The cultural beliefs of the network members influence the provision and withholding of support from the abused women interviewed. Networks within the community at large provide more support when leaving the abusive situation, than the networks within their ethnic communities. However, siblings too are eventually supportive.

Recommendations for future interventions include facilitating access for the immigrant communities to the resources within the community at large; combining the informal support provided within ethnic communities with the formal support offered by the community at large; developing programs to increase public awareness regarding abuse in general with translation into different languages; initiating outreach programs to ensure ensuring that information regarding abuse and the related resources are available to immigrant women; and increasing cultural awareness among policy makers and practitioners as how different cultures perceive and deal with the issue of abuse.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1-Background Information

In the spring of 1990 when I was still living in my home country, I received a phone call indicating that my best friend had been killed by her husband at their home in Florida. The husband threatened his wife and mother law (who was visiting them in the United States) with a gun and my friend attempted to exit the house to get help from the neighbours. Not wanting the neighbours to realize what was going on, her husband shot her in the back before she could open the door to leave the house. Moments later the husband shot himself in the throat. Both died in front of my friend's mother with whom I grieved for a long time.

I was in shock when I heard the news. I knew they had experienced marital problems before migrating. However, they did not seem to have any major problems that distinguished them from other married couples in our country. Their marriage seemed to be going along the same path as the others with "ups and downs". As I was her close friend, she felt comfortable to talk to me about her family matters.

I always thought that being in a different country would have a positive impact on their marital relationship. I also believed that if worse came to worse after migration and things did not work out between them, they would have a better chance to divorce peacefully out of our home country rather than being killed in a tragic way. I was under the impression that divorce was more easily accepted in North America than our country, and

therefore, I saw it as a possible solution to my friend's marital problems. However, my friend did not choose that solution and I have to wonder why? Why did my friend not leave her husband before she was killed? According to the letters she sent me, their marital problems were escalating and their relationship was getting worse, but she never sought help.

Years later, after I moved to Canada, I saw the same pattern in other immigrant* women. I also later provided individual counselling for abused* immigrant women at a shelter for abused women as part of my field work in social work. During my work period at the women's shelter, I noticed that immigrant clients had more difficulties in making decisions about whether to leave or stay in their abusive situations. I also found that immigrant clients were discouraged by their friends and family members for being at a shelter, whereas non-immigrants received more support from their network members regarding the choices they made to be at a shelter. Seeing a difference between immigrant and non-immigrant women and their support networks made me curious as to how much the immigrant women's networks contribute to their decision-making regarding staying or leaving their abusive situation. This formed the basis of my research question to explore what the role of personal social networks* within ethno-cultural* communities is in providing support for abused immigrant women. My interest in conducting research on this topic was increased even further due to development of my professional experience working with immigrant women in different settings, as well as working with different agencies which provided services for immigrant women. In addition to counselling abused women, I have provided employment counselling on an individual and group basis at an

* See glossary for definition.

employment agency. I have also provided health interpretation for immigrant women, and participated in the development of books and pamphlets regarding health care for immigrant communities through a health organization in Winnipeg.

My research query was also influenced and formed by my personal experience in dealing with cultural issues in the process of integration into a new society. I have seen and experienced what difficulties immigrant women face because of language barriers, cultural differences and an insensitive social service delivery system. I wondered how these factors influence help seeking patterns among this population when they needed assistance to end their abusive situation. If these factors created difficulties for immigrant women to access formal support*, then where else could support be sought, how much support would they receive from the members of their ethnic communities? I was especially interested in knowing how supportive the personal networks were towards abused immigrant women. Accordingly, I decided to undertake research that would address all these issues by studying and examining the role of personal networks, particularly the ones consisted of the members from ethno-cultural communities, in providing support for abused immigrant women.

1.2- Rationale for this Research

Canada has always been an immigrant receiving society. According to Barbara Ward, the noted British economist, Canada has grown into the world's first international nation (James, 1996). James (1996) indicated it is expected that the immigrant population of Canada will continue increasing. He also anticipated that in some cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary, the segment of the immigrant population will increase

more than in the other parts of Canada (James, 1996). These changes in immigrant population will create changes in Canadian* society. In the past immigration has played an important role in forming a culturally diverse Canada. However, the demographic structure has changed even further due to the arrival of new immigrants from Asian, Pacific, African, Middle Eastern and South and Central American countries in recent years. Statistics show that 80.21% of the total immigrants to Canada came from these areas in year 2001 (see appendix A, Immigration Summary by Sources Area). Badets and Chui (1993) indicate that while Canada's earliest immigrants came from France, England and Ireland, since the 1960s, alteration in the sources of immigrants from European to non-European countries have changed Canada's ethnic and linguistic composition. In Winnipeg, 9.04% of the population consists of people from non-European areas (Statistic Canada 1996). This change of demographics within Canada suggests that we need continuous evaluation and improvement of our social service system to meet the needs of our population. It has been mentioned that the traditional Canadian social service institutions have failed in providing access for ethnic-racial groups (Beyene, D., Bucher, C., Joe, B., and Richmond, T., 1996). When immigrants seek services from mainstream agencies, besides language barriers, they have to deal with "racist policies and practices, as well as staff and programs that lack a fundamental understanding of their culture and life experiences" (Beyene, et al., 1996, p.172). In working with immigrant clients, we have to be sensitive towards their traditional values, belief systems and cultural practices.

"Due to differences in value systems, discriminatory conditions, and societal constraints, ethnic minority members can be expected to experience significant family and individual problems and difficulties" (Ho, 1987, p.15).

In order to provide better service delivery to our clients in social work field, we have to understand their problematic situations as well as recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Otherwise it will be difficult to develop appropriate policies and practices to respond to their needs. According to a study conducted in Toronto, 62 percent of the established family-service agencies had no formal or informal policies or practices to address the concerns of ethnic and racial-minority communities (Tator, 1996). The results of this study are important for the social service delivery systems to consider as the more information we have about the problem, the more competently we can act in providing better social services (Tutty & Rothery & Grinnell, 1996).

Wife abuse in ethno-cultural communities in Winnipeg seems to be one of the issues which requires more investigation as the number of immigrants being charged with family violence offences is increasing in Winnipeg (Services to Immigrants on Probation, 1994).

Wife abuse is an insidious and ingrained aspect of violence that women experience in diverse cultural communities. The same as all other women, immigrant women, may experience abuse in many forms such as sexual, physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and economic.

The incidence and experience of abuse in immigrant women's lives can influence them in many ways: it can endanger their mental health, their lives, reduce their self-esteem, limit their social contacts and also further reduce their access to social or health services. Many studies have shown that immigrant women do not use social services for help when they need it (Macleod & Shin 1993; Kanuha 1994; Martin & Mosher 1995; Ho

Kim, 1996). Instead, they turn to people in their personal networks within their ethnic community. The role and importance of social networks in ethno cultural groups in terms of providing them with social support* have been frequently mentioned in the literature (Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994; Kuo & Tsai, 1986). However, the cultural beliefs of an ethnic community influence the kinds of support provided (Liang & Bogat, 1994). Some ethnic communities might not be very supportive towards the abused women due to their cultural beliefs (Pinedo & Santinioli, 1991). The purpose of this study was to find out what kinds of support are provided for abused women by their personal networks and what factors mitigate or facilitate this support.

1.3- Research Focus and Objectives

This research intends to add to our knowledge regarding abused immigrant women and their situation, by studying their help seeking endeavours and examining the hardships they have faced in this regard prior to and after accessing formal services. This study also explores the types of support abused immigrant women have received from their networks before and after accessing services, as well as the possible difficulties they have faced due to the cultural differences.

This study examines the role of personal networks in providing support. Wellman (1988) describes “egocentric or personal networks” as networks that are smaller than the “whole networks” and are defined from the “standpoint of focal individuals”. This study looks at the nature of support provided for abused women by their personal social networks and identifies the strategies that the network members use in order to reduce the pain of abuse for these women. The research intends to find out how personal social networks

assist women in accessing more support, either from formal services, or services consistent with their cultural traditions. In particular, this study explores on how personal networks are influenced by cultural beliefs within the ethno-cultural community.

Berkman (1985), posits that “social networks may or may not be supportive”, and depending on conceptualization, and cultural belief system, social networks and supports could be buffers or stressors in relation to one’s problematic situation. By conducting this research, I tried to find out how social networks within immigrant communities function as buffers or stressors for abused women.

In addition, I tried to discover what kind of culturally appropriate support a network may provide for its members. How do abused women perceive the availability and accessibility of support from their networks? Some studies have identified that perceiving that social support is available (even if in reality it is not available) could be as important as social support itself, like believing that “someone cares about what happens to you” or someone would help if you were in need (Berkman, 1985). Therefore, perceived support was also documented.

This study has been conducted with immigrant women who have been physically abused by their spouses and have already accessed formal services. The reason that I have decided to conduct this study with women who have experienced physical abuse, is that physical abuse is more easily identified than other kinds of abuse. It is important to note that the networks of women who have already accessed the services might be different from the network of women who have not made use of them.

While this research examines the role of social networks in providing support for abused immigrant women, it also explores some of the obstacles that reduce the opportunities for networking inside their own communities or within the community at large*. The barriers vary from cultural beliefs (e.g. A woman should not go anywhere without her husband) to physical or circumstantial factors such as the environment, or being too involved with merely family members that blocks opportunities of establishing connections with others. Studies have shown that reliance on a few strong family ties prevents immigrants from expanding their networks, especially within the community at large (Leslie, 1992).

By conducting this research I intend to develop further understanding about the connections between informal social support, generated through networking in immigrant communities vis a vis the support offered through the formal services within the mainstream community. Providing information in this area can help human service workers to incorporate the use of informal support* within immigrant communities while taking under consideration their cultural beliefs. The outcome of this research may also be useful to policy makers for developing suitable policies, which accommodate the needs of immigrant clients.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter will review literature about social support and its relatedness with social networks, as well as the literature regarding abuse and some common cultural perceptions about it among immigrant groups. Literature that addresses the issues related to migration, its impact on the immigrants' networks and adaptation* process in the host country will also be reviewed.

2.1-Significance of Problem

2.1.1- Loss of Previous Network and Traditional Type of Support

Family violence amongst immigrants is usually taken care of by extended families or community leaders and healers in their home countries prior to their immigration (Ho, 1990 & Kanuha, 1987). In some Asian countries, extended families play an important role in handling the marital problems (Ho Kim, 1996). However, by leaving their countries, immigrants no longer have similar access to their extended families or community leaders and healers. These are sources of support that immigrants leave behind them at the time of leaving their country of origin. Although immigrants actively try to re-establish their social network in the host country and try to transplant their lives from their homeland to the new society (Kuo & Tsai, 1986), forming an alternate support system which can respond to abuse related problems may not be possible. Berkman (1985) defines social networks as:

"The web of social relationships that surround an individual and the characteristics of those social ties-that is, their size, composition, geographic dispersion, density, homogeneity, intimacy, frequency of contact, and so forth (Fischer, Jackson, Stueve, Gerson, & Jones, 1977; Laumann, 1973;

Mitchell, 1969). Social support might then be viewed as the aid (emotional, instrumental, and financial) that is transmitted among network members (House, 1981; Kaplan, Cassel, & Gore, 1977; Mitchell & Trickett, 1980). Thus, social networks and social support are two different concepts" (p. 255).

Caplan (1976) looks at social support as "an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time" (cited in Fuchs, 1992, p. 1162). Such support can be provided on a continuous or short-term basis, and may be used by a person in the event of a desperate need or crisis.

Establishing a social network within their own community can be very beneficial for immigrants in terms of providing them with social support (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Leslie, 1992). The lack of social support, especially informal support*, can affect their integration in the host country. According to Gottlieb and Hills (1980), social support can protect an individual from potential hostile effects on mood and functioning, by facilitating the coping process. Gottlieb also believes that embeddedness within a supportive social field can buffer the impact of life stressors (1983). In the absence of extended family and kin, a friend or even a friend's friend who is from the same background can be contacted in order to access information or receive help. Nair (1980) sighted that immigrants who have no relatives in Canada seek information and assistance from people of their own background or from organizations operated by people of the same origin.

However, as much as networking with people from their ethnic background is important for immigrants, overusing it may bring some disadvantages for them. A study

with Central American immigrant families demonstrated that "High level of contact with network members are associated with both a lower willingness to utilize outside services and lower level of family mobilization to use community services" (Leslie, 1992, p. 254). Utilizing too much informal support and having too much reliance on network members may limit the utilization of formal support offered through social services. This can cause a problem if the informal support system is not able or willing (due to their traditional cultural beliefs) to resolve the abuse related problems or malfunctions. Thompson (1995) posits that lack of external contacts can perpetuate existing norms within networks and if abuse is accepted as a norm, then network members may fail to challenge it.

2.1.2- Reluctance in Utilizing the Social Services

Most immigrant women do not use the mainstream service providers' assistance when they need it (Macleod & Shin 1993; Kanuha 1994; Martin & Mosher 1995; Ho Kim, 1996). There are many reasons as to why immigrant women do not reach out to service providers while in abusive relationships. According to their cultural practices, immigrant women believe that they are required to care for their families first, and this belief prevents them of seeking help for themselves (Kanuha, 1994).

In interviewing sixty-four women from four different immigrant communities around the issues of abuse, MacLeod (1993), noticed that the majority of the women do not even consider looking for help to stop their abuse. She states that the "faith tradition" is a source of strength and direction for abused immigrant women, and the available services which usually are culturally foreign to them would take away their strengths (1993). In a study which was conducted on Korean abused women, it was concluded that the women

accepted their traditional values, and "empowerment" from their point of view was perceived as a "modern" concept that threatened their traditional value system (Ho Kim, Tong 1996).

In most cultures women are expected to be obedient to their husbands and keep abuse as a private matter (Macleod & Shin 1993; Kanuha 1994; Martin & Mosher 1995; Ho Kim, 1996). However, in western countries, this doctrine has been influenced by feminism in the last few years and wife abuse has shifted from an unspeakable private family matter to a conceptualized social problem (Hyden, 1994). According to Kanuha (1994), abused immigrant women do not seek help out of their communities because they perceive the western services available to be a part of the "white feminist movement, designed not only to break up families, but as 'anti-male' in their philosophy and origins" (p. 441).

As Nishioka (1992) indicates, it is very difficult for immigrant abused women to look for help outside their ethnic communities for such a "private" affair (Cited in Kanuha, 1994). Accordingly, the dilemma is that at the same time that an abused woman reaches out to the professionals for help, she may also feel that she is denying her sense of ethnic identity (Ho Kim, 1996).

The feminist movement has probably not reached some of the third world countries from which these immigrants come, or if it has, the impact on their societies in changing social policies is not as great as it has been in Canada. Therefore, wife battering is probably still perceived as a private family matter in most third world countries. Accordingly, it is not reasonable to expect immigrant women to abandon their traditional way of receiving

assistance, and turn from their communities to the Canadian legal system or social services. Martin and Mosher (1995, p.3) believe that aggressive criminal justice intervention in cases of wife abuse, characterized in particular by mandatory charging and no-drop "prosecutorial policies" usually scares immigrant women away from reaching out to the mainstream services as they do not want their husbands to be arrested.

There are many other factors that may prevent immigrant women from reaching out to the mainstream services. The issue of mistrust, which is caused by service providers not acknowledging cultural differences and treating immigrant women by the standards of mainstream society, has been frequently mentioned as a factor which prevents these women from seeking help from mainstream services (Health Canada, 1994; Macleod & Shin 1990). Systemic barriers continue to operate in delivery of services to ethnic communities (Tator, 1996). Studies have shown that many clients underutilize or terminate their involvement with an agency due to the fact that the manner of "service delivery is too institutionalized and culturally/racially insensitive" (Tator, 1996, p.162). Adamson (1990) indicates that the cultural, racial and language differences are usually not recognized or are misunderstood or ignored.

"There are inequalities for our immigrant woman in being able and open to express and maintain her cultural values with a helper who is not sensitive to cultural differences, or who feels that certain social and legal strategies must be used, even if they are disrespectful to an individual's cultural beliefs and values" (Adamson, 1990, p. 28).

According to Davis & Proctor, (1989) working with immigrants should be done through a culturally sensitive approach. They believe that it is impossible to work with

immigrants without familiarity with their culture. That is why a therapist in general is being viewed as an “unwelcome outsider” for families (Nicholas & Schwartz, 1995, p.228). Sometimes it is difficult for immigrant families to trust the therapist because of racial and cultural differences. “This basic mistrust is a consequence of negative historical and contemporary interracial experiences. Not surprisingly, part of the mistrust in communication between minority families and those trying to help them is a consequence of the practitioner being perceived as an extension of the larger society, which often acts to oppress them” (Davis & Proctor, 1989, p.78).

2.2- Theoretical Framework

This study explores the role of personal networks in providing support for abused immigrant women from an ecological point of view. The main research question is: What is the role of personal networks within ethno-cultural communities in providing support for abused immigrant women? This question was developed based on the concepts of social support and social networks with consideration that cultural expectations can influence these concepts. Berkman, (1985) supports the premise that cultural expectations influence social support and social networks. Based on a literature review and my discussions in the past six years with professional cross-cultural service providers (e.g. abuse prevention programmers and counsellors) and scholars who have expertise in studying abuse on a cross-cultural basis, along with my experience of counselling abused immigrant women, I have developed some assumptions associated with my research which are as follows:

Usually, social networks within ethnic communities provide social support for the members of that group.

Common Cultural beliefs of the ethnic communities may influence the networks in terms of supporting abused women. Some cultural beliefs might not be supportive of abused women and might minimize the seriousness of abuse. Women's issues of abuse in ethnic communities may be ignored. Conflicts may arise for network members of the same cultural background in terms of supporting the abused women and helping them with the abusive situation. Thus personal networks within the ethnic communities may not only be impotent in providing support or buffering the burden of abuse, but they may be stressors themselves. I will elaborate on these assumptions separately in order to explain how they have led me to my research question.

2.2.1-Social Networks within Ethnic Communities Provide Social Support for the Members of those Groups

The role and importance of social networks in immigrant groups in terms of providing them with informal social support have been frequently mentioned in literature (Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994; Kuo & Tsai, 1986). "Social networks are a determinant of the social support which is available and accessible to persons as individuals or in social unit" (Lugtig, 1992). Therefore, through their networks immigrant women can access social support. Several studies have indicated that being connected with the ethnic community plays a positive role in the immigrants' mental health and in their adaptation process (Murphy, 1973; Kuo & Tasi; 1986). Results of a study on Central American immigrants, indicated that the networks of these immigrants are dense and provide a great deal of support (Leslie, 1992).

In general, strong ties are very common among ethnic minority groups (Leslie, 1992; Kuo & Tsai, 1986). Many studies show that immigrants use informal sources of support within their communities over the formal support provided by the society at large (Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994). People from ethnic minority groups are bound together by race, nationality, culture, common history, and "share a common faith and common experiences of discrimination and social disadvantage- all of which serve to strengthen in-group cohesiveness and solidarity and to enhance self consciousness of their minority group membership" (Hutnik 1991, p.21). The cohesiveness among the members of ethnic groups facilitates the process of providing support.

Leslie (1992) has mentioned that the immigrants' networks are kin-filled. The kin-filled networks are especially common in the cases where migration takes place for reunification with family members. Kuo & Tsai (1986) refer to this as "chain migration", a term indicating that some networks have already been developed by the family members of immigrants whom they came to join. Chain migration has an important effect on the immigrants ability in social networking and on the type of support in the new environment (Kuo & Tsai, 1986). Kin-filled networks among immigrants have the capacity to provide emotional and physical support for their members (Leslie, 1992). In a study on Mexican Americans, Hoppe & Heller (1975) found out that frequently visiting with relatives is associated with lower feeling of helplessness. Not only do ethnic networks provide support from within themselves, there are also some linkages between members of ethnic networks and members of the society at large that can facilitate access to the resources outside the ethnic group (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Leslie, 1992). Therefore, the ethnic networks have the

capacity to connect their members to the formal support provided by social services in the society at large.

2.2.2-Common Cultural Beliefs of the Ethnic Communities May Influence the Networks in Terms of Supporting Abused Women.

Since communities and social groups normally try to protect their identity by preserving and reinforcing their cultural characteristics they do not support people who do not behave within the group norms (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Similarly, immigrant communities may directly or indirectly put pressure on their members to act within the community's cultural norms. Many studies have shown that immigrant communities may abandon women if they do not behave in accordance with the cultural norms of the community (MacLeod & Shin, 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991). According to McMillan & Chavis, social groups have boundaries which ensure the emotional safety which is required for needs to be exposed or for intimacy to be developed (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Ethnic minority groups draw and maintain boundaries from within their groups (Hutnik, 1991). "The pulls of culture and tradition from within the group contribute at least equality if not more to the persistence and maintenance of ethnic boundaries" (Hutnik, 1991, p.23). Therefore, members can face excommunication from the community if they do not accept the boundaries. McMillan & Chavis indicate that it is important for the members of a social group to be accepted by their group in order to receive support. In order to be accepted by the group, one has to behave within the group's norms. The existing literature indicates that many cultures encourage women to be obedient to their husbands and keep their family problems a private matter (Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture, 1988). For example, according to the traditional values in Korean culture, the "good" wife should be

unquestioning and obedient (Lee & Kim, 1976, cited in Ho Kim, 1996). This principle has been identified to different degrees in some other Asian cultures as well, such as: Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotians and Khmers (Ho, C.K. 1990). In many cultures women are responsible for the unity of family; therefore, they have to remain in their marriages regardless of being abused (Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991; MacLeod & Shin, 1990). In the Latin American culture, women are being pressured to stay with their husbands; "if she leaves, she might be stigmatized by her husband and community as becoming a 'whore'" (Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991. p. 71). Hispanic abused women have difficulties in seeking help leaving their batterers due to the influence of traditional values (Torres, 1987). It was reported that the traditional values and the social stigma associated with divorce, prevent some Asian women from leaving their husbands (Ho Kim, 1996). In some Asian cultures it is very important for women not to seek help from outside resources because if they do, their family will "lose face" and they will never be able to get back to their previous status (Ho, 1990).

Berkman (1985), states that cultural expectation influence social support and social networks. Immigrant women are expected to keep quiet about abuse as it is considered as a private matter (Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture, 1988; MacLeod & Shin, 1990). Speaking about the issue of wife battering is still a "taboo" in immigrant and refugee communities in Canada (MacLeod & Shin, 1990). According to the existing literature abused immigrant women remain silent regarding their abusive situation due to the fear of being abandoned by their ethnic community or being blamed by their community members for not keeping their traditional faith (Report on an International Session Ethno cultural Communities on Family Violence, 1994; Macleod & Shin 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991;

Ho Kim, 1996 and others). By speaking up and complaining about their abusive situations, immigrant women may be rejected by their ethnic communities (Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991). Consequently, they may lose their sources of support by being disconnected from their ethnic community. The role and importance of social connections in accessing social support has been frequently mentioned in literature (Gottibe, 1983; Berkman, 1985; Lugtig, 1992; etc.). Therefore, it is important that immigrant women maintain their relationships with their network members within their ethnic communities. Many studies have shown that support comes from relationships, not from the resources (Wallman, Masher, Rottenberg and Espinosa, 1978; Granovetter, 1982; Gottibe, 1983; Berkman, 1985). People who have close relationships in a network may receive guidance that helps them to anticipate stressors and alter aspects of their life in order to respond to the stressful situation (Gottibe, 1983).

Studies have shown that ethnic groups are being influenced by their cultural beliefs regarding marital relationship and the role of women in the family (Family Violence in Patriarchal Culture, 1988; Macleod & Shin 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991; Report on an International Session with Ethno cultural Communities on Family Violence, 1994; Ho Kim, 1996). This may cause networks within those groups not to support abused women if it is culturally believed that abuse is a normal function of the marital relationship and women are expected to tolerate it. While ethnic groups provide informal social support for their members (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994), when it comes to the issue of abuse, the cultural beliefs prevent them from supporting abused women (MacLeod, 1980; Kanuha, 1987; Ho, 1990). For instance, elders and community leaders are seen as a major source of support in Asian families (Kanuha, 1984; Ho, 1990),

however, concern has been raised that they may not protect women from being abused due to their belief systems (Ho, 1990). It has been mentioned that women's network members such as friends, relatives and extended family can be influenced by the traditional expectations and tell the battered women that "they are exaggerating or must be better wives so they won't lose their homes and husbands" (MacLeod, 1980, p.36). In this way not only can networks be impotent in providing support or buffering the burden of abuse, but they can turn out to be stressors themselves by pressuring abused women to be "better wives".

"Social networks are a determinant of the social support which is available and accessible to persons as individuals or in social units" (Lugtig, 1992). However, the common cultural beliefs amongst network members can influence their supportiveness. If the members of the immigrant communities are homogeneous in sharing the same belief system, they may not challenge the abusive situation, but rather reinforce it by minimizing the seriousness of abuse. In a study regarding child abuse, Thompson (1995), describes homogeneity as a "double-edged sword" because, although homogeneity within a network can increase social support for its members who share the same norms and values, it may also maintain the abusive situation, if the negative values and norms are shared by community members or subgroups.

In summary, reviewing the above assumptions leads to the point that ethnic networks provide all kinds of support for their members. However, when members do not fit within the norms and do not meet the cultural expectations, they will not be supported. Speaking out against abuse is not culturally accepted. Therefore, it seems abused women

are not generally supported. Taking this into consideration, this study explores how the personal networks of abused immigrant women function under the influence of such cultural expectations. The following questions will be explored using the qualitative methodology described in the next chapter.

- 1- What is the nature of support provided for abused women by their social networks within their ethnic communities?
- 2- How are these personal networks influenced by the dominant cultural beliefs within an ethno-cultural community?
- 3- Do the networks reduce the abused women's stresses or are they stressors within themselves?
- 4- Do these personal networks reinforce the cultural beliefs? Or, do they compromise the cultural beliefs in order to provide support for the abused women?
- 5- If the networks discourage women from leaving their abuser or reaching out to the mainstream services, what kinds of alternative solutions do they offer to buffer the stress that is caused by abuse?

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

3.1- Research Methodology and Rationale

For conducting this research a qualitative design was used with an ethnographic approach. My decision to use the qualitative method was based on the suitability of this methodology for research which deals with vulnerable human beings. Unlike quantitative methods which encourage utilizing standard instruments for studying the subjects, qualitative research aims to understand “how people live” and “what captivates and distresses them” (Tutty, Rothery & Grinnell, 1996). The qualitative approach suited my research better, as my intent was to understand how immigrant women received support in abusive situations and how they perceived the support provided to them. In this research I explored a social phenomenon (social networks of abused immigrant women) and its impact on providing support for this group of people in their social setting. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that qualitative methods are useful in illustrating the complicated details of a phenomenon that is difficult to articulate with a quantitative approach.

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study social phenomena by looking at relationships within a system or culture and focusing on understanding a given social setting, not necessarily on making predictions about that setting. The purpose of this research was to understand the nature of support provided for abused women not to test any pre-existing hypotheses. Therefore using a qualitative method was more suitable for my research. As Goldstein (1991), indicates, in qualitative methods “the research intent is not

to test or prove some preliminary assumption about the question; its purpose is to discover, explain or interpret or to fashion a more systematic way of understanding what, at the outset, appears to be an obscure, perhaps ambiguous human event or situation" (p. 104).

Qualitative designs allow the researcher to study phenomena from the participants' perspective. This fits well with my quest to gain a comprehensive understanding about my research participants' experiences in terms of receiving support according to their perception of it. Reality is considered to be a construct and not an objective fact. People shape their respective realities to make sense of their day to day living activities (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The intent of this study was to explore not only the existence of social support for abused women, but also the aspects of their experiences that are unique to them and shape their perception of the availability of this support.

3.2- Ethnographic Approach

I chose the ethnographic approach because of its capacity to assist in understanding the participants' viewpoints within the context of their cultural beliefs. "Ethnography, one of many kinds of qualitative research, employs cultural theory, which emphasizes part-whole relationships, context, and multiple perspectives" (Sands, 1990. p. 115). This methodology suited my research as it was dealing with two concepts of "support" and "abuse" which could be perceived and interpreted differently by different people.

In order to have a proper understanding of any particular action or event, it should be viewed in its context and in relation with other actions and events (Hammersley, 1981). Since abuse in the minority community is a complex issue stemming from different cultural

beliefs, environmental factors and the personal attitude of the “abused” and the “abuser”, the type of support provided for this matter could be influenced by these factors. Thus, the concept of support for abused women needed to be studied within the natural context and in relationship to other influential factors. In ethnography “empirical description of social phenomena requires not simply the documentation of physical behaviour but the attribution to participants of intentions, motives, and perspectives” (Hamersley, 1981. p. 210). Accordingly, using an ethnographic approach allowed me not only to study support, but also to explore the women’s perception of what they have received as support.

In ethnography, similar to other naturalistic research, the human is the essential instrument for data gathering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When humans study other humans, they can apprehend and accustom themselves to the demands of a situation, thereby they can identify the problem within its context and they can ask proper questions to clarify what is happening (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, ethnography provided me with the suitable framework that I needed in my research for studying other humans.

In the ethnographic approach the researcher enters into the social field and participates in the social world which is being studied. Therefore, the researcher is not a “detached or dispassionate observer”, but rather is part of the study and becomes an active component of the social system that is being explored. Ethnography is referred to as the entry of a researcher into the action of a social setting or situation in order to study the meaning of behaviours and attitudes (Goldstein, 1991). I needed to get close to my research participants in order to understand their personal and social circumstances. Ethnography was a suitable methodology for my research as it allowed me to get into the social field of

my research participants in order to explore their social networks. For example, I have seen my participants in their interaction with their family members (teenage children), separated husband and their kin related or extended family members. I also have entered their social settings such as their work places, community meetings, informal praying groups at their homes, shopping, and social gatherings such as picnic, and music and dancing socials.

Entering into my participants' social field provided me an opportunity to be engaged in their social setting in order to better understand the relationships, events and the roles that were patterned in their lives, as well as their interactions with their network members. Even though my observations were not used for data analysis, they helped me to better understand the information my participants provided within the context of their experiences. While my observations were not included in my data analysis, they helped me to ask the right questions in order to get more reflective and profound information.

Even though, I had been involved with different ethnic communities in Winnipeg since I came to Canada and had been studying their cultural perceptions in relation to abuse, entering participants' social setting provided me with more in depth and detailed information. My previous knowledge of the cultural practices amongst different ethnic communities helped me to ask the proper questions in order to get better information about how the common cultural beliefs in their communities influenced the support they received. As Sands (1990) indicates, although theories affect ethnographic research, they do not arbitrate what is studied. Prior knowledge can help the researcher gain a general idea about the questions to be asked, the group of people to be considered for the study, the type of related information which already exists, and the type of data that needs to be collected

(Zaharlick & Green, cited in Sand, 1990). However, “the researcher does not make prediction, based on the theory, about the direction of the findings” (Sand, 1990. p.118).

The intent of this study was to drive themes from the data.

3.3- Sampling/ Research Recruitment

3.3.1- Sampling Process

In the recruitment stage of the study, I prepared written information about my research to be distributed to the organizations that provide services for abused women. I placed the written information on bulletin boards of many social service organisations in Winnipeg and asked for volunteers to contact me in confidence (Appendix B).

I also contacted counsellors of the organizations who facilitate groups for abused women and asked them to pass on written information about my research in their group sessions. In this manner, if any of the women wanted to participate, they could contact me confidentially. Also, I contacted my immigrant women acquaintances and asked them to pass on the information about the study to their friends and associates. I further incorporated a “snowball” method for sampling. Creswell (1998) posits that snowball sampling “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (p.119). I asked the research participants to pass the information to their friends and ask them to contact me confidentially if they were interested in participating in this study.

Before beginning the interviews, all the research participants were informed about the research objectives, and were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E). I asked for

permission to audio tape. Four interviewees agreed. I took notes in the other two interviews since the women did not want to be tape recorded.

In recruiting research participants, I was able to recruit women from two different world regions. Although, Creswell (1998), considers 10 subjects to be a reasonable size for research which utilizes in depth interviews, saturation was my standard for deciding on the number of research participants needed to obtain credible findings. As did Morse (1994) I sought "indices of saturation, such as repetition in the information obtained and confirmation of previously collected data" (p.230). After 6 interviews I reached this point and I realized that my data was saturated.

3.3.2- Sampling Criteria

In recruiting research participants, there was no time requirement for residency in Canada, since there is no exact time frame for adapting to a new culture. As MacLeod & Shin (1993) noted, immigrant women may live in Canada for years after they become Canadian citizens and yet, not be adapted to mainstream culture. In their report, MacLeod & Shin (1993) indicated that there are many immigrant women who are Canadian citizens and have lived in Canada for more than thirty years, yet are not able to speak English and are being abused by their husbands. In this study, the participants had to be able to communicate in English as interpreters were not used. There were two important reasons for not using any interpreter; the first was the sensitivity of the topic. As Fontana and Frey (1994) indicate people do not feel comfortable talking about their personal situation in front of an interpreter. The second was to ensure that the data gathering process was not being affected by yet another perspective, that of the interpreter. Freeman (1983) posits that

researchers who rely on interpreters “become vulnerable to an added layer of meanings, biases, and interpretations that may lead to disastrous misunderstanding” (cited in Fontana and Frey, 1994).

I was aware that conducting interviews with people who spoke English as their second language would offer challenges such as dealing with different accents and cultural meanings of words. However, I tried to overcome the language difficulties by repeating, rewording, restating and rephrasing the sentences as many time as needed, until I was certain that the concept was well understood and the true meanings of the words were correctly captured by both myself and the participant.

Although it has been mentioned that a culture should be studied by the members of the same culture (Tutty & Rothery & Grinnell, 1996), in an ethnographic study, the researcher is encouraged to select a group to which he or she is a “stranger” but has access (Creswell, 1998). Creswell, advises researchers to avoid conducting ethnographic research on the site or with the people or culture in which they have a vested interest (1998). He describes this kind of research as studying “one’s backyard”. This is one of the reasons that I decided not to limit this research to women from one ethnic group, and not to focus on my own ethnic community.

“Studying such people or sites establishes expectations for data collection that may severely compromise the value of the data; the individual might withhold information, slant information toward what they want the researcher to hear, or provide dangerous knowledge that is political and risky for an inside investigator” (Creswell, 1998. p. 114).

Furthermore, since different ethnic networks may provide different types of support for their abused women, I believed it was worthwhile to study this issue on a cross-cultural basis. Most studies on minorities have focused on a single ethnic group and very little collaborative research has been conducted on a cross-cultural basis (Wong, 1982).

3.4- Advisory Group

Green, believes that in working with minorities the best way of learning their culture is “combining reading, listening, watching, and consulting with knowledgeable insiders” (Green, 1995, p. 88). Using my personal and professional connections, I identified some of the knowledgeable insiders of different immigrant communities who could assist me in this study. As Creswell (1998) indicates these people who have “insider” status with the cultural groups can be used as the “gatekeepers” to relate and lead the researcher to other informants. I had no influence over the gatekeepers as our professional relationships were based on mutual respect.

An advisory group of well-informed members of the research participants’ communities was organized. This group was formed after the interviews were completed. The group consisted of three Latin American women who worked in social services in Winnipeg; two of them were working as counsellors for abused women. Two advisors from the Pacific Regents (one Chinese and one Vietnamese) also worked in the social services, one as a counsellor for abused women and the other as a women’s health advisor.

The purpose of constituting an advisory group was to get feedback regarding the research process and findings. The advisory group explained some of the cultural and

religious rules and regulations in their homelands. The members of this group helped guide me and translated cultural mores and norms and ambiguities in the interview data whenever it was needed.

3.5-Research Techniques

3.5.1- Data Collection/ Interviewing

Unstructured in-depth interviewing was the primary strategy for data gathering in this research. Fontana and Frey posit that the main purpose of unstructured interviewing is to establish a human to human relationship in order to “understand rather than to explain” the participants culture, language, and way of life (1994). This made the unstructured interview a suitable method for my research as in this study the major objective was to understand the nature of the support provided for abused immigrant women by their social networks. Due to its flexible style, unstructured interviewing has been recommended to be used in studies which deal with people’s difficult experiences, especially in exploring the issue of wife abuse (Hyden, 1994; Riessman, 1994). According to Pope and Denicolo (1986) interviewing provides flexibility for the researcher to follow up the areas which seem to be more important to the interviewees. This flexibility provided me an opportunity to further explore the subject matters that appeared to be significant for the participants. In this way, I collected richer data.

I allowed the interviews to be constructed by the research participants in a joint process with myself. There are many similarities in qualitative research and social work practice interviewing with clients and consumers of our services (Yegidis, B. L., Weinbach, R. W. & Morrison-Rodrigues, B., 1996). It has been mentioned that interviewing and

communication skills, rapport building, the ability to build and maintain relationships, verbal and non verbal data gathering are the requisite skills for undertaking qualitative research (Yegidis et al. (1996). Through my education and work experience, I had gained these skills.

