

**IMMIGRANT WOMEN, SOCIAL SERVICE AND
ADVOCACY: THE ROLE OF AN ORGANIZATION OF
IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN MANITOBA**

BY

PAULA MIGLIARDI

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

© 2001 Paula Migliardi



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-76811-2

Canada

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION PAGE**

**Immigrant Women, Social Service and Advocacy:
The Role of an Organization of Immigrant Women in Manitoba**

BY

Paula Migliardi

**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 ARTS

PAULA MIGLIARDI ©2001

Permission has been granted to the Library of The University of Manitoba to lend or sell copies of this thesis/practicum, to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to University Microfilm Inc. to publish an abstract of this thesis/practicum.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither this thesis/practicum nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the development and role of immigrant women's organizations in Canada. A case study of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) was developed. The study was guided by a series of research questions such as what is the role of IWAM (i.e., services and other functions); what is the result of the organization on clients; what is the organization's relationship with government, its principal funder. A qualitative methodological approach was adopted to address the research questions.

The main findings reveal that, in their service area, IWAM, as other organizations of immigrant women and immigrant in general, offers a safe and familiar environment where immigrant women were able to access resources and share common experiences. The services were defined as culturally appropriate and relevant to immigrant women. The organization, through collective action, was able to articulate the needs faced by immigrant women and in some cases to obtain financial support to develop programs and deliver services to address those needs.

Nonetheless, the organization has faced shortcomings. An examination of the organization's dependence on government funding indicates some of the constraints faced by IWAM. A number of internal problems also indicates the inability of the organization to sustain the provision of services. In sum, this study shows the relation of constraint and autonomy between the larger environment and the daily activities of a small women's organization.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to thank Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba that openly accepted my role as a researcher in the organization. I also would like to thank the women who kindly devoted part of their time to the interviews performed for this study. Without their participation and consultation, this research would not have been possible. I dearly appreciate the constant sharing of their accounts of the history and perspectives of the organization and of their roles within IWAM. I particularly thank the organization for helping me to enter into a new dimension of Canadian society, the social and political realm of non-profit organizations.

I would like to express my thanks to my advisor, Dr. Raymond Wiest, who offered invaluable assistance and encouragement in the accomplishment of this research. I have to extend special thanks to Dr. Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz who acted as my advisor for the first period of this research and was not able to walk with me throughout the complete research process due to logistical reasons. I appreciate Dr. Chodkiewicz's and Dr. Wiest's assistance with my English. Thank you to Dr. Tuula Heinonen for her interest in this research.

This research has largely been possible thanks the constant support of my best friend, my husband Gio Robson. I appreciate his interest in this initiative and his constant encouragement and support. I value the time he invested in reading the last draft.

Many thanks to my friends and family for their interest, encouragement and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Defining the category of “Immigrant Women”.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Focus of This Study.....	10
Methodological Issues.....	10
Analysis.....	22
Limitations of the Study.....	23
Profile of the Research Participants.....	24
Members of the board and staff research participants.....	24
Clients or consumers of services research participants.....	26
Structure of the Thesis.....	28
CHAPTER TWO.....	29
IMMIGRANT WOMEN: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	29
Immigration to Canada.....	29
Immigration and Gender.....	38
Multiculturalism and the Premise of Multicultural Social Services in Canada.....	42
Immigrant Women and Participation in the Canadian Women’s Movement.....	45
Immigrant Women and Immigrant Service Organizations.....	48
Culturally Responsive Services.....	52
Financial Resources.....	55
Summary.....	59
CHAPTER THREE.....	61
IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA.....	61
Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba: Origins and Development.....	64
CHAPTER FOUR.....	75
THE WORK OF IWAM: SERVICES AND BEYOND.....	75
Cultural Responsive Counselling.....	76
Role of the IWAM: Empowering Women.....	81
Individual Case Advocacy.....	84
Internal Organizational Issues.....	86
Financial Arrangements.....	90
Funding Process and Its Implications.....	92
Working Conditions.....	101
Alternatives to Funding Relationships with Government.....	104
The “Transition Period”.....	106
Summary.....	110

CHAPTER FIVE	112
CLIENTS: THE QUEST FOR INTEGRATION AND THE ROLE OF IWAM.....	112
The Implications of Immigration	115
Language	115
Work Life.....	119
Relations at Home.....	124
Isolation.....	132
Seeking Services from IWAM.....	133
Services obtained from IWAM.....	135
Gaining knowledge of resources.....	135
Individual Case Advocacy	137
Bridging the Language Barrier.....	137
Role of Immigrant Counsellor	140
Cross-culturally Sensitive Counselling.....	141
Breaking Isolation	143
Empowerment.....	145
Awareness of Services	146
Experiences with Other Service Providers.....	147
Summary	150
 CHAPTER SIX.....	 151
CONCLUSIONS	151
 REFERENCES CITED.....	 161
 APPENDIX 1	 173
Consent Forms	173
APPENDIX 2	177
Interview Guides	177
APPENDIX 3	180
Document Reflecting IWAM's History.....	180

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The American continent is largely populated by immigrants and descendants of immigrants who have arrived throughout the last five hundred years. Inuit and First Nation peoples arrived into the American continent earlier and can be called its first inhabitants. Since over a century ago many different waves of migration have altered the social profile of its populations. The beginning of a new era of transportation, industrialization, urbanization and the war periods and territorial wars, labour movements, voluntary and involuntary migration have affected the movement and settlement of people around the globe. At the present time, even more changes have been affecting the world and it has become a “global village” within which people move increasingly. Canada has not been an exception; on the contrary, as shown in many scientific publications devoted to the study of migrations into Canada (Driedger 1996; Halli, Trovato and Driedger 1990; Kalbach 1994; Stafford 1994).

Immigration has played an important role in the making of Canada. While Europeans, mainly the British and the French, have prevailed throughout the history of Canada, the profile of the newcomers has tended to change. In particular, since the 1960s Canadian society has been shaped by a growing diversity in terms of its ethnic composition. Since the 1960s there has been a decline in the populations coming from the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe in general while there has been a constant increase in populations entering Canada from Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and

Africa (Statistics Canada 1999). Since the 1960s, new immigration legislation and policies have allowed the entry of migrants coming from the so-called 'non-traditional' sources such as Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Migrants are challenged by the new social reality they must confront. They leave known social, economic and political situations and learn to deal with new circumstances which come to influence changes and transitions in world views, values, practices and identity. Migration involves a process of disorganization and cultural and social reorganization, which results in the loss of a known and predictable way of life and an adjustment and adaptation to a different one. The migrant populations of the last few decades are largely from non-English or French speaking backgrounds. They come from societies with cultures different from those of the Western world; and tend to become racial minorities in Canada. Consequently, these populations encounter particular challenges.

The emergence and establishment of appropriate assistance and services can facilitate the incorporation of migrants into the new society as well as providing for political representation. Although this is not a new phenomenon, a growing variety of immigrant and ethnic organizations have arisen in order to deal with the needs and interests of many new immigrants from increasingly diverse ethnic and national groups since their entrance in the 1960s. Some of these groups have chosen to organize around different identity markers such as their country or region of origin, their ethnic groups, their religious background, their migrant or their gender statuses.

The purpose of this thesis is to inquire into the role of organizations formed by immigrant women in Canadian society. In order to examine the foundations for

establishing formal organizations, services and programs for immigrant women by immigrant women, I present a case study of one organization of immigrant women in the city of Winnipeg. The purpose of this ethnography will be to shed light on the social forces at play that determine how this group of women organizes and the extent of its success.

Defining the category of “Immigrant Women”

Immigrants are persons who have moved from one country to another with the purpose of adopting residence in the new country for extended period of time. Throughout this study I use the terms “migrant”, “international migrant” and “immigrant” interchangeably, as I am always referring to women who have crossed international borders, including the experiences of some women refugee and refugee claimants¹. I understand that the experiences of refugee women are in some respects dissimilar from those immigrant women in general. Both have traversed the borders of their countries of birth. However, refugees face a sudden relocation, in most of the cases to entirely unknown places. They have presumably encountered previously situations of violence and hardship which might still be part of distressed memories. Refugees are more likely to expect to return to their countries of origin once the conditions that brought them to flee are reversed. However, this group of immigrants like others tends to take residency in

¹ The legal definition of the term refugee refers to the categories of: *Convention Refugee* which includes persons who meet the definition specified by the UN Refugee Convention; *designated class* which includes persons displaced by refugee-like emergency situations or persecution and persons whom the federal government has given humanitarian consideration (government assisted refugee, privately sponsored refugees, self-supporting refugees, joint assisted refugees and *refugee claimants*, people who are applying for refugee status within Canada.

the new country for a significant period of time and has to face many of the same problems of settlement as other categories of immigrants.

The definition of immigrant women as a homogeneous group due to their mobility from one country to another overlooks differences within the group of persons it expects to define. The label “immigrant women” shadows the differences among and between women who have immigrated from all around the globe. The category of woman as a “generic woman” has become a center of debate in the last few years within the feminist movement both in academic and political activist circles. New theoretical approaches have denounced the idea of sameness of all women, when critiques of the white/first world feminism by different groups of women – black, lesbian, Chicano, Third World – were heard. Nowadays there is an increasing concern about “difference” among women. Issues of “difference” and diversity have become main dimensions in feminist research as well as in ethnic studies. The notion of “immigrant” – as belonging to a legal category neutrally and objectively imposed by the nation-state through its regulations and policies – also presents challenges about “difference”. Just as women cannot be defined as representing a homogeneous group, immigrant groups are not homogeneous. I use this category to embrace very diverse women, with distinct histories and experiences in their countries of origin and in the country of reception.

In her analysis Roxana Ng (1993) points out that references to “immigrant women” are directly associated with some differences: skin color, language, ethnicity, religion, origins in a Third World country, working or expecting to be working on certain areas of the economy, and so forth. Ng also recognizes that white, educated, English-speaking immigrant women are rarely considered to be immigrant women. However, the

creation or re-creation of categories is embedded in class differentiation as well as in racialized and gendered social relations within the ideology of a nation-state.

Roxana Ng (1993) offers an understanding of how social categories become politicized. Although it is controversial and difficult to use while avoiding the connotations examined by Ng, I will utilize the term “immigrant women”, but take into consideration that this does not represent a monolithic category. It must be read as taking into account the different social and cultural positions (e.g., social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) occupied by different groups and categories of immigrant women. An important justification for my use of the term is that many women use this category to advance their demands and present their interests and concerns to the state or in the rhetoric of struggles within their ethnic group or society at large. Khayatt claims that “where these classifications are significant is when they are appropriated to provide a feeling of belonging to a community, where this self-labelling may develop into an accepted identity, or, whenever so identified and transformed into a political identity” (1994:7). The experiences of many groups of immigrant women in Canada are shared since many of them face systemic discrimination.

Although a large number of immigrant women occupy a disadvantaged place – at least for some time in a new country, I attempt to challenge the idea that they are victims of immigration regulations. Women have reflected on their own situation and have articulated their demands. They have become organized. Organizations of immigrant women have reflected on the complexities of the intersection of the axes of power: race, class, sex/gender, nation, migratory status. These social categories characterize the experiences of women as a ground for the production of knowledge and collective action.

The exploration of a local organization will help to shed some light on the organizational efforts of immigrant women. The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) will constitute the focus of this thesis. IWAM is a non-profit organization characterized by a board of directors formed of volunteers, all of them immigrant women. IWAM relies on funding from government agencies, but also on small private funding. It delivers programs and services to a particular sector of immigrants (i.e., immigrant women) with the help of a paid professional staff. This organization does not intend to focus on one particular ethnic, national or regional group. Instead, it aims to attract a large constituency, but it differs between issues in substantial ways from other organizations of women and the so-called "mainstream"² or generic organizations which deal with women. For instance, they differ by being more responsive to cultural differences and/or in dealing with socio-economic and cultural problems which arise from the fact of being an immigrant. The logo of the organization, a representation of a circle of women holding-hands, colored in different tones from clear to dark, portrays the intended diversity of the group, its constituency and clientèle. Although created and managed by middle-class immigrant women, the organization is more likely, but not exclusively, to provide services to working-class and low-income immigrant and refugee women and their families.

² 'Mainstream' organizations are usually understood as providing services to everybody regardless of race, language or cultural factors. Nonetheless, some 'mainstream' organizations have implemented programs for particular sectors of the population (e.g., visible minorities, lesbians, gays, women, aboriginal, etc.)

Statement of the Problem

My focus on immigrant women as a particular sector of the population is influenced by the acknowledgment that consideration of women and gender has been absent or superficial in theoretical debates about migration. Usually women migrants have been stereotypically considered as non-immigrants who wait for the return of their partners or as passive followers of their spouses (Brettel and Simon 1986; Buijs 1993). Women have been considered as “migrants’ wives” rather than female migrants (Brettel and Simon 1986: 3). This categorization implies that when women migrate, they do so as “dependants”. Their role as active migrants was ignored in the social sciences literature even when the available statistical data showed their massive presence, a fact well documented in the Tyree and Donato (1986) research on the demographic movement of people around the globe. In the last two decades many studies of women migrants, influenced by feminist scholarship, were published. Furthermore, the fact that migration is a gender-differentiated process, that is to say that the different positions and status of men and women in society are reflected in the migratory process, has only recently been acknowledged in migration studies (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Bjerén 1997; Kelson and DeLaet 1999).

The life experiences and social and political participation of immigrant women have been overlooked throughout Canadian history (Ng 1993). The concerns of women have been subordinated to those of immigrant men. It is only recently that those experiences have become part of the corpus of literature, as well as shaping groups of interests working toward their increased visibility and the improvement of their social conditions in the Canadian society. Groups of immigrant women serving immigrant

are part of the development of the voluntary sector which largely since the 1970s has provided services to ethno-cultural and immigrant groups. These groups have grown, but their resources are still too scarce to provide adequate services to a growing and diversified constituency.

Studies on organizations of immigrant women provide many examples of the ways in which women have faced prejudice, and of the constraints and challenges which they had to confront at the individual but also at the collective level. This study focuses on the strengths that have made organizations work. Through all the years of providing services and advocacy, organizations of immigrant women have achieved a recognized status and have become meaningful to a large sector of Canadian society. Nonetheless, I shall argue that while organizations of immigrant women provide important social services by catering to the needs and interests of immigrant women, they are bound to the federal, provincial and municipal institutions and their regulations. I shall stress also that while the state³ has supported these organizations, the vagaries of its changing policies and administrative regulations have restricted the scope and effectiveness of the activities of women's organizations. In that sense, I intend to highlight the internal tensions and contradictions with which organizations of immigrant women have to deal in order to provide needed services to a displaced and discriminated population.

The notion of agency to analyze women's situation should shed light on the understanding of how society constrains actions and how it can be 'made and unmade through human action and interaction' (Ortner 1984: 159). Therefore, the analysis should

³ The 'state' in this thesis refers to a plurality of government agencies which manage the Canadian nation through its mechanisms of ruling (e.g. legislation, policies, programs, different levels of government).

challenge any oversimplified interpretation of women as being dependent on government's programs to promote and address their interests and needs. In this study I seek to explain the advantages and constraints provided by the institutional and political contexts in Manitoba for an organization dedicated to the welfare of immigrant women, while making the immigrant women's agency visible. The dynamics of participation unveil that through action immigrant women can succeed in changing their situation, but at the same time social context structures the forms that social action and participation take.

An emphasis on human agency requires an understanding of social change and resistance: women have demonstrated capacity to exercise control over the social relations in which they are enmeshed. Further, an emphasis on the lived experience of women has been significant for the women's movement and for the academic understanding of their actions. The idea of agency allows an understanding of women's action in the political arena as inherent to the operations of control of resources, not as mere reaction to the imposition of the ruling system. Tenure of social positions grants people knowledge and access to different types and amounts of social capital. The mobilization of social capital is part of and allows transformative action, even when actors are bound by historical and social constraints. Anthias and Lazaridis claim that "[i]ntroducing agency into migration theory, whilst also recognizing that such agency is conducted in given structural and institutional contexts, enables a more multifaceted approach that can pay attention to the lived experiences of migrant women" (2000: 6).

An emphasis on the distribution of resources is important to understand the position of immigrant women and groups of immigrant women in Canadian society.

Nevertheless, attention shall be paid to the history of organizational efforts of immigrant women. Women express their interests and agendas vis-à-vis other sectors of the population (e.g., governments, men, “mainstream” women’s groups, “mainstream” social services groups, etc.). In this case such a social group becomes agent rather than victim.

Focus of This Study

In this case study, I will attempt to answer the following set of questions: What do organizations of immigrant women accomplish? What are the implications for immigrant women of participating in these organizations? What is the organization’s relationship with other agencies (immigrant and/or “mainstream”)? What is the organization’s relationship with the funding bodies, that is the governments? What are the implications of those relationships for the delivery of services to immigrant women?

These questions will be pursued through the understanding of the actors in the organization that is central to this study. Relationships with other organizations (i.e., non-profit or public) is explored from the perspective of the actors of the Immigrant Women’s Association of Manitoba (IWAM) and from my observations of the dealings of this organization with these other agencies. I also utilize written records produced by and on behalf of IWAM to document the issues relevant to this thesis.