During the interview sessions, I encouraged the research participants to bring examples when describing a situation. One of the positive aspects of interviewing was that it gave participants an opportunity to illustrate their answers with examples. According to Pope and Denicolo, (1986) bringing examples “allows the interviewee to retain their autonomy while facilitating the interviewer’s attempts to provide as full a description as possible” (p. 154).

Since the issue of abuse was a sensitive subject, it was essential for me to establish rapport with my research participants. “Close rapport with respondents opens doors to more informed research” (Fontana & Frey, 1994. p. 367). Consequently, developing trust was important in conducting interviews. I showed sympathy toward my research participants and when it was appropriate, shared some of my own experiences as an immigrant female whose ethnic community’s cultural values were sometime different than the values of the society at large. By making these disclosures I reduced the status differences between the research participants and myself and established more trust. Moving away from the traditional hierarchical atmosphere in interviewing, can have a better result (Lather, 1986; Fontana & Frey, 1994). Thus, in contrast with traditional methods of interviewing where the interviewers are not supposed to self-disclose, in an unstructured same gender interview, they are encouraged to show their human side and respond to questions and

speak of their feelings (Fontana & Frey, 1994. p. 370). In describing unstructured interviewing, Lather (1986) indicates that “interviews are conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner that requires self-disclosure” (p. 266).

Furthermore my gender also helped me in establishing rapport with the participants. As a woman who similarly has experienced a culture that was mostly male oriented, the participants felt close to me. Fontana & Frey (1994) indicate that the interviewer’s gender, “especially in highly sex-segregated societies” may affect the level of trust within the interview.

The interviews were scheduled according to the participants’ convenience in terms of time and place. Each interview took from one and a half to two and a half hours. Interviews were conducted based on the interview guide that outlined the areas of interest and the probes (Appendix C). In order to better understand the participants’ situations and the context of their experiences, some socio-demographic information was also collected (Appendix D).

3.5.2- Second Interview

Padgett (1998) states that: “sometimes the truth only comes out in the second or third (or fourth) interview” (p.96). As much as possible, second interviews were conducted in order to confirm the results of this study with the research participants and to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. Repeating interviews has been recommended by some scholars in order to reduce the chance of biases (Lather, 1986; Pope & Denicolo, 1986). In the second interviews not only did I have a chance to confirm the accuracy of the

findings but also to gain more information through additional examples the participants provided. As Glaser indicates “often informants will be able to confirm immediately the accuracy and validity of the study, and may even, offer additional stories to confirm the model further” (Cited in Morse, 1994. p. 230). Through the second interviews I also had an opportunity to clarify any discrepancies and reach deeper levels of understanding.

3.5.3 Field Notes and Observation

Even though participant observation was not the primary technique in this study, I could not help observing the participants’ behavior in conducting the interviews. I took notes during each interview session and included my observations of the participants’ behavior. For instance, I recorded when they cried or showed frustration while telling their stories, as well as noting happiness too. Taking notes of the participants’ behavior within the interview session helped me to better understand what was said and how the women felt about it.

Some of the women showed their family pictures to me; others took me for a tour inside their house to show me their ethnic art or their hand made crafts. I also saw the women within their social settings, in different situations other than the interview sessions. I saw the women’s interaction with their friends, children or other relatives even with their abuser (in one instance). My observations of their behaviour in different settings in which I saw them were not used for data analysis; however, they helped me to better understand my data. Seeing the participants’ family pictures, ethnic art and crafts, home decoration and especially their interactions with their network members, provided me an opportunity to better understand their intentions, motives, and perspectives. Sand (1990) indicates that

“the ethnographic researcher tries to understand (rather than explain) the diverse context in which meaning is created collaboratively in the culture” (p.117). Although my observations of the participants in their social setting were not included in my data analysis, they enabled me to ask the proper questions in order to get more detailed and in depth information.

3.5.4-Network Mapping

Network mapping was another technique that was used in this study. Using this technique allowed me to identify and visually display the network composition and membership of each participant. In addition to the information revealed by the maps about the social connections, some specific questions were asked to identify the function of the network relationships (Appendix C). The responses to these questions were recorded in order to identify the type of support provided and the nature of the relationships. For example, who provided what type of support and which relationships were conflicted and which ones were reciprocal.

By asking questions like “who did you tell”, I identified the approachable people in the participants’ networks who were perceived as source of support for them. Furthermore, by questioning “how did they respond when you told them about your situation” and “how did you react to this”, I gained more information as what kind of support was provided. By further probing with questions like, “how did you feel after hearing their response” I invited the participants to transform their personal experiences into a description which increased my understanding of how the people in their networks made them feel, i.e. whether they felt supported, more stressed, etc...With these open-ended questions, I was able to identify the sources of support in the participants’ social field and the role of

informal support available to them as they perceived it. Tracy and Whittaker (1990) indicate that use of network maps along with qualitative research allows us to “evaluate several aspects of informal support: (1) existing informal resources, (2) potential informal resources not currently utilized by the client, (3) barriers to involving social network resources, and (4) factors to be considered and weighed in the decision to incorporate informal resources in the formal service plan” (p.462).

3.5.5- Eco-Maps

In addition to network maps, eco-maps were used to illustrate some of the interview findings. This technique was used to demonstrate and visually compare the women’s utilization of the social service agencies prior to and after their separation. While the network maps provided information on women’s relationships with others from their standpoint as focal individuals, the eco-maps showed the connections between their family system as a whole and their social surroundings. This technique also helped to identify the nurturing or conflictual relationships between the women’s families and the other systems within their social settings.

3.6-Data Analysis

3.6.1-Sources and Process of Data Analysis

My primary data came from the interviews and my field notes and later on the results of these were illustrated and highlighted by the information revealed from the network maps.

My field notes included my observations of the participants' behaviour during the interview session. According to Tutty "the analysis is not a one-step process, but involves considering the fit of each piece of data in relationship to all the other pieces" (1996, p. 90). In ethnographic research, data analysis should be done concurrently with data gathering as an ongoing activity. Therefore, I was constantly moving back and forth between initial and later interviews to pull out units of meaning and categories to interpret data as I was going along. As Tutty (1996) recommended, I blended data collection and data analysis and this allowed me to continue interviewing women until I reached saturation. The same method was applied consistently for the process of data collection and data analysis, as I was rigorous in my interviewing and in developing and applying the rules for coding the data. There was a continual reassessment and refining of concepts as my study proceeded. The information was cross-checked and confirmed constantly.

3.6.2- Transcribing Raw Data

I transcribed the data from audio-tapes to provide a written record of the interviews. The transcribing consisted of more than just the words spoken by the research participant during the interview. I also, included comments that reflected the non-verbal interactions such as pauses, nervous moments, excitement, laughing and crying. This along with my own interview notes allowed me to understand the context of the conversation better. I did not censor or edit anything during the process of transcription, as I did not want to jeopardize the meaning of the data to be changed. Doing so can "conceal the meaning of the text" (Tutty, et al., 1996. p. 95).

I read all the transcripts of the preceding interviews one more time before starting the next interview. This gave me an opportunity to familiarize myself with the data available to that point. At the end of transcription of each interview, I fit the data in a three-column format to be ready for analysis. The first column on the left side was for my notes, the second one in the middle was the text and the third one on the right side was for codes. I numbered each line of the transcripts as it helped me to organize the data. I wrote my notes in the left column including the general rules as to what type of information can fit under that assigned code and my rationale for how they should be coded. The related text was in the next column and the chosen code was next to the text in third column. In this way I could see the text, the code and the rationale for the coding in the same paragraph of the same page. I also kept a separate journal during the data analysis in which I wrote all the ideas and the questions that came to mind regarding identifying the units of meaning and later on the categories. As Lincoln, & Guba, (1985) suggested I included notes on the method used in my study and also notes on the issues of credibility as well as "audit trail" notes. In this way, if another person reviews my notes he/she can retrace my steps and understand the decisions I made in the study. Journalising my analytical memos helped me to organize my thoughts and to ensure that consistent rules were applied on to the units of meaning and to the categories.

There were a few reasons for me to transcribe the interviews myself. The first reason was to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants. Even though, the tapes were safeguarded by being coded, I still could not trust anyone to transcribe due to the fact that Winnipeg is a small community and the women could be identified by their accent or unique experiences. Furthermore, I wanted to include the non-verbal interactions

and I could capture them better as I had been present and recorded these interviews. Additionally, transcribing the interviews myself gave me an opportunity to review my data and become thoroughly acquainted with the content of the interviews. Each tape was safely stored after being transcribed in the event I had to refer to it again.

3.6.3-Method of Data Analysis

In this study the approach to data analysis was to conduct a systematic analysis of small units, to allow the results to emerge from the data. As Tutty, et al, (1996) contend, "the process of systematically comparing and contrasting the small segments of interviews will keep you thinking about what each individual is saying" (p.90). In addition, starting with a broad perspective by identifying the important themes at first could increase the risk of focusing on recognized themes, and paying less attention to what actually was said (Tutty, et al, 1996).

There were two levels of coding. The first level of coding was merely concrete and involved identifying properties of data that were clearly evident in the text. The second level of coding was more abstract and involved interpreting the meaning underlying the obvious ideas revealed in the data. Lofland, (1984) emphasizes the importance of the interpretation of the data at the second level of coding. He states "Remember, qualitative research is more than description-it takes a natural interest in the meaning underlying the words" (p.100). I started the analysis with the concrete coding, and worked toward deeper understanding and abstract content in the final stages of analysis.

3.6.4-First Level of Analysis/ Concrete Coding

The first level of coding (concrete coding) included five different tasks, which sometimes overlapped. The five tasks were as follows:

Identifying the Units of Meanings: At this stage, I read the transcripts and identified different experiences and ideas that were expressed in my data as units of meaning. A unit of meaning could be a word, a partial or complete sentence, or a few sentences together. In the first run-through to identify units of meaning almost every line of the transcript was coded as a unit of meaning. The units of meanings were assigned names relating directly to what they were without combining the data for underlying meaning. For example if a woman said that "I need to talk to someone", "need to talk" was identified as a unit of meaning and was coded as "need to talk".

Identifying Categories: After identifying the units of meaning, I looked to see which of them fit together into a category across transcripts. The constant comparison was the major technique for categorization. "Each meaning unit is considered in comparison to other similar meaning units, and the category is a way of identifying important similarities within and across individuals" (Tutty, 1996. p. 103). In this manner, I was able to identify the units of meaning that appeared the most in all transcripts. Categorizing started when I first saw similarities and differences between data segments or units of meaning. The units of meaning that shared the same characteristics were considered to be a category, and that category was given a code name. For instance, all the sentences that contained ideas about needing to talk were identified and categorized under the name "need to talk". Units of meaning that were different from the above were gathered to form categories under

different names. I kept notes about the characteristics of the units of meanings that made them similar to one another with a rationale for fitting a unit of meaning in a particular category. Through this process rules governing when to include particular units of meaning in a specific category were solidified and applied to categorizing other units of meaning. The number of categories increased each time I identified units of meaning that were not similar to the ones I had previously categorised. At the beginning, new categories were developed rapidly; this slowed as I analysed more data. I also had a separate category for “miscellaneous”. This category contained all the units of meaning that did not fit in to ones already named. However, the “miscellaneous” category was very small in comparison with the others, perhaps one percent of the total data.

Assigning Codes to Categories: When I was developing the categories, I assigned them a temporary name that helped me to identify them easily.

Refining and Reorganizing Coding: Before moving from the concrete coding, I reviewed the data again to ensure that my analysis reflected what my research participants had said. I reviewed all the categories and reassessed how the units of meaning fit. I revisited my rules to check whether there were any instances that had not been applied properly.

Deciding When to Stop: I stopped the first level of coding when there seemed to be saturation of categories. Morse (1994) indicates that when the researchers reach the point of feeling that they have “seen it all”, then data can be considered “saturated”. When I interviewed new research participants and the units of meaning fit easily into the previously developed categories and no new categories emerged, I knew I had reached saturation.

At the end of the first level of coding my data had been reduced and transformed from transcribed interviews to a closed set of categories that were more manageable.

3.6.5-Second Level of Analysis/ Abstract Coding

The second level of coding was more abstract and involved interpreting what the first level categories meant. At this stage, I retrieved the units of meaning that I had coded and fit into categories. Through this process I examined the units of meaning in the categories away from any association with the women who had originally spoken them. I grouped together all the units of meaning that fit within each category. At this point in the analysis, my attention moved from the context of each woman's story to the context of the categories and what was said over all. Tutty states that in the second level of analysis "the focus of analysis shifts from the context of interviewee to the context of the categories" (1996, p.107). In this way the analysis became one level more abstract as it pulled each unit of meaning one step away from the original interviews and the individual's story.

After retrieving units of meaning into categories, I identified similarities and differences between the categories in order to find relationships between them. I located the patterns that frequently appeared amongst categories. Then, I integrated the categories into themes and sub themes according to similar properties. Once each theme was identified, I assigned a code to it in the same manner as I coded categories.

A regular word-processing program was used to cut and paste the units of meanings into the groups and to sort these into the relevant categories. The same method was used for developing the themes from the categories.

Finally, I transformed the data gathered into a narrative. As Agar (1980) indicates, in ethnographic research the goal “is not to specify an inductive logic, rather, it is to display data and explicate judgements so that an outside reader can follow the reasoning process” (p. 38). In order to do this I identified the relationships between the major themes and developed logical interpretations of the ones that remained consistent with my earlier category segments and units of meanings. I visually displayed the themes and categories in a diagram by drawing and labelling a circle for each theme and arranging them in relation to each other. The circles overlapped one another in a way that portrayed how the themes were interacting. Therefore, it helped me to identify the interconnections between themes and categories.

3.7- Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

Fontana & Frey, (1994) indicate that “Because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (p.372). The most important ethical issues that a researcher should be concerned with are informed consent, protection of harm, right to privacy, deception and confidentiality (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1995). Because my research revolves around the topic of abuse, I was very sensitive about the issues of anonymity and confidentiality. I took extra precautions so that the women’s identities would not be revealed under any circumstances. In order to protect their identities, I did not disclose names or other identifying information to any third party, including the members of the advisory group.

Although, identifying information regarding the research participants was not disclosed in the study, their regional backgrounds were identified to discuss the congruence

of belief systems across different cultures. As reflected in the consent form, this issue was discussed with the participants prior to the study (Consent form, Appendix E). Since ethnic communities in Winnipeg were very small, the research participants were asked for their personal conditions for protecting their identities. For example, the women were told that in co-operation with them demographic information could be changed to ensure anonymity. The research participants were also told that they did not have to answer the questions if they chose not to.

In order to maintain confidentiality and to assure that the identity of research participants was not released to any one, all the notes, tapes, transcripts, network and eco-maps were given a code number instead of a participant name. I was very careful regarding the management of information such as storing the tapes, notes, and transcripts in a safe place during the process of the study.

The participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed and whatever they said would be kept confidential. Their names and identifying information are not used in this report and will not be used in any other written reports or presentations. Identifying data were not released to any third person. However, prior to conducting the research, I notified the participants of all the possible limitations in maintaining confidentiality such as in terms of disclosing child abuse. (Consent form, Appendix E).

A consent form indicating the participants' rights was signed by them prior to their participation in the research. Written permission was obtained for audio-taping the interview sessions. During the interview sessions participants were frequently reminded of their right not to answer some or all of the questions, and to stop the tape at any time if they

wished. If they did not want to be recorded, I managed the interview sessions by taking notes. The participants were advised that if they wished they would be informed of the research findings. I made sure that every participant fully understood what was going to happen and their right to withdraw from the study any time they wished. I understood and respected their choices without questioning their decisions.

Rosenblatt (1995) believes that a qualitative researcher can never provide enough information for the interviewee before the research therefore, it is impossible to ensure that informed consent is truly informed. He adds that in qualitative research, the interviews are unpredictable and have an unfolding quality that makes it impossible to fully inform people of what they may experience within the interview session. "Because of this, I supplemented the consent procedure that occurs before the research begins with a 'processual' consent procedure that occurs during the research" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 148). This repeatedly gives participants opportunities to stop the researcher or at least to avoid a particularly difficult question (Rosenblatt, 1995). As did Rosenblatt, I gave my research participants a consent form at the beginning of the study and repeated it verbally at the beginning of the interview and throughout the session.

Some women cried during the interview sessions. I showed sympathy and acknowledged their pain but was not judgmental, and did not take on the role of a therapist. It has been mentioned that, the interview should not cross the line into a therapy session and the researcher should not take the role of a social worker (Rosenblatt, 1995; Rogers & Bouey, 1996). Rosenblatt (1995) recommends that researchers to refer research participants

to other practitioner if need arises. In this study, there was no need for making referrals as nothing occurred during the process that could jeopardise women's well being.

3.8- Issues of Validity

Many scholars have expressed their concerns regarding the issue of validity within qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tutty, Rothery & Grinnell, 1996; Padgett, 1998). Since qualitative research depends heavily on the researcher's judgement and discipline, the trustworthiness of the results could be in question. Padgett (1998) refers to this problem as "the Achilles heel of qualitative research" (p. 88). Miles and Huberman (1994) indicate that: "we have the unappealing double bind whereby qualitative studies can not be verified because researchers don't report on their methodology, and they do not report on their methodology because there are no established canons or conventions for doing so" (p. 244). In order to increase the credibility of the findings in this study, I have provided a detailed explanation of the methodology, including techniques of data collection and, most importantly the method of data analysis.

The rules for gathering data, transcribing, first and second level of coding remained consistent throughout the course of this study. By carefully documenting my findings, and the decisions that were made through the process of this research, I increased the trustworthiness of this study. Recording both the process and content was done on an ongoing basis. For instance, I kept accurate notes in my research journal after each interview. I constantly used a contrast and comparison approach during the data analysis. For example, if new information was presented in an interview, I recorded this as a new

line of questioning that I wanted to explore further. Then, I checked in the next interviews as to whether the woman felt the same or differently.

Padgett (1998) has identified six strategies to improve rigor and relevance in qualitative research. They are listed as: 1) prolonged engagement; 2) triangulation; 3) peer debriefing and support; 4) member checking; 5) negative case analysis; 6) auditing - leaving a trail. Most of these measures have been undertaken in my study. Padgett (1998) believes that prolonged engagement in the field creates a trusting relationship between researchers and research participants that reduces the chances of bias as it decreases the motivation for deception. As was mentioned before, I assured prolonged engagement by joining the participants' social field and keeping in touch with them. I also conducted the second interview to add to the credibility of my study. The second interviews provided another opportunity for the participants to reveal more information; this enriched data and increased the accuracy of the findings. There was also the member checking that increased the credibility of this study as I went back to the research participants and asked them individually to confirm or refute my findings.

The data I collected through interviews were compared with the information that the literature review provided. These two were used to supplement one another in most cases. I used the key concepts defined in the literature review for comparison with the findings in order to increase knowledge, verify or dispute the analysis, and expand the findings.

From time to time I consulted with my advisory group about the findings. Also, my advisor was available not only for debriefing, but also for reading my notes regarding the

coding rationale as well as relevant chunks of data to verify that the codes chosen reflected the correct meanings. Padgett (1998), suggests that “for qualitative researchers who do not have access to a peer support group, acquiring even one peer debriefer with qualitative research experience can be helpful” (p. 99).

In summary, the qualitative methodology I discussed in this chapter provided me clear guidance for conducting this study from the time of data collection to analysis and presentation of the results in a narrative manner.

The following chapter presents the findings of this study characterized by direct quotations from the research participants.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of the Findings

During the nine months of actively advertising for sample recruitment, I received responses from six immigrant women who volunteered to participate in this research. These women had experienced physical abuse by their partners during the time of their residency in Winnipeg. Three of them migrated to Canada from Latin American countries (two from El Salvador & one from Chile), and the other three were from Pacific Regions (two from China & one from Japan). Thus, I gathered a sample of six women from 2 different world regions. Patton (1990) indicates that by selecting participants from a variety of backgrounds two types of data can be obtained; one is "high-quality case descriptions, useful for documenting uniqueness; second, significant shared patterns of commonalities existing across participants may be identified" (Cited in Mores, 1994, p.229).

Selecting research participants from two different world groupings provided me with an opportunity to understand each group with respect to unique cultural practices in response to abuse, and commonalities across groups. Although, due to small sample size of each grouping, detailed circumstances of each region can not be understood, the data still provided ideas about the commonalities and uniqueness. Morse (1994) refers to this kind of sampling as "Maximum Variety Sampling" in which the researcher purposely selects a heterogeneous sample and observes commonalities in their experiences. She believes that this is a most useful fashion of sampling when examining abstract concepts (such as support).

4.1-Sociodemographic Data of Research Participants

While all the women were over 34 years old at the time of the interviews, the length of the time that they had been married before they left their husbands varied from 6 to 17 years. Four of the women were married to their husbands before coming to Canada, and the other two met their husbands who were from the same ethnic background, in Canada. All the women however, left their husbands in Canada. The length of the time the women had been separated from their husbands varied from two months to 14 years.

Out of six women who were interviewed, four were divorced and one was separated while going through the legal process of divorce. The other woman was still going through the process of decision-making. She was separated from her husband on a temporary basis to give him a chance to correct his behaviour so they could get back together. These women's children were pre-school to adolescents at the time that women left their abusive situations. At the time of interview, the children's ages ranged from 4 to 26 years old. The women had from one to four children.

With the exception of one woman who was in the process of completing her elementary school in Canada, the women interviewed had at least one university degree from their country of origin. Two women completed their second university degree in Canada. All the women's husbands had completed their university education in their home countries except one woman's husband, who was a high school graduate in Canada. Two of the husbands continued their education in Canada and acquired a higher degree such as Ph.D. Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic information.

Figure 4.1- Table of demographic information:

	MIN	MAX
Length of Women's Residency in Canada	6 Months	23 Years
Number of Women's Children	1	4
Women's age at the time of interview	34	49
Women's age when they left the abuser	32	39
Husband's age at the time that women left them	35	49
Children's age at the time that women left	4	17
Women's Education Level	Elementary School	Bachelor Degree
Husbands' Education level	High School	P.H.D & MD

4.2-Thematic Summary of Findings

After completing the second level of analysis, which was the abstract coding, two major themes and five sub-themes emerged from the data. Each major theme included three sub-themes that revealed the types of support that women received from their network members. The framework of the themes is presented in table 4.2 as the **Thematic Summary of Findings**.

Figure 4.2- Table of Thematic Summary of Findings:

Major Theme	Sub-theme	Component
1. Influence of Cultural Beliefs in Providing Support for Abused Women	1. Help From Family Members	1. Sheltering women
		2. Trying to save the marriage
		3. Sibling's support: Reliance on sisters
		4. Children encourage mothers to leave
	2. Role of Close Friends From the Ethnic Community	1. Criticism and rejection
		2. Approval and support
	3. Lack of Support from Ethnic Community Members	1. Being abandoned
		2. Cultural expectations of tolerating Abuse
		3. Being Judged
		4. Avoiding the ethnic community Members
2. Influence of the Canadian Society in Providing Support	1. Support from Canadians	1. Role models empower by providing life style options
		2. Tangible support
		3. Spiritual support from the church members
		4. Informational support
		5. Role of the Canadian media
	2. Canadian Social Service Assistance	1. Welfare provides a way Out
		2. Crisis services for shelter and referral
		3. Immigrant women's agencies provide multiple services
		4. English as second language: Pros and Cons

The first major theme revolved around the women's networks within their ethnic community and how these networks' cultural beliefs impact the level and the types of support they provided for the women. As such, this theme was titled: **The influence of cultural beliefs in providing support**. This major theme consisted of three sub-themes that demonstrated the role of family members, close friends and the other ethnic community members in providing or not providing support for the women according to their cultural beliefs. Also, each sub-theme was divided into smaller components which discussed how different network members reacted towards abuse.

The second major theme revealed information on the types of support that the women received from their network members who were not from their ethnic background. This major theme was named: **Influence of Canadian society in providing support**. The second theme consisted of two sub-themes that demonstrated the role of Canadians and the Canadian social services in providing support for the women. As well, each sub-theme consisted of smaller components which described the types of support provided for the women by their networks within the community at large, the Canadian community, and their impact on women's decision-making in regards to their abuse. The role of the Canadian media was separately discussed as a component under the first sub-theme.

These research findings present information about the influence of cultural beliefs in providing support as the women perceived and presented it. The accuracy of the women's perception of the cultural beliefs of their ethnic groups, and how precisely their perceptions reflect the true cultural beliefs and practices of their geographic regions, is beyond the scope of this research. This study does not claim any expertise in the cultures of

the women and does not intend to generalize the findings to those cultures; it is simply and truthfully presenting the responses received from the research participants regarding the cultural beliefs of their ethnic groups as they perceived them and how these affected the process of receiving support from their points of view.

In order to understand the findings of this study more clearly, each theme including their sub-themes and components will be elaborated upon separately in the next pages.

4.3- The Influence of Cultural Beliefs in Providing Support for Abused Women

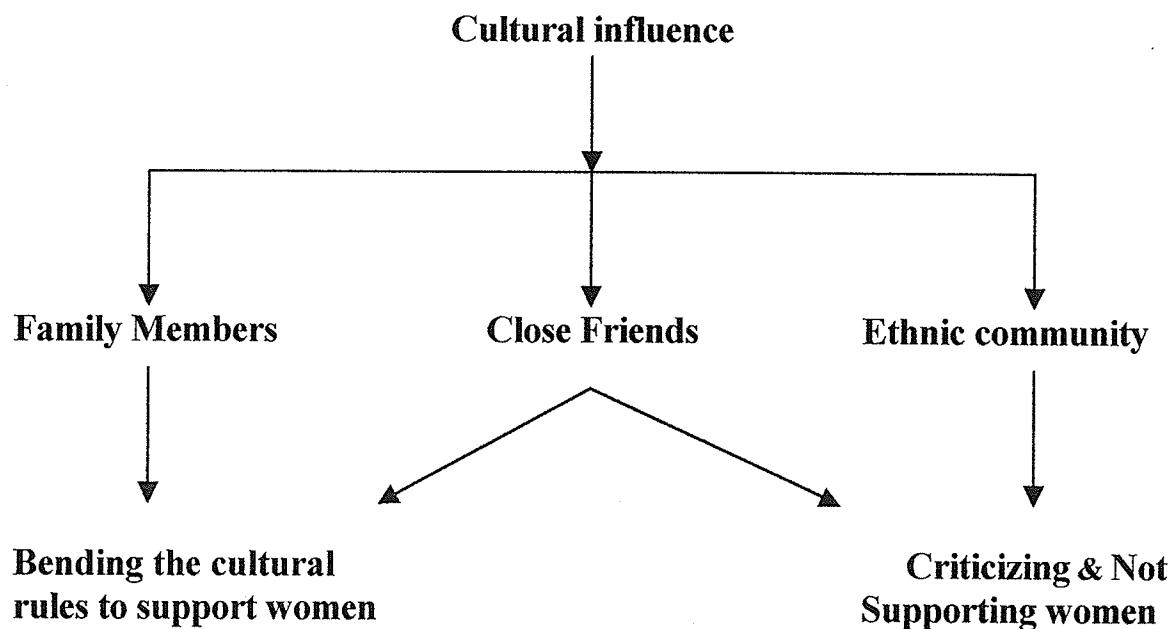
Without exception, all the women stated that the common cultural beliefs regarding abuse and the expectations that women tolerate it influenced their network members within their ethnic communities when they approached them for help. Cultural beliefs affected the types of support, if any, that the women received from their ethnic communities. Since getting a divorce or leaving husbands was not culturally accepted in these communities, the women were not supported when they decided to leave the abuse. The type of support provided was mostly in the form of helping women to increase their abilities to cope with abuse and minimize it, thus making it more tolerable.

The influence cultural beliefs had on support offered to abused women was demonstrated through the following three sub-themes.

The first sub-theme was “The Help from Family Members”. This sub-theme demonstrated how the women’s family members, parents, siblings and children tried to provide support in accordance with their cultural beliefs. This sub-theme also revealed that some family members disregarded the cultural beliefs and bent the cultural rules in order to

support women. The second sub-theme was the “Role of Close Friends”. This sub-theme described how close friends might behave differently by either criticizing and rejecting the women, or approving and supporting them. The third sub-theme, “Lack of Support from Ethnic Community Members”, explained the commonality of cultural beliefs that were practiced in the women’s homelands and how these cultural beliefs influenced ethnic community members to blame and judge the women and withhold their support from them. Figure 4.3 illustrates the influence cultural beliefs had on those providing support for the women.

Figure 4.3- Cultural influence



4.3-1- Help from Family Members

All women who were interviewed perceived their families of origin to be their source of support whether the family members were residents of Canada or were living in their home country. This support included financial, tangible, emotional and informational assistance. However, the level and the type of support provided by the family members varied depending on the family's financial situation, their rigidity or flexibility in practicing cultural rules, and most importantly, depended on where the family members lived. Long distance support was of the emotional type via phone calls and letters, while the type of support provided by family members within Canada was more tangible. Four of the research participants did not have any blood relatives in Canada. However, one woman whose husband's siblings were here, considered them as close as her own kin related family members. One woman's entire family of origin was resided in Canada and another had only her siblings living in here.

Four components were identified that more fully described the role and activities of family members in providing support. They were; "sheltering women", "trying to save marriage", "sibling's support: reliance on sisters", and "encouraging mothers to leave the abuse". These components will be explained in same order as listed above.

4.3-1-1-Sheltering Women

All the research participants mentioned that in their home countries family members play an important role in dealing with abuse-related issues. They indicated that due to the lack of social services in their countries, extended family members are considered to be the main source of support for the abused women at a time of crisis.

Extended family members, parents in particular, can always be approached by women when abuse becomes a problem. In their home countries, extended families provide refuge when abuse occurs, to defuse the abusive situation. It is customary for women to move to their parents' home on a temporary basis at the time of crisis. Even though women seek refuge with their parents, it is only for a short time since they are expected to go back to their husband, and carry on with their marriages. All the women indicated that it would be more difficult, if not impossible, to permanently leave their abusive husbands if they were living in their home countries, because extended families would try to send women back to their husbands regardless of the abuse.

Second woman: They just... they go to their parents' for a little while but they carry on with their life. It is very different in there. They just send you to go home and obey your husband. That is how it is working over there. We talk about it, but only to very close family members and they will all tell you to cope with it and you have to do something good. But you know..., no one would challenge it as it is abuse. In there it is seen as a normal dynamic of couple. They don't recognize it as abuse. They say: you would forget about it and you would get going, and oh... married couples they do fight but they would get over it..., that kind of attitude. That is why I don't know how much help my family would have been either (if they were in Canada), because, after a little while they would want me to be with him again.

The women reported that, even after severe physical abuse, none of them were given an option by their extended families to divorce their husbands. Families maintained an expectation for women to cope with abusive behaviour from husbands. Parents would remind the abused women of the gender differences that culturally allowed men to behave

in certain ways, while women were prohibited from similar behaviour as it would cause them to "lose face". For example, women were reminded that extramarital relationships were culturally acceptable for men in their home countries, but not for women.

The family members also tried to keep the women within their marriage by emphasizing the women's role in the family as peace-keepers and that they were expected to be patient and tolerate abuse in order to maintain the unity of their family. While the family members highlighted the commonality of abuse in their culture, they tried to make it more tolerable by comparing their daughter's/sister's circumstances with the more serious abusive situations that other women face. Therefore, while women were sheltered at their parents' place, mothers especially, tried to provide them with advice in coping with abuse, and advised them of ways to change themselves to accommodate and obey their husbands in order to prevent abuse from happening again. In addition, they provided practical suggestions about how to handle abuse when it occurred.

Sixth woman:

My mom always tried to tell me that there are people in worse situations than me, so I had to be more patient. She said, "Many women from our country are like that." She said when your husband wants to hit you, try to stay in another room for a while until he calms down. She said, "In our country women are being hit by their husbands all the time and they stay at home until their bruises are gone." She said that "in our country, husbands bring other women home to their wives' bedrooms to sleep with and the wife should prepare food for the husband and the other woman." She said to me that "in our culture men come first". Once my husband went out for two days and my mom said, "It's OK. Men always have other women, you are still lucky that he doesn't bring them to your home." She said:

“He can do that because he is a man, but you can not because you’ll lose face.”

Women could go back to their extended families for help as many times as they required. Depending on the family's economic situation they would keep the woman for a period of time and try to resolve the abuse-related problem before sending them back to their husbands.

Third woman: **The woman may go back to her husband and live with him for so long until the problems show up again. Then she will go to her family again. (This can continue) For years, until they get tired of fighting.**

Research Participants stated that if they were in their home countries, parents would be the first people that they would talk to, but because of the long distance all the women tried to keep their abuse and separation a secret from their parents in order not to upset them.

Third woman: **With my parents it is different. They don’t even know that we are separated now, because I don't want to hurt them.**

However, the women were in close contact with their family of origin through letters and telephone calls. All women indicated that they contacted their family members in their home country when they faced abuse. They mentioned that they used one of their trusted family members (mainly sisters or brothers, but not parents) as the source of consultation and direction about what to do. Despite the distance the women still perceived

their family of origin as their source of support even though they had lived apart for many years at the time of the interview. All women mentioned that they felt comfortable talking to their siblings, especially sisters, over the phone about abuse while they were going through it.

Participants identified their extended family members in their home country mostly as a source of emotional support. They all stated that their family members would also provide them with money if they were able to afford it; however, in all cases their finances were limited.

4.3-1-2-Trying to Save the Marriage

All women reported that their family members who lived in Canada tried to play the same role as they would have played in their home country when first informed about the abuse. In other words, they acted as the immediate refuge for the women, and tried to persuade them to go back to their husbands. As well, they tried to provide advice for women to increase their coping mechanisms. For example, when the women disclosed their abusive situation family members encouraged them to stay in their marriage and try to be more patient with their husbands. Family members also tried to draw the women's attention to their children and to remind them that women are culturally expected to remain within their marriage and to cope with the abuse for the sake of their children having a father. At the same time, the family members offered help with child-care and other housework in order to make it easier for the women to remain within their marriage and cope with the abuse.

All women stated that their family members did everything to enable them to stay in their marriages and to work it out, because it was not culturally acceptable for women to leave their marriages. Sometimes family members intervened to stop the abuse as it was happening.

Sixth woman: **My mom was living with us. (Whenever he was hitting me) She came and gently asked him not to hit me. I told my mom that I wanted to get a divorce but she said: "no don't separate from him because you have children. Your children grow up and go to school. They need their father". My mom said that: "people from our country say when your husband is not good you stay and cope and be patient to raise your children". My mom said: "I take care of your children and do the house work, you just stay with him". She would do anything for me to stay with him. She just wanted to save my marriage.**

Family members offered not only all kinds of tangible support, they also sacrificed in order to assist women in coping with abuse. They took an active role in trying to accommodate to the husbands' wishes to try to keep the women's lives calm, so they stayed within their marriage. In this manner family members tried to reduce the chances of provoking the husbands' abusive behaviour. For example, one woman reported that her mother did anything she could to ensure that the woman remained married. Her mother who was living with them volunteered to move to a nursing home in order to pacify the husband, even though she did not want to live in a nursing home and it was not common practice in their ethnic community for elders to be sent to nursing homes.

Sixth woman: **She would do anything for me to stay with him. She said, "It is OK, I'll go to nursing home so he**

won't get upset. "She just wanted me to stay with him. I knew that she didn't want to go to a nursing home. It is not common in our ethnic community to send their elders to a nursing home. But she just did that to save my marriage. She just lived for four months in the nursing home and then she died (she is crying). I am sure she wouldn't die if she was with me. But my husband didn't let me to take care of her (crying)... You know she did every thing for us. She took care of our children, she cooked and did the house work while I was working from morning to night. But when she needed us, he did not allow me to take care of her (crying).

Family members who were in Canada eventually stopped persuading the woman to stay in the marriage once they realized that the woman's health was seriously affected by the abuse. Only then did they agree with women leaving their husbands. In these circumstances, not only did they continue providing support for the women, they even increased their assistance in all areas to the maximum. In two cases, sisters and brothers in Canada agreed that the woman should leave the abuse due to her health.

First woman: (Eventually my brother and sister agreed that I couldn't stay with him anymore). When I started to get sick and sick and sick... my kidney, my stomach, everything... I think my body was sending the message that I couldn't be in that situation anymore. I was so sick and was crying all the time, ah..., very difficult, very deep, deep depression.

It was mentioned that getting parents' approval for divorce was impossible due to their adherence to their cultural beliefs. This was especially more emphasized by the women from the Pacific Regions whom felt their parents' wishes held priority over theirs.

Unlike the women from Latin American communities, none of the women from the Pacific regions left their abusive marriages without their parents' approval.

Fifth woman: **I have to think of my parents first before thinking of myself. They would get upset if I separated him. Because you know they want to see me be married not separated. They believe that it is not good for a woman to be separated.**

The research participants from the Pacific regions showed devotion towards their parents following advice to not get a divorce. One woman stated that she did not leave her husband until after her mother died, because her mother was against it and she did not want to disappoint her mother by behaving against her cultural beliefs.