Methodological Issues

This research is inspired by a qualitative methodological approach that addresses women’s experiences from their own perspectives and analyzes how these experiences are structured in the relations of power in society (Smith 1987). I believe that research

serve the interests of the participants who actively shared their insights and stories in the research. Research should be sensitive to power, and its unequal distribution in relations of race, gender, and class. It should also provide a holistic understanding and appreciation of human experience as well as recognize the interconnectedness of class and decision-making process within the historical, economic and cultural contexts of society. The methodology assumes a level of involvement with participants that goes beyond the traditional relationship of researcher and subject. In this case, such an approach was possible because I am, also an immigrant woman, an active member of the group and through that experience I have gained an in-depth knowledge of the issues pertaining to immigrant women in Winnipeg.

Participant observation helps to gain insights into the insider's interpretation of or motivations for their actions and beliefs – an emic perspective. This study attempts to bring forth the experiences and the voices of immigrant women who are participants of an organization of women. This is an attempt to understand women's accounts of their participation experiences from their own perspectives. In that sense this research is influenced by women-centered research approaches which document the experiences and activities of women; to understand these experiences from their point of view and to recognize women's course of action as an indication of social context (Reinharz 1992). By placing women and their interests in the center of the inquiry I hope that this research has the potential to benefit them.

One question that needs to be considered for this study is that of my participation in IWAM beyond the role of the researcher. I gained entry into the organization in a variety of positions. The formal study of the organization began only when the project

was fully approved by the different academic committees and by the group of women itself at the level of the board of directors. However, my understanding and description of this organization is based partly on my personal experiences in different capacities with the varied activities and programs of Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) since September of 1998. These experiences allowed me to gain insights into the organization and to gather information used to discuss the group in this study. I volunteered in different programs of Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM), as part of a practicum in Applied Anthropology which was completed by the end of 1998. The growing acceptance of my collaboration by the board and the staff is reflected in the progression of the tasks assigned to me, from receptionist and clerical worker to support and interpreter for clients in Family Court, health care system, social assistance offices and, in 1999, promotion to member of the board and participant on an advisory committee for the Women's Action Against Violence project. All these roles have given me the opportunity to reflect on the complexities of the organizational undertakings of IWAM. Nonetheless, I intended to prevent any misunderstanding of my role as researcher by resigning from my position as member of the board during the time of the research. Being a member of the board of directors of the organization might have placed me in an ambiguous position with the staff and the clients. They might have had to avoid addressing certain issues in my presence as well as address certain others in an acceptable manner because of my position within the organizational scheme of IWAM. Nonetheless, since I am committed to the work the organization is accomplishing, I continued to volunteer in other activities and programs. I was asked to record board meetings and workshops at conferences and symposia organized by IWAM or by other

organizations where IWAM has taken active participation in the organization of the events. In these occasions, I intended not to alter the normal interactions of the group. However, I cannot measure the influence of my presence in the process of the discussions.

The literature on organizations of immigrant women does not reveal much reflection on the conflicts that the researcher might confront when occupying an insider role within the group s/he intended to research. All the studies I reviewed (Abraham 2000, 1995; Agnew 1996, 1998, 1998a; Ng 1996) on the organizational efforts of immigrant women reveal that the authors are women belonging to the ethnic groups the organizations represent or immigrant themselves and that they were involved in a number of activities, including in the decision-making processes of the organizations. However, few ethical and methodological questions have been raised about this issue. Some authors have adopted a feminist research position which advocates that self-identification with those being researched provides substantial insights. Agnew (1998) found that affinity and commonality between herself and her respondents, physical appearance, immigrant status and class enabled the respondents to feel more comfortable. Becerra (1997) discusses the question about achievement of validity of research results on ethnic minority populations by researchers from the same ethnic group. On the one hand, Becerra argues that ethnic minority researchers can bring an understanding and sensitivity to the research that only an 'insider' can provide (e.g., understanding of cultural norms and values, language capability, better understanding of historical conflicts of the group in their own home countries, etc.). That perspective is gained through life experiences. Further, it is argued that researchers from the same ethnic group are more able to gain

access to the groups under study and more able to create mutual trust. On the other hand, the researcher is formed and informed by his or her skills which have been learned in the academic world. Also, the social context and position of the researcher may influence the research process. "The ethnic minority researcher brings with him or her a set of values and beliefs that will permeate the research. These values may reflect class, gender, educational, and regional background of the researcher" (Becerra 1997: 115). Therefore, the researcher may only capture a limited aspect of the group or distort that reality. Similar discussions on "women studying women" have been raised by feminist anthropology (Moore 1988). The issue continues to be a contentious one.

Since I have played a variety of roles within the organization, I have adopted a research position which supports the view that self-identification with the group of participants in the study provides important understanding or knowledge of the issues in question. Although in the case of this research I cannot identify myself with one particular ethnic group, the discussion can be extrapolated to my similar position as an "immigrant woman". Maria Mies argues that women's research should give up the detached and presumably neutral approach toward research objects and substitute it with a conscious partiality based on partial identification. Partial identification within the field is not the same as "becoming like the 'other' women". Nor does this stance mean that the researcher identify herself with her respective role – in my case the role of "volunteer" – since people are much more than that role (1991: 69-70). Partial identification allows the researcher to get close enough and at the same time to take enough distance to reflect on the familiarity of the environment as if it were unfamiliar.

Evidently, my entry into the field has largely been influenced by my own background as an immigrant woman. As an active member of the group I share certain commonalities with the group. However, the experiences of immigrant women vary since we occupy different positions within society. We experience multiple forms and different degree of integration into or exclusion from a new society. I entered this area of investigation holding a position of insider and outsider at the same time. On the one hand, I have experienced the tensions created in migrants by the uncertainty of dealing with a new cultural and social milieu and the uncertainties and isolation that come with it. These experiences led me to gain insights on the position of immigrant women in Canadian society. On the other hand, I have learned to recognize the diversity of experiences and my position as a “white” person without having to confront discrimination on the basis of skin color and without having to confront the economic ordeals many women have been through. Therefore, my position as an ‘immigrant woman’ has allowed me to gain critical insights, yet it does not exclude the possibility that people in a different position can gain understanding of the issues concerning the group under study. Further, I do not share the same position in terms of race, class, age or nationality as most of the participants in the research. I have also experienced that language barriers have prevented me from gaining access to many participants in the programs. Nonetheless, as many of the services and activities are directed towards women, the sex/gender of the researcher may prevent entry to certain issues such as, for example, an open discussion on the abuse experienced by women.

The information on the project was openly shared in writing through the consent forms and also verbally in different instances (e.g., formal and informal group meetings,

individual encounters). First, informal discussions were held with women of Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) to establish permission and support for research for my thesis with them. I formally presented the project during a meeting of the board and further discussions were held at different instances in the group and/or on a one-to-one basis. The consent of the group to participate is reflected in the minutes of the board. For the individual interviews every woman negotiated her consent to personally participate in the project with me. I personally presented the project to the workers of the organization who had not been present at the relevant meetings of the board and to the clients, former clients, volunteers and other participants on programs of the organization. This face-to-face process of sharing information gave opportunity for questions to be asked of me at any point of the research, during the interviews or during my regular interaction as a volunteer in the organization. This approach was intended to challenge the traditional one-way process for interviewing where the interviewer receives but does not give information (Oakley 1981). Consequently, it was important to me that the research process mirror my intentions of being respectful and non-exploitative of the group and the individuals. It was also meaningful to me to demonstrate my indebtedness to the women involved in the research for their time and valuable observations and discussions. I believe that my time and work devoted to the organization in different areas is a way of expressing my gratitude.

For this study I relied on information gathered through different methods for social research. I have employed archival methods, interviews and participant observation to gain an understanding of the problem concerning this research. For an understanding of the history of the group I attained access to institutional records. Archival methods have

been adopted with the written materials pertaining to the group over the years and which have been kept in the organization. I have also consulted written material kept by one of the participants that is representative of the activities immigrant women held previous to the formal development of the organization. Through bibliographical search I have also located a presentation made by a professor of the University of Winnipeg at one of these previous activities. The records of IWAM that I was able to procure were annual reports, minutes of board meetings, briefs presented to government and other public institutions, newsletters, conference and symposia proceedings and research reports written on behalf of the organization. To some extent, the rationale of policies and programs are found in written sources. Therefore, institutional records of the organization would reveal the philosophy or ideology of the organization, the policies formulated by the organization, and the programs implemented by the employees and volunteers. Although my search was not exhaustive, I have attempted to document the history of the organization revealed through an assessment of the archival material I have consulted. However, there may be gaps due to the unavailability of materials. Moving from one physical location to another at times leads to the loss of archival records. Besides, through the years organizations tend to accumulate more material and the physical space cannot hold the older registers. IWAM is considering sending the materials representative of the first years of operation to the provincial archives. Despite any technical assistance offered by the professional archivist from the provincial archives, personnel of IWAM must organize the material under certain given categories. Other priorities have postponed the execution of this task.