Sixth woman: **I never separated from my husband until after my mom died (crying). She didn't want me to separate from him. She always advised me to stay with him for the sake of my children and because it would be bad in the community if I was separated.**

This woman stated that after her mother's death, she was encouraged by her sister to get a divorce, while her four brothers remained silent even though they had previously disagreed with her getting a divorce. At the same time that her brothers stopped their disapproval, they increased their tangible support towards this woman to accommodate her needs during the separation process and after her divorce. According to this woman, one of her brothers started to visit her on a daily basis after her divorce in order to assist her with the mechanical tasks around the house.

Two of the women indicated that their parents came to Canada for a visit when they were separated. In both cases the parents successfully persuaded the women to return to their husbands. However, the same abuse-related problem caused them to leave their husbands again, after the women's parents had returned home. One woman indicated that her mother was invited and brought to Canada by her husband in order to help to solve their problems, and at that time, the mother convinced the woman to return to her abusive situation.

First woman: **Yes, even my mother, even my mother... My mother came here for nine months. My mother said to me: "I don't want you to be alone. This man is providing you everything. Who is going to be with you and help you this much?" and I went back to him with my mom.**

The degree of flexibility or rigidity of the family's cultural beliefs regarding women having to remain married, influenced family members approval or disapproval of a woman's decision to leave the abuse. According to the two research participants whose siblings were living in Canada, the siblings were more flexible in accepting the women's decision to leave the abuse. However, their parents never accepted the idea because they believed that women should not leave their marriage for any reason. Nevertheless, while the siblings from the Latin American background approved and encouraged the women to leave the abuse regardless of their parents' disagreement, none of the siblings from the Pacific Regions expressed their approval until after their parents died.

4.3-1-3- Sibling's Support: Reliance on Sisters

Siblings, especially sisters were perceived as a source of all kinds of support, especially in terms of borrowing small amounts of money whenever it was needed. Financial support was mostly needed after the women left their husbands. Although most women did not receive large sums of money from their relatives, they were confident that their siblings would provide them with money if they could afford it. Some siblings went through hardship themselves in order to help the women. Sisters were especially identified as support people who would sacrifice their own needs in order to help financially. Brothers who lived in Canada also were identified as a source of financial support, but to a lesser degree than sisters as brothers often had their own families to support. Overall, the women indicated that their female relatives were in a better position than the males to provide financial assistance and the women felt more comfortable asking their female relatives for financial help. In one case it was simply because the female relative (sister) had a higher income than the male one (brother).

Furthermore, because women usually were in charge of spending money and budgeting for family's expenses, they were in a better position to help their abused relatives. This was particularly mentioned to be a common practice by women from Pacific Regions cultures.

Sixth woman:

My sister is always there for me if I am short of cash. She does not have much money herself, but if she knows that I need money she tries to budget her expenses somehow so that she can lend me some money. She does not let her husband know about it. It would be just between her and me, and I return her money whenever I can. In our culture women are in charge of the family's

budget. Husbands give their earnings to their wives to spend on the family. Therefore, she is in a position to be able to lend me money, but I never ask my brother for money because his wife would find out and she might not like to lend me money. But I can always count on my sister.

Substantial support (household) was provided for women by their siblings both before and after they left their abusive partners. Similar to parents, siblings offered tangible support to ease the women's hardship and help them to cope with the abuse and stay in their marriages rather than leaving their husbands.

As would be the case in their home countries, siblings offered their place to the women and their children to stay overnight when they felt that their situation was escalating to the point of being physically hurt. Women were advised by their siblings to leave their houses temporarily in these circumstances and to return when their husbands had calmed down. In the meantime the siblings would talk to the woman and husband, as they traditionally would have done if they were in their home country to smooth the crisis situation.

Third woman: ...she supported me, like you know, spending the night at their place with the kids. And stay there until he (the husband) got sober, so she could go and talk to him.

The women could count on their sisters to accept them in their home for a longer time so they could get away from abuse on a temporary basis. In such circumstances, sisters even tried to facilitate the women's transportation so they could leave as soon as possible and go to their sisters' home.

First woman: **Then I phoned my sister and told her: You know, maybe I can go to your house for a while. She said OK, are you coming or you want me to pick you up?**

The two women who had sisters in Canada were in daily contact with them and perceived them as a source of all kinds of help, especially emotional support as they listened to them when they needed to be heard. The need to talk to someone, to be heard and especially to be believed was openly expressed by all the women. Sisters especially, were identified as the most helpful people in this regard. However, all women reported that they felt relieved when they realized that they had someone to talk to.

First woman: **When in an abusive relationship for a long time, a woman needs to talk about it. But no one wants to listen to that. But it is very important for a woman to talk about it, and have somebody to listen to her. My sister, she has been my support the whole time, maybe I would have gone crazy if she was not here. I talk to her everyday. [then I moved to her place and lived with her for six months]**

All women stated that their sisters were the most trustworthy people to whom they could talk about their abuse, and they were the first people to whom the women made the disclosure about their abuse regardless of whether their sister was resident in Canada or in their homeland. Sisters in home countries were reported to be the most trusted, and the most important source of emotional support, while brothers were perceived more as sources of financial and tangible support. The women talked to their sisters in their home country regarding abuse before and after leaving the abuser, however, they did not disclose this to their brothers until they made up their mind to leave their husbands.

While the women were very comfortable talking to their female relatives about their abusive situation in detail, they were not as comfortable discussing their abuse with their male relatives. This was especially evident in the participants Pacific Regions cultures as women tried to hide their abuse from their male relatives. In two cases from the above region, the women did not even want their male relatives to know about their abusive situation at all. At the same time, the female relatives were trusted to maintain confidentiality and to not disclose the abuse to the male relatives.

The emotional support provided by the female family members comforted the women. Even amongst female in-laws the connection was reported to be strong enough to overcome the matter of not being kin related, and in fact being related to the abuser. This connection was especially stronger if the sister in law had also experienced abuse herself. In one case, the sister did not support her brother but instead, supported his wife and blamed her brother for being abusive toward his wife. Therefore, in the absence of the women's own sisters, the sisters-in-laws in Canada were reported to be a source of support. In one case, the sister-in-law was the first person to whom the woman disclosed her abusive situation.

Third Woman:

(I first told) my sister in law, because they were living close to me and I was running to their home crying, you know... and she was supporting me. Well you know, we are very close family, and also she knows because she has been abused herself too. Most of the time the support was emotional support from both of them. My husband has two sisters in here. I feel relieved, knowing that they support me.

Brothers were identified as a source of tangible support in a broader way such as giving rides to the women and their children, repairing their car, fixing their house, etc. Brothers also were perceived as a source of protection for women and their children. For example, one of the participants stated that her brother visited her every evening right after work even before he went home, because he wanted to check whether she or her children needed anything.

Brothers took it upon themselves to protect the women, especially after the women were divorced. This was mentioned to be due to the gender-specific role of males who were culturally expected to be responsible to protect their female relatives. For example, one of the women mentioned that her brother offered for her to move back to their country and live with his family. However, this woman perceived her brother's offer more of a control issue based on the gender superiority rather than a support.

Second woman: **My brother, I have a brother that he is a businessman and everything. When he knew, he said: what are you going to do? "Because a woman is nothing without a man, hey..." What are you going to do there all by yourself? Why are you separating? and all that..., You better come back to our country. You can live in my house, he said. I said yah..., to go free from one man and get troubled by another one, forget it. I said no, I am just fine in here.**

While siblings from both genders were reported to be supportive, women were more comfortable with their sisters than brothers. The gender-specific roles that male and female siblings played in each culture impacts upon the type of support they provide. For instance, the male relatives mostly provided tangible support i.e. fixing the car and offering

protection. While the male relatives tried to protect the women, the female relatives provided emotional support such as “being there” for women and listening to them when they needed to talk to someone. Gender appeared to be important for all the women in connecting to one another and in trusting enough to disclose their abusive situation.

4.3-1-4 – Children Encourage Mothers to Leave

The children of abused women were reported to play a unique role in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Unlike the older generation who tried to convince women to stay within the abusive marriage and try to cope with it, the children of these women did not want them to tolerate abuse. According to research participants, as the abuse continued it became more difficult to hide it from the children. Their children suspected that there was something wrong and took the initiative to voice their concerns by encouraging their mothers to leave the abusive situation. Especially if children witnessed the abuse, they insisted their mother put an end to it by leaving the abusive father. One child even took a step further and threatened the women that he would leave the home if his mother did not leave.

Second woman: I remember once he pushed me on the chesterfield and he went through my purse, and my son said to me: “why don’t you leave this ... [obscurity]. When you are going to leave him?” He said to me: “If you don’t leave him, then I am going to (to leave)”.

It was reported that on many occasions the children played an important role in disclosing abuse without their mothers' consent by calling the police to ask for help while

their mothers were being beaten up. In one of the six cases, a ten-year-old girl took the initiative to call the police when she saw her father hitting her mother again. In this way the abuse was disclosed, even though the woman had kept it a family secret for many years.

Sixth woman: **We got into a fight and he started hitting me, then my daughter called 911... She was ten years old. I did not want anyone to know... but she called the police and the police came and took him and that was the end of it. The police kept him and told him that he could not come back to the house.**

The children's age was mentioned to be an important factor in women's decision-making and taking action against abuse. While women were worried about their young children, they indicated that their older children, teenagers in particular, were supportive of them leaving the home or asking the husband to leave.

Third woman: **You know, when they were little they cried with me and they were scared to see their dad doing those kinds of stuff. But now my oldest one is 17, and that is good. She said to me: "let him leave the house".**

Despite the fact that children were supporting and encouraging their mother to leave the abuse, the women indicated that they still did not want to give up their marriage. They wanted their children to have a father and a home citing cultural beliefs in marriages. However, the children of the abused women did not pay much attention to these cultural expectations and the social status or the materialistic aspects of life that were important for the women. Instead, the children did not want to see their mothers suffering. The women perceived that the children gave them permission to leave the abuse. This helped them to

feel emotionally supported as they made the decisions to break up their marriage, disregard cultural expectations and make marital sacrifices.

Second woman: (I received emotional support from my children all the time). Oh, yeah, all the time, all the time. As I told you I was so focused on... that I have to have a house for my children, and a husband. My older son said to me: "Mom, you don't have to be here because of us, we will manage somehow". That was the time that I left forever, when my son was OK with it. I call it like giving me permission to leave, and then that was it, I left.

Overall, it was indicated that while women considered their family of origin as a source of all kinds of support, they were frustrated when at the beginning their family members tried to ignore the abuse and send them back to their marriages. While the older generation upheld the idea of women remaining in their marriages regardless of being abused, the women's siblings were more flexible and accepted the women leaving the abuse when their health was jeopardized.

Accordingly, the type of support that parents provided was mostly around advising the women to be more patient and obedient in order to cope with abuse and also assisting them with their household tasks to reduce their pressure. The siblings on the other hand, tried to provide emotional support by listening to the women and acknowledging their pain, as well as sheltering them on a temporary basis when it was needed to defuse the abusive situation.

4.3-2-Role of Close Friends from the Ethnic Community

Although close friends from ethnic communities were identified as an important source of emotional support while women were tolerating abuse, depending on their adherence to the cultural beliefs they reacted in two different ways in response to the women's decision to leave the abuse. They either criticized and rejected the women or approved their decision and supported them.

Out of six women interviewed, two who informed their close friends that they decided to leave the abusive situation, stated that their close friends did not agree with their decision and withdrew their support. These women also added that they were rejected and abandoned by their close friends. That ended their friendships. The other two participants did not trust their close friends to share their experience of separation due to the fear of being criticized and rejected. One of them had been separated from her husband for five years and the other one for three years. Although these women did not report losing friends due to being divorced, they stated that they tried to isolate themselves from friends in order to keep their divorce a secret. In this way they lost their friends. This added to the losses that women faced due to their separation.

Of the remaining women interviewed, one had not yet reached the decision about whether to leave her husband permanently, or to go back to him. Although this woman was temporarily separated from her husband, she did not disclose that to any of her friends due to the fear of being criticized and rejected. Only one woman was supported by her best friend.

This sub-theme consisted of two pertinent components, which described the role and activities of close friends in providing support more fully. The first one was "Criticism and Rejection", and the second one was "approval and support".

4.3.2.1-Criticism and Rejection

The women were criticized and rejected by their close friends from ethnic communities after they decided to leave the abuse. At the beginning, before the women decided to leave the abusive situation, their friends played down the abuse and minimized its seriousness in order to convince them to stay with their husbands.

First woman: She told me so many times that you have to be there, stay with him... you have to make it... You don't have to think that he is doing that to you, that he is abusing you, "because you know he really doesn't want to hurt you".

When the women reached their decisions that they were definitely going to leave the abuse, they were criticized and rejected by the same best friends who were trying to keep them in their marriage. Women also felt that they were judged by friends. While friends criticized the women for deciding to get a divorce, they also tried to persuade them to stay in their marriages by highlighting the husband's positive characteristics. However, eventually their friendships ended when the women decided to divorce. These women stated that they never got any support from friends within the ethnic community even though they considered those as their only friends to whom they talked about the abuse and getting a divorce.

Second woman: When I really decided to leave him, I talked to a friend. First thing she told me was that "you are crazy." She told me that "you are leaving an educated man. He is not a drinker. He is a good-looking man. Any woman would die for a man like yours." And I said OK, go live with this man for a week and then tell me. So..., that friend, the one from my community, that only friend I had (from our ethnic community). Oh..., she told me that I shouldn't be doing those things. She said: "I don't really think that he is that bad", and things like that. She never really supported me. Never, never, never... She was judging me for leaving him.

The close friends were not considered as friends any more when they did not believe the severity of the women's abusive situation and accused them of not being truthful. In these circumstances, the close friends who were considered to be like "sisters" to women became just acquaintances. One woman, who had become physically ill, said that eventually she ended up disclosing to her best friend about her being sexually abused. However, her friend did not believe her. The issue of sexuality was reported to be one of the subjects that most women did not talk about even to their close friends.

First woman: A friend of mine. Now she is not my friend anymore. She was a very good friend of mine, I told her that I am going to leave this man because I am very sick physically because of my husband's... thing [sexual abuse], and I told her that I felt very sick. She said that was not true. She did not believe me and I felt very sad about it because she was the only one for me besides my sister. She was my best friend.

It was mentioned that women were criticized by their close friends for not knowing how to cope with abuse and for provoking it. The women were especially criticized and

rejected by their close friends if they decided to leave their husbands permanently. This created sadness in the women as they felt that they had lost both friendship and their source of support.

First woman: When a person I feel is my friend and consider her as my friend and then she criticizes me very hard and says to me that I am the one who doesn't know what to want, that I wasted that opportunity, or things like that, you know... blaming me, you know... I feel very sad... but this is a friend.

4.3.2.2- Approval and Support

When the women were tolerating abuse and were committed to stay within their marriage, close friends from the ethnic community were reported to be supportive and provided the women with emotional support and sympathy. It was reported that the women felt supported when they talked to close friends who were also experiencing abuse, as they would be more understanding about the abuse. They could talk about their common misery and sympathize with one another to ease their pain. The fact that the women could discuss their marital problems with their close friends who also were in abusive situation, made it easier for them to be able to cope with their abusive situation.

Third woman: I have close friends that I can tell them about my situation. Yah, I am a person that I can share very easily, and I can talk, you know... I talk to friends that are in the same situation as me. Friends from the same country that are in the same or probably worse situation, you know... they cry... and, you know, you have someone to talk to.

Although women indicated that their close friends could not really do anything about the abuse, they stated that talking and crying together would bring them comfort and emotional support.

Fifth woman: **My friend can't do anything. She just listens to me, and talks to me, and it makes me feel that there is someone who I can talk to. I can even cry with her, she shows that she understands me, and it makes me feel that I am not alone.**

One woman, who had just told her very best friend about her abusive situation and divorce, indicated that her friend supported her all the way along, and that she was sure that her friend would keep her divorce a secret from other friends and community members. The woman did not have any relatives or family members in Canada and she stated that this particular friend was like her sister.

Fifth woman: **And I am sure she wouldn't talk about it to anyone. I trust her that she doesn't say anything to other people from our community. I tell her everything.**

While the woman above identified her friend as a source of financial and tangible support, she stated it was not common practice amongst women from her ethnic community to establish this kind of close friendship and to talk about abuse. She stated that she could count on her friend to borrow money or to stay at her place temporarily.

Fifth woman: **My friend would offer me her place to stay. She would definitely give me money if I need to borrow from her. But I don't know what other women do if they don't have a close friend. I don't think any other woman from our community in**

here would tell another one about her marital problems.

In summary, the women were supported by their close friends as long as they remained within their marriage and coped with abuse. Once they decided to leave the marriage, most close friends rejected them. On only one occasion, was the woman supported throughout by her close friend who also played the role of the sister for her. Depending on their adherence to the common cultural beliefs of their ethnic community, close friends either criticized and rejected, or approved and supported the women.

4.3.3- Lack of Support from Ethnic Community Members

This sub-theme included network members within the women's ethnic communities but outside the realm of family and close friends; for example acquaintances, neighbours, classmates, friends, community leaders or professionals from the women's ethnic community. In this theme, the word "friends" was differentiated from the term "close friends" to refer to those who were considered by the participants as people who were not quite "close friends", but more than just acquaintances, i.e. family friends. Many of these "friends" withdrew their friendship from the women by abandoning them after they left the abusive situation. As such, these people became former friends or mere acquaintances.

There were four components which described the role and activities of the ethnic community members in responding to the women's abusive situation. These were as follows:

1. Being abandoned

2. Cultural expectation of tolerating abuse.
3. Being Judged.
4. Avoiding the ethnic community members.

4.3.3.1- Being Abandoned

It was frequently reported that the women were abandoned by their network members within their ethnic communities after they left their marriage. Although most women (four out of six) did not disclose their abuse and separation to members of their ethnic community, they all strongly believed that they would not receive any support from their community members if they had. On the contrary, they believed that they would lose their support as they would be blamed and abandoned by their community members. The two women who disclosed the abuse to community members about the abuse stated that they were rejected and abandoned by them, yet these same community members kept in touch with the husbands and became closer friends.

First woman: **My doctor friend and her doctor husband are still friends with him. In two years after our separation, they have not invited me to their home while they have invited him to their parties and social gatherings.**

One woman indicated that after she told a family friend that she left her husband because of abuse, this friend became more supportive of the husband and tried to find him a new wife. "So, that family friend tried to play the role of matchmaker for the husband and ignored the woman". In this manner, not only did the woman not receive any support from the friend regarding her abuse, but she also lost one member of her network.

Second woman: I talked to a woman from our community who was a friend of both of us. She was trying to make me to go back. And finally when she couldn't get us back together, then she found a woman for him. Once, I phoned her to say that I was going to go over to her place. She said: "no don't come, because your husband and this other woman are here. I invited them both for dinner". I never got any support or anything, not from my community and not from her, and she was the only friend that I was talking to who was from my community.

In addition, due to the perception that divorced women were "not good women", many men from the ethnic community prohibited their wives being in touch with them. Again, this caused women to be abandoned by those friends since being associated with a divorced woman who is stigmatized by the ethnic community as a "bad woman" could jeopardize their reputation.

First woman: I had a good friend. She used to come and visit me sometimes after I separated, but her husband does not let her to talk to me anymore. He said to her that it is not good for her to be my friend anymore, because everybody in the community talks behind my back.

As well, all the research participants frequently mentioned that in their culture if a woman left an abuser and initiated an independent life as a single woman, her action was interpreted as merely looking for sexual freedom.

Second woman: She wants to get separated because she wants to be a free woman. She wants to sleep with different men; and things like that.

The interpretations of divorce presented by ethnic community members ignored legitimate reasons for divorce. As such, divorced women "lost face" in their community and subsequently were abandoned. Furthermore, due to common assumption that "women get divorced to be with other men" the men of the ethnic community pursued divorced women and sexually harassed them. In such circumstances, the assumption was that if the woman was a "good woman" she would not divorce, so "men would not go after her".

Sixth woman: When a woman gets divorced everyone talks behind her back that she is going to be with other men, and she is not a good woman. Everybody thinks that she is available, that is why men go after her, because they say she wants to be with everyone. The woman loses face even if she doesn't go with men, because men go after her. Then they say if she was not divorced, men would not go after her.

Since, network members did not feel comfortable being associated with abused women who left their husbands as it could jeopardize their own reputation they often refused to provide any kind of assistance for the women.

Second woman: [After Separation] I asked her for help, because I knew her well. I asked her to talk to him, because he just went angry and so wild. She said no: "I don't want to get involved". So, I didn't have any help from people from my community.

In summary, ethnic community members not only did not offer support to the abused women, they also withdrew their support as soon as they realized that the women had left their marriages. This is due to the cultural expectation of women to remain married for their entire life regardless of abuse. Women who are not fulfilling the cultural

expectations by remaining within their marriages are being assumed to be “whores” (Pinedo & Santinoli 1990) and therefore are abandoned.

4.3.3.2- Cultural Expectation of Tolerating Abuse

Wife abuse was reported to be a routine behaviour that people saw in their day-to-day life and grew up with in their home countries. It was regarded as part of normal life and a typical dynamic of marriage that was not even recognized as abuse.

First woman: But you know..., no one would challenge it as it is abuse. In there it is seen as a normal dynamic of couple. They don't recognize it as abuse.

All the women talked openly about the commonality of abuse in their home countries and the existing cultural beliefs that women were expected to tolerate abuse. According to the research participants, abuse in their home countries was a common practice that was embedded in the cultural perception of the marital relationship. The cultural expectation for women as they became wives was to handle abuse without complaint.

Third woman: It is very common back home you know, but... you hide what is going on inside your home. Some people probably just put up with it until the man gets tired. Ah, you know... back home women don't recognize that... that is abuse, because you grow up seeing that

It was reported that women had been tolerating abuse throughout history in their country of origins and were still culturally expected to do so. In the Pacific Region cultures,

in particular, women were considered to be part of the husband and his family's belongings. As such, they were supposed to remain within their marriages and cope with abuse.

Sixth woman:

You know in our country, women have been abused for from long time ago. They used to drowned women under the water if they had relationship with a man out of marriage. If a young woman's husband passes away she would still remain with the husband's family and would do their chores. She cannot marry until her mother in law finds her a husband if she wishes to do so. It totally depends on mother in law's decision, because in our culture when you marry a man, then you belong to him and his family not your own parents. Even after your husband dies you cannot go back to your parents. You belong to the husband's family. You are a part of their belongings. You will have to do what ever they decide for you to do. Young widows are not allowed to find husband for themselves. They are not allowed to date anyone after their husbands die. It is their mother in laws' decision whether they can marry or not and to whom they have to marry. (So if they date any one, they would be drawn). Not only them, but also the man who is dating them would be drawn as well. Now days, is better and they don't drawn women any more, may be in some villages still people are doing that I am not sure, but it is very bad for a young woman to date a man.

Due to the commonality of abuse in their homelands, women were culturally expected to accept and tolerate the abusive behaviour just as they were supposed to stay with their husbands and maintain the unity of their family by sacrificing their personal needs. This required them to put up with abuse in any form, whether it was physical,

psychological or emotional. A woman's role as a wife was to be patient with abuse and try to hide it from everyone to maintain the family's reputation as a good family.

Sixth woman: In my country women are being hit by their husbands all the time and they stay at home until their bruises are gone.

Women were expected to keep abuse a private matter. They were convinced that by talking to their community members about abuse, they would be blamed for not being a "good wife", regardless of the severity of the abusive situation.

Sixth woman: Women from our community don't talk about these things. If they did, other people would blame them and would judge them that they are not good women and are not from good families. In our culture usually people blame the woman. They say there must be something wrong with that woman. Look how she talks about her husband. "Perhaps there was something wrong with her otherwise her husband wouldn't hit her". Because it is our culture that women should obey their husbands. People blame the woman.

When a woman disclosed her abusive situation to others it affected not only her reputation, but that of her entire family who would also be labelled as being "not a good family". The cultural assumption was that if the father was doing something wrong, then there must be something wrong with the entire family.

Sixth woman: I had a classmate in my English class; she was from our community. "She talked about her husband beating her. Then, other students from our community in the ESL school talked behind her back and said that: "they don't want their children to play with her children any more".

**"There is something wrong with this family".
 "They are not a good family". "If her husband is
 not good it means that her children are not good
 either". "If I tell my community members that my
 husband took my money to gamble, they would
 say that your children are like their dad too".**

The cultural expectations of tolerating abuse were also held by professionals in the participants' home countries.

**Second woman: We went to a psychologist in my country. But
 over there it is different. He was abusing me
 there, too, you know, but the psychologist, a
 woman (with emphasis on gender), she said that I
 have to obey my husband, yeah... a woman. It is
 very different there.**

Since abuse was common and tolerated in their home cultures, women were expected to accept and cope with it in Canada as well. Consequently, if women looked for help rather than hiding it, they were strongly criticized and rejected by their ethnic community. All the women mentioned that they would be stigmatized for behaving against the ethnic community's cultural expectations by not tolerating abuse.

**Sixth woman: You know in our culture women should stay with
 their husbands for the rest of their lives,
 regardless of what happens to them. That is why
 I don't want to talk to any of my community
 members about my problems.**

Not only had the participants tolerated abuse themselves, but they also reported that they had seen many women from their ethnic community tolerating abuse and coping with it in silence in order to behave in accordance to cultural expectations of their communities.

Third woman: And in here too, you know... We have many, many friends that we know they are in abusive situation, but they keep it quiet. But you can tell that they are in abuse.

All women reported that they had tolerated abuse for a long time before they took any action against it. Although the women identified different strategies that they used to cope with abuse, the most common one was minimizing it. The women justified their abusive situations by comparing it with those of others that were more serious.

Fourth woman: But it was not so serious. He was short tempered, so then... when we had a big fight (he hit me), but I know a lot of other women being hit, it was not so serious. I know more serious cases. (I did not go to anyone and did not say anything to anyone), because it wasn't so bad, I wasn't injured. If I was injured or if I went to see a doctor, maybe I would say something. But, just my back was so sore.

Minimizing abuse was one of the common strategies that the network members also used both in the home country and in Canada to make it easier for women to tolerate abuse. All the women described their network members within their ethnic community as people who underplayed the abuse and focused on its prevalence in order to convince women to stay in their abusive marriages.

Second woman: They would say that: "oh it is just a little bit of fight... all couples have that...you know... After a little they would say: Oh you have got to go back to your husband, and things like that".

The network members of the two women who disclosed the abuse, tried to justify the abusive behaviour by emphasizing the husband's good functioning in other aspects of his life such as being an educated man and a provider.

First woman: But everybody was saying that he was the best that I could find, he is a doctor, he is a breadwinner, everything. Yes, everyone was saying that maybe "he is very sensitive and that is why he is doing this to you, because you know... he doesn't want to hurt you."

Another way of coping, in accordance with cultural expectations, was for women to obey the husbands and to try to change things to suit them in order to prevent abuse.

Second woman: The way that I coped was to change myself all the time to suit him. Like, because they used to say back home, when he hit me, if you didn't answer back or argue, you know it wouldn't happen. So, I kept changing myself, thinking, if I don't argue and don't answer back it is not going to happen. He is not going to hit me. So that was how I coped, changing my lifestyle and changing myself to suit him.

Culturally it was perceived that it was the women's responsibility to facilitate the perfect marriage. Accordingly, if a woman was perceived as having a perfect marriage it was a sign of her success as the family's main caregiver. Therefore, women tried their best to portray an image of themselves as being in a good marriage.

Third woman: (many women in our community keep it quiet about their abuse) because they would be embarrassed if other people know that their perfect marriage is not perfect. In our community it is important to have a perfect marriage.

It put shame on women if they were in an abusive situation because it was an indication of their failure to accommodate to their husbands' needs, to the point that it provoked husbands to be abusive. The women also felt ashamed after separation because they were perceived to be at fault for letting their marriages fall apart.

Second woman: In the community everyone was thinking that we were the ideal couple, because we went out with the children. We were cross-country skiing sometimes. Everyone saw us together as a family, and they never saw him with another woman. So, we were the ideal couple for anyone else. And after that I was ashamed of who I was, you know... I was ashamed, because we women think that it is our fault when the marriage breaks down.

Culturally, women were not viewed as equal to men, and were not valued if they were not related to a man. For this reason, women were not to live on their own, but to live with a man in order to have a decent and acceptable social status.

Sixth woman: In our culture women are nothing without a man.

In keeping with these cultural beliefs, women did not leave their parents' home until they married. In this way the women's social status changed from being someone's daughter to someone else's wife. In the same manner if a woman divorced, she had to go back to her parents or brother, and could not live on her own.

First woman: It was like a sin if you were a single mom, it meant that there was something wrong with you, because in our country most women leave their parents' home only when they get married. That

is the mentality of many people (that women should not live alone)

Maintaining social status was mentioned to be an important issue within the immigrant communities as it was rooted in the class-oriented cultural beliefs, which went hand in hand with their cultural view of abuse. The women indicated that the higher the social status of a family, the more difficult it was to talk about abuse and end it, because the cultural assumption was that high class families did not have abuse-related problems. According to the women, economic factors played an important role in determining the families' prestige and the level of respect they had within their ethnic community. Similarly to their home countries, their ethnic communities here had a very class structured viewpoint that was focused on the materialistic aspects of life such as having a house, higher education and a "white collar" job that provides for a middle class lifestyle. As such, the women tried hard to reach a middle class lifestyle and when they obtained it, they tried to maintain it because it would ensure they would be respected by their ethnic community members. Having a house especially was very important. It was one of the family values that women had been raised with. The idea of having a house was so important that it could outweigh abuse and delay separation.

Second woman:

I was raised with the values of back home, you have got to have a house for your children. So I was concentrating on that, that I had to have the materialistic things for my children, and even though we were ready to separate, we bought the brand new home. We had a beautiful home and everything. I was so focused that I have to have a house, because in many immigrant communities people see the economic situation first. Many immigrants, they see that, and you know... they

say ah... why is she going to get separated, she has a house. She lives in a house and she has a beautiful home. What is wrong with her? Because that is how we see things back home, economic first.

Maintaining the social status as a married woman who belongs to a family from a certain social class prevented women from disclosing their abuse and kept them within their abusive marriages for a long time. To end the marriage they had to decide to give up their social status and lifestyle. All participants reported that they stayed within their marriages in order to maintain their marital and socio-economic status.

Second woman: I had a status. I felt that I had a place in this society. You know... he had a good job. We had a beautiful house. [After separation] We went through poverty. I was left with absolutely nothing; you know... finally, I lost the house. We went back to renting. We rented three rooms, but that was our place and it was calm.

Being educated was also a factor that played an important role in preventing women from disclosing abuse. There was an expectation that highly educated people within the ethnic community had non-abusive marriages. This put more pressure on educated women to hide their abusive situations, as it was extremely important that others would think highly of them and their families.

First woman: I have friends who are in abuse situations but they don't say anything about it. I have a friend who is a chemist and she is in an abusive situation, but she doesn't leave her husband because of "what people are going to think". I have another friend who is a psychiatrist and her

husband is a surgeon. He abuses her, but she stays with him, and she is a psychiatrist.

The highly educated and “high-class” families, especially, were supposed to keep their abuse a private matter because they were perceived to be representatives of their ethnic community. Maintaining the ethnic communities’ reputation was reported to go hand in hand with maintaining the husbands’ reputation by not disclosing their abusive behaviour. This was especially emphasized if men were highly educated and working in “white collar” positions, as the men’s level of education and how they behaved towards their wives and family were important elements in establishing the reputation of the ethnic community. Maintaining the good reputation of the community was so important to the members of the community, including to the abused women, that it prevented the women from disclosing abuse. Furthermore, women reported that they could be criticized by their ethnic community members for ruining the reputation of the men of the community if they disclosed their abuse. It was thought that their ethnic community would be stigmatized by the society at large as a community in which abuse is common and all the men are abusers.

First woman:

(one of my friends) She was upset about abuse, but she was very concerned about the reputation of her husband in our community and the reputation of men from our community in here, that is why she kept quiet. She always told me: “What are we going to do if we start leaving our men and what do people start to say? That all men from our community are bad”.

The women also expressed their concerns about their husbands losing respect in their workplace and within the host society if they were identified as abusers, especially if the police were involved and the men were charged for assault. In some circumstances being arrested caused the men to lose their jobs, and that exaggerated their loss of respect within not only their workplace but most importantly within the community at large. The women felt guilty when their husbands lost jobs due to abuse related charges.

Third woman: **He lost lots of respect from the community. I mean the Canadian community. He lost most of his things, but most importantly his job. So, he was out of the house for 18 months, and that was the time that they charged him. He had to spend some time to go to AA meetings, because the court obligated him to go to AA. (the wife)... was feeling guilty because he lost his job.**

4.3.3.3-Being Judged (Judgementalism)

The issue of being judged when they reached out for help was repeatedly expressed by the women. They stated that instead of supporting them when they decided to leave the abuse, their friends judged them. Thus, they lost their friendships since they tried to avoid contact with those friends in order to prevent being judged.

Second woman: **But she was judging me. She was judging me for leaving him because he was an educated and clean man who did not drink. She always was judging me.**

“Being judged” was the participants’ biggest concern; and if their situation was disclosed to their community members “being judged” was inevitable. Community

disclosure of abuse or divorce put women in the situation to be judged as “bad” wives or “bad” women. Women also believed that anything they said to their community members about their situation would be turned against them as blame and that people would talk behind their backs.

Sixth woman: I never talked to anybody, because they turn back everything against me or think that I am not a good woman; or I was not patient enough. I am from ..., but I don't like my people, because they talk behind your back. I still don't want any one to know that I have been abused and I am divorced.

According to the research participants, when a woman left her marriage, the general assumption of the community was that she did not deserve to have a family.

Sixth woman: In our culture people blame the woman who is divorced and judge her that she is not good. She didn't deserve to have a family.

Due to the fear of “being judged”, the participants tried hard to hide from their community members that they were using counselling agencies to receive help. Using these formal services also would cause them to be judged because it was not a common practice in their culture to discuss family matters with outsiders. Even in speaking to the researcher, confidentiality was critical.

Fifth woman: (if people from my community know about my situation)...Oh, they start talking behind my back, and judging me for getting separated or coming here (an immigrant women agency). So, please don't let anybody know that I talked to you.

The participants felt that they would be “judged” by counsellors from their own ethnic community if they sought help from them for their abusive situation. Although women agreed that going to a counsellor from their ethnic community would be convenient in terms of speaking the same language, it was not easy to establish trust with them. On the contrary, it was even more difficult for women to open up to a counsellor from their own ethnic community because the counsellor was brought up within the same culture and with the same values, the values that denied them support from their community members and forced women to tolerate and cope with abuse. Women felt that the workers also might judge them the same way that other network members from their ethnic community did.

Second woman: I didn't want to see any counselors who spoke my language...you feel that they are going to judge you. The workers are going to judge you. They may think, “She has a husband who is not a drinker. She has a beautiful home. Why is she leaving?” You know... I thought that they were going to judge me.

4.3.3.4- Avoiding the Ethnic Community Members

All women stated that they tried to keep away from their ethnic community members to avoid being judged. Generally, women limited their contacts with their ethnic community members and reduced the number of their ethnic friends by being more selective in choosing friends from their ethnic community.

First woman: I avoid them, you know, I avoid them. I am very selective in having friends.

In some cases, women took one step further: they not only disconnected themselves entirely from their ethnic community including their old friends and acquaintances, they also tried to isolate themselves from their ethnic group in order to avoid being judged. They avoided establishing any new connections or friendships with the members of their ethnic community to avoid explaining themselves and their situation as divorced women.

Sixth woman: **I am not in touch with my community members at all. I don't want to have any friends from my community. I am not in touch with my community members, because if they know that I am divorced, they judge me and talk behind my back.**

The issue of stigmatization of divorced women as being “not good women” in the ethnic community was mentioned as a major problem that the women were struggling with. Five of the six women tried hard to avoid it by keeping their divorce or separation a secret from their ethnic network members. They wanted to prevent people “talking behind their backs”. Accordingly, these women pretended that they were still married and living with their husbands. They pretended to be married for many years after their divorce to avoid being judged. Two women were still keeping their divorces a secret at the time of the interviews from their friends and community members. One had been divorced for three years and separated for five years and the other one had been divorced for one year and separated for three years.

Sixth woman: **I still haven't told anybody that I am divorced and living on my own. Everybody thinks that we are still together. If friends come to my house, I always tell them that my husband is at work or**

has gone fishing. I don't want anybody to know that I am divorced.

To be able to hide their separation or pretend to still be married, the women eliminated their contacts with their community members. Eventually, they found themselves disconnected from their previous network. This made it easier for them as they felt fewer obligations to pretend or explain their marital status. Three women stated that they totally isolated themselves from the ethnic communities, so they would not be judged. However, doing so decreased the women's opportunities to be informed about what was happening in their ethnic communities and to benefit from them. For example, the ethnic community associations were identified to be a good resource for their ethnic members to exchange information about job advertisements, apartment vacancies, cars, childcare services, free recreational services, interpretation services, free English courses and other educational opportunities etc., but the women no longer attended these associations

Fourth woman: No, I don't go there. People join the ethnic community association because they want to find a job. They mostly want to talk about the jobs, cars, and so on. But generally speaking they don't bother to get involved with serious problems of others. They don't want to talk with me regarding my personal life. Ah, no, they are mostly old retired people. I don't go there.