Fieldwork has been accomplished by participant observation in activities of the organization. Participant observation, a core method of any anthropological research, was

an appropriate approach for the research. This method, I believe, is the prime procedure to understanding the relationships and dynamics of any group. Participant observation requires interaction with the participants of the research and active participation in their tasks and activities. Although observational data might provide for very important insights, not everything can be observed and experienced. It is a very labour intensive and time consuming technique (Patton 1990). One of the major challenges of participant observation is to what extent to participate and to what extent to observe. I was able to observe and participate in a wide variety of activities of the organization which allowed me to gain some understanding of the participation of the different actors.

During this research, I found semi-structured and open-ended questions very useful because they made possible the spontaneous expression of the personal aspects of the participation of immigrant women in the organization in a non-exploitative relationship. It also allowed for a more dialogic interaction with the participants. Questions about the history of the organization and the engagement and participation of women in its activities were raised to understand personal motivations, interests and needs of these women. This technique uncovered information of their personal history of political participation and of the ways in which the government and other institutions have been shaping the character of the organizations through the participation of women. The history and development of organizations of women is also important to register since they have no opportunity or resources to systematically record that history. Consequently, this research has been envisioned as a way of giving greater visibility to the organizational efforts of immigrant women, not only in the social sciences but in society as well. In order to assess the appropriateness of the delivered programs and

services, the study of the relationship between the association and its clients is incorporated.

During the research process I made sure that ethical issues such as privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and the risks and benefits involved in this research be appropriately discussed. As I have already said, Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba (IWAM) is the principal association dealing with issues concerning immigrant women in Manitoba. Due to the prominent role and visibility of the organization, its identity could not be concealed. My objective was oriented to conceal the identity of the participants in the research. Pseudonyms were provided and characteristics of participants' personalities and personal life were not mentioned or were changed enough to safeguard anonymity. Once these issues were understood, the participants were encouraged to rely on their experiences, to describe events that appeared to be significant to them, to provide their own definitions of their situations, and to reveal their opinions and attitudes as they experienced and viewed them. This was done in a frame of trust and with the knowledge that they did not need to answer any question they were uncomfortable answering. Some questions were intended to reveal facts about the organization and their roles within it.

People accustomed to participating in social services and organizations are more likely to be inclined to answer questionnaires and participate in interviews. Nonetheless, I realized as well that these persons are hard working and very busy people. The fact that some of them (i.e., directors from the board) volunteer their time to this and other organizations, as well as carry regular jobs and work at home, presented an obstacle to scheduled times for interviews. This was also true for some of the clients.

The interviews were recorded on tape with the exception of some of the interviews with clients. Some clients were concerned about the revelation of their identity and thought that avoidance of a tape recording would to some extent prevent them from being identified; others did not want to be taped due to concerns about their level of English. Notes on the encounter were taken once the interview was finished. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the organization. The interviews with the staff were conducted in their personal offices while the interviews with some of the other participants were held in the board room or at an office space the organization shares with another organization. A few of the interviews were held at the home of the participants (i.e., clients), the workplace of the participants or at a coffee shop. The formal interviews varied in length from thirty minutes to one hour and a half and were occasionally followed by more informal discussions.

The sampling technique used to select members of IWAM clientele was a “purposive sampling” technique. The lack of statistical data by ethnic, regional, national, linguistic backgrounds of clients of IWAM prevent any attempt to apply a probability sampling by selecting a random and statistically representative sample. Nonetheless, the validity of purposive sampling rests in selecting cases to gain in-depth understanding of social issues from the perspective of a relatively small group of people (Patton 1990). Access to clients was facilitated by the counsellors. Due to the confidentiality agreement within the agency, access to telephone lists of clients and freedom to contact clients for purpose of interviews without the assistance of the personnel were ruled out. Only in a few cases did I myself contact the participants. Besides the direct interviews with clients, I draw from the experiences of other women gained through my practice as “client

support worker". In these circumstances, women usually disclose the circumstances of their appeal to the organization for services as well as their experiences as recipient of the services. I have escorted women to court, health services, lawyers and social assistance services. My role varied, from that of interpreter, to observer making sure that miscommunication between the parties was prevented, or even to advocating the cause of the client in particular cases. Many of the clients were women who have lived or are living in violent intimate relationships (i.e., violence perpetrated by spouse and or other family members), and are dealing with actual abuse or consequences of long-lasting abuse. Other consumers of services I have supported, mainly in dealing with immigration issues, have been the main clients of other organizations and institutions such as Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council. Other women requested support for dealing with or obtaining services within the health care system.

The main requirement for interviewing clients or consumers of services was to be able to communicate in English. Language acted as an impediment to reach many of the clients of IWAM. Knowledge of Spanish, my own mother tongue, acted as a facilitator in some cases. Due to lack of resources, the use of interpreters was excluded.

Some of the quotes representing participants' voices have been slightly modified to reduce the chance of unintended confusion and misunderstanding. These modifications concerned issues such as the agreement of verb tenses, agreement between pronouns and antecedents. I translated the passages from Spanish to English.

As I have said, I required the support of counsellors and staff to get access to the clients. Since most of the relations between counsellors and clients are done on a one-to-one counselling encounter, only these front-line workers could facilitate my approach to

many clients. In that sense, the counsellors have acted as “gatekeepers” of the participants to the research. Although, few of them were concerned about the relation of power between the researcher and these immigrant women, the staff was very supportive having the experiences of the clients included in the study. They considered this inclusion as a sort of “evaluation” that could facilitate changes or enhance the effectiveness of their work.

In general, the women interviewed were supportive of the research. While some of them considered that what they would say is “no secret” or that they did not have anything to “hide”, often they were vigilant in their observations. Only in a few cases did the participants refuse to communicate their views about some of the issues.

Analysis

Qualitative analysis involves the pursuit of patterns among the data gathered throughout fieldwork. This endeavor consists of a process of identifying, coding, and associating the basic patterns in the data into categories (Patton, 1990). The data from the open-ended questions and the reflections that evolved from them were analyzed for the purpose of this study by systematically attributing labels to the various themes revealed through the interview process. The analysis comprised a broad coding of the data into general themes and sub-themes sustained by citations of participants or literature citations whenever possible (Berg, 1995). This step lead to the exploration of similarities and dissimilarities among the responses. Since I utilized participant observation and open-ended questions, there were many interesting points informally discussed by the participants that I was unable to include in this thesis. Nonetheless, in this study the

multiple types of data are related to each other to support or refute the interpretation. The data triangulation consists of interviews, literature review and participant observation. By triangulating data obtained through different research techniques the research produces a more comprehensive analysis of the problem. Open-ended questions and participant observation also make difficult the process of systematization of the information. Nonetheless, I have tried to maintain the integrity of the data offered by the participants.

Limitations of the Study

Since this study is limited to one group, it cannot be assumed to speak for other groups of immigrant women in Winnipeg, in Manitoba or for that matter within Canadian society. Although IWAM is the most visible and larger group of immigrant women in Winnipeg, there are a number of organizations of women or sections of larger organizations from different ethnic, regional or national groups in the city. Although an approach that included the different types of groups might have captured a large variability among them, it was ruled out as impractical. Therefore, the case study is used to shed light on some of the issues raised by the literature. The study is intended to describe the development of the organization throughout its seventeen years of existence in Manitoba. In that sense, it would highlight the dynamics of growth and changes in the organization within the Canadian socio-historical context. Since this agency serves the population of immigrant women of Manitoba, the study also attends to the needs and concerns of immigrant women who demand services and attend programs and activities in the organization.

Profile of the Research Participants

The population that actively contributed to this study can be divided in two different sectors. There is a group of women who constitute the cadre of the organization as well as those who, although voluntarily, are involved in the management of IWAM (i.e., members of the board of directors). The second sector is a group of women who are the users or consumers of services, the “clients” as they are called within the organization. The number of informants in this study is relatively small and their characteristics are not meant to be representative in a strict statistical sense.

Members of the board and staff research participants

Seven members of the board and six members of the staff participated in the interviews. Many of the participants in this research have experienced living in other countries before coming to Canada and some have family members and friends who left their homeland as well. Most of these women came from the so-called Third World countries (i.e., the Caribbean, Central and South America, Africa and South and South East Asia); some had fled from Eastern Europe after the breakdown of the communist regime or came from Europe without major political or social pressure. They have gained entry to the country as refugees, family class and independent class immigrants or have been sponsored by ethnic associations and churches. The majority of them were adults when they entered Canada. Although the immigrant status might tell us something about immigrants' experiences, in some of the cases these categories disguise the real motivation and history behind one's decision to come to Canada. For instance, in some cases I asked about the immigrant status participants claimed to enter to the country and

the response was “family class” or “landed immigrant”. A further inquiry about the reasons and motivations to emigrate are directly related to social, economic and political pressures. In some of these cases the category of “quasi-refugee” could more accurately depict the situation of these women. In that sense, migration presented a future of hope and even survival that unfortunately their countries of origin and/or transition could not offer. Nonetheless, not all the stories reflect an “escape” or “push”; some of the participants came to Canada to upgrade their education and stayed in the country once they had established themselves, or in consideration for the future of their children.

The women I have interviewed who actively participate as paid employees and members of the board of the organization have had a successful settlement history. In some of the cases the subordination and postponement of personal occupational goals in the interest of the general family economic welfare were important⁴. The other women (i.e., clients and volunteers) I have interviewed are in a more vulnerable position due to their situation of living in abusive situations and/or due to a series of barriers encountered in the new society. However, one of the interviewees was a former client who used to volunteer at IWAM before becoming a counsellor herself. Other participants from the personnel used to volunteer before becoming paid workers in the organization and or contacted the organization when job openings were available. In general, all the women at this level in the organization felt that their roles and social status had changed in Canada.

⁴ We must remember that most of the women interviewed come from the so-called Third World countries or communist societies. Even when belonging to a middle-class or enjoying certain privileges, they had to deal with the drop in their earnings once entering a society of the so-called industrialized world and the fact that their previous work and educational achievements have been largely unrecognized in Canada.

All the participants possess some post-secondary education. Many have undergraduate degrees, some have graduate degrees or are upgrading their education by participating in graduate studies at a Canadian university. Some of these women have earned high education degrees and professional experience in their own or other countries outside Canada. However, many of them have had to become mature students in the Canadian university system because their foreign degrees and professional achievements were not recognized in Canada. In general, these women had to reinvent themselves in the new country trying to reconcile their skills and interests with new fields of employment available to them. These women are or have been working in areas related to social work, human services in government, non-profit or educational sectors as paid or unpaid/volunteer workers. The participants are also active in groups dedicated to the advancement of women and social justice in society, in ethnic or national associations or generic organizations.

Clients⁵ or consumers of services research participants

Twenty-five users of services at IWAM participated in the interviews. The clients or users of services were all adult women in their early and middle-late adulthood years, that is, between their thirties and early sixties. They have come to Canada from Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern and Western Europe, South Asia and South East Asia. They are participants of voluntary or involuntary migration to Canada. They have migrated with or without husband and children or married local or migrant males from

⁵ In general, in the social service arena, service providers use the term 'client' to refer to people requesting services. In this thesis I use the term 'client' because it is largely used in the association to refer to women requesting services.

their same country of origin in Canada. However, most of these women have arrived in Canada as “dependants” of their husbands; few of them have been the main force to initiate the migratory process.

Most of the interviewees are divorced or separated and do not obtain any allowance or child support from their former husbands. All the women do the housework; some of them are employed as health care aides and a few expect to get a job after they finish their training or degree in the areas of social work or health or home care. Most of them are unemployed and receive social assistance in order to survive. Also, most of them do not receive any type of support (i.e., financial and or domestic help) from relatives or friends to accomplish their tasks. Most lack fluency in either of the official languages.

In their countries of origin, a few of these women have earned university education degrees; some of them have practiced their professions for many years or have not finished their university programs. Most of them have completed elementary school or a few years of secondary level education. In Canada, some of them have upgraded their education through training acquired in employment agencies and colleges. A few are presently participating in university programs.

Country of Origin	Number of Interviews
Vietnam	6
Philippines	3
India	2
El Salvador	2
Nicaragua	2
Ethiopia	2
Paraguay; Brazil; Costa Rica; Mexico; Jamaica; Russia; Portugal and Eritrea (one interview with participant from each of these countries)	8
Total	25

Structure of the Thesis

The major themes that structure this study are addressed in Chapter Two. Chapter Two provides a review of recent literature on immigration and the making of Canadian immigration and integration policies and their gender-related aspects. The chapter also includes a review of literature on the development of voluntary organizations concerned with immigrant settlement and integration issues, in particular the advancement of immigrant women's organizations, and the characteristics of these types of organizations. This review serves as a backdrop to understand the findings described in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three introduces a summary of the history and development of IWAM since the 1970s. Discussions of the topics relevant to the delivery of services and advocacy role of the organization as well as constraints to its work as presented by the participants in the research appear in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains perspectives of the women who seek services from IWAM. Chapter Six offers conclusions. Interview protocols are contained in Appendix 1. Consent forms for access and review of documents of IWAM and individual interviews are included in Appendix 2. A document published by IWAM containing a description of the activities since its formal inception to 1998 is included in Appendix 3.

CHAPTER TWO

IMMIGRANT WOMEN: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Immigration to Canada

Together with births, immigration is an important component of population increase. Over the last hundred years the growth and diversity of the population of Canada have dramatically changed as a result of immigration. The decades of 1901-11 and 1951-61 manifest the largest admission of immigrants affecting total population growth. This immigration pattern is the result of the expatriation of populations from Europe due to the state of the local economy and the attractive immigration policies of Canada. The War periods and the Depression era practically stopped immigration into Canada. Currently Canada is undergoing a new peak period of immigration. Since 1991 over 200,000 people have entered Canada annually (Driedger 1996).

In the past, immigrants came mostly from Europe, in particular Britain. Many of these immigrants were attracted by the agricultural possibilities and settled in rural areas. In the 1960s people began landing from other parts of the world such as Asia. These later migrants have tended to settle in metropolitan cities and urban areas (Driedger 1996: 54-55). Leo Driedger points out that since the 1976 Immigration Act, which came into effect two years later, (proclaimed in 1978 and modified in 1993), most of the recent leading source countries are non-European. Asian countries such as Vietnam and Hong Kong have ranked at the top of countries of immigration source during the last few decades.

According to the 1996 Census, since the 1960s there has been a decline in the populations coming from United States, United Kingdom and Europe in general while there has been a constant increase in populations entering Canada from Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa (Statistics Canada 1999). Manitoba also counts with Asia as the main source of immigration in the last two decades. For the period 1986-1994 the Philippines was the leading country. It has also been the leading country for the period 1997-1999. Between 1983 and 1994 over 43 % of the total incoming population to Manitoba were coming from Asiatic sources. Eleven percent came from Eastern European countries, in particular from Poland (8.9 %). England (4.3 %) and United States (4%) followed these populations' inflows. Data available for 1995-2000 show that among the top ten countries, the Philippines, China and India are the most important sources of migrants. 1999 and 2000 register Germany as the second source country of migration to Manitoba (Citizenship and Immigration 2000; Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2000, 2001).

The state has the power to determine the permeability of its border through a series of regulations. Immigration policies are intended to rationalize and select the migrant population entering a country. In sum, the state is the manager of numbers, source countries and types of immigrants and conditions of citizenship. Throughout Canadian history immigration policies have largely been shaped by the demand for a labour force. However, these policies have been selective in terms of race, class, ethnicity, countries of origin and gender. In Canada, the nineteenth century was a free-entry period of "laissez-faire"; immigration policy was essentially non-existent. However, migrants coming from specific regions of the world and certain classes of people were denied entry. For instance, in 1872 "criminals and other vicious classes" were excluded.

To this category, in 1879, were added “paupers and destitutes”. By 1885 the restrictions and regulations focused on Chinese migrants by imposition of a “head tax” of \$50, a levy to be paid by each immigrant on being admitted to Canada. Financial requirements discriminated against poor immigrants and immigrants with earnings that were lower than those in Canada⁶. By the turn of the century, an extensive promotion of immigration to Canada, in particular the attainment of good land at no cost and the possibility for work in activities related to the need of settling the West, such as the railways, attracted a larger number of European and American settlers. However, Asiatic migrants were largely restricted⁷. The campaign targeted British and North European migrants, but, the promotion was extended to Eastern and Southern European persons once they would prove their ability to become integrated, that is to say, to become economically independent (Matas 1996: 95-96). In the 1930s, during the depression years, the government restricted immigration.

After World War II many Europeans moved to Canada, mostly under the

⁶ Although at that time financial requirements were imposed on the basis of race or ethnic origin, the same can be said about the new financial requirements imposed in 1995. According to Thobani (1998), nowadays racism in immigration regulations is represented in the amount of money that every potential immigrant has to pay in order to get the ‘privilege’ of participating of Canadian society.

⁷ The Immigration Act of 1910 imposed a head tax of \$500 on immigrants of Asiatic origin. It also granted authority to the government to exclude “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada.”. See Peter Li (1988) *The Chinese in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. In November 2000, The Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC), a Toronto-based NGO, filed a suit on behalf of the three plaintiffs seeking redress for the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act, which together represent 62 years (1885-1947) of legislated racism directed against the Chinese people. The proposed class action includes a claim for damages for Head Tax payers, widows and descendants, who suffered from the financial burden as well as the extended separation from their families. See on-line, at URL: <<http://www.ccnc.ca/>> (accessed on December 2000)

categories sponsored by relatives and displaced persons or refugees. Restrictions to certain groups, such as the Asiatic immigrants were slowly lifted. At the end of the 1950s the European economy improved and resulted in the decline of immigration from Europe.