When the women disconnected themselves from their ethnic associations, not only did they have less support in the areas of employment, childcare, recreation, education, etc., they also missed some aspects of their culture.

Second Woman: We were not connected with anyone from our community. So, we didn't go to our ethnic community association, or the folkolorama*, nothing, nothing...and I used to miss it so badly. I missed my culture...my music, my dance, every thing.

Summary:

In summary, abused women who left their abusive situation lost assistance from their ethnic community members in two ways: 1) they were abandoned and support was withdrawn from them based on the community's perception of them being "bad women" for leaving their marriages; 2) they tried to avoid their network members within their ethnic community to be safe from being judged. As a result, they lost out on information and other benefits of the ethnic community.

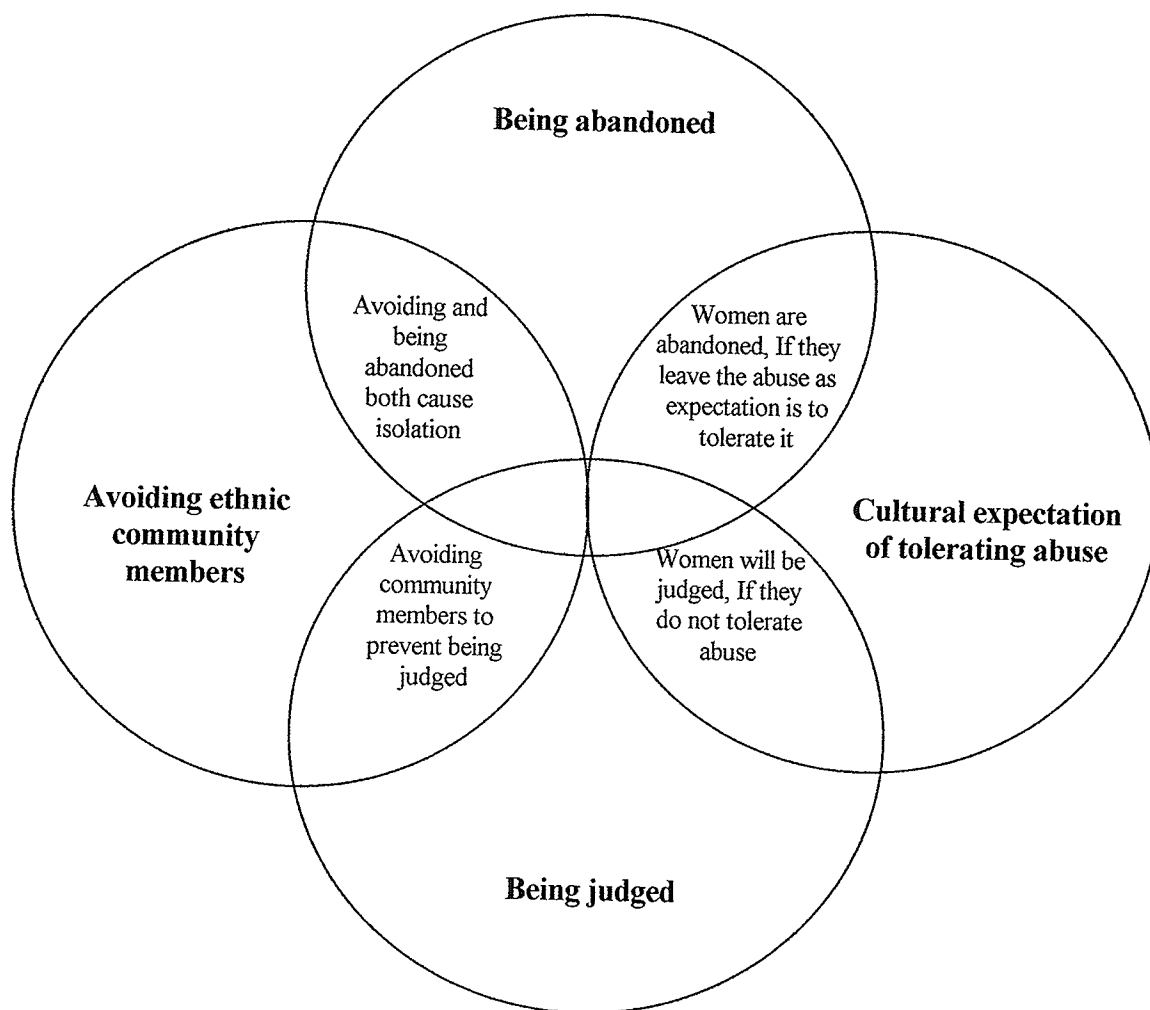
All four components of this sub-theme resulted in limiting the women's networks within their ethnic communities. Also, there was a close relationship among the four components which showed the process of network shrinkage.

As mentioned in the discussion of the first component, women were abandoned and lost connections with their ethnic community members. This was due to the communities' cultural expectations of women to remain within their marriages and tolerate abuse (discussed in the second component). When the women did not tolerate abuse and reached out for help or decided to leave, they were judged by their ethnic community members (third component). In order to prevent this treatment, women avoided contacting their

* An annual celebration in Winnipeg in which ethno-cultural communities provide cultural presentation. i.e music,dance,...

ethnic community members and isolated themselves from them. By doing so they lost more connection with their ethnic community members. Figure 4.4 illustrates the interconnection of the four components.

Figure 4.4: The relations of the four components in “limiting networks within ethnic communities”.



From the first major theme, it can be seen clearly that the women were not supported by their ethnic community members due to the influence of cultural beliefs regarding abuse and the cultural expectations that women must tolerate it. The women

explained that they were rejected and abandoned by their ethnic community members if they did not tolerate abuse and left the abusive situation instead. They also described how they were judged by their community members and tried to isolate themselves from them in order to avoid being judged. Similar experiences were reported by the women from both Pacific Regions and Latin American cultures.

Where do these women turn when they turn away from their ethnic communities? The next major theme, the influence of the community at large in providing support will present some clues.

4.4-Influence of the Canadian Society in Providing Support

All women indicated that their networks within the community at large, or Canadian networks were of great help to them in ending their abusive situations. Unlike networks within their ethnic community, networks within Canadian society encouraged women to speak up about abuse and do something to end it rather than tolerating it.

The influence of the Canadian society in providing support for abused women was demonstrated through the two sub-themes which follow: 1- Support from Canadians and 2- Canadian Social Service Assistance.

4.4.1- Support from Canadians

This sub-theme described the role the members of the community at large played in providing support for abused women. The Canadians within the women's network were identified to be very supportive. Particularly, Canadian friends were reported to be very

caring and provided both tangible and non-tangible support in response to women's needs in order to overcome their abusive situation. Canadian coworkers were identified to be more helpful in providing non-tangible support such as advising women to stand up for their rights and directing them to services they needed. Overall, all the Canadian network members were recognized to be very supportive in all areas, especially, in providing informational support.

There were four components, which described the role and activities of the Canadians in providing support. These were as follows:

- 1- Role Models Empower by Providing Life Style Options. This component described how the Canadian network members provided the women and their children with different kinds of supports and also presented some aspects of the Canadian lifestyle to them.
- 2- Tangible Support. This component described the types of tangible assistance the women received from their Canadian network members.
- 3- Spiritual Support from the Church members. This component explained how the women perceived their networks within their church groups.
- 4- Informational Support. This component demonstrated that through their networks within the community at large, the women received useful information that helped them to leave the abuse.
- 5- The Canadian Media. This component focused on the impact of the media in regard to the women's abusive situations.

The first four components above revolve around the types of supports provided through the women's interactions with Canadian network members. Attention is paid to the human connections and relations in providing support. The role of the Canadian media in providing information and empowering the women is discussed in a separate component because it does not include the human-to-human connections, even though there is overlap with the informational support component.

4.4.1.1-Role Models Empower by Providing Life Style Options

Establishing friendships with the members of the community at large provided women with an opportunity to learn about different life styles, and consequently, increased their awareness about abuse. The women indicated that they learned from their Canadian friends that a non-abusive family would function differently from theirs. They saw how Canadian couples within their network interacted with each other, and that brought to their attention the difference in their relationships.

Second woman:

Then we started having Canadian friends. Then I realized that they interact very differently than the way that we were interacting. He was very involved with their kids. He put the kids to bed, and was kind and nice to his wife. I said, I was stupid enough to be a maid and a sexual object, but not as a partner. I had to be there for his needs, but never mind my needs. So, that cautioned me, I started realizing. Yeah, because of those friends that were different couples than we were and I learned that was not the way that everyone else lives.

Since the women perceived their connections with Canadians as very beneficial, in terms of improving themselves, they tried their best to maintain these friendships and connections. Furthermore, they tried to establish new friendships or relationships with Canadians in order to receive help from them in different life areas when it was needed. The women stated that they even went out of their way to establish and maintain friendship with Canadians in order to benefit from their networking with them in different life areas such as employment.

Fifth woman:

I found a lot of friends amongst my coworkers. They are all Canadian. I try to keep them as my friends. Even though it is expensive for me to spend \$7 or \$8 on lunch, I still go with them for lunch to just be in touch with them and keep my relationship with them. They may be able to help me to improve myself in my job, or find another job.

Unlike most friends from ethnic communities, the Canadian friends provided women with emotional support by talking to them in a non-judgmental manner while sharing their experiences with them. The Canadian friends also relayed the message that abuse does not have to be tolerated in Canada. As such, women recognized these Canadian friends as their role models and identified themselves with these friends.

Second woman:

Yeah, we were sharing. I started sharing and talking about my relationship. There was also that other woman, who started talking to me, because she had gone through the hell also. She was separated. She was the person who inspired me to get separated. She was the role model for me. She was Canadian.

The women mentioned that they chose their Canadian friends as their role models because they admired the level of freedom in their Canadian friends' lives and wanted to learn how to live the same as them.

Fifth woman: **I like to be with them. I like to learn from them and to be like them. I like the way they live. They are free.**

The more women talked with their Canadian friends and the more they exposed themselves to their Canadian friends' lifestyle, the more they desired a similar lifestyle. The women especially highlighted that unlike themselves, their Canadian friends were not living a fearful life.

Second woman: **And we started talking, talking, and talking. Then I started to realize that, that was how I would like to be, you know. Not living in the fear. Fear of going home and my husband would be mad if I was late. No, she didn't worry about the time, you know. But me..., I was terrified that what if I go home late, because he used to get jealous. He was like a baby, jealous and everything.**

Especially if the Canadian friends were single mothers, they were reported to be more understanding regarding the issue of marital problems and more knowledgeable about the process of divorce. As such, the women received more support from the Canadian friends who themselves had already been separated. The Canadian friends empowered women and made them determined to end their abusive situation and believe they could handle the hardships of going through the process of separation.

Second woman: Those were the friends who were helping me, Canadian separated women; they had gone through the same thing. It was hard, but I had already got some power from those women that I was talking to. They snapped me out of it, you know.

In some circumstances, the Canadian network members, especially the ones connected to the children, served as a replacement for extended family members by providing the children emotional support and a comfort zone in which they felt safe. Children, especially, perceived these network members as a source of support that they could go to as a refuge at times of family crisis.

Second woman: There was this woman, my children used to call her grandma. She was Canadian. She was my children's babysitter and the children became very close to her and called her grandma. My son told me if you don't leave him (the father), then I am going to go to my grandma.

Although most of the women reported that they found their Canadian friends through their workplace, other circumstances also provided opportunities to establish their networks with Canadian friends. One of the most common situations was through their children's friendships with Canadian children. Some of these connections facilitated through their children provided women with a great opportunity for a new friendship and the development of a support system that led them to accessing all kinds of support. In some cases, having one new Canadian friend expanded the women's network within the community at large as they were introduced and connected to other Canadian friends. Some

of these newly established networks turned out to be the women's main source of support as they started talking and sharing their experiences.

Second woman: That Canadian woman that I shared with her about my life, that Canadian woman was my source of support. How we met was that I took my son to the succour game and her son was playing soccer with my son. So, we met and we started talking, and talking; and she was a single mom. (She introduced me to another friend), we stopped at another friend's place to talk and have coffee. She wasn't worried about anything. So, she was my... inspiration.

4.4.1.2-Tangible Support

The Canadian network members were reported to be more helpful than the ethnic community members. All women indicated that they found their Canadian network members highly supportive in terms of helping them to overcome their abusive situation by leaving the abuser, while their network members within their ethnic community, other than family members, were not supportive. In terms of tangible support, with the exception of family members who provided the women with all the support they could afford, the ethnic community members were not supportive in comparison with the Canadians.

Second woman: I found support from many Canadian people, but the people from my community, no way. No, I didn't get any help whatsoever from my friends who were my community members, but... I got help from Canadian friends. I went to one of the Canadian women and I lived with her for a month. I said to her: I want to give you money for the food. She said no, no, don't give me any money. Save your money to find your own place to rent. That was help. That was a big help.

The Canadian friends also were identified as a great help in assisting women to prepare themselves for court. For example, they helped women to write the required legal statements in English, and assisted them in filling out the governmental documents. In one case, the Canadian friend wrote a formal description of the abuse in support of the woman and to advocate on her behalf to the "Human Rights" organizations. This Canadian and his wife also accompanied the woman to the court repeatedly to support her.

Fourth woman: Oh, he is a Canadian (he wrote this, a formal written description of the case to advocate on her behalf). They came to the court with me many times, so they know my husband. There are a lot of people helping me, mostly Canadians.

The Canadian neighbours were reported to be helpful towards the women, especially if they saw that the woman was alone. In such circumstances, they would offer more help to the single mother.

Third woman: My Canadian neighbours are more supportive now seeing that I am alone. They usually offer me help, you know...shovelling the snow and things like that...

4.4.1.3-Spiritual Support from the Church Members

Amongst the other Canadian network members, church groups were frequently discussed. However, there were different views and some conflicting perceptions of the church groups as being supportive or non-supportive. While some women identified these groups as a source of support in terms of making them feel respected and a part of a bigger group, other women did not view them as supportive. On the contrary, these women felt

that they were being criticized and looked down upon by the church groups because of being divorced. It was mentioned that "divorce is a sin in the Bible". Therefore, if the church members found out that they were divorced they might be seen as having done something wrong.

Third woman: **If you were divorced, the church group would criticize you and "look at you with bad eyes". They may not tell you anything but they look at you somehow that you have done something wrong.**

None of the women felt comfortable disclosing to their church groups that they were divorced. They indicated that generally speaking, they did not disclose much information about their personal life to their church groups.

First woman: **I go to church and almost everybody knows me. They know my face and my name, but they don't know about my life.**

Similarly, none of the women disclosed the abusive situation to the church group, so they did not receive any help in this regard. However, two out of six reported that they perceived the church group as a source of support in general because of the focus on spirituality.

First woman: **I am in the prayer group. We meet every Friday. There are many people that are very spiritual and I feel that they respect me.**

4.4.1.4-Informational Support

While the Canadian networks reported to provide all kinds of support in response to the women's abusive situation, they were especially identified as the source of informational support. The women's networks within the community at large provided them with the information they needed to deal with abuse. However, they received information from a variety of different sources depending on the nature, size and the type of their networks. For example, women who were working mostly identified their coworkers as their source of information, while women who did not work relayed on their networks within friends, neighbours, school, church, professionals etc., for gaining information. For instance, some women got information from their physicians or from their church.

Third woman: **We went for private counselling. From the church we got a name, a doctor's name. I looked for help. I went to a center for family counselling, groups for families with alcoholics (my Dr. told me about it).**

Women were also informed by the church that some counselling services were provided through the church itself. However, a woman who received counselling services from the church with her husband, stated that she was not satisfied because the counsellor was reinforcing religious ideas to keep her within her abusive marriage.

Second woman: **But on the other hand, the counselling was not effective because the counsellor was putting his religious beliefs into the counselling. I was growing but the counsellor was trying to push me back into my marriage. Finally I said fine... I**

stayed one more year in my marriage because of that counsellor, because of religious reasons.

It was stated that coworkers were very helpful in terms of providing information about the available social services. Women stated that they received support from their Canadian coworkers, particularly in the areas of the legal system and employment. The Canadian coworkers helped women by introducing and helping them access the legal system. Along with information, guidance and referral, coworkers also offered to accompany the women to the legal organizations to empower women to become aware of their rights.

Second woman: That was a Canadian woman, a co-worker of mine. She said, you go and see a lawyer. I said, I don't have any money to fight or anything. She said, you know, we have Legal Aid here. You go and tell the lawyer that you need Legal Aid. If you need me, I will come to the court with you. She supported me, because finally I left only with a bag of my clothes. I was so emotionally drained that I couldn't even look after the children. So, I said why I would bother. I am just going to rent a room and die. That is the way I felt when I left. She said to me one day: "Why are you doing this"? You belong to that house. You belong to the children. Who does he think he is? She said: You belong to the house not him. She said: you go and see a lawyer and tell him to get the hell out of the house. It was hard, but she shook me up. Then I thought she was right, and then I went to see a lawyer.

The women also received information regarding jobs from their coworkers within their Canadian networks. In terms of employment, Canadian coworkers were reported to be the most important source of support for women by providing them information and

guidance related to their jobs and helping them to improve themselves in the workplace. One Canadian co-worker offered the woman a job after she trained her and helped her to be qualified for the positions.

Fifth woman: **My Canadian teacher introduced me to a Volunteer job in accounting. In there, a Canadian lady helped me to learn more about accounting and insurance. She taught me the insurance job, and then she offered me a full-time job, and good pay.**

The networks within the community at large provided women with different types of supports to empower them to stand up against abuse. It was mentioned that being in touch with Canadians, helped women to learn a lot about abuse. The women stated that by living in Canada they gained information that inspired them and changed their attitude towards abuse. They not only received information regarding the social services available to them, but they also received awareness about abuse, how it is viewed in Canada and their choices to deal with it. The women stated that they gained this information through their environment and just by living in Canada.

Third woman: **But everything was different when we came here, because you hear about abuse, and you hear that it is not acceptable, and women have choices and they can get help. So, you just gain information by yourself by living in Canada.**

4.4.1.5- Role of the Canadian Media

The role of the media in increasing women's knowledge about abuse and empowering them to overcome their abusive situation was frequently mentioned through the interviews. Even though women did not mention the word "media", they related their personal growth and increased awareness to learning about abuse from TV, radio, books and magazines.

Second woman: I started to grow on my own by the talk shows and reading. Grow and change by myself. I remember I was listening to these talk shows at night. I listened to these shows that gave advice about different topics, and I started to be aware of many things. I borrowed books from the library and hide them and read them.

The women stated that they did not remember how and where they got their information about abuse and how to handle it, but they indicated that it was through their network within the community at large. Even regarding some of the concrete information or directions that women received, such as calling the police in response to a crisis situation in which their safety might be jeopardized, they could not remember the source of information. However, they were certain that they did not receive the information from their own ethnic community. On the contrary, they were sure that they received information from the host society, with a high possibility being, learning it from the media.

Third woman: I don't even remember where I heard that, I got the information, and it was from the school or TV, or a book. I don't remember, but I knew that I could call the police.

The impact of media was significant enough to motivate the women to take the initiative to call the police or to take refuge at the women's shelter when they needed it. However, at the same time that women were receiving information about abuse and women's right in this regard, they were being criticized by their ethnic communities that they were becoming "Canadian" if they decided to practice their rights.

Third woman: **He was saying that he was p...off [obscenity] with my attitude because I was becoming Canadian. That..., you know, I changed since I came to Canada. And I am always telling him that if this "being Canadian" means that I am not going to put up with abuse, then I would rather to be Canadian. Most of the men complain that women have all the rights in Canada. Lots of men, but you know why they complain, because back home they can do what ever they want, and no body stops them. But most of men complain.**

In summary, Canadians provided different types of support for the women to empower them to end the abuse. By living in Canada the women established personal networks within the community at large through different settings such as workplace, school, neighbourhood, etc. These networks increased their knowledge regarding abuse and facilitated their way out from the abusive situations. All the women especially, highlighted the role that Canadians played in providing informational support and empowering them to stand against abuse. The informational support was provided for the women not only through their personal networks within the community at large, but also through the Canadian media. Information was a powerful tool in empowering the women to end their abuse. The media had a great impact in this regard.

4.4.2- Canadian Social Service Assistance

This sub-theme identified the types of supports that women received from different agencies within the social service system. The importance of social services was evident throughout the women's statements. The social services that exist in Canada were great assistance to women in terms of enabling them to leave their abusive situation.

In comparison with their countries of origin, the women concluded that social services in Canada were far more supportive of abused women. While women explained that in their home countries, abuse-related issues were considered to be family matters, they confirmed the need for social services similar to the ones in Canada. They stated that the lack of these kinds of social services in their home countries was a factor in keeping women in their abusive marriages.

As well, there were four components, which described the role and activities of the Canadian social services in providing support. These were as follows:

1. Welfare provides a way out. This component showed the important role social assistance played in providing financial support for the women, enabling them to be financially independent of their abusive husbands.
2. Crisis services for shelter and referral. This component demonstrated how the crisis services function to assure the safety of women and their children at the time of crisis by sheltering them and responding to their immediate medical needs.

3. Immigrant Women Agencies provide multiple services. The compound role the immigrant women agencies played to serve the women according to their individual needs and preferences was highlighted through this component.
4. Pros and Cons of Speaking English as Second Language. While this component verified the barriers of speaking in a second language, it pointed out some of the benefits which came along with attending the English as Second Language schools in terms of referrals to agencies which could assist in abusive situation.

4.4.2.1 Welfare Provides a Way Out

The welfare system in Canada was identified as a great encouragement for women not to tolerate abuse. Lack of welfare in their home countries was the key factor in obligating women to remain in their abusive marriages. Many families had no choice but to send women back to their abusive husbands when they sought refuge. If the economic condition of the extended family was poor, they could not financially afford to keep the woman for a long time and take care of her and her children. However, this problem was solved in Canada by having a welfare system that assured the coverage of women's basic needs after separation.

Third woman:

There is no help at all there. No government help, no shelter, nothing. So, some people probably just put up with it until ..., Depends on the situation (whether the family can support the women or not), because if they are a very poor family... maybe they consider her as another person to feed..., But that is a problem in our home country. Here, you can go to welfare, or to other social assistance. A few days after the separation I woke

up and I thought, well, I am going to find out what are my options, and I went to welfare.

Consequently, there were fewer worries for the family members in terms of obligations to financially support women after they divorced. The extended family did not have to put pressure on women to go back to their husbands for financial reasons.

First woman: I came here to my sister's house and I went to the Social Assistance because I didn't have any money. I came to my sister's in June and I rented this house in November. I could not be alone. I was so sick.

The internal links amongst the social services in Winnipeg directed women to services that they were not aware of. The women appreciated these referrals and found them useful as the time because they benefited from these services in terms of getting their questions answered and ending their worries.

Third woman: The welfare worker did not know, but he gave me an address to go for the single women's assistance. I was very worried. So, I went there the next day, she was a social worker. She said, you came to the right place, don't worry.

4.4.2.2-Crisis Services for Shelter and Referral

The women were referred to many agencies when they, or their children, reached out for help during a crisis situation. Although women agreed that the referrals were beneficial, the process of rapid referral to different agencies was reported to be somewhat frustrating for them at the time that they were facing their family crisis.

Fourth woman: (I was referred to immigrant women agency and the abused women's shelter) through the Child and Family Services and (to Legal Aid) from the police. I don't have to feel anything. I just have to do all these.

Although some women expressed their frustration at going through so many different agencies at a time of crisis, they stated that the referrals were very helpful as they made it possible to access the services that they needed. The women who had already passed the crisis reported that they were quite satisfied with being referred to the agencies they needed at the time because they were assisted by the services. Women stated that they tried to remain in touch with some of these organizations even after the crisis was over. In this way women felt supported and assured there would be continuity in their support for the future if they need it again, or need other kinds of support in similar or unrelated areas. Agencies helped them access information in different life areas due to the interconnection existed amongst the agencies. Furthermore, being in touch with these organizations provided women with the opportunity to be in touch with other abused women who were previous or present clients of that agency.

Fifth woman: My counsellor from here (helped me to get information about everything). I still get information that I need from here.

Another benefit of remaining in touch is that it created a perception that support is available if it is needed again in any life areas. For example, one woman perceived the women's shelter that had sheltered her once as her source of support in assisting her to go back to her country.

Fourth woman: **I still get maintenance from there or “I think” I can get help from them to get back to my country.**

The abused women's shelter was particularly identified as a great support in terms of the direct services they provided for women and also for connecting women to the other services they needed at the time such as welfare, Legal Aid, Child and Family Services, etc. All women who used the women's shelter at the time of crisis expressed their satisfaction with the prompt attention they received in response to their immediate needs. Furthermore, the interconnection of the women's shelter with the other social services was identified as helping to speed the process of receiving immediate help and making women feel safe and supported.

Second woman: **They even took me to the hospital... one time that he choked me, I was throwing up. So they took me to the hospital right away. They worked with each other, the women (doctor and the counsellor). So, the doctor was a woman and she said to me: I have to call the police to contact your husband, because he intended to kill you. Yes, I felt safe.**

One of the other positive aspects of the women's shelter was the easy access at the time of crisis. This shelter and its services were promptly available to women upon their request if they took the initiative to call the shelter. The shelter was also available if women were sent there through the police. The women's shelter also helped the women after the immediate crisis by making short-term living arrangements for them.

Fourth woman: **Yes. It was easy for them to get me in there.... Yes, I had a counsellor there. She was helpful. She found a place for me to stay for a while (after leaving the shelter).**

The shelter was utilized by the women as a place of refuge as many times as needed. Also, the fact that they could take their children to the shelter was very important. The counselling services provided at the women's shelter helped the women feel listened to.

Second woman: I left him; I went to the women's shelter. I left him about three times. I took the children and went to the women's shelter...The counsellors in there, yeah, they were helpful. They were listening to me.

4.4.2.3-Immigrant Women's Agencies Provide Multiple Services

Although immigrant women's agencies provided counselling services in women's first languages, they were more appreciated for other services they provided for the women such as proper referrals, advocating on behalf of the women, helping with their legal issues, and even accompanying them to the court. Most importantly, they were identified as a great source of support in terms of providing information in a variety of different areas as well as about abuse issues.

One of the unique aspects of immigrant women's agencies as service provider organizations was the fact that the women stayed in touch for many years after their crisis to receive information. Two women stated that they used those organizations as a source of information for almost all areas of their lives for years after their initial contact. They received information about employment, self-employment opportunities, education, health, English courses, free recreational clubs for women and children, available workshops and other activities in the community at large that they could benefit from.

Although women used these organizations' services for years, they still did not want anyone from their ethnic community to know about it. They tried their best to hide any connection between them and the immigrant women's agencies as it could uncover their secret to the communities that they were abused or separated and were using formal services to solve their problem.

Fifth woman:

No. I told my friend everything except that I am coming here to see a counsellor. I don't want anyone to know that I am seeing a counsellor here. Because in our community news spread so fast. If people from my community member know about this, Oh, they start taking behind my back, and judging me for getting separated or coming to here (Immigrant women's agency). Our people don't believe in these things, they believe you have to stay with your husband, regardless.

Although, the immigrant women's agencies were identified as a great source of referral and informational support, the women stated that they had some difficulties in establishing trust with the counsellors in those agencies if they were from the same ethnic background as the women. The issue of women not trusting counsellors from their own ethnic background has been discussed previously. All women indicated that they could establish trust with a Canadian counsellor more rapidly than a counsellor from their own ethnic background because of the fear of being judged. None of the six women who participated in this study had a counsellor from their own ethnic community. Even the three women who used the counselling services of the immigrant women organizations were not counselled by counsellors from their own ethnic community, but they were advised by counsellors who were immigrants.

Second woman: I went to an immigrant women agency, but I didn't want to see any counsellor who spoke my language. That is why I wanted to talk to another counsellor. Yes, I asked for a counsellor who was not from my community, and I was connected with another counsellor. Even though at the beginning it was difficult for me to understand her accent, I would rather have her than some one from my own community.

Another factor that prevented women from trusting the counsellors from their ethnic background was the fear that those counsellors might not maintain confidentiality as they were in touch with other ethnic community members. Even though women were aware that their counsellor was supposed to maintain confidentiality, as it was a part of their jobs, still they could not trust the workers from their ethnic community. The fact that the counsellors from their own ethnic community would know many of the community members was very disturbing for the women, and made them to hesitate to go to them.

Fifth woman: They know everyone in our community and everyone knows them. I am not sure if I could trust them or not. I thought that they were going to talk to the community, because I don't know how they would think of me. They may judge me.

A combination of the fear of being judged and the lack of trust of the counsellor from the same ethnic background made women feel uncomfortable and prevented them from utilizing these services.

Second woman: I didn't feel very comfortable, well... I felt comfortable, ... but ... but somehow I didn't go back because of that fear of being judged. Then I went to see another counsellor. She was Canadian.

The issues of establishing trust with the counsellor and believing that he/she understood the problem, were reported to be more important than being from the same cultural background. Although it was more convenient to speak in their first language with a counsellor, it was more important to be able to trust the counsellor first.

Fifth woman: I told her everything about my life, things that I would not tell any counsellor from my own community. The counsellors have to be able to help, to understand; it doesn't matter if they are from my culture or not. I have to be able to believe my counsellor first. I have met different counsellors from the Canadian culture and I believed them.

4.4.2.4-English as Second Language: Pros and Cons

Speaking English as a second language was identified as one of the barriers that women faced while trying to reach out to the available services. The women stated that they had difficulties expressing themselves and talking about their personal problems in a foreign language.

Fifth woman: Especially that I did not know English well. I was not sure if I would be able to express myself well. A day before coming to my appointment with the counsellor, I practiced how to talk about my problem in English and what I wanted to say in English.

However, it was reported that regardless of the language difficulties, not only was trust established between the client and her counsellor, but also their connection lasted for a

long time. In some circumstances such as the above case, the woman perceived her counsellor as a friend and a support person to whom she could talk at a time of frustration.

Fifth woman: (When I get very frustrated I talk to) my very close friend. I also talk to my counsellor at... She has been my counsellor for three years, now she became my best friend.

In some circumstance in which women did not know English and needed an interpreter, the counsellors from immigrant organizations helped them communicate with workers at other agencies. Although women acknowledged their need for interpretation services at the time of crisis, they felt that they did not have a choice except to disclose their personal life to a third person. Especially when the police were involved, maintaining confidentiality was limited. Therefore, women felt that they were forced to disclose their personal matters not only to the police but also to a third party (the interpreter) who was usually from their ethnic community. Disclosing their family matters to the members of their ethnic community was exactly what the women tried to avoid. In some situations, police routinely called for an interpreter without the women's consent.

Sixth woman: From the police. I couldn't even speak to the police because of my English. They called... and asked for an interpreter. At the beginning (I did not feel comfortable talking to her about my situation). But the police had already told her about my situation. So she knew about my situation. But ... yeah, she was good. In that situation it really didn't matter. The police called her. So she was there and I felt that I needed her help anyway. I needed her for interpretation anyway.

English as a Second Language schools (ESL) were mentioned to be very important in providing the women with information they needed, as well as connecting them to the proper service agencies. Four out of six women indicated that their ESL school provided them with information regarding abuse and the fact that it did not have to be tolerated in Canada. While some women got their information directly from their ESL teachers, others stated that guest lecturers provided them fact about abuse and were a helpful source of information and referral to the agencies that dealt with abuse-related issues.

Fifth woman:

I was attending the ESL classes about three and a half years ago when I came to Canada. They did teach us many things about life here. One day we had a male social worker that came to our class and talked about abuse. Until that day I did not know what abuse was. After the class I talked to that social worker and he introduced me to this counsellor at an immigrant women's agency. I am using these services now. But if I didn't go to ESL class, I wouldn't know about them. I probably wouldn't get any information through my community.

All the women appreciated the ESL system as a source of information and referral in general. They also stated that their ethnic community would not provide them with this information about social services and abuse.

Most of the women (four) had used the ESL system prior to their accessing agencies for abuse-related services. However, in one case this was reversed. Although the woman was living in Canada for more than twenty years, she had never used ESL services and was referred to ESL classes by her counsellor after she left her abusive situation.

Sixth woman: She told me to go to ESL classes and I did. I never went to ESL until I separated from him. He wouldn't let me go anywhere or do anything except go to work to earn money.

The ESL school was also identified as a source of information that connected women to employment agencies and referred them to volunteer jobs that would lead them to full-time employment.

In summary, the role and importance of the social services in assisting and helping the women empower themselves to overcome their abusive situation was demonstrated through the participants' statements. The social services themselves had well connected networks which made the process of referral easier, especially, at the time of crisis when taking quick action was needed to ensure the women's safety.

CHAPTER 5

Network Maps and Eco-Maps

The network maps and eco-maps of each participant were developed in order to illustrate the women's position within their social surroundings with a person-in-environment focus. These maps helped to portray the women's social connections with others while they were in the abusive situation, and also how these connections changed after they left the abuse.

While the network maps were focused on the women as individuals and identified their network composition and memberships, the eco-maps portrayed their whole family system's relationship with the outside world. A model of eco-mapping introduced by Holman (1983) was adapted for this study. The benefits of the eco-maps were their visual simulation of connections between the women's families and their environments including the ethnic and non-ethnic individuals or organizations they were in touch with. The eco-maps also illustrated whether the relationships were nurturing or conflicted with the ethnic and non-ethnic groups. Not only did the eco-maps demonstrate the number and the nature of the women's connections to their environment, but they also showed how the women's connections to the social services changed as they went through the process of separation. In order to better understand how the women's families were linked to their environment before, during and after the process of separation, three eco-maps were drawn for each woman to illustrate their connections with their environment at each stage.

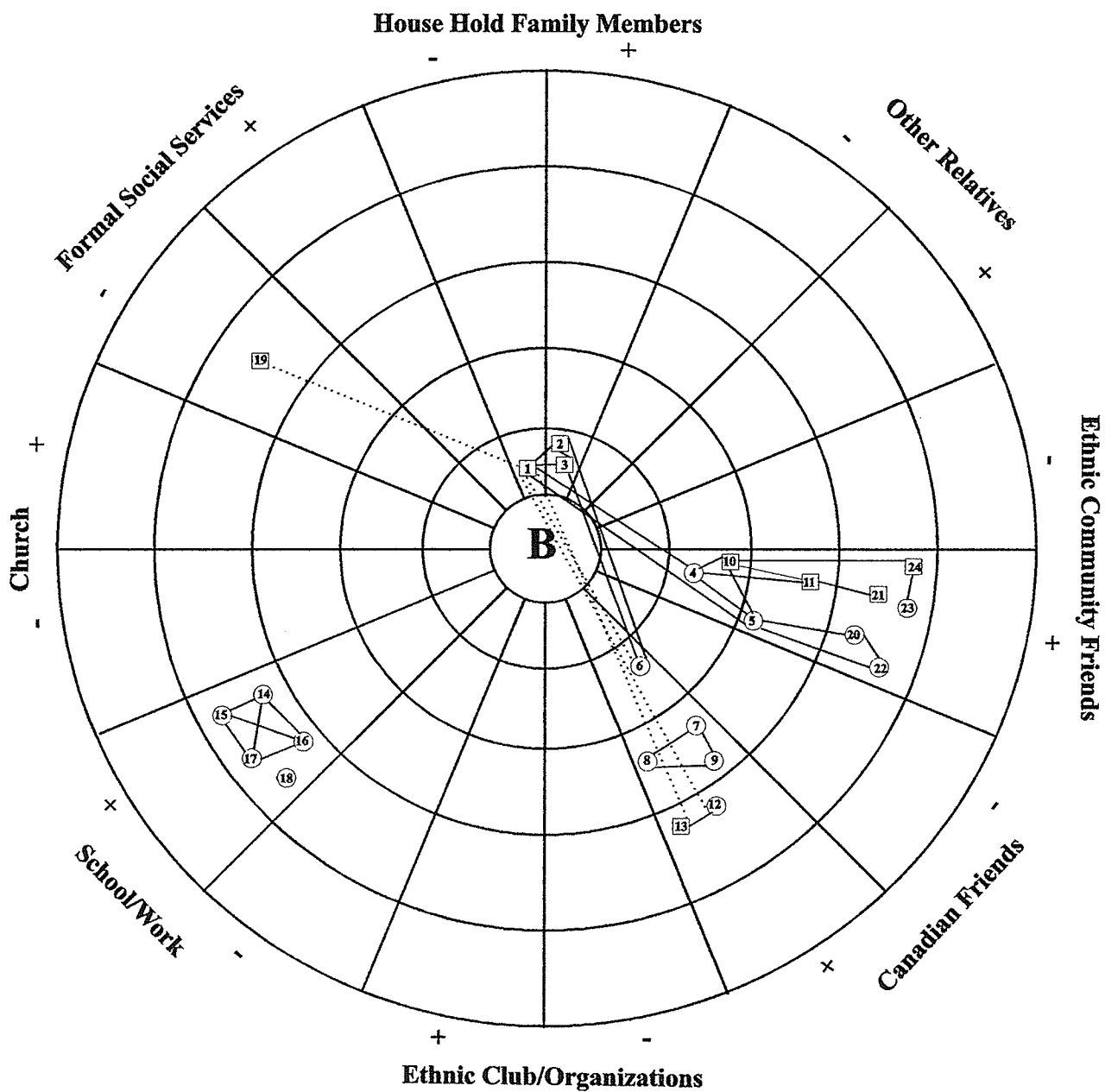
Unlike the eco-map, the network map was an egocentric map of the each woman's personal network that included each person known to that woman. A model of mapping used by Lugtig & Fuchs (1992) was adapted for this study. While following their principles in drawing maps, I increased the informational domains presented in the maps by dividing each circle into 8 sections rather than the 5 which Lugtig and Fuchs (1992) originally used. In this fashion I was able to customize the maps to reflect my research participants' networks. For instance, by creating two domains for friends (ethnic community friends and Canadian friends) versus Lugtig and Fuchs' model which allowed only one domain for friends, I was able to illustrate the women's connections with both their ethnic and Canadian friends. A good example of this is on map (D) which demonstrates that the woman's friend from her ethnic community is married to a Canadian man. While both the husband and wife are connected and shown as the woman's friends, they appear in two different domains of the woman's map.

The network maps provided more detailed information regarding the quality and functioning of the women's social connections. They highlighted the information provided within the interview sessions. The network maps also showed the size, composition and the density of the women's networks, as well as demonstrated the differences among the women in terms of their networks. For example, some women's networks mostly consisted of the members of their ethnic community (F), while others' included more "Canadians" than members of their ethnic group (B). Two network maps were prepared for each woman; one reflecting their networks while they were in the abusive situation and another one for after they left the abuse. A comparison of the two network maps showed the

changes which occurred within the women's networks after their separation in terms of the size, composition and density.

Two women's network maps and eco-maps were chosen to be presented in this chapter in order to illustrate how their networks modified after they left the abuse, and how their connections to their environment changed during and after the process of separation. The two women whose networks were chosen as samples were both divorced. However, one had her entire family of origin residing in Canada and her network did not include any "Canadians" before separation (Map F). The second woman, on the other hand had no relatives in Canada, and her network indicated some connections between her and the members of the community at large prior to her separation (Map B). The network maps indicated that the woman (B), who had already established friendships with "Canadians" prior to her separation, expanded her network within the "Canadian" community more than did the woman (F) who had fewer prior connections with "Canadians".

Social Network Map of Participant B Before Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

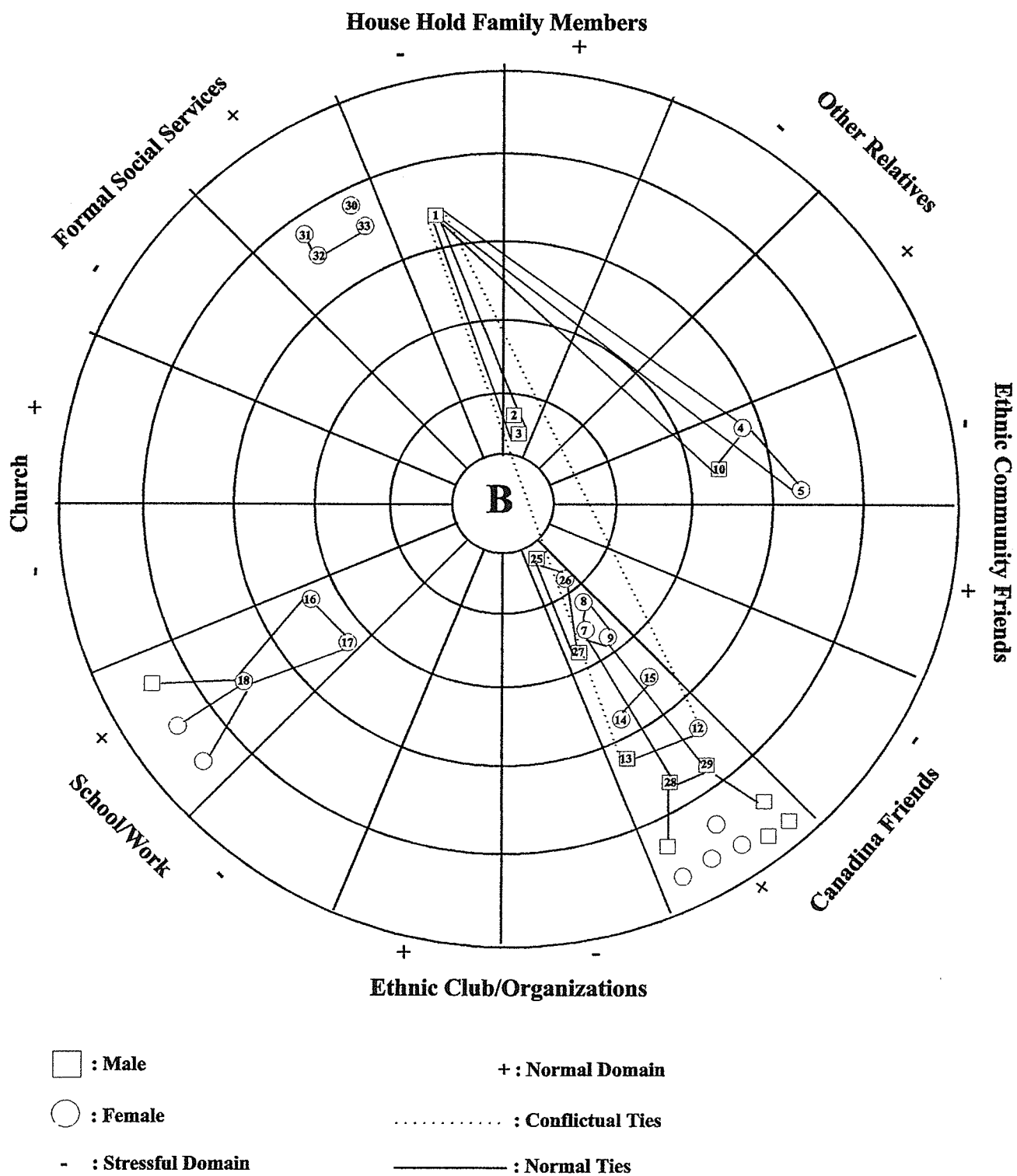
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

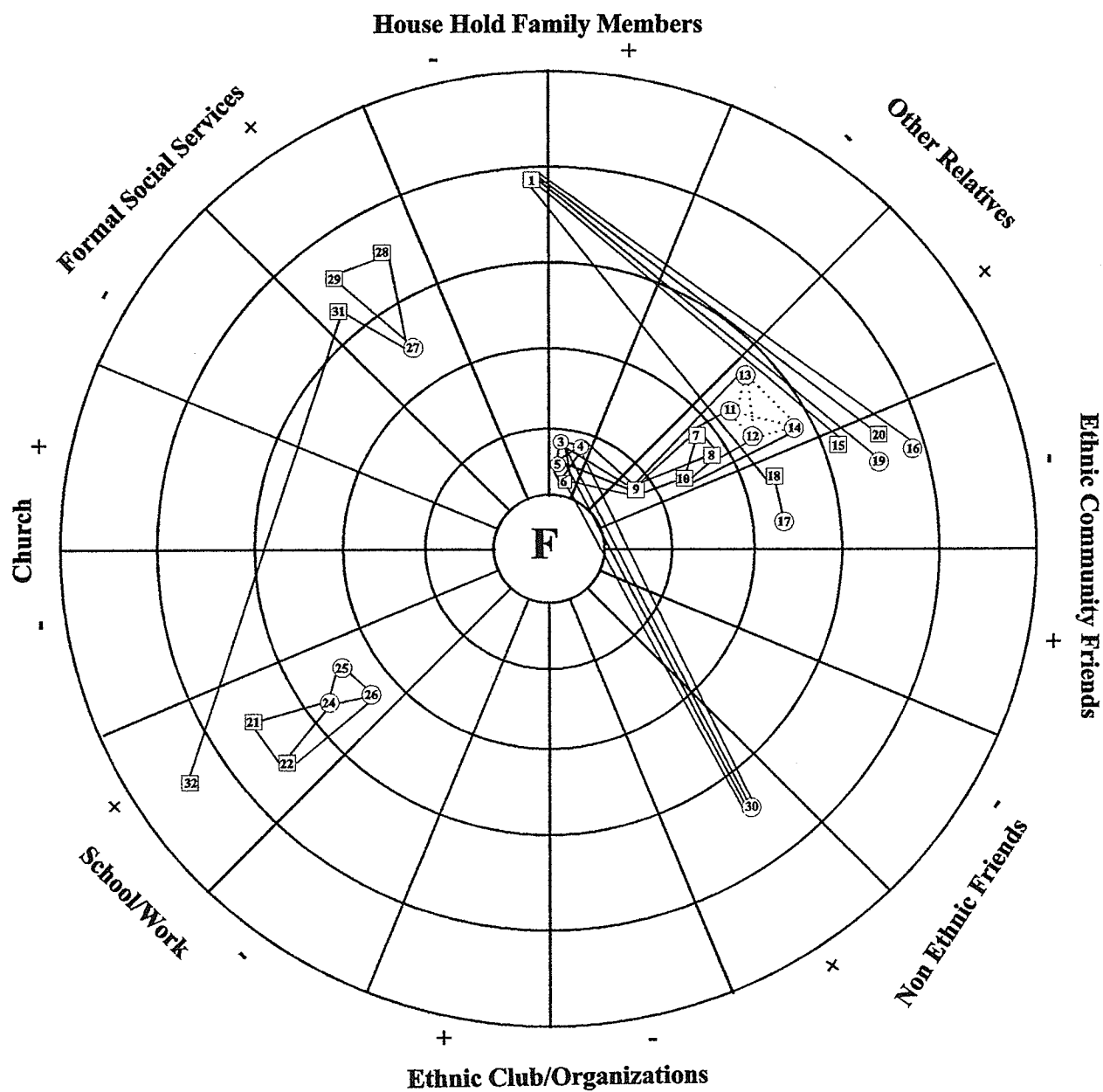
..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

Social Network Map of Participant B After Separation



Social Network Map of Participant F After Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

According to these two samples of network maps, the woman (B) who did not have any relatives in Canada felt closer to her "Canadian" friends and some of her coworkers after separation, while the other woman F's family members became closer to her. However, they both became distanced from their ethnic community friends. The network maps of both women demonstrated a significant decrease in the connections with members of their ethnic communities after their divorce and the subsequent development of connections with members of the community at large.

Both women's network maps indicated that the relationships between them and their network members within their ethnic community became stressful after they left the abuse. This was illustrated by the maps of both women that showed same individuals, from the ethnic community domain on the first maps, moved from positive (+) part to the negative (-) ones on the second maps. However, the maps of the woman (F) who had her relatives in Canada, showed that her relatives remained on the (+) side of the map, indicating that her relationships with them had not become stressful. As a matter of fact, this woman's brother (person # 9 on the map) moved closer to her and increased his number of visits to be able to help her and her children with household tasks.

Furthermore, the network maps showed the interconnections amongst the women's network members and the relationships which were reciprocal or conflicted. For instance, on map B there was a conflicted relationship between the woman B's husband (#1) and her counsellor (#19). The network map demonstrated the woman B's statement that her husband did not like using counselling services as he believed that these services in Canada were in favour of women.

Not only did the maps display the network memberships, they also exposed information about the type of the relationships as well as the intimacy or the closeness of the network members to the woman. As such, the maps illustrated that both women (B and F) became more distanced from their friends within the ethnic communities after leaving the abuse. This information is reflected by the maps as they illustrated that the friends moved on the farther intervals on the maps. This is different from moving from + to - part of the map since this shows the distance created between the woman as the centre of the map and her network members, while the former one reflect the changes of the nature of the relationships from reciprocal to stressful. However, in the maps of woman (B) who was working, it is shown that "Canadian" coworkers became friends after her divorce.

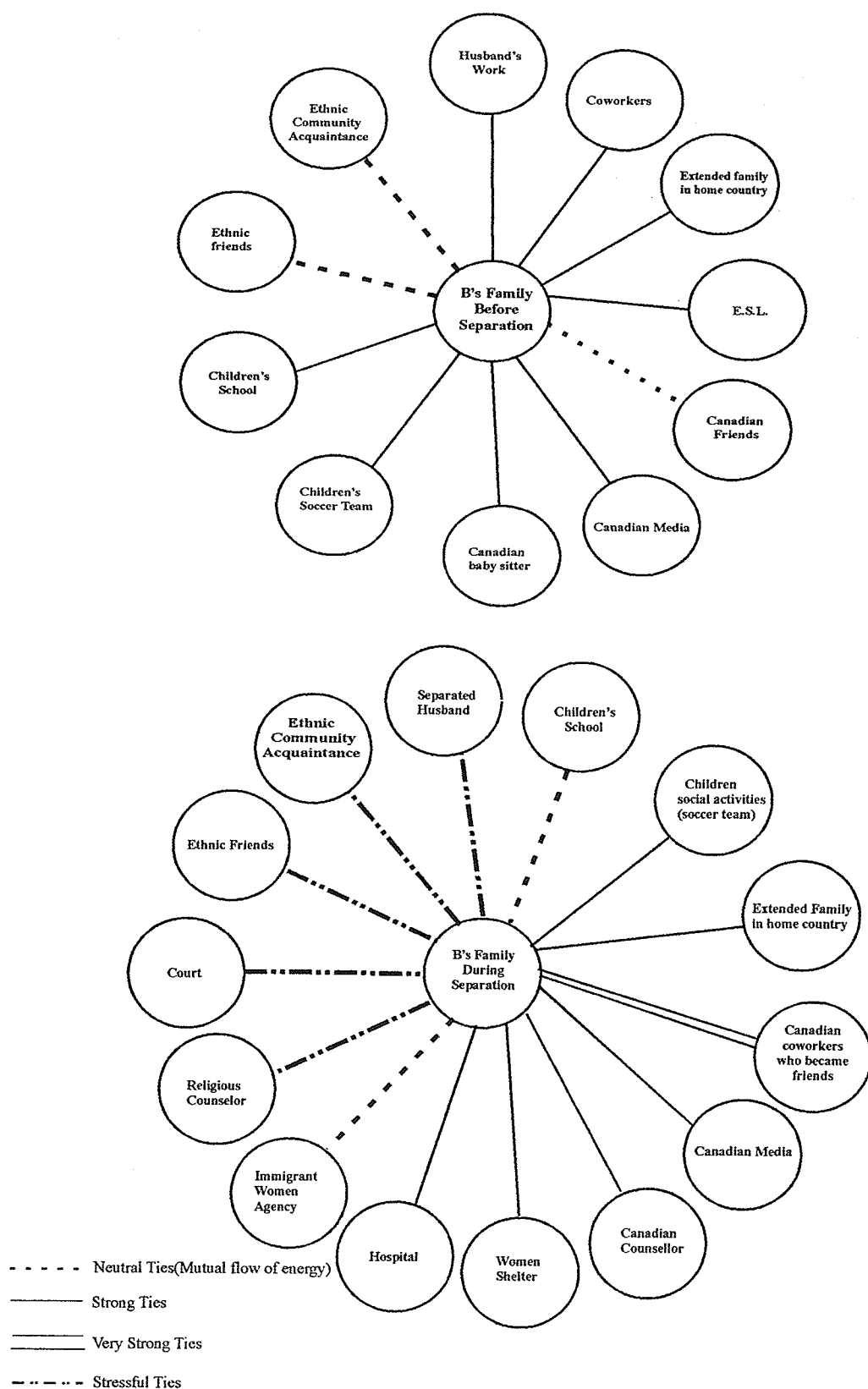
While the network maps of both women demonstrated that their use of social services increased after separation, woman B who previously had some Canadian friends within her network used these services even prior to her separation. As her eco-maps clearly showed, this woman even used a counsellor for her children after separation. As well, the eco-maps of both women demonstrated the women's connections with the social services suddenly increased during the process of separation. After separation they left some of the social services while maintaining their connections with others. The eco-maps also showed that both women established new connections with resources offered within the community at large such as going to school to upgrade their education.

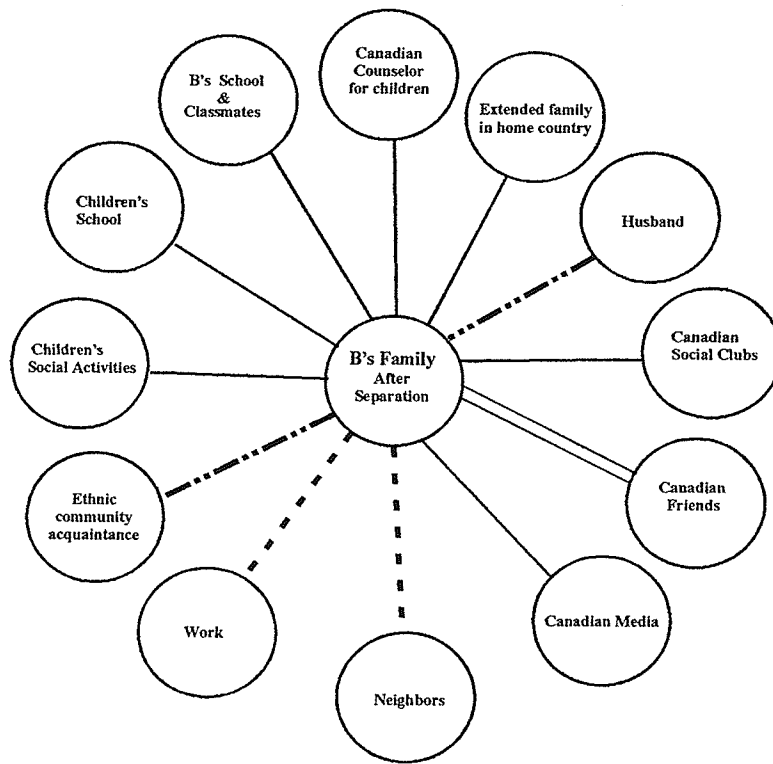
According to the network maps, both women were working before separation. Woman B who had connections with her coworkers, further developed friendships with her "Canadian" coworkers after separation. However, woman F who did not have many

connections through work disconnected herself from her coworkers. According to the eco-maps woman F did not maintain her employment and relied on social assistance after separation. This illustrates the information this woman provided within the interview session.

The eco-maps also showed that woman B who was in touch with her Canadian coworkers and had some Canadian friends prior to her separation took one step further in expanding her network within the community at large by joining some social clubs. Both women however, made the connection to some recreational organizations because of their children i.e. taking the children to the swimming club or other social activities.

ECO Map of Participant B Before and During Separation





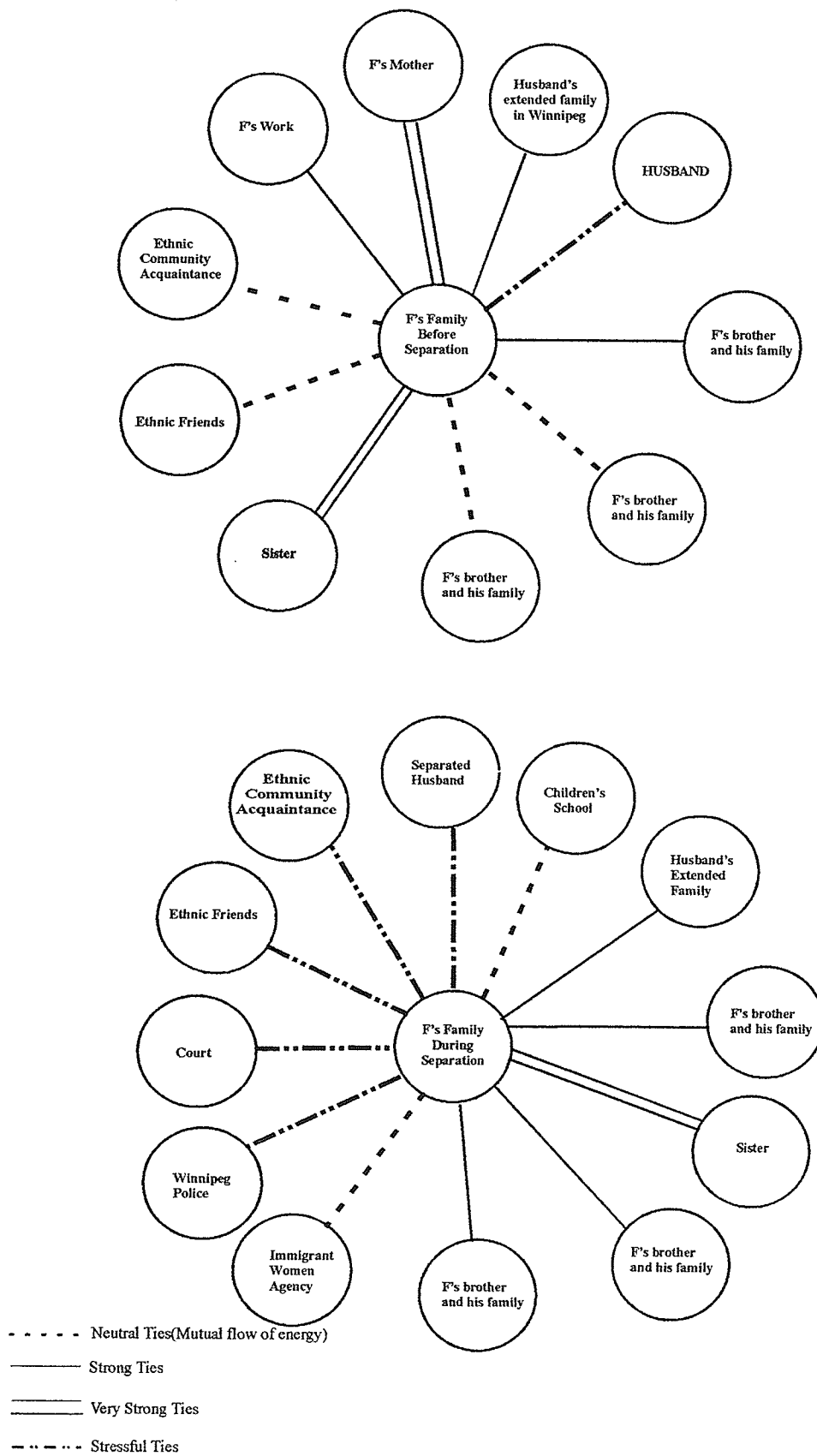
- - - - - Neutral Ties(Mutual flow of energy)

———— Strong Ties

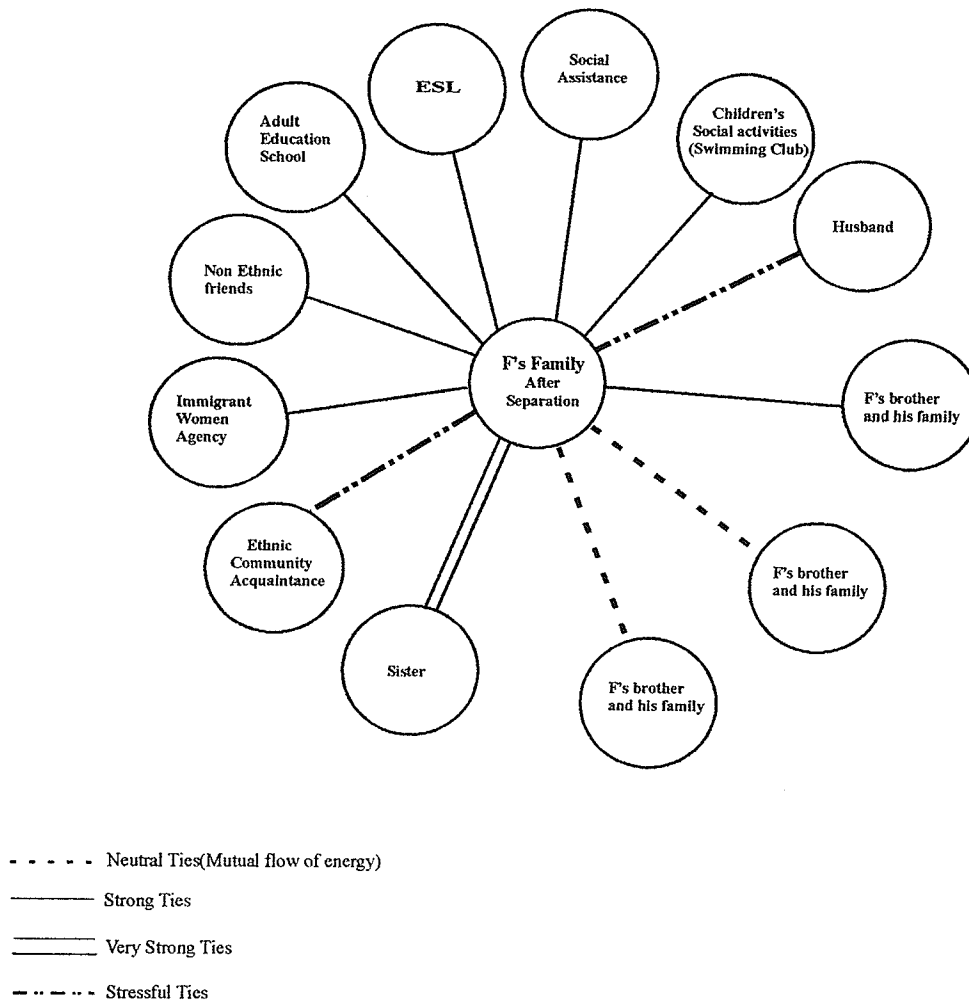
===== Very Strong Ties

- . - . - . Stressful Ties

ECO Map of Participant F Before and During Separation



ECO Map of Participant F After Separation



The other four women's network and eco-maps were also reviewed and compared in order to get a better understanding of the patterns of changes within the women's networks and their connections to their environment. These network and eco-maps can be found in appendices from F to I.

An overall comparison of the "before and after" network and eco-maps of all the women demonstrated several similarities in changes within their networks and their connections to their environment. The composition of all the women's networks indicated that the number of connections with members of their ethnic communities decreased after their separation while their connections with the social services increased (Maps of A, B, C, D, E and F). Also, all the women's network maps demonstrated that their connections with their ethnic community members became stressful after they left the abuse, even though the relationships had been positive or neutral before hand.

A comparison between the network maps of the women who worked and the ones who did not revealed that the density of the women's connections with Canadians was higher if they were working (maps of B and E). The non-working women's maps indicated a higher density of connections with their ethnic community members before separation (A and F). In the same manner, the network maps of the women who did not have any relatives in Canada (Maps of B, D and E) showed a higher density with members of the community at large in comparison with this women who had relatives here (Maps of A, C and F).

By looking at the network maps and eco-maps overall, it is interesting to note that the women who had extended their connections with members of the community at large,

were least connected to Social Assistance (B, D and E). However, the women who did not have connections with "Canadians" before they left the abuse, became dependent on Social Assistance after leaving the abuse, even though they may have been working prior to their separation (A and F).

The information provided by the network and eco-maps highlighted the interview findings. According to the interview findings the women either were rejected by their ethnic community members or they isolated themselves from them in order to avoid being judged. As a result of this, their networks within the ethnic communities became limited. The network maps verified this reduction in the women's connections to their ethnic community members by visually displaying the number of individuals with whom the women were in touch before and after their separation. The interview findings also suggested that the women lost their closeness with their friends from ethnic communities as they were criticized and blamed by them. This was in accordance with the network maps which illustrated that the women became distanced from their ethnic friends. Furthermore, the women expressed through the interviews that their relationship with their friends became conflicted after they left the abuse. The network maps also showed this by reflecting the changes which occurred in the women's relationships with those friends after separation. Except in one case, woman E, in which the close friend remained so, the rest of the network maps indicated that the women's relationship with their ethnic friends turned from positive to negative. The network maps also demonstrated the interview findings that family members remained close to the women even after separation and the nature of their relationships with them did not change.

Similar to the network maps, the eco-maps reinforced the interview findings that the women's families had fewer connections with the social services before separation while their links with these agencies suddenly increased during the process of separation. The eco-maps also verified the interview findings about the increase of resource use within the community at large after their separation.

Utilizing the network and eco-maps highlighted my interview findings and also helped me to gather more detailed information about the women's relationships with their environments. By portraying the women's connections to their social settings, the maps provided me an opportunity to access additional information that I had not noticed through the interviews. After visually displaying the information through mapping I could identify similar patterns of social connections among women who use similar resources for support. An example of this is when I realized that the women who relied on Social Assistance services after separation had less connection with the members of community at large. The mapping technique also enhanced my abilities to further examine the perceived availability and adequacy of support from the women's point of view.

In the next chapter the findings of this study will be discussed further and the role of the women's networks in providing them with support will be elaborated upon.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion of Findings

The primary purpose of this chapter is to link the findings of this study to the literature review. I will discuss the findings in relation to the research question and the two associated assumptions developed in the theoretical framework and discussed in chapter 2. The main research question was: What is the role of personal networks within ethno-cultural communities in providing support for abused immigrant women? The two assumptions were as follows:

1. Social networks within ethnic communities provide social support for the members of those groups.
2. Common cultural beliefs of the ethnic communities may influence the networks in terms of supporting abused women.

Prior to beginning discussion, I would like to point out that the focus of this study was on the barriers women faced accessing support to deal effectively with their abusive situation which were consistent across the 6 women interviewed. While all 6 women interviewed identified similar limitations in support available to them, there were some instances in which the women from the different regions shared concerns which seemed to be regionally specific. Because of the small sample size these similarities can not be generalized to the regional cultures of the participants; they may be due to other factors, or

may be coincidental. These regional similarities however, will be mentioned in order to highlight the differences in these women's experiences. Hsu (1971) states:

"When the familiar restraints are absent and new social and cultural ingredients are added, anyone is liable to behave differently. But the extent of change and the kind of change when away from home are not a foregone conclusion. They are very much dependent upon the cultural soil from which travelers have sprung and the circumstances in which they find themselves abroad" (p.29).

6.1- Personal Networks within the Ethnic Communities

Ethnic communities normally have the potential to provide a variety of types of support for their members. According to Granger and Portner (1985), "ethnic minority communities have always had strong natural support networks and self-help systems" (p. 44). The members of immigrant communities usually turn to their own ethnic communities for help before reaching out to the service providers in the community at large. Many studies find informal support is used over formal support by immigrants (Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994). Immigrants usually have very strong network ties among themselves with a high level of ongoing contacts with the natural helpers in their network (Leslie, 1992). This increases the likelihood of using existing informal support rather than using the formal support presented by the community at large (Griffith, , & Villavicencio, 1985; Kim, 1987; Leslie, 1992).

The writings above are in accordance with the findings of this study which indicate that women initially sought help from one of their network members within their ethnic community, i.e. sisters, close friends, etc. However, the literature on networks and social

support focuses on support in general. One of the primary contributions of this study is its exploration of how networks within ethnic communities respond to the issue of abuse and how supportive they are towards abused women. According to the findings of this research, the cultural beliefs of the ethnic networks may play an important role in providing or withholding support to abused women. This research found that when women leave their marriages, they are not supported by their networks; in fact, they lose their previous support due to being abandoned by their networks because their status as separated or divorced woman is not culturally accepted.

The literature review indicates that women of different cultures are not supposed to leave their abusive situations due to the cultural expectations of their communities (MacLeod, 1980; Kanuha, 1987; Kanuha, 1984; Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Ho, 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991; Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994; Ho, 1996). This is congruent with the responses received from the research participants about losing support from their friends and community members when leaving their husbands because of cultural expectations to stay in their marriages regardless of abuse. Ho (1990) highlights this by stating that the cultural beliefs of ethnic communities can prevent them from being supportive toward abused women.

This study demonstrates that the support provided by ethnic community networks is reliant upon the community's cultural belief system around family and marital relationships. Liang and Bogat (1994) agree that the support provided by an ethnic community is influenced by its cultural beliefs. McMillan and Chavis (1986) indicate that

social groups do not support people who do not fit the group norms. It is important for the members of a social group to be accepted by their group to receive support. Acceptance requires behaving within the group norms. This is congruent with the findings of this study that suggest in order to be accepted and assisted by one's ethnic network, one has to accept the cultural norms that are commonly practiced within the ethnic community.

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), communities and social groups usually maintain and reinforce their cultural characteristics to protect their identities. In the same manner, the immigrant communities put pressure on their members to behave within the community's norms. In return, the group offers its membership. Membership provides a sense of belonging and identification that involves "the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there, a feeling of acceptance by the group and a willingness to sacrifice for the group" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). The research participants spoke of their positions within their ethnic communities before leaving the abuse. Prior to divorce, the women perceived themselves as having a place within their ethnic group, being accepted by their ethnic friends and being a part of their ethnic communities through their connections with other community members. Since they "felt that had a place" within their ethnic community they tried to behave according to the cultural norms by remaining within their marriages in order to maintain their status. They sacrificed for the group by keeping quiet about their abusive situation for a long time in order to protect the reputation of their husbands and their ethnic group.

Except for the issue of abuse the women received support in all areas prior to their divorce; they felt a sense of belonging to their ethnic community, attended their social

gatherings and participated in cultural events through their ethnic community associations. There existed an acceptance between the participants and their ethnic networks which I would call a "mutual cultural acceptance". Mutual cultural acceptance means that the members accept the cultural norms of the group, behave within the norms of the group and therefore are accepted by the group. This mutual acceptance existed between them and their ethnic networks prior to them leaving their abusive situations, while they remained within intact families.

When mutual cultural acceptance is in place, families proudly behave within cultural norms because they believe, accept and practice these, and consequently are accepted and respected by that ethnic community. McMillan and Chavis (1986) refer to this as a "sense of belonging and identification", with the emphasis on the role of identification that can be expressed in the reciprocal statements "It is my group" and "I am a part of the group". This sense of identification is part of a bigger concept that according to McMillan (1976) is called "sense of community". He defines the sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan, 1986, p.9).

This study indicates that when there is a mutual cultural acceptance between the two, the ethnic network provides informal support for its members. The effectiveness of social networks within minority communities in providing their members with informal social support is frequently mentioned in the literature (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Leslie, 1992; Liang & Bogat, 1994). When dealing with life problems other than abuse, the ethnic

networks help immigrant families to access formal support by connecting them to the social services within the community at large. These networks also help their members to access jobs offered through ethnic businesses, or connect them with other non-ethnic services that assist in job searches. Besides employment, the networks provide information about other resources within their ethno-cultural community or the community at large. For instance, ethnic community associations are reported to be a good resource for directing and connecting immigrant families to services such as welfare, low income housing, employment agencies, health care, and schools and training centres. Thus, ethnic networks provide both direct support and links between their members and resources within society at large (Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Leslie, 1992).

Figure 6.1 shows how immigrant families can benefit from their networks within their ethnic community when a mutual cultural acceptance is in place between them and those networks.