A major change in Canadian immigration policy can be detected in the 1960s. In the early 1960s immigrant selection based on ethnicity, race and country of origin was eliminated. However, according to Agnew, this change was motivated more by a concern to obtain skilled and professional labour than to eliminate racism from immigration legislation (Agnew 1996: 114). The policy was also nonsexist in principle. Women could apply to come into Canada as independent immigrants in their own right. However, social status and cultural norms with respect to women's roles and position within the sending and the receiving countries influenced immigration patterns (Simmons 1999: 44). The policy shifted to emphasize the selection of immigrants on the basis of their education, training and skills in order to accommodate the labour force needs for Canadian economic development. The new selection criteria were formally adopted in 1967. Besides the emphasis on manpower considerations, the new immigrant regulations aimed to suit the demands of already arrived immigrants to be reunited with their relatives by sponsoring them for entry to Canada. These innovative regulations divided immigrants into three main categories: sponsored or "family class", nominated relatives, and independent class⁸. Furthermore, they were enacted by the implementation of the "point system". This system was meant to overcome any bias since it instituted objective criteria for admission of immigrants. Therefore, in order to be accepted as an independent class immigrant, the

⁸ The 'Independent Class' category includes self-employed, investors, entrepreneurs, retired, assisted relatives and other independents, whose entry to Canada depends on economic requirements and criteria measured by the so-called 'point system'.

applicant has to be ranked according to the point system. In that case, the system grants a fixed number of points according to the occupation, level of education, knowledge of the Canadian official languages, skills and age, personal qualities, specific vocational preparation, experience and arranged employment.

Whereas the 'point system' is deemed to be neutral, we can deduce that it would be harder for a black than a white person, or a woman than a man willing to enter to the country under the class of independent immigrants. However, Matas considers that this assumption is difficult to measure since no data have been collected to determine if the system is discriminatory or not (1996: 100).

With respect to the gendered aspects of the policy, we can say that although the policy is not gender biased it is important to take into account who enters under what category. Immigration policy has mostly assigned the role of head of household to the male of the family group. Therefore the independent status is granted to the male, consequently categorizing his wife as 'dependant spouse'. The 'family class' category is crucial in order to understand the position of immigrant women in Canadian society. Most of the people entering Canada under the 'family class' category are women, children and elderly. They are permitted to enter the country under the sponsorship of a man (e.g., husband, father, son). To a great extent, migrants are admitted into Canada under this category because they are unable to fulfill the requirements of the precedent category due to their disadvantaged social and economic situation. Thus, it is considered that the categories under which an immigrant enters the country have real social and economic consequences for people's lives (Ng 1996: 18). Immigration regulations are supposedly gender-neutral, but they have a different impact on men and women. There are more

women than men entering the country under the 'family class' category, so we observe that women in this case are defined in relation to men and through the heterosexual nuclear family model (Mohanty 1991: 26). According to Roxana Ng, "this classification system ignores the fact that wives may have comparable education and work experience to their husband and may have made essential contributions to family income before immigration" (1993: 283). This classification also conceals the fact that in Canada many women start working before their husbands because there are more job opportunities for them in the marginal sectors of the economy or because their husbands are more affected by the downward mobility due to the lack of recognition of their education and qualifications. Besides, the sponsorship system places many immigrant women in a dependent and subordinate position vis-à-vis the sponsor. The literature raises the issues of deportation of sponsor and the sponsored, psychological and physical isolation and ineligibility to most forms of state assistance while sponsorship lasts (Djao and Ng 1987:148). In a recently published policy research paper that focus on the impact of the "sponsorship regime" on immigrant women, Côté, Kérisit and Côté conclude "[I]ndeed, our research revealed that the sponsorship regime has a discriminatory effect on immigrant women who are sponsored by their husbands in that it exacerbates their unequal status within the marriage, diminishes their dignity and degree of independence, aggravates existing socio-economic disadvantages and violates their most basic human rights" (2001: 2).

By considering Bjerén's (1997) work on gender and migration it can be argued that this bias is not only a bias of the policy. Bjerén indicates that researchers of the migration process have failed to appreciate the significance of gender in the process since

they have considered men as breadwinners and women as dependants. The author explains the implications of this assumption by stating that “the perception of women as passive dependants (...) might have serious policy consequences for women’s opportunities to make a living for themselves in Northern countries” (1997: 225). The new legislation favours people who in another situation could not be accepted as permanent residents in the country. However, among the negative consequences, those people, as dependents, could be deported if the sponsor it is not allowed any longer to live in the country, since they are deemed legally dependent on their sponsors. Furthermore, if the sponsor chooses to deport his dependents – mostly wife and children – they are allowed to do so (Boyd 1986: 47). Other consequences, such as access to social programs, have been studied (Boyd 1990). Monica Boyd has discussed the policies and social program requirements that limit eligibility for training allowances and language training for migrant women falling under the “sponsored” classification (see also Rockhill and Tomic 1994).

The immigrant legal statuses defined through the last Canadian Immigration Act were established in 1976, but implemented since 1978. In Agnew’s words, “for the first time, the principles underlying immigration policy were explicitly noted” (1996:118). Under the act there was an explicit undertaking to bind immigration streams to economic conditions in Canada and demographic needs. David Matas (1996) emphasizes the fact that the present Immigration Act intends not to discriminate on the grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion or sex. Matas notes, “the legal power to prohibit entry by race is gone; the power to impose financial requirement by race is gone; the

power to insist upon continuous passage is gone. Yet the danger of racism remains” (1996: 98).

Twenty years later the Immigration Act is being reviewed to accommodate recent changes in the economy. The new Immigration Act is the result of the recommendations produced by the Legislative Review Advisory Group to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration “on the best future direction for Canadian immigration laws in light of present challenges, emerging trends and available research” (1997). This statement illustrates the close relation between migration research and policy. If social research neglects the participation of women in migration – the gender differentiated character of the migration process – and constructs an image of women as passive dependants it “might have serious policy consequences for women’s opportunities to make a living for themselves in Northern countries” (Bjerén 1997: 225).

Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Generations, as the report of the Legislative Review Advisory Group (1997) is called, advocates changes in different aspects of immigration policy. The report triggered negative reactions from the media, immigrant groups and other sectors of the population⁹. Therefore, a new document was produced by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). *Building on a Strong Foundation for the 21st Century. New Directions for Immigration and Refugee Policy and Legislation* (1999) is based on the recommendations of the previous immigrant legislation review and on a series of consultations (i.e., public hearings and written submissions).

⁹ One example of the organized efforts to dismiss the report was the Campaign to Defend Immigrants and Refugees by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the International Federation of Iranian Refugees and New Socialists. The campaign was intended to gather supporters for a public demonstration against the discriminatory proposal.

However, the new document has been denounced for its lack of gender perspective (Canadian Council for Refugees 1999). Jennifer Hyndman (1999) analyzes these documents which will guide immigration policy and legislation. Hyndman argues that although immigration legislation and policy intend to treat men and women equally, policymakers are still producing gender-blind policies with different outcomes for the different groups¹⁰. The author concludes that by virtue of their recommendations these documents promote “a wave of highly qualified immigrants who are more likely to be male than female given the prerequisite education, language, and skilled employment experience; and on the other, a small marginal group of refugees which will not be assessed on their ‘ability to establish’, but will be chosen from embassies and consulates overseas, rather than accepted from ports of entry here in Canada” (1999: 10). Expected changes in immigration regulations place emphasis in recruiting business immigrants with substantial capital. In sum, the documents are concerned with the advancement of a policy and legislation that create severe penalties for people involved in trafficking in humans and on the attraction of more highly skilled and adaptable independent immigrants. As positive recommendations the documents include the expansion of the definition of spouse to include common-law and same-sex partners, the inclusion of adult children of a greater age, and special considerations of “at risk” female refugees¹¹. In April 2000, Citizenship and Immigration introduced a new Immigration and Refugee

¹⁰ In spite of the federal government’s commitment to review all legislation and policies using a gender-analysis process, the immigrant legislation reflects shortcomings. The government has also produced guidelines to assist in this process. The *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making* (1998) produced by Status of Women Canada (Secretary of State) is intended to address the shortcomings of the legislation, policies and programs.

¹¹ For an analysis of the implications of gender on the refugee determination process and settlement in Canada see Boyd, 1998.

Protection Act, Bill C-31. A series of consultations across the country were scheduled to be taken place during the fall of the same year. In 2001, Bill C-11, which incorporated contributions by consultants of Bill C-31, was introduced.