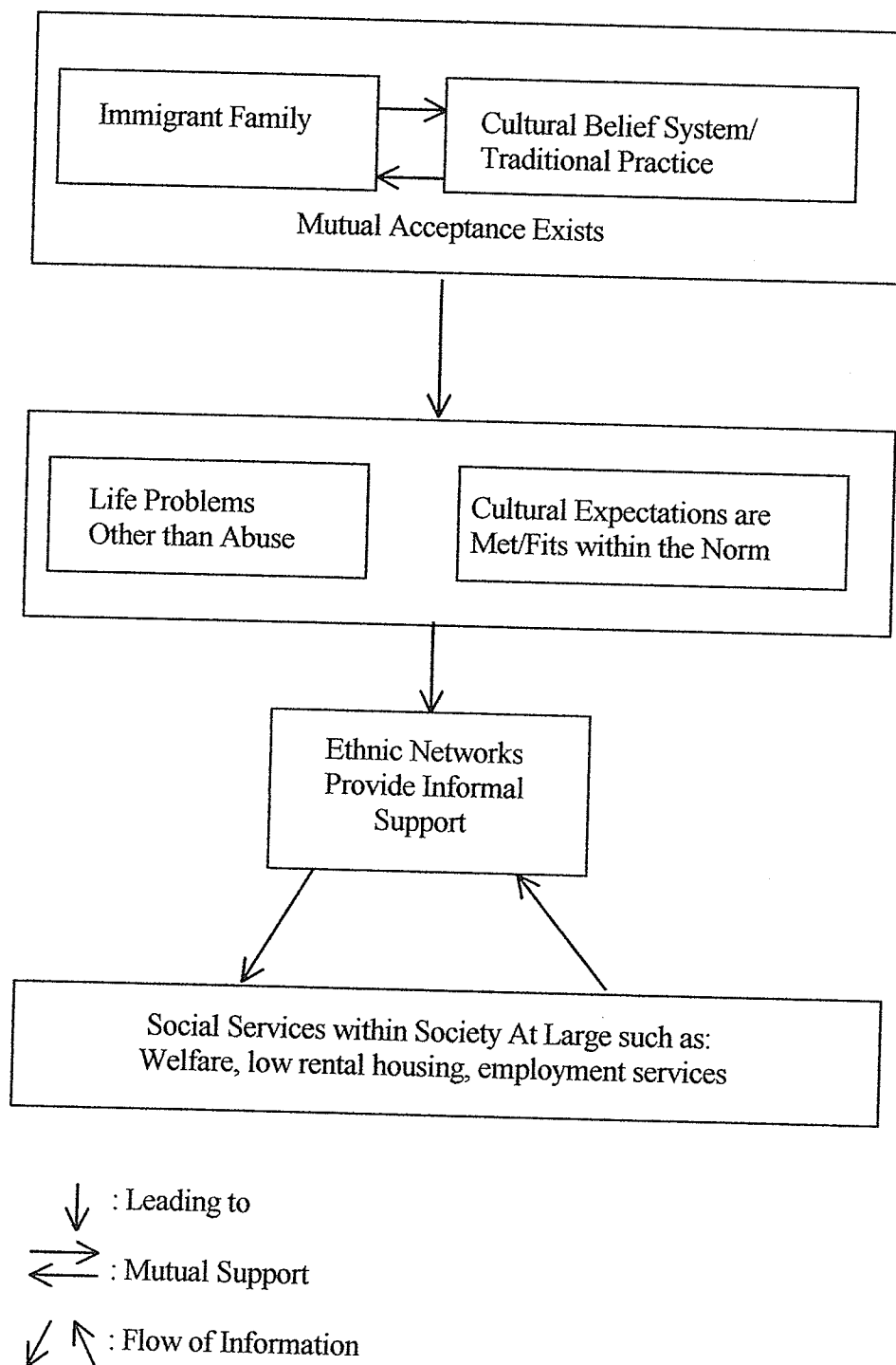


Figure 6.1- Support Providing Patterns

6.2- Factors Preventing Women from Leaving the Abusive Situation

No matter whether they were from the Latin America or the Pacific regions, the research participants' statements revealed that abuse is an accepted concept and a common practice in their home lands. Pinedo and Santinoli (1991) agree with research participants and state that many cultures consider it the women's fault if their marriages fall apart, as they are responsible for maintaining the unity of their families. Many studies indicate that immigrant women are expected to behave according to the traditional role which is assigned to them by their cultural belief system (Ho Kim, 1996; Kanuha 1994).

While women are expected to behave according to their traditional roles, it needs to be remembered that their established roles may change due to the process of immigration. While they may not have been employed outside their home in their country of origin, in Canada they may have to work outside home in order to respond to their families' financial needs, while still maintaining their previous role in the family as a homemaker. They are still responsible for the majority of the household tasks and the child rearing. Consequently, they face the triple stress of outside work, housework and child care while not being able to speak any of the two official languages. In their struggles to compromise with the new society in order to stabilize themselves financially and socially, immigrant families can fail in their family roles, rules and interactions. This failure increases the chance of marital and family problems, including family violence. At the same time, seeking professional help is not considered culturally appropriate; and can escalate violence.

Sluzki (1979) suggests that in immigrant families the women usually find an unskilled job more easily than the men; that challenges their previous family structure and

roles. He also adds that, even if this switching of roles takes place, in the long term the effects on men lead to depression or psychosomatic complaints. On the other hand, women's positions in the family may shift and they may become more assertive after entering the labour market since they will be contributing to the family's income (Sales, 1991). In this study women were criticized by their husbands for becoming "Canadianized" and not following their traditional role any more. Therefore, immigrant women have two choices: either maintain their traditional and cope with all the extra responsibilities i.e. working hard and tolerating abuse or being assertive and speaking up against the unjust situation they face in their families. In this later case they will be labelled as becoming "Canadianized" and not being faithful to their traditional values.

The women interviewed tolerate abuse to avoid being judged and criticized for not maintaining their cultural values. This is in accordance with the literature review in chapter 2 (Report on an International Session Ethno Cultural Communities on Family Violence, 1994; Macleod & Shin 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1990; Ho Kim, 1996). However, women in this study provide elaboration on the literature findings by identifying other factors that prevent them from leaving their abusive situation. Some of these factors include: being worried about jeopardizing the husband's job and social reputation; being criticized for ruining the reputation of the ethnic community; adhering to the expectations of them as educated people (for both men and women) who are not supposed to have problems with abuse; and saving face for self and the entire family; and being concerned about not upsetting their parents.

The research shows that women do not disclose the abuse because they are concerned about their husbands losing respect in their workplace and within the community at large. The issue of not jeopardizing the husband's employment especially when he works in a "white collar" position is another concern for the women because of the hardships the entire family goes through until the husband secures his employment. In the cases when police get involved and the man is charged for assault, he could lose his job after being arrested. In these circumstances the woman feels guilty and regrets it if the husband does lose his job.

This study's findings indicate that protecting the ethnic community's reputation is an important factor in preventing women from disclosing abuse. They fear that not only their husbands but also other men within their ethnic group might be stigmatized as abusers. That could cause disgrace for their ethnic community because all the men might be stereotyped as abusers. Sales (1991) states that "the immigrant woman's sense of self is often related to the community or the group she identifies with" (p.48). Therefore, it is not surprising that women try to uphold the good reputation of their community.

If women leave or disclose their abusive situation, they are criticized not only for disregarding the cultural beliefs of their ethnic group, but more importantly for ruining the reputation of their ethnic community. Two of the three women interviewed from the Latin American communities stated that they were strongly criticized by their close friends for jeopardizing the reputation of their ethnic community by disclosing their husbands' abusive behaviour. This was even more of a concern when the husband was an educated man with a

higher social status because he was considered ethnic community representative by the community at large.

Generally, having an education plays an important role in preventing women from disclosing abuse as it is one of the elements that determines social status. Women from both the Latin American and the Pacific Regions confirmed this. A common belief in their communities is that educated and professional families are free of abuse. As a result, highly educated and professional women try hard to hide their abusive situations in order to maintain their social status.

The findings of this study suggest that, while social status from education and professional employment is very important for women, owning a house and having a father for their children also demonstrate the family's social status and social class. The concept of having a house is more than just meeting basic needs and providing comfort for the family. Rather it is a matter of achievement in reaching an economic level that is respected by both their ethnic community and the community at large. From the time of arrival to Canada immigrant couples work hard and side by side to achieve this economic level.

Hutmik (1991), talks about the U-curve of adjustment and identifies three main phases after migration which are as follows: "an initial state of elation and optimism; a second stage of frustration, confusion and depression; and a third in which there is a gradual increment in confidence and satisfaction with the new society" (p.110). Although, in any of those stages separation can occur between the couples, it is highly possible that in the first stage of optimism the immigrant couple work hard together for the purpose of

building a brighter future for their family. Studies show that in a short period immediately after migration, conflicts and symptoms within the family remain inactive (Sluzki, 1979).

“Losing face” is another factor that prevents women from leaving their abusive marriages. This was especially emphasized by the participants from the Pacific Regions. These women expressed more concern about their own reputation than that of the men in their community. While this group of research participants shared the same concerns about the stigmatization of their men as abusers, they were more apprehensive about they themselves “losing face” after leaving their marriage and being stigmatized as “bad women” from a “bad family”, consequently causing their entire family to “lose face”. Ho (1996) emphasized the issue of “losing face” and indicated that in some Asian communities in the cases of divorce not only the women but their entire family “lose face”. This is an indication of the emphasis on the family values and the importance of maintaining the family’s unity since the concept of identity is mostly based on the family as a whole rather than the individuals who form the family.

Women from both regions stated that when a woman in their ethnic community gets divorced, it is interpreted that “she wants to be with other men”. This is also identified in some literature (Pinedo & Santinoli, 1990). They would be seen to be leaving their husbands because they were looking for sexual freedom, and might well be approached by men for sexual purposes. To prevent the stigmatization and to defend their social status, women in this study remained in their abusive situation for a long time. Two women were still pretending that they were married to their husbands long after being divorced (5 and 3

years respectively), to prevent being stigmatized and also avoid being judged and blamed by their community members.

As long as women are tolerating abuse and not talking about it, maintaining the unity of their family and pretending that they have a "perfect" marriage, they and their families receive all types of non-abuse-related support as mentioned previously. Keeping abuse secret can help to maintain the "mutual cultural acceptance" as it ensures the respectful connections between the family and the ethnic community which allows the flow of support in both directions.

Overall, the findings of this study show that at the same time that immigrant women want to end their abusive situation they still consider themselves a part of their ethnic community and their family and may not want to do anything that would harm either of these. This may come into conflict with the social workers whose endeavours in helping women to end the abuse is focused on encouraging them to press charges against their husbands or call the police. As Sales (1991) indicates:

"For many immigrant women the concept of identity is intrinsically group oriented and more specifically familial. The immigrant woman may emphasize responsibility for the collective good, rather than the good of individual. Assimilated Canadian social workers, who tend to be much more individually oriented, may have difficulty adjusting their focus to accommodate a culture where honour and security of the family may have the highest priority" (p.48).

The multiplicity of the factors that prevent immigrant women from leaving their abusive marriage suggests that it is necessary for service providers to know and understand

the heterogenic factors that influence these women's decision making regarding how to handle their abusive situation. Despite the existing stereotypic assumptions that immigrant women are a homogeneous group, there is a great heterogeneity among this population based on their socio-economic class, education, age and level of their adherence to the cultural beliefs of their ethnic group. Therefore, it is very important for service providers to understand and appreciate uniqueness when trying to help them. Also, consideration must be given to fact that although women seek help for abuse, they also would like to preserve their sense of pride in their ethnic background and their sense of belonging to that ethnic group.

6.3- Women's Social Connections and Use of Services

The findings of this study indicate that women feel comfortable talking about their abusive situation to their ethnic female friends who are in the same situation. By talking to someone who is experiencing the same pain, women feel relieved. Women sympathize with one another and provide each other with emotional support that makes it easier for them to tolerate abuse. In this way, they feel that they are accepted by their peers. McMillan and Chavis (1986) refer to this as "the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness" (p. 9). While Granger and Portner believe that ethnic minority communities have strong natural support networks for their members, they indicate that women in particular tend to get their support, consciousness-raising and self-help by focusing primarily on "getting together" (1985). The women in this study clearly expressed that they needed this togetherness. They spoke of the importance of being accepted by ethnic community friends, being listened to, and sharing abuse-related problems with

others who were suffering from the similar pain. This helped them to reduce pain. It provided them emotional support knowing that they were not alone and there were other women who were facing the same problem. Therefore, it will be helpful to facilitate women getting together when they are isolated either in their abusive situation or after they leave it. Making linkages between abused women will allow them to share their experiences as well as the resources they have accessed or heard about, whether within their ethnic community or the community at large.

This research found that while the family members support women in many ways to help them cope with abuse, they do not support the idea of separation or leaving the abusive husband permanently because this goes against their cultural beliefs. Even though they want to see their daughters living abuse-free lives, parents can not disregard these cultural beliefs. To ignore their beliefs, would bring unbearable embarrassment to the entire family as "divorce is known to bring shame to all members of the family" (Ho, 1996). Therefore, family members seem to be "stuck between a rock and a hard place". It is a difficult choice: between the traditional practices of their home countries which pressure them to keep their daughters/sisters within their marriages, and having their daughters/sisters safe and free from abuse.

Extended family and kin are very important in immigrants' lives as they are a part of their natural support system (Kelly, 1994; Davis & Proctor, 1989). However, families' cultural beliefs prevent them from supporting women in leaving their marriages (MacLeod, 1980). Most cultures encourage women to stay with their husbands forever and perform their roles as wives and mothers regardless of the abusive situation they may face (MacLeod

& Shin, 1993; Kanuha 1994; Martin & Mosher 1995; Ho Kim, 1996). Similarly, this study found that women are challenged by their family members to reconsider their decision to leave the abuse or to get a divorce. Women are strongly encouraged to stay within their marriage and accommodate the husbands' wishes more effectively in order to prevent further abuse. Thompson (1995) indicates that the family's acceptance of abuse causes them to view it in a non-critical manner and therefore, they fail to respond appropriately to the seriousness of the risks that are involved. In order to keep women safe, the families' beliefs regarding abuse need to be addressed by increasing their awareness about the cycle of abuse and its consequences. Programs can be developed to promote an understanding of wife abuse among multicultural families, as well to increase their access to information and resources. This will help to reduce family violence in immigrant communities.

Petuchowski (1987) refers to the family as a system that has historically been a "buffer" from environmental stressors. Immigrant families have been described as more dependent on relatives and involved in more reciprocal helping among themselves than outsiders (Griffith, J., & Villavicencio, S., 1985). This is congruent with participants' responses regarding their first disclosure of abuse. Although women tolerated abuse for a long time and did not talk about it because of the cultural expectations, when they finally decided to talk to someone about it, they turned to their family members first.

This research suggests that while family members are supportive and nurture the women, they do not challenge the abuse, but rather minimize it by highlighting how common it is in their home countries. They compare the abused women's situation in

Canada with what it would have been in their country had they not immigrated. By using these strategies, family members try to make it more tolerable for women to remain within their marriages. They also offer their help with housework, babysitting and other tangible supports to buffer the stress caused by abuse. Thompson (1995) points out the usefulness of tangible support and states that in the face of family difficulties, access to material aid, day care and other resources strengthen individuals' capabilities to handle difficult circumstances.

Although family members are emotionally supportive of women, it takes more than an emotionally nurturant network to reduce abusive behaviour. It requires a supportive network whose beliefs and values do not approve tolerating abuse and courageous associates who would challenge abusive behaviour among family in the face of threats of being labelled "Canadianized". The children of abused women are the only network members who challenge the abusive behaviour within the family according to the research participants. Kelly (1994) posits that, one of the issues that has been frequently observed in immigrant families is the tendency of the children to shift their allegiance toward the dominant culture. The children learn the new language much faster than their parents and tend to adapt to the new culture more rapidly. They prefer to act in accordance with the new culture, though it might be against the rules, values and styles that govern their family. The findings of this research indicate that the children disregard their culture and strongly urge their mothers to end the abuse. In some cases, the research participants reported that children threatened to leave home if mothers did not leave the abusive father. In other circumstances children took the initiative to call the police in order to end the abuse. As

was previously discussed, police involvement is exactly what immigrant women try to avoid. As Sluzki (1979) states, behaviour that is avoided by the first generation is embraced by the second, resulting in a clash between generations. He also believes that the clash in many immigrant families could be intercultural rather than intergenerational. This clash is a result of discord between the culture of a child's family, which shapes his/her behaviour, and the culture of larger society (Sluzki, 1979). My research shows that while women are encouraged by children to leave the abuse, their parents try hard to reinforce the cultural rules to sustain their marriages. Therefore, the women are "caught in both generational and cultural conflict" (Jenkins, 1981, p. 177).

In this study different family members react differently to abuse and offer different types of support. For example, parents mostly provide advice about how to tolerate abuse, whereas siblings give both tangible and intangible support. Wellman et al. (1987) also find that there are differences in the types of support provided by different family members. In their article "Different strokes from different folks", they present the differences in supports provided by family members according to their gender, generation and socio-economic class. While this study similarly recognizes differences in support because of gender and generation, it takes one step further and also identifies the influence of cultural beliefs. The type of support given by different family members is in accordance with the level of their adherence to the community cultural practices in dealing with abuse, and more importantly their viewpoints about how much women ought to tolerate abuse to fulfill these cultural expectations. While parents of the abused women strictly disagree with divorce and try to convince their daughters to cope with the situation rather than leaving it, siblings seem to

be more flexible. Siblings are willing to disregard or reinterpret cultural beliefs and accept the women's decision to leave their abusive husbands when the women's health and safety are in danger. Children of abused women take this one step further and as mentioned before, encourage their mothers to leave the abusive situation.

Different views among the three generations may be due to their different levels of contact with the members of the larger community. The findings of this study imply that grandparents have less contact with Canadians than their offspring and much less than their grandchildren. Similarly, Griffith and Villavicencio (1985) found that the second and third generation immigrants have more contact with the members of the community at large in the United States. Therefore, the parents' strong persistence in keeping the women within their marriages for the sake of cultural fulfilment can be due to their lower level of contact with the members of the community at large.

The literature reviewed emphasizes the importance of immigrants' contact with the members of the host society in their integration process as well as the utilization of the services offered by that society (Kim, 1987; Leslie, 1992). Likewise, the findings of this study indicate that the participants who were in touch with "Canadians" were more informed of available resources and were more open to the idea of using formal services for their marital problems compared with women who did not have any connections with the members of the community at large. Women with Canadian friends voluntarily used couple counselling provided by mainstream counsellors prior to their separation. In contrast, women who did not have any "Canadians" in their personal networks were resistant towards the idea of counselling and did not use these services until after police got involved

and referred them to abused women's centres. Even then, they did not feel comfortable having to disclose their personal life to an outsider, as they were used to having mothers or sisters to counsel them.

It has been suggested that abused immigrant women utilize informal sources of support within their families over formal support (Ho Kim, 1996; Kanuha, 1994; Ho, 1990). Similarly, my findings suggest that women who have their extended family members in Canada rely mainly on their help as there are strong connections among them and they are in close contact with one another. This may be an indication that strong ties with only family members might disadvantage immigrant women in terms of accessing resources within the community at large.

By referring to Granovetter's idea regarding "weak ties", Kuo and Tsai (1986), suggest that the strong ties among ethnic groups seem to work against their social mobility and psychological well-being, and consequently lead them to powerlessness. Granovetter (1982) favors weak ties over strong ties because weak ties can connect people to more resources with more options without creating dependency. He believes that by relying only on strong ties, people might become dependent on a few strong ties and be disconnected from other resources.

A perfect illustration of Granovetter's ideas emerges from my study. A woman who was connected only to her extended family members in Canada was so isolated from the community at large that she did not access ESL services even though she had been in Canada for over 20 years. This woman tolerated abuse for many years, using only her

mother and sister as her main source of support for counseling and consultation in coping with abuse. Only after her mother died and she was moved out of the abusive situation (after her daughter called the police), she became connect with some people from the community at large through the social services she was referred to. She was directed to ESL and other adult learning programs which helped her to expand her network within the community at large.

The literature mentions that reliance on family ties limits the use of formal support and slows down the process of cultural adaptation (Kim, 1987; Leslie, 1992). The influence of networking with the mainstream on immigrants' cultural adaptation has been discussed by some authors. Leslie (1992) states:

“As Kim (1978) points out, establishment of an interpersonal network is one of the more critical and difficult problems immigrants confront in a new environment. The characteristics of this interpersonal system are pivotal in the adaptation process. Although Kim notes that immigrants will naturally be drawn to ethnic communities formed by their fellow immigrants, she maintains that the long-term adjustment is facilitated by the centrality of both immigrants and natives in the support network” (p.244).

Outside community contacts give immigrant families an opportunity to be exposed to new ideas which could be useful for them. Increasing contacts with members of community at large can be beneficial for immigrants in that it can connect them to more resources. Connecting immigrants with the members of mainstream society also provides them behavioural and cognitive role modeling, and feedback from the culture of community at larger. Relationship with people from other communities and the community at large serves to sustain immigrants, to open a window into the universality of the human

circumstance, and to demonstrate alternative techniques and attitudes about marital relationships.

In this study women who were in touch with Canadians compared their own marital relationship with those of the "Canadian" married couples with whom they had established friendships with, and realized that "they were interacting differently" than the "Canadians". This caused them to see the maltreatment in their marriages in a new light. They started questioning and reconsidering some of the marital beliefs that were ruling their relationships with their husbands. Corse et al. (1990) agree that marital beliefs and practices can be influenced by enhanced positive exposure to other community members.

This research demonstrated that "Canadian" friends and coworkers become role models for the women. The women stated that they want to live the same "fear-free" lifestyle as their "Canadian" friends did. As such they decided to end abuse rather than tolerate it. Contacts with people from mainstream society give immigrant women an opportunity to learn different ways of handling abuse. This is in congruent with literature that suggests abusive behavior may continue when little new input of ideas and activity is allowed into the family system (Corse, Schmid, & Trickett, 1990; Thompson, 1995). There is a need for programs aimed at increasing awareness and developing community resources while enhancing families' outside contacts by creating a more connected and supportive neighbourhood.

6.4- Services within the Community at Large

The findings of this study suggest that Social Assistance (welfare) is one of the main and most frequently used sources of financial support for women. Unlike counselling services, social assistance was known to the ethnic communities, and to my research participants. Most women indicated that they had received information about welfare through their ethnic networks even prior to their separation, since such information is available and easily accessible within ethnic community associations. Unlike in the women's home countries where the economic situation of the extended family is an important factor in supporting women or forcing them to go back to their husbands, in Canada the welfare system assures the coverage of women's basic needs after separation. Consequently, there are fewer worries for family members in terms of their obligation to financially support women after divorce.

Interestingly, this research also found that women whose personal networks included Canadians did not use the welfare system after separation while women who were not connected with Canadians relied on the welfare system for years after separation. Perhaps since the participants' Canadian friends were all working, they promoted the Canadian lifestyle's emphasis on the women working too. Leslie (1992), believes that "natives who are well integrated into the support network are not only able to assist the immigrants in finding a 'fit' with the host culture but are also evidence that such competence and adaptation exist" (p. 244). It is possible that through connections with people from the community at large and by observing how mainstream friends live their lives day to day, immigrant women can learn how to survive.

The Canadian media also influence these women in terms of changing their attitudes towards abuse. The participants stated that, the media plays an important role in increasing women's awareness of abuse and how it is dealt with in Canada. Listening to radio and watching TV programs designed to increase community awareness regarding abuse can be a good source of information for abused women if they have sufficient knowledge of English language to comprehend these programs. However, as Sales (1991) posits, usually the information regarding abuse related services is disseminated in English or French, even though the "target population may not be English/French speaking" (p.47).

The question therefore remains: "what good is an informative TV program regarding crisis shelters, for instance, to a woman who has to rely on her husband to translate the TV program for her? With limited knowledge of the English language immigrant women are not able to access information they need regardless of availability. The participants in this study had sufficient knowledge of English. Consequently, they received information through radio and television programs regarding handling their abuse. It is very important to promote opportunities for immigrant women to learn English as well as providing information in their first languages. Also information about abuse and the related services can be published in the ethnic communities' newspaper or on ethnic radio and T.V stations.

This research suggests that English as a Second Language (ESL) schools not only are important for learning English but also are a good resource for directing women to different agencies, including the women's shelter and immigrant women's agencies. James (1996) emphasizes the role of educational institutions in acculturation* and states that "like

other Canadians, minority-group members and immigrants learn the elements of culture through education. The textbooks used and the language spoken in schools inform everyone of the cultural norms of our society and so we learn the behaviours that are expected of us. Through interaction with educational and other institutions, minority-group members are likely to be acculturated" (James, 1996, p.24). Moreover, he believes that immigrant organizations play an important role in the acculturation process by providing information about Canadian law, policies, and events or by offering citizenship and second language classes to promote their clients' access to educational and employment opportunities.

The findings of this research show that women suffered for years before reaching out for help to the social services. This is congruent with existing literature that reports most immigrant women do not seek help from service providers when they need it (Macleod & Shin 1993; Kanuha 1994; Martin & Mosher 1995; Ho Kim, 1996). This may be an indication that immigrant women do not perceive the existing services to be supportive. Immigrants' cultural beliefs may have an impact on their perception of support and their willingness to receive social support. According to Liang and Bogat (1994), cultural beliefs can influence the stress-buffering effects of social support. Receiving social support does not always have a stress-buffering effect, especially for minorities because of their different perceptions of support. In order to receive support one has to openly request it; this can be a stressful event itself (Liang and Bogat, 1994). This is in accordance with the participants' voices that show they do not want to ask for help, especially from a counsellor from their own ethnic group, because it is embarrassing. Liang and Bogat (1994)

also mentioned that in Chinese culture asking for help can be interpreted as incompetence. Thus for many from the Chinese community "received support was not only unrelated to better adjustment, but also had a negative stress-buffering effect" (1994, p. 142).

The issue of inappropriateness of the services offered to immigrant women due to the lack of a culturally sensitive approach in dealing with abuse has been frequently mentioned in the literature (MacLeod, 1980; Kanuha, 1987; Kuo & Tsai, 1986; Ho, 1990; Pinedo & Santinoli, 1991; Ho Kim, 1996). In response, the idea of using workers of the same race and ethnicity has been suggested often (e.g., Davis & Proctor, 1989; Granger, J. & Portner, D., 1985). However, contrary to my expectations, this study found that the participants did not want to be counselled by workers from their own ethnic background. They feared being judged by the counsellor as she would have been raised within the same culture, a culture that puts the blame on women for the occurrence of abuse and criticizes them if they complain about it and seek help for this private matter.

Going to counsellor from their own ethnic background means that the women have to ask for help explicitly and disclose a private aspect of their life that they have tried to hide for years, in particular from their own ethnic community members. Going to a counsellor from a different ethnic group than theirs gives women a sense of security of privacy being maintained and also the feeling of not being judged by the counsellor. Even though the participants in this study were aware that confidentiality was essential to the counsellor's job, they still could not trust a counsellor from their own ethnic background because "she would know everyone in the community". Two women in the study used counselling services in their second language (English), or in a third language known by

both. None of the women in this study looked for a counsellor from her own ethnic background. Out of the three women who used the immigrant women's agency, one switched to a mainstream organization for counselling services and the other two used counsellors from ethnic communities other than their own. Although being able to speak in their first language would have been convenient, the women preferred to go to a counsellor who was not from their own ethnic community, even though it meant they had to struggle to express themselves in English. It was more tolerable for them to struggle with English as their second language within the counselling session than to think that they were being judged by a counsellor from their ethnic background.

The importance of establishing trust between clients and workers and the mistrust immigrants have of mainstream counsellors has been frequently mentioned in the literature (MacLeod, 1980; Kanuha, 1987; Davis and Proctor, 1989). According to Davis and Proctor (1989), "part of the mistrust in communication between minority families and those trying to help them is a consequence of the practitioner being perceived as an extension of the larger society, which often acts to oppress them" (p. 78). In the same manner, the dilemma arises when ethnic counsellors are perceived as an extension of a culture or a community which acts to keep the women down and maintain them within the abusive situation.

This research shows that the values of non judgementalism and trust outweigh the counsellors' ethnic background in terms of receiving support. As Kuo and Tsai noted, as long as social support is strong and available, "no matter whether it comes from ethnic community or from the members of the host society, it does have a reductive effect on

psychological impairment" (1986, p. 136). The key point is to reduce the victim-blaming aspects of the services (real or perceived) so women feel supported.

Stigma and victim-blaming in counselling abused women in mainstream services has also been acknowledged; some of the strategies utilized for empowerment, for instance, emphasizing self-protection, have contributed to a form of victim-blaming too by putting the burden on women to stop violence: "Why didn't she do something to protect herself?" (Understanding and Charting Our Progress Toward the Prevention of Woman Abuse, 1994, Legislative Library, p. 31). The above statement about mainstream counselling and six immigrant women's views of counsellors from their own communities make it worth noting that any perception of victim-blaming may prevent women from establishing trust with their counsellors.

Summary:

The research findings identified that personal networks played an important role in providing or withholding support from abused immigrant women. These networks also influenced the women's decisions about how to respond to the abuse. Social networks within ethnic communities failed to support these abused women due to their community's cultural beliefs about family and marital relationships, while networks within the community at large supported them. After leaving the abusive situation, women were isolated from their ethnic communities either because they were abandoned by them or because they chose to avoid them. This caused women's networks within their ethnic community to shrink while their networks within the larger community expanded.

The more the women in this study were connected with the members of community at large, the more they adapted to the idea of using formal services to solve their abuse issues. They also had better opportunities to access information regarding social services through their "Canadian" network members. Women whose personal networks included "Canadians" used them as role models to adjust themselves to the "Canadian" culture and lifestyle.

What are the implications of these findings for social work practitioners and program developers? What are some suggestions for conducting further studies? The following chapter addresses these questions.

CHAPTER 7

Summary and Recommendations

7.1- Results of the Study

This research added to our understanding of the role of personal networks in providing support for abused immigrant women. Using a qualitative approach allowed me to study not only the phenomena of social support but also the relations between this and social networking, cultural perspectives and wife abuse. Two major themes and five sub-themes gradually emerged from the data provided by the six participating immigrant women. The following is a summary of the contents of the major themes and sub-themes:

1. The support provided for the participating women by their ethnic networks was seen to be contingent on the cultural beliefs of their network members. Network members who were adherent to their traditional faith and practices were not supportive of women leaving the abusive situation. The types of support provided by parents was geared to fostering women's coping strategies to tolerate abuse, while siblings were willing to bend cultural rules to support women's leaving. Children on the other hand encouraged their mothers to leave the marriage.
2. Women were supported by their close friends as long as they remained within their marriage and coped with abuse. However, when a woman decided to leave her abusive marriage, her close friends mostly criticized and rejected her. Only in one of the six cases was the woman supported by a close friend and in this instance the friend played the role of "sister".

3. Other community members such as family friends and acquaintances abandoned the women for leaving their marriage.
4. Networks within the community at large provided women with support to leave the abuse. These networks provided information regarding the available resources within Canadian society and facilitated the women's connections to those services so that they could get help to leave their abusive situation.
5. The connection with the members of the community at large introduced a different life style to women than their own. This, in turn, influenced women's decision making regarding how they dealt with abuse.
6. The Canadian media increased women's awareness of abuse and directed them to the abuse prevention services available within the community at large.
7. Social services provided assistance for abused women by responding to their needs around leaving their abusive situation.
8. The women were hesitant to use counselling services offered by counsellors from their own ethnic communities. This was due to their fear of being judged by the counsellors from their own ethnic background as the counsellor had been raised within the same culture that encourages women to tolerate abuse. Also because the ethnic counsellors were in touch with the members of their ethnic community, the women could not trust that confidentiality would be maintained. However, the women felt comfortable using an immigrant counsellor from a different ethnic community than their own.

7.2- Strengths and Limitations of the Study

7.2.1- Strengths

The qualitative methodology used was one of the main strengths of this study as this approach allowed me to interact with my research participants in order to capture the essence of their experiences, perceptions and feelings. Applying ideas from the ethnographic approach allowed me not only to interview the women but to enter into their social field and establish a more prolonged engagement in their social world to better understand the functioning of their social networks. As well, plotting the participants' network and eco-maps further illustrated the women's network connections and increased the force of my findings.

The fact that I am an immigrant woman yet not from the research participants' ethnic group created a comfortable atmosphere that enabled trust to be established. There was more confidence that confidentiality would be maintained as I did not know anybody from their ethnic communities. This was a similar situation to their feelings of security with immigrant counsellors from ethnic communities other than their own. My immigrant position was important since this increased the level of connection and facilitated the dialogue. We could talk about the hardships we faced adjusting to the new country and to our new roles in our families. As well, in order to establish trust I shared some of the common cultural beliefs from my country, and we discussed and compared some of our cultural similarities.

As Hammersley (1981) states, to understand what is being seen or heard, a researcher should learn the culture(s) of those who are being studied. Being a member of

the "Cross Cultural Coalition for Violence Prevention" and working with members of immigrant communities to prevent abuse in immigrant families had increased my knowledge of different cultures within the ethnic groups residing in Winnipeg. As well, I had gained a greater understanding of the social life of different ethnic groups during my residency in Winnipeg.

My intimate knowledge of immigrant communities was an asset in accessing informants and information which was required for this research. However, as Green (1995), points out, it is probably impossible to fully learn other cultures.

"To pretend that one has fully crossed into the expressive realm of another culture is not only preposterous but usually embarrassing to onlookers. But to be able to recognize the core messages of expressiveness, and to respond to them even somewhat appropriately, is a sign of growing empathy. Rapport comes from one's willingness to learn about others at that level and intensity. Rapport cannot come from a practiced technical style" (Green, 1995, P.89).

Overall, my background and past experiences in working with organizations that dealt with immigrant women provided me an important advantage.

Another strength in this research was the composition of the participants. Having participants from different ethnic groups who all had experienced abuse increased the credibility of my findings.

7.2.2- Limitations

Although using a qualitative approach produced a very rich database and allowed very rich interactions with the participants, this methodology has some inherent limitations.

Qualitative research can rarely be generalized as usually it involves a small number of participants. However, it helps us to better understand the phenomena that was studied and explain what, at the outset, appears to be obscure.

My study was conducted with women who have already accessed formal support through the social services. The networks of women who have already accessed the services might be different from the networks of women who have not made use of them. Consequently, the results of this research cannot be generalized to the networks of all abused immigrant women. Nevertheless, the results of the study provide ideas of the barriers that women may face in seeking help.

There was another limitation that could not be avoided. Two of my research participants moved out of province and were not available at the time of the second interviews. Out of the six participants who were originally interviewed, only four were interviewed for the second time. However, this did not have a critical impact on this study as the first sets of interview were done thoroughly in depth and the 4 women who were interviewed for the second time confirmed all the major findings.

7.3- Recommendations

Recommendations that emerged from this research will be presented in three groups: recommendations for direct practice; recommendations for community and network practice; recommendations for further study.

7.3.1- Recommendations for Direct Practice

Cultural Sensitivity

Social Workers who have abused immigrant women as their clients need to be aware that these women could be facing a dilemma because while they turn to professionals for help, they may feel that they are betraying their ethnic identities. They carry pride in their ethnic background as a facet of their identity. In the same manner, women may hesitate to take legal action against their husbands since they do not want to dishonour them in the larger community. It is recommended that while taking every necessary step to ensure the women's safety, social workers try their best to assist the family in maintaining their reputation within both the ethnic community and the community at large. Women's sense of pride must be honoured.

Workers also have to pay attention to the fact that the women have gone through the hardship of immigration. They have worked hard with their husbands to establish their family in Canada, and to reach the socio-economic status they are in. By leaving their husbands, not only do they lose their material possessions but they perceive that they also lose their social status. It is recommended that social workers emphasize other aspects of the women's life, besides the economic, that would highlight the women's achievements, i.e. their employment and educational achievements, or their children's educational achievements. This later gives the women the social status of being good mother.

Confidentiality and Choice of Counsellor

While it is essential to employ a culturally sensitive approach in working with women who are abused, the values of non judgementalism and trust outweigh the counsellors' ethnic background in providing culturally appropriate services. Abused immigrant women may not trust a counsellor from their own ethnic community as women may perceive that they are being judged by these counsellors. The ethnic counsellors may be perceived as an extension of a culture or a community that tried to keep the women down and force them to remain in their abusive marriages. When women can speak English, it is better to give them a choice as to whether they want to be connected with a worker from their own community or someone from another community.

The issues around confidentiality are extremely important for abused immigrant women. Going to a counsellor from their own ethnic community may not be ideal from their perspective as they may be hesitant to discuss their abuse related issues with someone who is known by their community. Due to privacy concerns, abused women may feel more comfortable to be working with immigrant counsellors from ethnic communities different from their own. This can increase their assurance that confidentiality will be maintained as the counsellor would not know any community members. At the same time, the immigrant counsellor can be sensitive toward the hardships caused by the immigration process.

Increasing Resources

By the time that abused women access the social services, these services are most likely their last resort as they possibly are abandoned by their own ethnic community.

Social workers need to find out other resources the women can connect with while exploring the possibilities of reconnecting women with their networks within their ethnic community. To do so means introducing women to other immigrant women or those in community at large, as well as working on the stressful ties within their own community networks.

It is important to develop linkages between the immigrant families and the members of the community at large in order to bolster available support and facilitate the process of cultural integration. It would be helpful if social workers try to connect their clients with different social activities such as cooking, sewing, breast feeding, child rearing, or recreational clubs, drop-in centres and English classes. Participation in any of these activities increases their contacts with people from the mainstream community.

Also, it is important to make linkages between abused women in order for them to reduce their isolation. This enables women to share their experiences as well as the resources they have accessed or heard about whether within their ethnic community or the community at large. Social workers can initiate gatherings such as pot locks, tea parties, etc. and invite these women to get together. However, it has to be entirely voluntarily as some of these women might not want to be seen at the gatherings. Nevertheless, the ones who want to attend would have a chance to expand their networks with abused women from different communities including the community at large.

7.3.2- Recommendations for Community Practice

Although social services play a significant role in providing support for abused women, given the influence cultural beliefs have on immigrant women's use of social services agencies, they may hesitate to seek help. Increasing formal support by itself will not fully respond to the needs of this population. Chances are that they would not use the services because they are not culturally accustomed to them or due to the fear of stigmatization by their ethnic communities. Emphasizing the use and acceptability of formal social services for immigrant women must be accompanied with raising their awareness as well as the awareness of ethnic communities regarding abuse and its consequences. Thus, what is needed is a combination of both formal and informal support which is more effective in preventing wife abuse in different ethnic communities. Careful discussions and cooperation between service providers and the ethnic community organizations and leaders will facilitate the development of plans and strategies to reduce and prevent abuse within ethnic communities through education and empowerment.