Immigration and Gender

Most of the studies concerning migration, in particular those prior to the mid-1970s, overlooked the gender component. However, demographic examinations of Canadian immigration have neglected that distinction. In an attempt to recognize female migration by measuring the extent of their participation in international movement, the United Nations Secretariat (1995) highlights the limitations to the acknowledgment of the gender factor due to deficiencies of migration statistics. As Zlotnik argues, "it is symptomatic of the neglect accorded to women's migration that even the task of quantifying and characterizing it is far from straightforward, largely because the data available on flows of international migration are seldom classified both by sex or other characteristics" (1995: 230). These studies tend to lump together men and women as if immigrant subjects were gender-neutral and had the same status in society. Therefore, in terms of statistics women have not become visible because the international migrant was assumed to be a male. Nonetheless, the migratory process can be sex-selective. In Canada, while European men outnumbered women in the first centuries of colonization and settlement, contemporary migration studies revealed that Caribbean and Northwestern European women began entering the country as domestic workers at the beginning of the century (Agnew 1996; Calliste 1989; Roberts 1990). The fact that men

outnumbered women obscured the reality of migration flows that were dominated by women. This reality also shadowed the analysis of sex-selective immigration policies.

Vijay Agnew (1996) analyses the impact immigration legislation had on women from China, Japan and India during the early part of the twentieth century. Although racism excluded Asians from entering the country, many Asian males were accepted as cheap labour when shortage of unskilled labour existed. At the same time, the admission of immigrant women from Asia was severely restricted. Asiatic males therefore outnumbered females. Nonetheless, Chinese women were brought into Canada by Chinese merchants as their legitimate wives or as their pretend wives and were later sold into prostitution. These regulations uncover the cloaked racist, sexist and classist aspects of the Canadian government at that time. After the First World War, wives and children of South Asian and Chinese males were allowed into Canada. In some cases, racist attitudes discouraged cross-cultural communication between Chinese men and white women through legislation that prohibited women from working in Chinese restaurants, and interracial marriage was virtually impossible (Agnew 1996: 28-33).

There were also restrictions on the immigration of black migrants from the United States. In the early 1910s black women from the Caribbean were recruited as domestic workers and later deported due to economic recession. A decade later, Caribbean women were encouraged to enter as cheap domestic labour. In this case women immigrants from this region outnumbered men (Calliste 1989). Since the mid-1950s the number of women immigrants from the Caribbean has been higher than the number of males due to the immigration policies and programs promoting the entry of women to occupy certain

positions in the domestic labour market (in particular as domestic workers, but also as nurses and office workers) (Calliste 1989).

Despite the disregard of the role of women in the migratory process, migrant women have become an important part of the migrant population. Over the decades, however, the gap in the ratio of men to women has gradually narrowed, largely due to the increase of women immigrating to Canada, and the higher survival rate of women (Badets and Chui 1991). In particular, since the 1967 Immigration regulations women have not been restricted entry to Canada. Nonetheless, as I have already stated, most of the women entering Canada since that innovation in immigrant legislation did so under the 'family class' category which stimulated family reunification (Ghulam 1995). Family reunification explicates the sex distribution of Canadian immigration. In this case, as far as women are concerned, migration within the context of the family is an important factor. Independent migrants are more likely to be men than women, in particular in those places where cultural pressures are exerted over women. In the cases in which women have more freedom to move, they are less equipped than men in terms of education, training and access to work (Chant and Radcliffe 1992: 14). Autonomous migration might be linked to particular programs and selective migration driven by the needs of the labour market in the receiving countries. However, women who migrate as part of the family or as 'dependants' might participate as well in this gender-differentiated labour market. The sexual division of labour in industrialized countries such as Canada tends to bring women mainly as domestic laborers or as workers for the garment industry. A pioneer ethnographic account on the first Filipino garment workers to Winnipeg describes the recruitment process as including English proficiency and sewing machine operation

and medical tests. Buduhan (1972) revealed that not only were women lured into the garment industry, but the potential migrant workers were even required to pass a humiliating “virgin test”. The test was not only performed by doctors and nurses but by representatives of the Canadian government constituting a clear case of sexual harassment and even abuse (Buduhan 1972: 56-63). These practices reveal discrimination, inequality and exploitation of workers at the hands of the Canadian system even before entry into Canada.

Pedraza (1991) describes the concentration of immigrant women in particular types of occupations such as domestic work and the garment industry, the contribution women make to the development of immigrant enterprises and the migration of highly educated immigrant women entering the primary labor market (1991: 314-318). This situation reveals the restructuring of production and the labour market in the countries of immigration. Since the 1960s more local women in the industrialized countries have increasingly been participating in the labour market leading to the demand for contracting of domestic services. Immigrant women frequently have been the sector of the population to respond to that demand. Immigrant women also are concentrated in other areas of production besides the industrial manufacturing sector. Therefore, the changing labour market is reflected in gendered-migration streams. Moreover, the labour market, immigration policies and regulations work together to produce systemic inequality. Chant and Radcliffe argue that “female migration experiences are determined both by intra-household resource and decision-making structures [...] and by the socially determined, gender segregated labour markets available to them” (1992: 23). Since the economic factors have been considered central to interpret the movement of people across borders,

Brettell and Simmon stress that “[labour] is the area in which the most significant theoretical contributions to the study of immigrant women have been made” (1986: 10). More recent studies on gender and migration also stress the socio-economic role of migrants in the globalization era (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Kelson and DeLaet 1999). The movement of capital, new technology and new flexible employment practices have affected people from all over the world. Globalization has encouraged feminization of migration due to the demand for labour in certain niches of the labour market (Anthias 2000: 22-23). In addition, the participation in the labour market of immigrant women has been considered as bringing about transformation and changes in the family. Gender roles and status are challenged throughout the immigration process. Social networks as important resources in chain migration or as supporting newcomers to adjust to the social conditions of the new country and the impact of the state in the lives of immigrant women are also topics of research (Brettell and deBerjeois 1992).

Multiculturalism and the Premise of Multicultural Social Services in Canada

In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt a Multiculturalism Policy with the announcement of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of the official document entitled "Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework". This policy was adopted in response to social changes and forces present in Canadian society. The Canadian state, which was characterized by an ideology of ethnic homogeneity and assimilation, began to address an emerging ethno-national diversity and its quest for recognition. Foremost, the policy was instituted to address the concerns expressed by ethnic minorities in response to

the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960s¹² (Lewycky 1992; Reitz and Breton 1994). A multiculturalism policy would accommodate the immigrants and the descendants of immigrants as well the “charter” nations and the native people. Although the idea of unity within the nation-state was challenged, diversity was narrowly defined. The emphasis on French and English hegemony relegated the role of other ethnic groups to a secondary status. That led members of these minority groups to be concerned about their relative positions in society. Mainly, the concerns were centered on the conviction that their cultures and contributions to Canadian society would be devalued in comparison to those of the French and British. Pressure from these other groups led to a shift from biculturalism to multiculturalism (Lewycky 1992; Reitz and Breton 1994). The multiculturalism policy of 1971 was developed to contribute to the recognition of other ethnic groups.

However, this was not the only factor. In the 60s, Canada's immigration policy has changed from one that privileged and even restricted access to Canadian territory to those of European background to new policy that did not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religion, or culture (Gwyn 1995). An official policy of multiculturalism was an understandable next step in acknowledging the results of this ethnic and national diversity. Nonetheless, the idea of a multicultural nation-state had as its objective to bring

¹² In 1963, the Royal Commission had been designated to make recommendations on how to develop Canada as a nation on the basis of an equal partnership of the British and French founding groups. The emphasis on French equality was a response to French claims for equal status and the movement toward independence. Further, in 1969 Book IV of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission Report emphasizes the bilingual and multicultural nature of Canada broadening the horizon in order to recognize a more diverse immigrant population.

tolerance while leaving intact the relations of power between the different sectors of the population (Gwyn 1995).

The stated purpose of the multiculturalism policy of 1971 was to encourage members of all ethnic groups in Canada to maintain and share their language and cultural heritage with other Canadians. The accomplishment of this aim was expected to build personal and collective confidence among members of all ethnic groups, and thus promote tolerance of diversity and positive intergroup attitudes (Berry and Laponce 1994; Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada 1991). In 1982, the policy of multiculturalism was included in section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which pronounces that the Charter shall be interpreted in a manner concordant with the maintenance and strengthening of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. The more recent "Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada" was passed in 1988. It has become a law and only suffered minor organizational amendments since that time (Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada 1991). However, the document acknowledges racism as a fact of life in Canadian society and turns the focus toward social-equality rights (Gabriel 1996: 173, 182). Even when there is a recognition of systemic racism in the Canadian society, the multiculturalism policy has been criticized "for reducing the task of providing equal access to power and privilege to that of simply becoming 'sensitive' to the values and norms of ethnic and racial groups" (Agnew 1998: 86; see also Bissoondath 1994).