There is a need for programs aimed at increasing awareness about abuse and developing community resources for abuse prevention. At the same time these programs must increase immigrant families' outside contacts by creating a more connected and supportive network that includes both ethnic and non ethnic members. This requires that the program planners combine community level interventions with family level interventions. For intervention at the community level, the first step is to help the ethnic community and the community at large recognize that a problem with abuse exists and that is important to deal with it. At this stage the ethno-cultural communities' leaders should be identified. Involving the key people of the ethnic communities could help to validate that

wife abuse is an important issue which needs to be addressed. Identifying and involving leaders whose opinions are respected by community members can be a valuable support for any abuse prevention initiative. These people can be identified through churches or heritage organizations or through first language schools. Input from key community people would assist in developing proper plans for violence prevention within the communities.

It is important to get the support of community organizations and leaders before planning any intervention at the community level. If key people do not accept the existence and magnitude of the problem, their lack of support may block initiatives for abuse prevention. However, the most challenging task may be for the leaders to acknowledge that abuse is a problem. It would be helpful if problems that contributed to abuse were identified and community leaders were invited to a meeting to discuss these problems i.e. unemployment, parenthood, etc. By getting their cooperation in working on problems that indirectly contribute to abuse, they may be encouraged to admit the existence of abuse and thus increase their willingness to work on this problem. Also, trust can be established with the community leaders during this time.

Service providers can develop a consultive relationship with the ethnic communities' leaders. By developing this kind of relationship with the key people in the communities, effective existing patterns of help can be maintained and augmented with appropriate use of formal services when needed. Also discussions to challenge present cultural beliefs about wife abuse can be initiated with them in order to further encourage and support the idea that abuse is not acceptable. The key people could influence a large

number of families with little effort as they could disseminate any new information to the whole network since they are well connected to the other parts of network.

After obtaining the ethnic leaders' cooperation in each ethnic community, stage two begins, key community members are invited to join the representatives from other ethnic communities and immigrant and mainstream agencies working on family violence issues to develop a project to enhance awareness of abuse among immigrant families. The primary objective of the project would be to reduce and prevent abuse by promoting the understanding of community members in this regard and familiarizing them with existing resources. These resources could then be made available to females before a crisis occurred. In step three, a steering committee would be formed with a number of ethnic community members and agency workers (both immigrant and mainstream) to formulate activities and coordinate responsibilities such as outreach and coordination among ethnic community members, identifying gaps in service delivery, providing a procedure for needs assessment and also apply for funding for the project.

Depending on the availability of funding, stage four would see facilitators from ethnic communities hired and trained to provide information and facilitate discussion in first languages. The facilitators could conduct community based prevention through: outreach, advertising, delivery of workshops, support groups and production and distribution of first language materials. In addition to holding workshops, the facilitators would arrange radio and T.V interviews with the community members in first languages regarding abuse. They can play the role of consultants for their community members, and as such they can assist their communities to mobilize internal resources to improve their

structure and functioning. They could also coordinate ongoing consultations between the mainstream agencies and ethnic community leaders to begin to address gaps in services. They would support agencies abilities to respond to family violence issues in different ethnic communities through: training in cross cultural issues; consultation and support for prevention activities; increased outreach and increased contacts within ethnic communities.

At the family level the intervention would be more focused on increasing the immigrant families' connections with the members of the community at large as well as with other ethnic communities. Many different strategies can be used to increase the opportunities for immigrant families to meet more people such as, organizing community picnics or social gatherings. While these increase the size of family networks, they could also be used for increasing awareness about abuse amongst immigrant women. Any activity that increases social contacts, and creates opportunities for immigrant families to get together to meet people, is beneficial for increasing support.

As can be seen above, my vision is focused on preventing abuse within the immigrant families through combining community level intervention with family level intervention to modify personal social networks so that these can be more helpful in situation of abuse.

When working with immigrant families, not only is it important to try to connect them to each other to prevent isolation, it is also necessary to encourage involvement with the larger society to reduce the community's isolation from the host society. Delivering workshops about abuse and advertising with posters and pamphlets in first languages are beneficial for abuse prevention. Ongoing consultations between service providers and

ethnic community leaders are useful in finding a suitable fit to present services for families in need of assistance. Using a model of consultation that is adapted to the community is beneficial as is hiring and training workers from the immigrant communities in network intervention and ethno-specific models of community work. Together immigrant and mainstream workers can help communities to restructure themselves and enhance their flexibility in dealing with issues of abuse and complying with the Canadian laws regarding abuse.

7.3.3- Recommendations for Future Study

Prior to conducting this study, I reviewed literature in the areas of abuse and family violence, immigration and cultural adaptation, as well as social support and social networks. The need for further research to be undertaken is recommended by the literature in all these areas, especially in the area of cultural adaptation. Landale (1997) states that "theoretical frameworks for understanding the role of the family in immigrant adaptation to the receiving country are less well developed than those focusing on the immigration process itself" (p.283). Also, more research needs to be conducted on a cross-cultural basis. Most studies on minorities have focussed on a single ethnic group and very little collaborative research has been conducted on a cross-cultural basis (Wong, 1982). Therefore, in reflecting on the literature and the findings of this study, several suggestions can be made for further research.

1. There is a need for conducting research that combines these three social phenomena social support and social networks, cultural adaptation and abuse to provide a better picture of the dynamics between them, the complexity of the problem and different

means of resolution available on this topic. Further study is needed to add to or deny the findings presented here.

2. Other immigrant women may experience similar difficulties to those emerging from this study. It would be useful to conduct similar studies with other immigrant women from different geographic regions to find out how their networks deal with abuse in Canada.
3. Studies on child abuse within immigrant families could help with understanding whether there are similar patterns in dealing with child abuse and wife abuse, especially in the responses of the support networks within the ethnic communities.
4. This study reflected only the perspectives of abused women in terms of the influence of cultural beliefs in providing or withholding support. Conducting research with the children of abused women can provide valuable information regarding their perceptions of the impact of the cultural beliefs of their ethnic group on their family life especially in terms of abuse, and how it should be dealt with.
5. Further study in the area of cultural adaptation and how it affects networks within immigrant communities should be conducted.
6. Conducting research with immigrants who work with abused women is beneficial to determine how to maintain confidentiality when working with one's own ethnic community and the stresses in doing so.
7. It is important to assess how the ethnic communities view abuse, whether they are aware of its existence and whether it matters to them. Conducting a needs assessment with different ethnic communities is recommended.

7.4- Final Words

My hope is that this research, along with the existing literature will initiate additional endeavours towards abuse prevention within ethnic communities. I also hope that additional steps towards increased awareness and action will be taken by individuals who are interested in the social work field, keeping an open mind to cultural differences. I would like to conclude this chapter with the words of Lena Medaglia and Mary Catherine Rejca since they capture the essence of cultural understanding between immigrant women and social workers.

“By understanding the values and practices of immigrant women, and more importantly by understanding our own values and practices as not just cultural givens, but as aspects of our culture that we have chosen, these connections-links of understanding- between the counsellor and the immigrant woman can help to support a continuum which leads to establishing a commonality which then leads to a critique of sexism, racism and classism” (1991, p. 149).

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GLOSSARY

Abused

Definitions of types of abuse as described in Mathes (1991, p. 31)

- Physical Abuse: Such as battering: slapping, shoving, punching, hitting, hair pulling , forcibly restraining, choking; threats of physical abuse; life threats with or without a weapon.
- Psychological and Verbal abuse: Name calling, insults, degrading, comments or statements, jealousy, possessiveness, put-downs, humiliation, public humiliation, forced isolation and control over choices about friend, activities or freedoms.
- Sexual Abuse: Insulting statements about appearance or body, degrading statements about sexuality or choice of sexual expression, touching of the body, including breasts and genitalia without consent, unwanted touching, kissing, hugging or fondling and forced sexual activity including intercourse.
- Economic Abuse: Denying access to finances or information about finances such as location of banks, account numbers, other financial accounts or investments, controlling or limiting access to money, withholding money or the opportunities to access money such as employment.

Acculturation

James, (1996, p. 23) defines acculturation as “a process that minority groups and immigrants go through in response to overt or systematic pressures from the dominant group(s) to adapt, conform with, or adjust to majority values, customs, behaviours, and psychological characteristics”

Adaptation

The term “adaptation” is taken to mean “the changes made by the immigrant in order to fit better with the environment” and “includes changes in attitude as well as behaviour” (Taft, 1973, p. 227).

Canadian

Badets & Chui (1993) indicate that Canada’s earliest immigrants came from France, England and Ireland prior to 1960s. In this paper the term Canadian refers to people whose ancestors came to Canada prior to 1960 from the European countries.

The term Canadian and "the member of the community at large" have been used interchangeably in this study.

Community at large, Canadian society

In this paper, these terms refer to mainstream Canadian society. See above.

Ethno-cultural or ethnic community

The phrase "Ethno-cultural community" has been frequently used and referred to as "ethnic minority community", directed at immigrant and refugee communities (Report on an International Session with Ethno cultural Communities on Family Violence, 1994, Ottawa). In this paper, this phrase is being used in the same way as it was in the report.

Immigrant

Refers to persons who are, or have been landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who is not a Canadian citizen by birth, but who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Most immigrants have become citizens. Persons are admitted into Canada as landed immigrants under three classes which are, family, refugee and independent (Badets, J. & Chui, T., 1993. Canada's Changing Immigration Population. Catalogue No. 96-311E, published by Statistics Canada and Prentice Hall Canada Inc.)

Informal support versus formal support

Informal support is the kind of support provided for people by informal network members such as friends, relatives, acquaintances and so on. "The significant others help the individual mobilize his psychological resources and master his emotional burdens; they share his tasks; and they supply him with extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills and cognitive guidance to improve his handling of his situation" Caplan, G. (1974). The formal support, on the other hand, is provided by community professionals such as physicians, and members of clergy (Gottlib, 1981).

Personal social network, Personal network, Social network

Tracy and Whittaker (1990) used this term interchangeably with social network which they refer to as "the structure and quantity of a set of interconnected relationships. I utilize the Tracy and Whittaker's (1990) definition for personal social networks. In this paper, the terms "personal network", "personal social networks" and "social networks" have been used interchangeably to describe social networks from the standpoint of focal individuals.

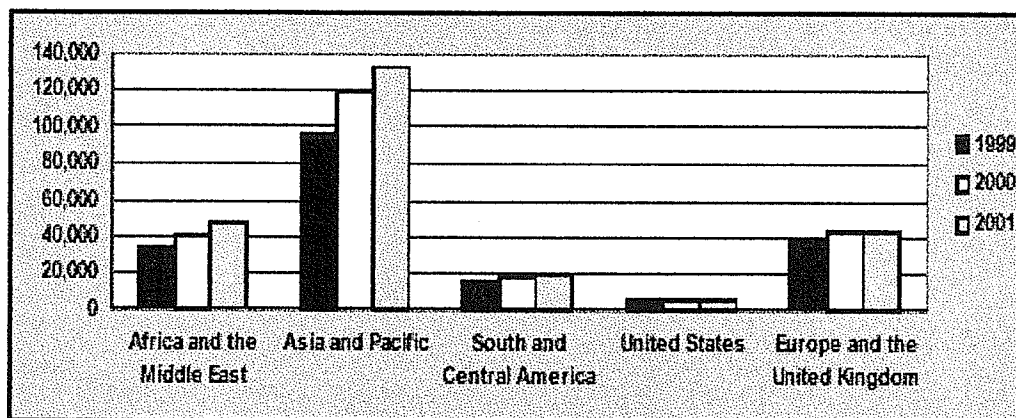
Social support

Social support consists of social relationships that provide (or can potentially provide) material and interpersonal resources that are of value to the recipient, such as counselling, access to information and services, sharing of tasks and responsibilities, and skill acquisition (Thompson, R. A. 1995).

APPENDIX A

Table 1 - Summary of Immigration to Canada By Source Area

REGION	1999		2000		2001	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Africa and the Middle East	33,490	17.63	40,815	17.96	48,078	19.20
Asia and Pacific	96,437	50.78	120,539	53.03	132,711	53.01
South and Central America	15,221	8.01	16,944	7.45	20,129	8.04
United States	5,525	2.91	5,814	2.56	5,894	2.35
Europe and the UK.	38,930	20.50	42,885	18.87	43,204	17.26
Not Stated	315	0.17	316	0.14	330	0.13
Total	189,922	100	227,313	100	250,346	100



Fact and Figures 2001: Immigration Overview. Retrieved July 1, 2002, from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/facts2001.pdf>

APPENDIX B

**IF YOU ARE AN IMMIGRANT WOMAN AND HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE,
YOU CAN HELP OTHERS WHO ARE IN THE SAME SITUATION.**

My name is Simin Hadidi. I am a graduate student at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba. I am conducting a study about how people in different immigrant communities treat a woman who is hurt by her husband/partner. *I am looking for immigrant women to share their experiences with me about abuse and the kinds of help they have looked for and/or received during the time of their hardship.*

The purpose of this study is to find out how different cultural communities help members who are or have been in abusive relationships. The information can be used to help plan new services for abused immigrant women.

Full confidentiality and anonymity is promised in writing. Your name will never be used in any reports or documents. Information that could identify you will not be used either during the study or after the study is finished. You can set your conditions to ensure that.

You can choose not to answer any question that you are uncomfortable with. Your participation in this research is absolutely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any explanation.

If you are willing to discuss your experiences in the strictest confidence, please call me, SIMIN HADIDI, at (Please leave a message of your first name and phone number and I will make sure to return your call, and no one except me listens to this answering machine)

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated

SIMIN

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APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

After greeting and presenting an introduction of the purpose of the study, the participant will be again assured that no individuals will be identified in my thesis. The respondents will also be reminded about their right of not answering any questions that they do not wish, and their right of withdrawing from the study at any stage that they want to.

Part A-Help seeking patterns:

The questions of this section have been designed to provide information about the help seeking patterns and the utilization of the social services:

- When do you seek help? (How serious your problem should be in order for you to discuss it with someone? For example, do you seek help when he slaps you in your face, beats you up all over your body, forces you to have sex, or just when you need medical services, e.g., when he breaks your arm etc. . . .)
- If you are very frustrated/upset, what would you do?
- Who would you talk to?
- Do you usually feel more comfortable to talk to people from your cultural background regarding your abusive situation or to an outsider? Please explain.

- What type of helps do you get from people within your community? (E.g., from family members, others in your household, friends, relatives who live in W.G., and friends and relatives who live outside W.G.).
- What do you know about the social service programs in Winnipeg?
- Whom did you get these information from?
- Which services have you ever used?
- Who referred you to these services?
- How comfortable do you feel using these services?
- Was there any program that you knew about and considered it useful for you but did not use it? Why?
- If you know some helps are available to you through some social organizations, will you ask them for help? Please explain why or why not?

Part B: Cultural Influences in Terms of Accessing Support:

The questions of this section have been designed to provide information about the impact of shared cultural beliefs in accessing support.

- From your community's point of view, is that O.K. for you to receive help from mainstream services regarding your abusive situation? Please explain.
- What would happen if you approach mainstream services for help?
- From your ethnic community's point of view, what are you expected to do when you are being abused by your husband?
- If you were in your home country, who would you go to?
 - Probe: Would the help be the same as here? If not, how would it be

different?

- How would it fit in your culture to receive help from people outside the family, relatives or friends?
- What does it like to receive help from service providers if it is against the cultural values of your community?
- How comfortable do you feel going back to your community after using these services?
 - Probe: How would your community members treat you if you seek help from service providers (e.g., would you be blamed, rejected, etc . . .)?
- If your community members discouraged you of getting help from service providers, did they offer you any kind of help or advice to what to? Please explain.
- Is that O.K. for you to receive help from your friends, relatives, community leaders, healers, a priest etc . . . ? Please explain.
- Has any of your community member ever given you information about some of the services available for abused women in Winnipeg? Has any of them encouraged you to use those services? Who?
- Is that O.K. for them to assist you in going to police or to refer you to a shelter for abused women? Would they be blamed by other community members for directing you that way?
- Do you believe that being a member of this ethnic community has reduced your chances of accessing to the social services (do you think that because of being a

member of this ethnic community, you had less chance to use the services)? Why?

How?

- Being a member of this ethnic group, what are the pressures (difficulties) which you have faced in relation to your abusive situation and in carrying out your responsibilities as a wife?
- What is it like to discuss these personal matters (matters regarding your abusive situation) with a third person (based on commonly practiced cultural beliefs of your community)?
 - Probe: what is it like to discuss these matters with your relative?
 - Probe: What is it like to discuss these matters with friends from your ethnic group?
 - Probe: What is it like to discuss these matters with an outsider (someone who is not from your ethnic background)?
 - Probe: Have you ever discussed your situation with a counsellor from your own cultural background?
 - Probe: What is it like to discuss these matters with a counsellor from your cultural background?
- To whom do you talk the most about your abusive situation, (friends, relatives, counsellors, etc . . .)?
- Is this person/s from your cultural background?
- To what extent do you discuss your problem with this person/s (how much details of your problem would you share with them)? E.g., would you talk to this person/s about your sexual issues, money, being hit by your husband, etc . . .

- Probe: Would you share your feelings with this person/s? E.g., would you cry in front of them?
- Probe: How comfortable do you feel discussing these matters to this person/s?
- Probe: What would you not tell them?
- Probe: Are there any certain areas that you do not or should not talk about?
- Probe: Why cannot you openly discuss those?

Available support within the network and the network characteristics (network maps):

The questions of this section have been designed to provide information about the characteristics of the personal networks and to identify the types of support which are provided by them.

- How many people can you count that will help you with your abusive situation?
- Who are these people? Or, what is their relation with you?
- How close do you feel you are to this person/s now? In a scale of one to five?
- How close you felt you were to them before?
- How does that person/s help you, or, what kinds of help each of these people will provide you with? E.g., provide you with money, a place to stay over the night, material you need, information you need (guidance), advice, showing sympathy to comfort you (emotional support), etc . . .
- Has this person/s overstepped the cultural rules to help you? Has he/she ever bent

the cultural rules in order to help you? Please give me an example.

- How many times, and how many people have stepped out of the cultural beliefs of the community to help you?
- Is that easier for you to talk to this person/s and get help from them, or talking to a counsellor and getting help from her/him?
- How does it feel like talking to that person/s; how supported you feel by them; in other words, how much it helps you to release your pain when you talk to this person/s? Please explain
- How frequently do you talk to this person/s (in person or over the phone)?
- How often did you talk to them before your separation?
- How often do you see this person/s?
- How often did you visit them before your separation?
- How often do you ask for their help?
- How comfortable you are in asking these people for help? In a scale of one to five?
- How often do you receive help from them?
- How often did they help you before your separation?
- How strong is your relationship with this person/s (emotionally or physically)? In a scale of one to five?
- How much help do you receive from these people in each following areas, in a scale of one to five?

Financial assistance (helping you with money), _____

Other kinds of physical help (tangible support), e.g., providing you some goods and material you need, a place to stay, giving you a ride to a place you need to go, or baby sitting for you, _____

Informational help, e.g., directing you to other available resources, or connecting you to other people who know of the sources of help, _____

Providing you with useful advices, e.g., what to do to make the situation easier (either in coping with or overcoming the problem), _____

Showing sympathy toward your situation and helping you to feel stronger in making your situation better (emotional support), _____

Overall, what kinds of help do think is available to you through the people you know? Please explain

Are there any other kinds of help that you can receive from these people that was not mentioned above? Please explain

Is there any difference in the amount of help or the type of help you receive from them now in compare with before your separation? Please explain

- How does it feel being connected with these people around you (being a member of the personal network, including family members, relatives, friends, etc.)?
- In terms of getting help with your abusive situation, how different do you see your connection with these people (your personal network) than your connection with your ethnic community?

APPENDIX D

Questions

Background Information

This section is designed in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' situation. This information sets the context of the interviews. Much of this information will be obtained in the course of the interviews. However, you are under no obligation to answer any of these questions, if for any reason, you would rather not. You do not need to explain this decision.

Sociodemographic Information:

- How old are you?
- How old is your husband?
- What is the highest level of your education?
- What is your husband's highest level of education?
- Where are you from?
- Where is your husband from?
- How long have you lived in Canada?
- How long has your husband lived in Canada?
- How many children do you have?
- How old are your children?

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

The reason for this study is to find out how different cultural communities help members who are or have been in abusive relationships. The information can be used to help plan new services for abused immigrant women.

The study will be done by Simin Hadidi, a social work student, with the assistance and supervision of professor Esther Blum.

You will be invited to participate in at least two meetings. In the first meeting, you will be asked to share your opinions and experiences about the help that you received from people you turned to in your community when you suffered abuse. At the second meeting, we will talk about the results of the study. At this time, you will be asked to share your ideas on what was found. You may be invited for another meeting in case we need more information. I hope that you will allow me to tape record and type up a written record of the meetings. If you do not wish to be tape recorded, I will only take notes during the meetings. The tapes will only be used for the study and will not become available to any third person. They will be kept in a safe locked place. The tapes will be erased after the study is completed.

The report will include common ideas that were talked about in the meetings. Some of your comments from the meetings may be quoted in order to relate your experiences and ideas. Your comments will be adjusted to prevent your identity from being exposed. Your name will never be used in any reports or documents. Information that could identify you **will not** be used either during the study or after the study is finished. You can put some conditions to ensure that. Your ethnic background could be mentioned when discussing the similarities and differences of cultures. If you are not comfortable with this, we will discuss how we can best ensure your anonymity. For example, we may be able to change some information about you such as your age, the number of your children, etc . . . , in order to keep your identity unknown.

You can choose not to answer any question that you are uncomfortable with. Your participation in this research is absolutely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any explanation.

There is also another limitation to the full protection of your identity. Where information involves a child abuse or neglect situation, I have an obligation to disclose this to child and family services. This is done to protect your child.

If being a part of this study puts you in any physical or emotional risk or harm, the research with you will stop immediately. You will then be referred to the appropriate services. A list of counsellors will be given to you at the first meeting.

A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you by Simin Hadidi upon your request.

I agree to participate in the interview meeting and have "some of what I say in the meeting" used in the study report:

Name

Date

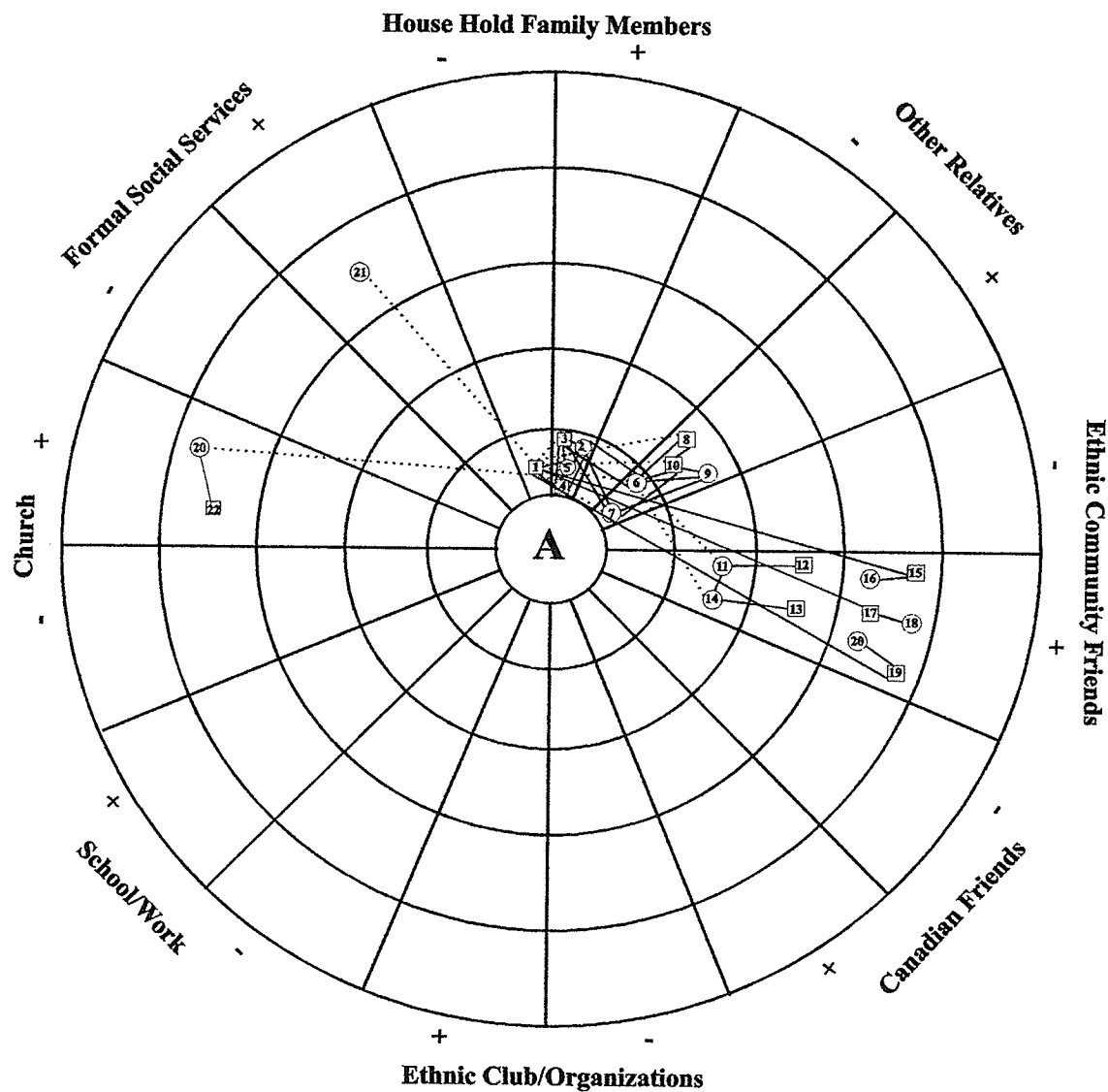
I agree to have my interview tape recorded

Name

Date

APPENDIX F

Social Network Map of Participant A Before Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

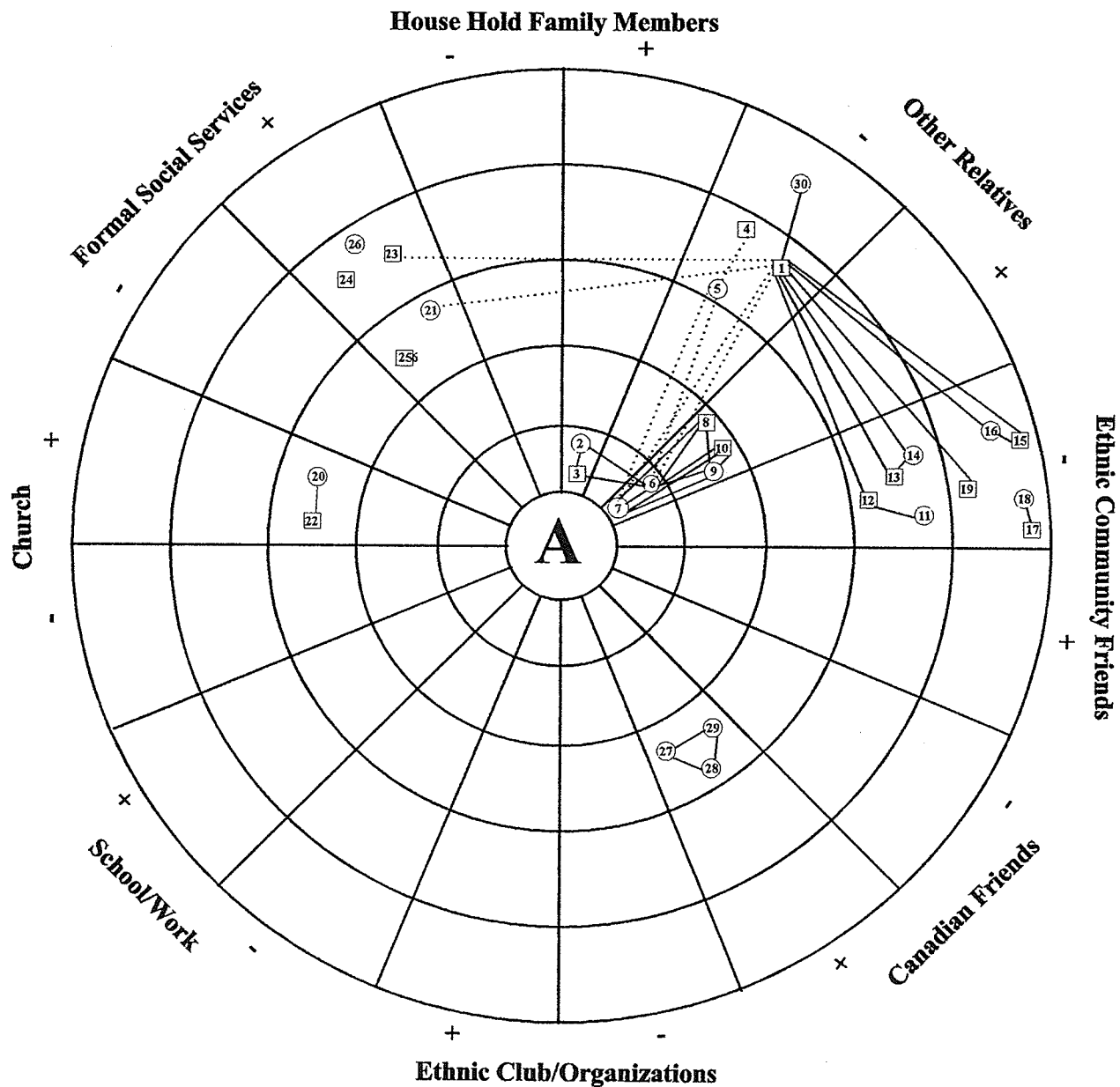
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

Social Network Map of Participant A After Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

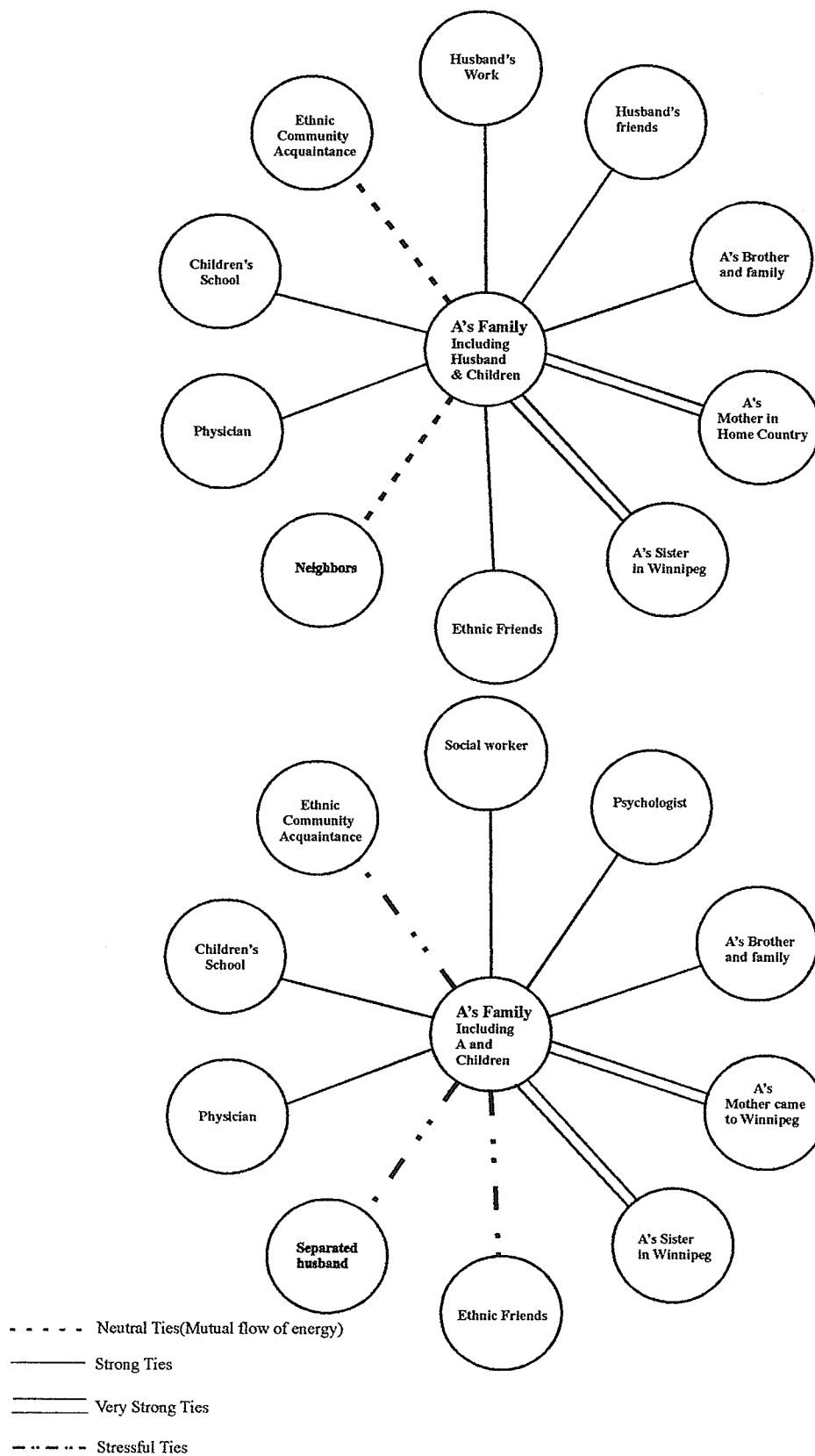
- : Stressful Domain

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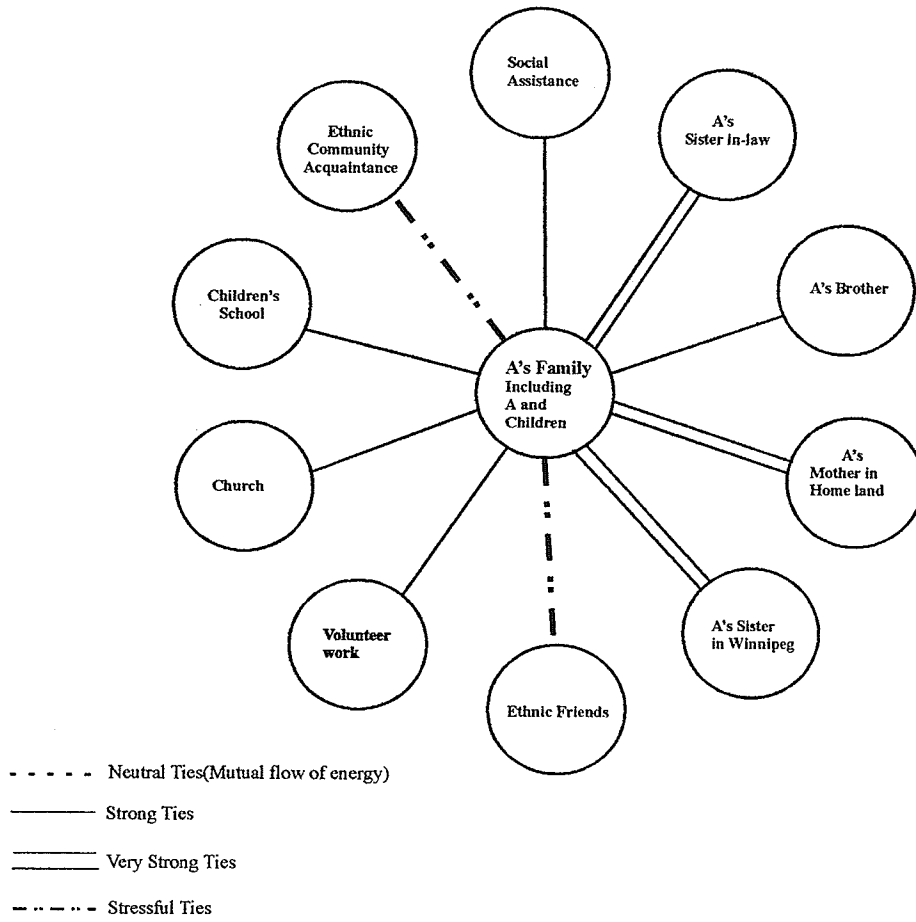
..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

ECO Map of Participant A Before and During Separation

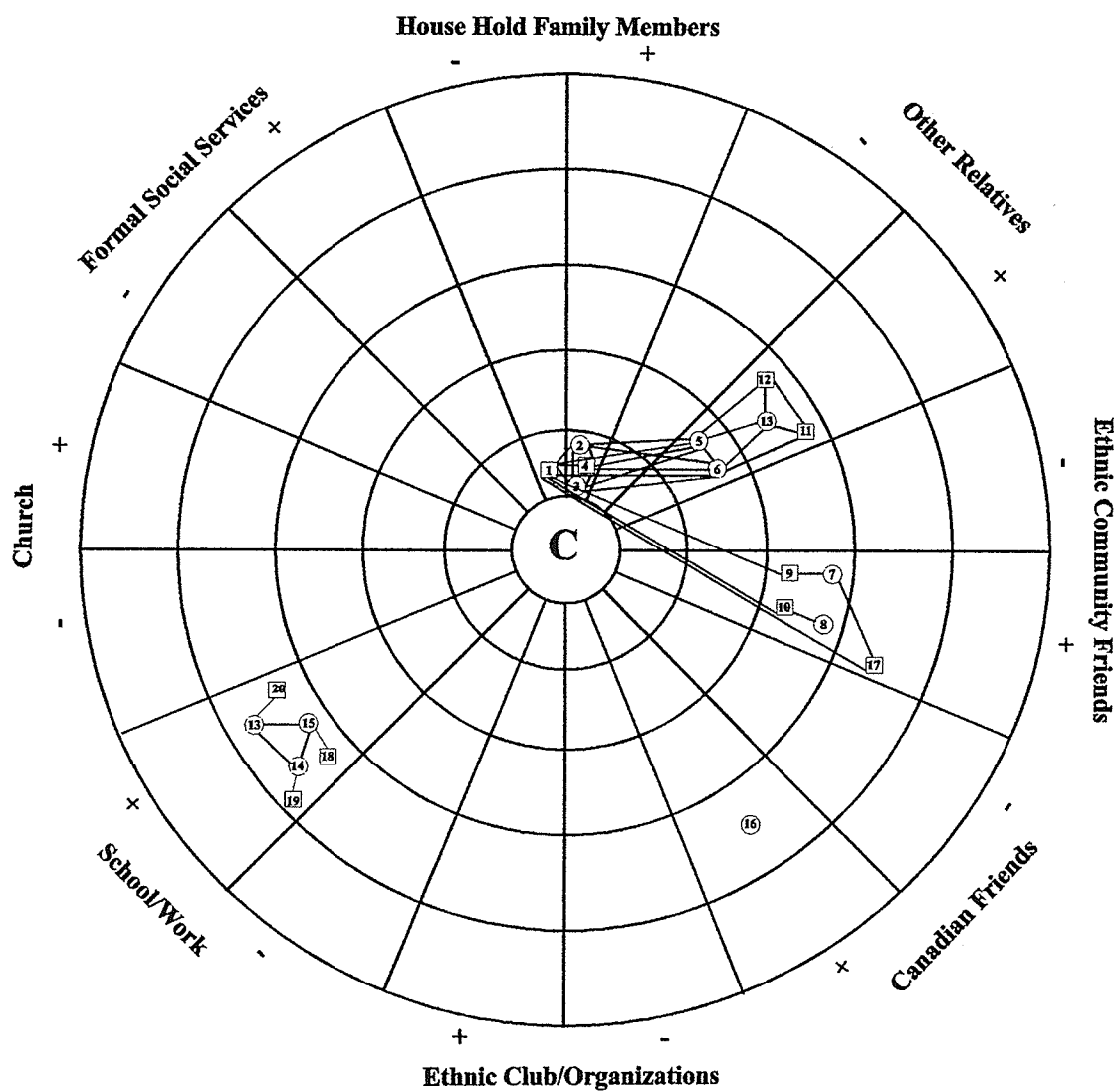


ECO Map of Participant A After Separation



APPENDIX G

Social Network Map of Participant C Before Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

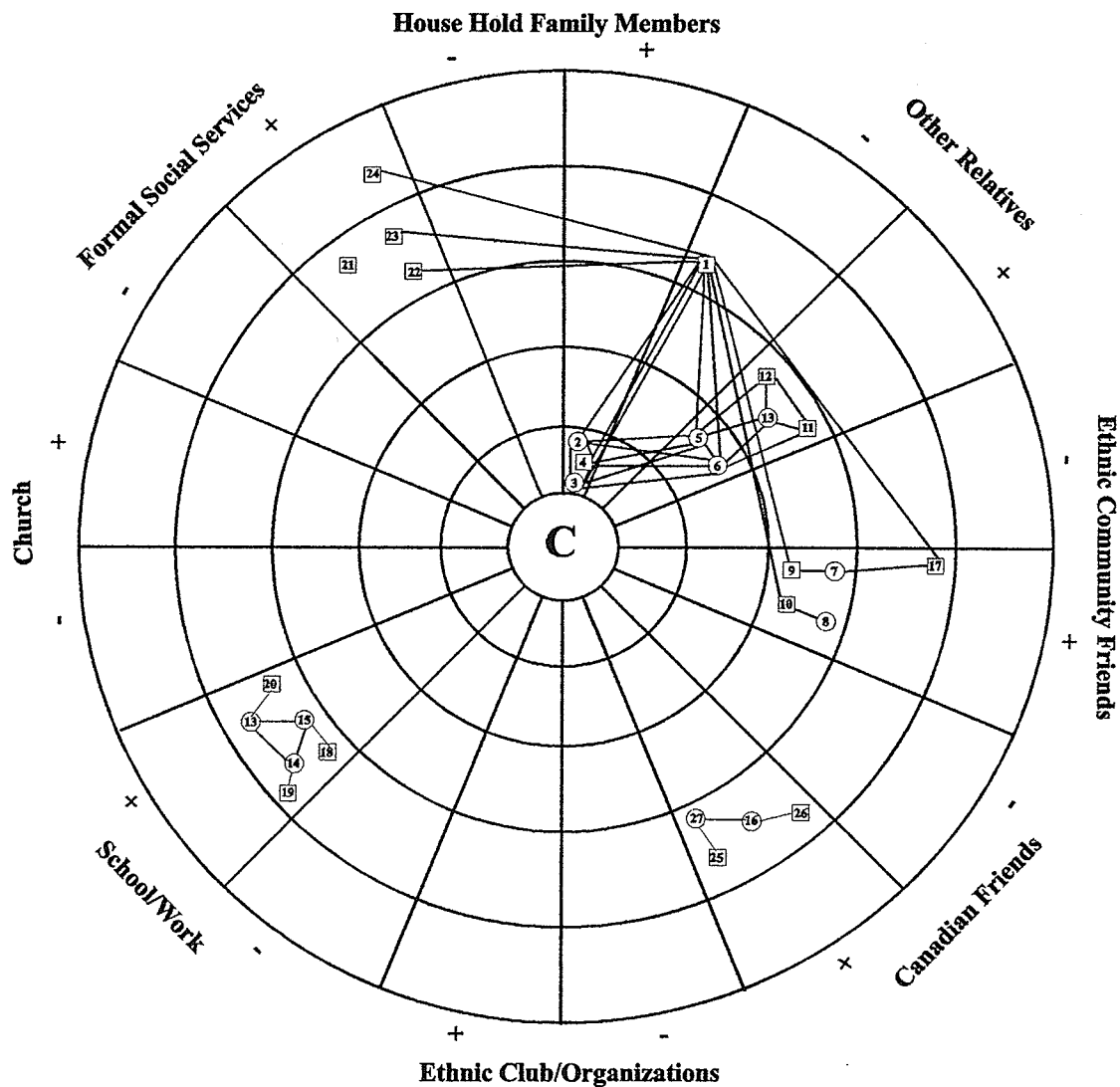
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

Social Network Map of Participant C After Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

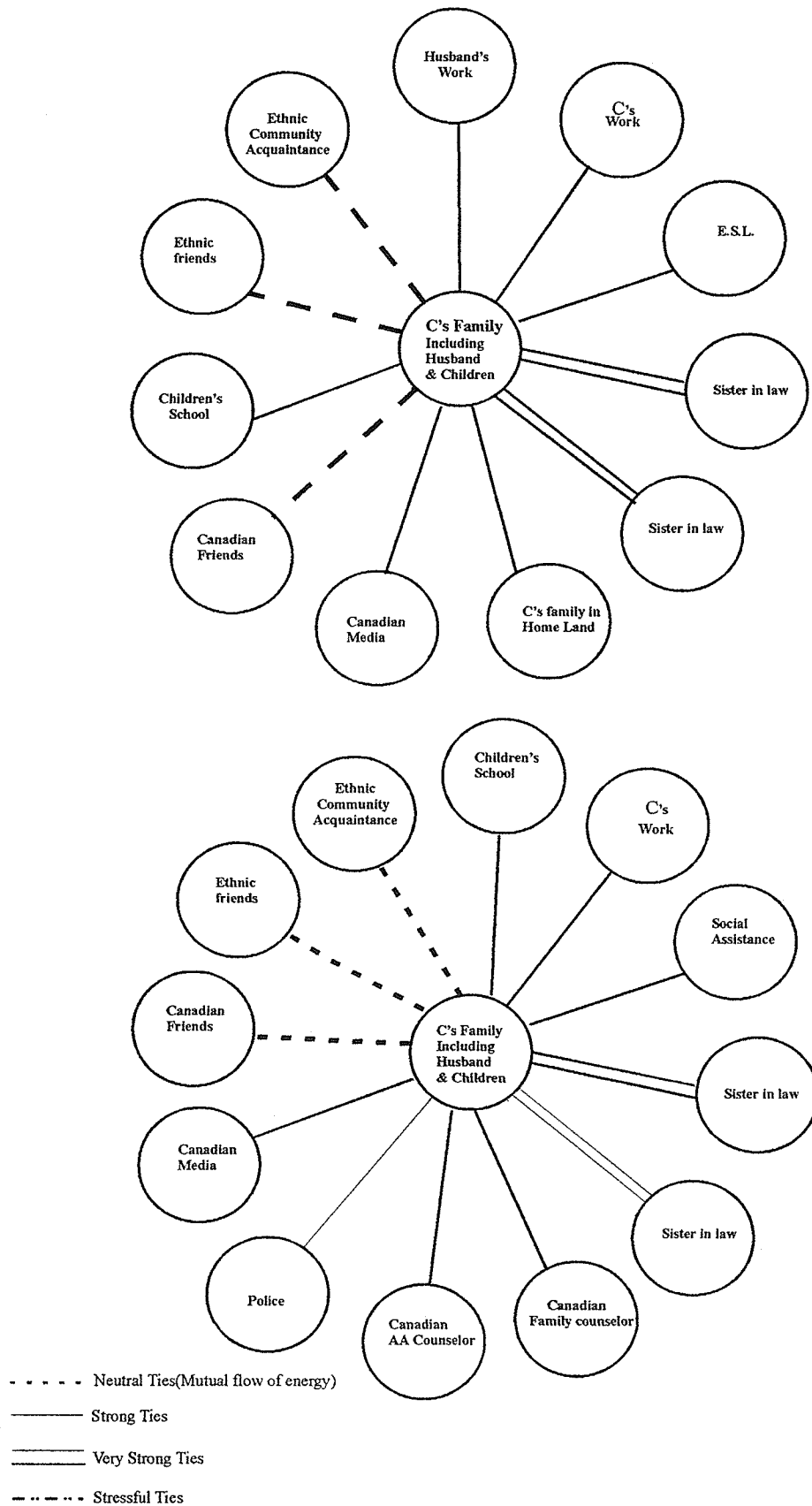
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

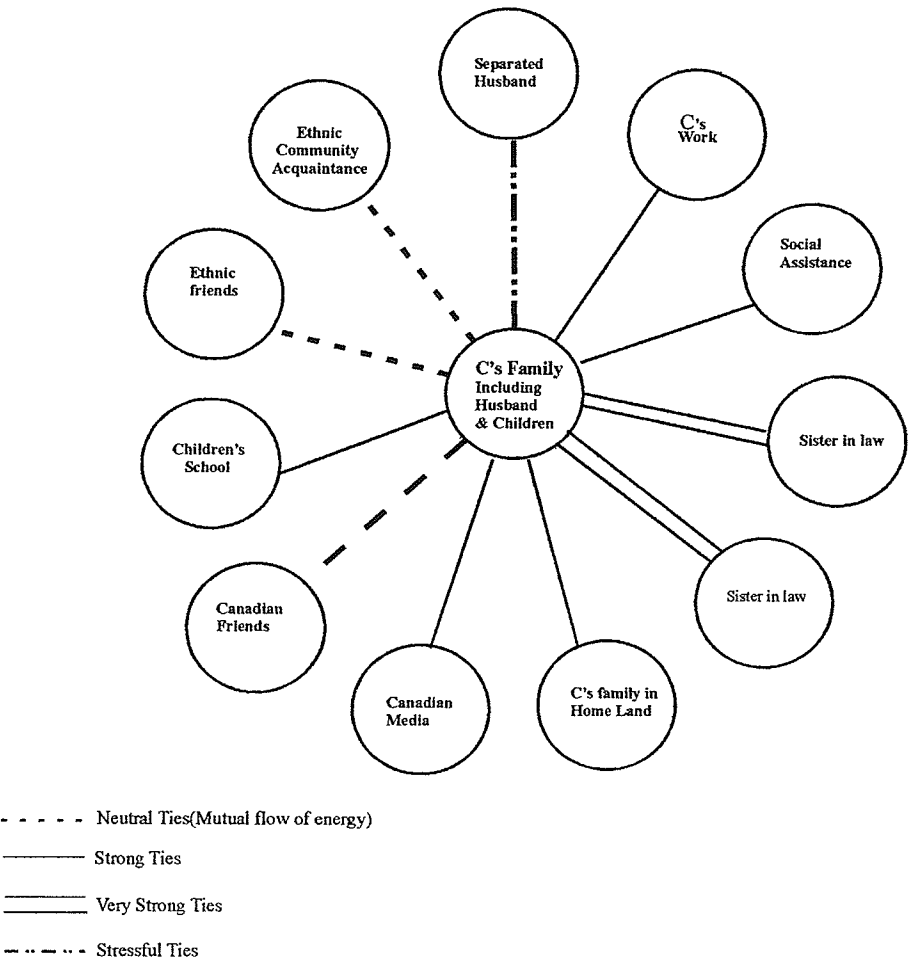
..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

ECO Map of Participant C Before and During Separation

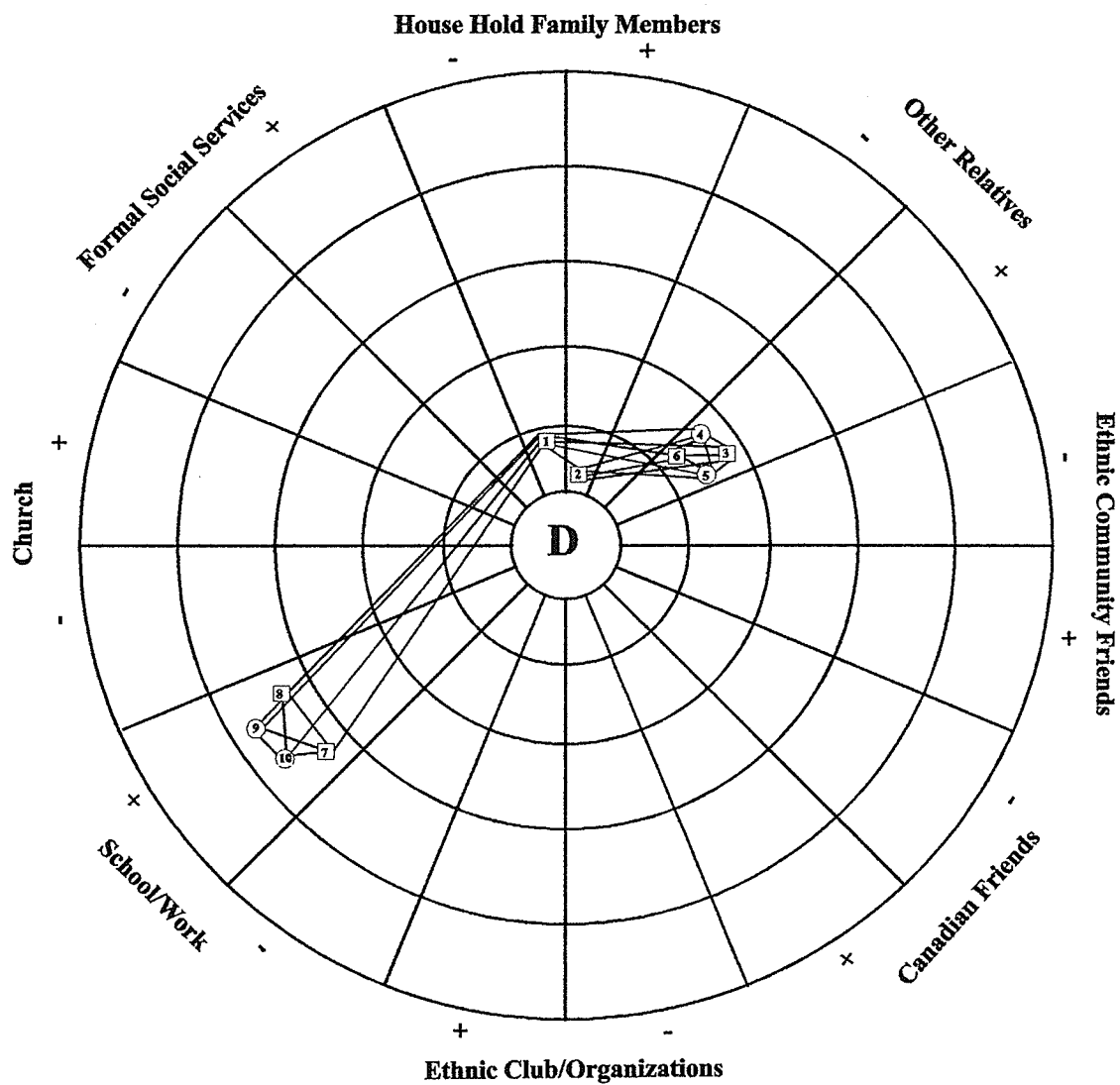


ECO Map of Participant C After Separation



APPENDIX H

Social Network Map of Participant D Before Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

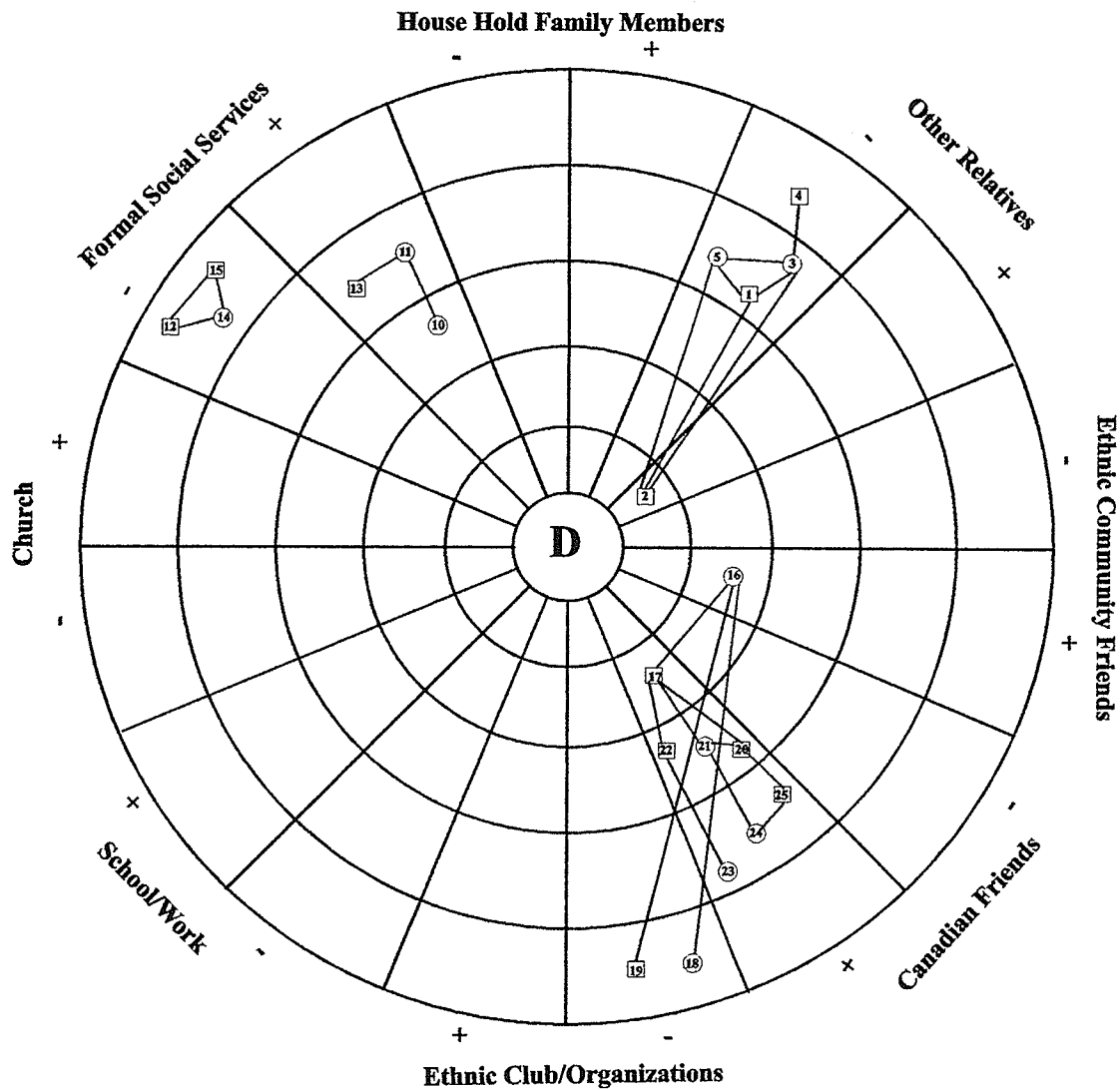
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

Social Network Map of Participant D After Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

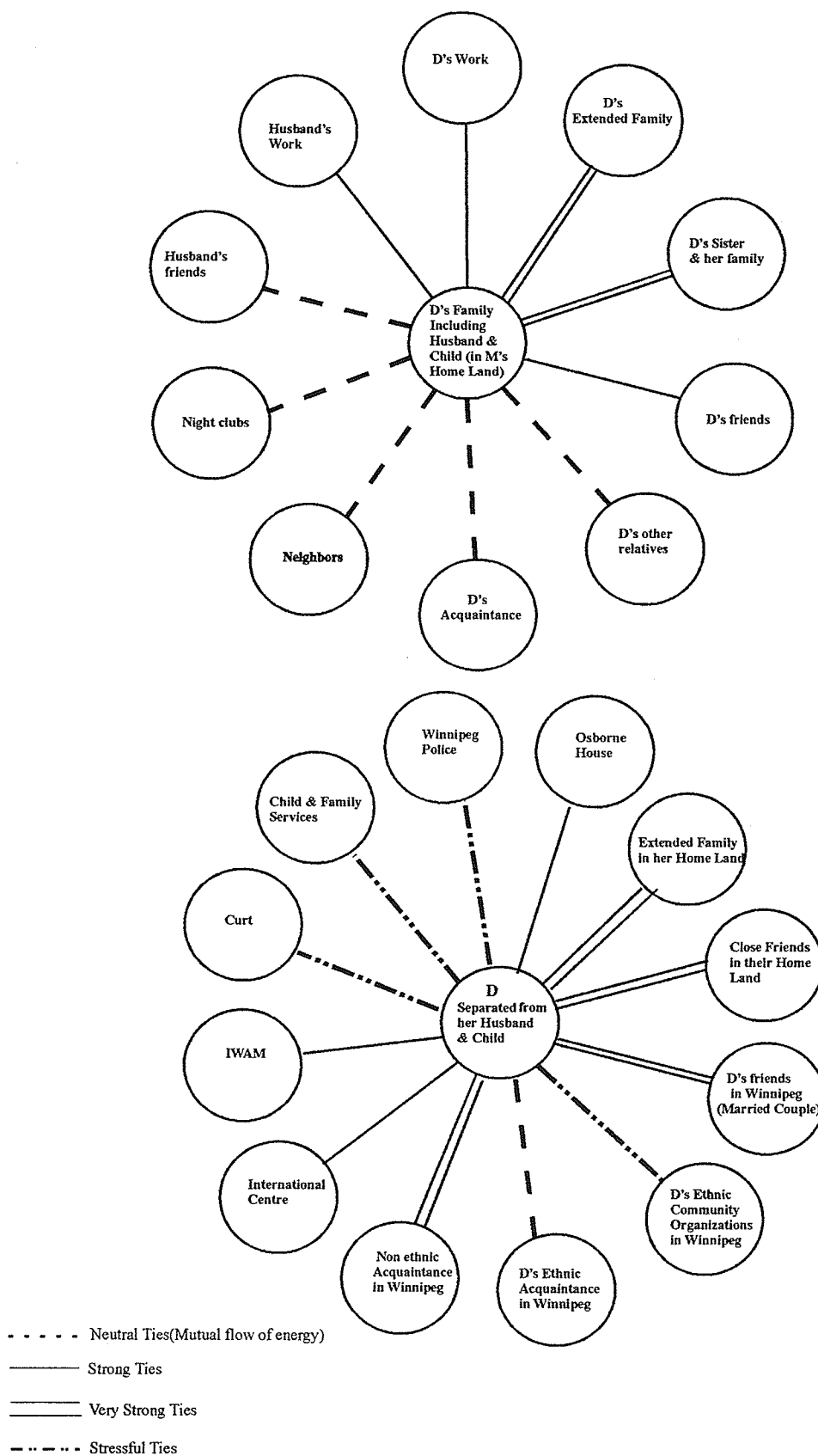
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

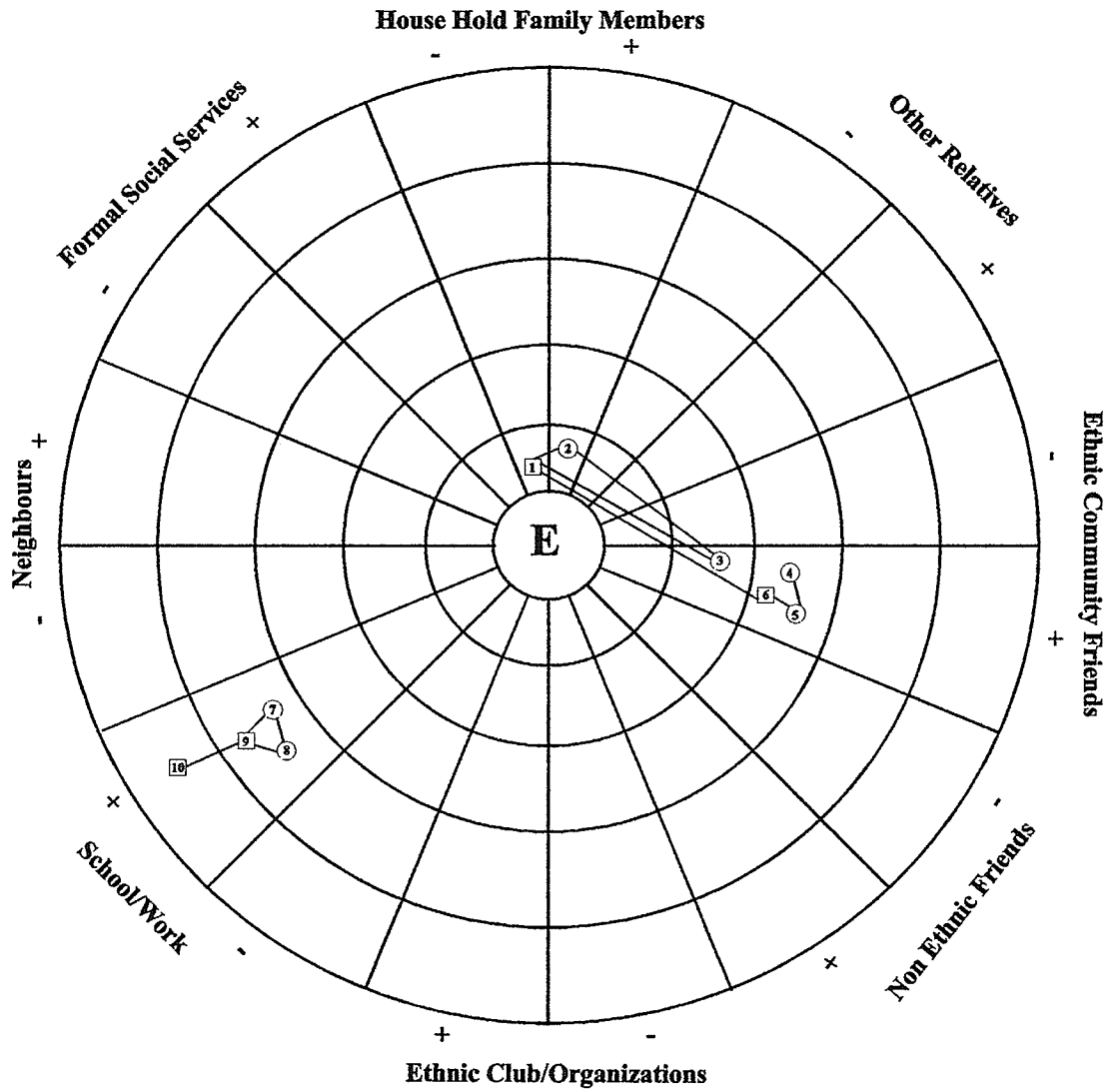
———— : Normal Ties

ECO Map of Participant D Before and During Separation



APPENDIX I

Social Network Map of Participant E Before Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

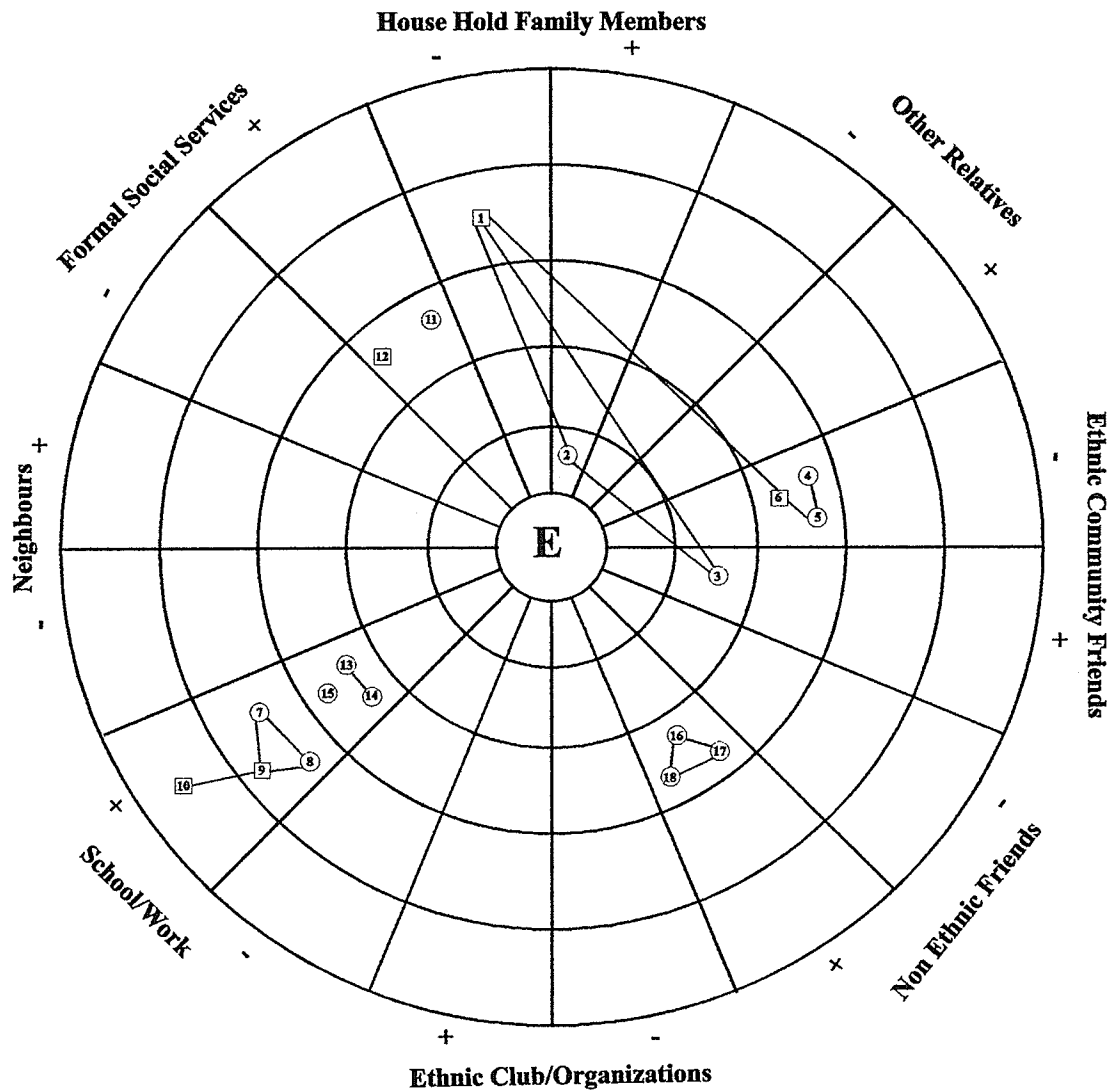
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

Social Network Map of Participant E After Separation



□ : Male

○ : Female

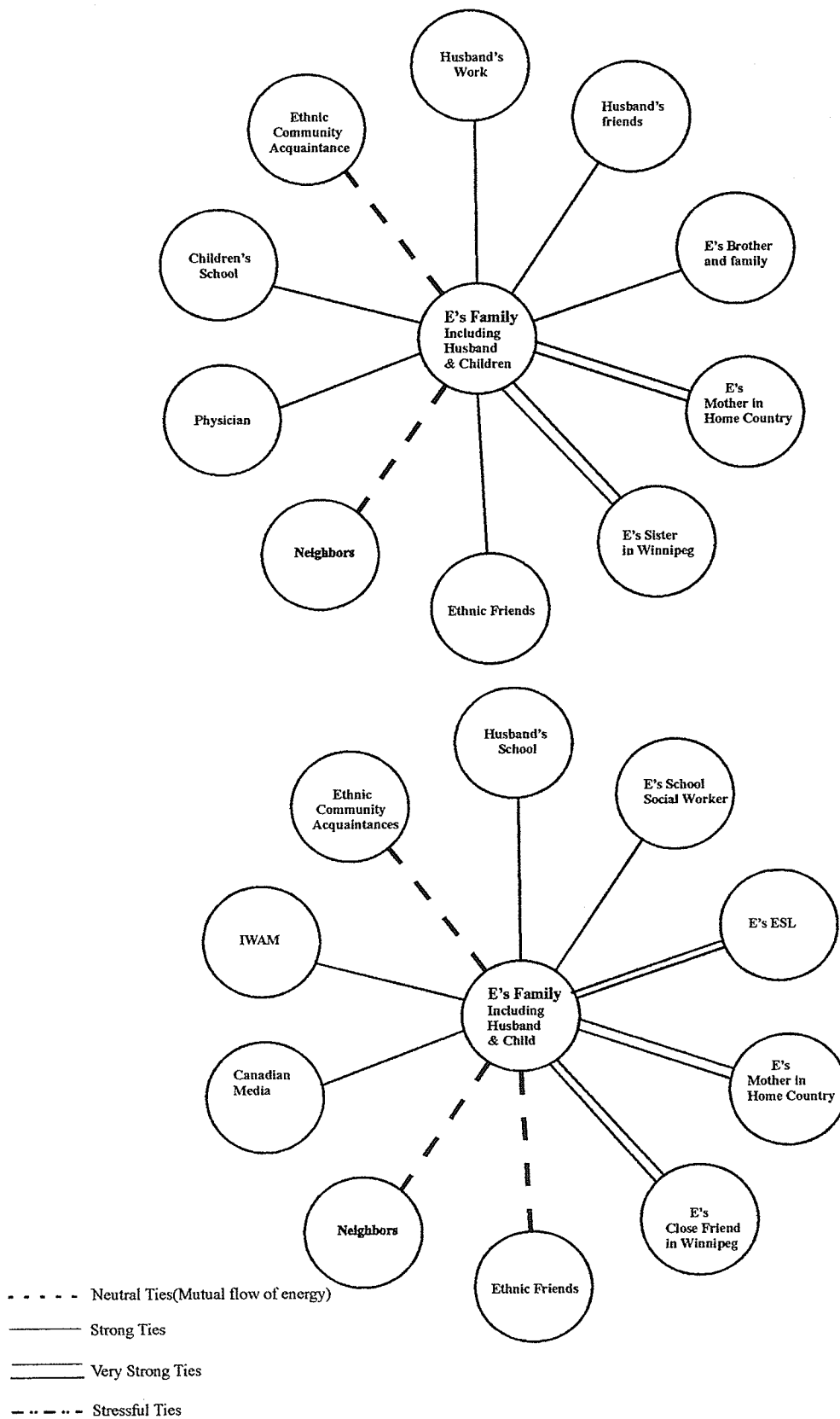
- : Stressful Domain

+ : Normal Domain

..... : Conflictual Ties

———— : Normal Ties

ECO Map of Participant E Before and During Separation



ECO Map of Participant E After Separation