In spite of the critiques of the multicultural policy, the work of immigrant organizations acquires legitimacy from the standards proposed by this policy. Furthermore, the multicultural policy is supposed to provide guidance for culturally

sensitive social services within immigrant or visible minority community services. The 'add on' policy adopted by associations by recruiting 'ethnic' workers and the provision of language interpretation to users of services has not challenged the philosophy characterizing the operational codes of those organizations (Agnew 1998: 86-87). The 1988 Multiculturalism Act was essentially intended to promote equality and to advance anti-racist policies.

The spirit of the multicultural legislation has been manifested in the fundamental principles of social service agencies oriented to assist in the settlement of immigrants. Since the early 1970s a series of programs and policies have been implemented to assist immigrants upon their arrival into Canada. These policies supported the growth and development of ethnocultural and immigrant groups, promoted intercultural encounters and means of overcoming social barriers to participate and contribute to Canadian society, including assistance in learning one of the official languages. Paraphrasing Agnew, in that framework the access to services becomes a right rather than a privilege (1998: 89). However, Agnew argues that the needs of immigrant women have been largely neglected by the agencies of the governments (1998: 90).

Immigrant Women and Participation in the Canadian Women's Movement

The emergence of autonomous groups of immigrant women in the 1970s is attributed to two factors (Agnew 1993b, 1998; Abraham 1995, 2000). First, there is the recognition that the interests and needs of immigrant women were subsumed under the concerns of immigrant men and their ethnic or national groups' concerns. As the position

of immigrant women in Canadian society is different from that of their male counterpart, both groups have a number of different interests and needs. Awareness of this fact encouraged the emergence of organizations of immigrant women.

Second, the groups of women already established, as well as those in initial formative stages, were considered to address mostly matters affecting middle-class white women. Ethnic minority and immigrant women have been frequently excluded or marginalized by white/western feminism. They argue that most feminist analysis and practice indicates racial bias, or at least the exclusion of diverse cultural contexts, “especially evident in its exclusive emphasis on gender oppression and in its relative indifference to race and class as oppressors of women” (Agnew 1998: 37).

Feminist organizations and scholars have identified the need to incorporate issues of interest to women of color and immigrant women. They believe that feminism needs to use the insights of race, class and gender analysis to move to a new stage of organizational practices. Tania Das Gupta (1986) analyzed the lack of participation of immigrant women in the Canadian women’s movement. Different factors have contributed to this limited participation. A case in point is the frustration of immigrant women when issues of concern and interest to them are not recognized by white women.¹³ Furthermore, there are some feminists who consider that issues concerning immigrant women would erode the feminist agenda and content. Their agenda is based on the consideration of gender as primary oppression experienced by all women (Das Gupta 1986). In that sense, it is believed that feminist practice reflects and reproduces the

¹³ The term ‘white women’ is usually utilized in the women of color literature to refer to a contrastive group vis-à-vis themselves (although not homogenous and monolithic). It also refers to the privileges race brings to ‘white women’.

dynamics of class and race within society at large. The subordinate groups (i.e., immigrant or (in)visible minority women) participate only in prearranged and limited ways. To the contrary, Vijay Agnew (1993a, 1993b) argues that feminism has realized that its goals cannot be achieved until racism is eradicated. Nevertheless, feminist literature and practice has ignored the intersection of race and gender in the lived experiences of women. Agnew explains that “this reveals the marginal status of such women in feminist practice, suggesting that Anglo-Saxon, bourgeois feminists do not consider the experience of visible-minority women as significant in an overall understanding of gender or of the workings of Canadian social and political organizations” (1993a: 144-145).¹⁴ However, the social climate created by the second-wave feminist movement has had indirect influence on the creation of autonomous groups of immigrant women. Immigrant women also began to analyze their experiences of subordination and disadvantages in Canadian society (Knocke and Ng 1999: 101-102; Ng 1982; Ng 1991).

Barriers experienced by immigrant and visible minority women to participate in Canadian society have been to some extent utilized as the justification or reason for the creation of new spaces of participation. Agnew claims that “the systemic barriers of race, class and gender are oppressive but the consciousness they generate is empowering” (Agnew 1993a: 142). Women have organized gender and race sensitive human services and political groups.

¹⁴ Jeannie Martin (1991) analyses the differences between white-Anglo feminism and immigrant women in Australia. The author illustrates the differences through an important topic in migrant politics: the ‘family’.

Immigrant Women and Immigrant Service Organizations

Once settled in Canada migrants are challenged by the new social reality they must encounter. They leave known social, economic and political situations and learn to deal with new circumstances which come to influence changes and transitions in world views, values, practices and identity. Migration involves a process of disorganization and social and cultural reorganization. This process is not transited without costs. To the economic costs of a transnational move and search for jobs and housing migration poses psychological costs of adjusting to a new environment, including cultural, linguistic and political factors and the time and energy involved in creating new social relationships among others (Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar 1997: 56-58).

The economic, social and cultural integration of an increasingly diverse immigration population into Canada is a concern not only to scholars on immigration and racial and ethnic relations, but also to social planners, policymakers and without a doubt to the immigrants themselves. In order to promote “integration” to the new country and ways of life, the government has designed policies and programs. At the same time, various immigrant and ethnic organizations have arisen to deal with the needs of so many new immigrants from increasingly diverse ethnic and national groups. Organizations based on the migratory status of their constituency and others based on their ethnic or national origins have addressed the concerns of immigrants. A variety of voluntary groups such as the National Indo-Canadian Council, the South Asian Family Support Services, the Filipina Women’s Group, to name just a few, have emerged around different identity issues. Some groups have drawn their membership from people sharing one ethnic, national or regional origin. Other groups have been more inclusive, embracing all

immigrants. Further, some of the voluntary groups have intended to address the concerns of particular sectors of the immigrant population such as immigrant women or elderly immigrant women, or regional or ethnic women exclusively.

Despite the fact that voluntary organizations have long been important actors in all societies of the western world, social scientists have published few studies on them. Most particularly, voluntary organizations involved in immigrant settlement in Canada have not been a significant subject of research (Agnew 1996, 1998; Bai 1992; Das Gupta 1986; Ng 1996). Recently the International Metropolis Project, a partnership of policy-makers, researchers and representatives of non-profit organizations came together to address issues of immigration and integration. This project has become a forum for NGOs to voice their perspectives and for researchers to increase attention to the role of these organizations. Much of the literature that I consulted on immigrant women focused on particular ethnic groups, in many cases linked to the ethnic background of the authors. Those studies reveal that, by the 1960s and 1970s, there were few services for immigrants in general (Bai 1992, Das Gupta 1986). However, a growing number of voluntary organizations or interest groups which championed issues of official language, equality of women, daycare, visible minorities, etc., emerged since the early 1980s. In an effort to account for the development of voluntary organizations for immigrant women in Ontario, Das Gupta (1986) describes four groups of, and programs for, immigrant women in Ontario established and evolved between 1958 and 1969; nineteen between 1970 and 1979 and thirty four between 1980 and 1986. This growth of organizational undertaking is part of an era of explosion of interest groups such as those involving women, persons of color, persons with disabilities or the environment, all of them trying to articulate and

promote the recognition of their cause. This phenomenon is also linked to the expansion of programs by the government in order to deal with a growing diverse immigrant population which was to become 'integrated' into Canadian society.

David Bai (1992) considers that in order to understand the role of voluntary organizations supporting the immigrant population we need to know the circumstances that make certain courses of actions possible or impossible. Several factors have contributed to the growth and development of immigrant organizations. First, a large number of immigrant arrivals to Canada from all over the globe, including large proportions of women, has occurred. The governments began to acknowledge, in the form of funding and policies, the need for settlement services and citizenship and multicultural programs¹⁵. Second, there has been a growing mobilization of immigrant groups, including groups of immigrant women, which have articulated their needs and concerns. Third, immigrant women began to emerge from a silent minority vis-à-vis mainstream feminist organizations, and men from their own ethnic, regional or national groups, to a vocal group disclosing their concerns and unmet needs in their new society. Fourth, immigrants have required settlement and multicultural services and assistance in the short and long-term (Agnew 1996, 1998, 1998a; Bai 1992; Beyene et al. 1996). Immigrants began to rely on the services provided by immigrant organizations provided by the

¹⁵ These programs and services cover the areas of language training (including class instruction in the workplace), interpretation and translation, referral services, employment counselling, women's support groups, women's health education in the workplace, first-language literacy, skills retraining, legal assistance, advocacy for the rights of immigrant domestic workers, citizenship classes (i.e., knowledge of Canada, citizen's rights and responsibilities, introduction to Canadian institutions, etc.), recreational and leisure activities to get immigrants together, etc.

other generic or mainstream organizations. All these factors have shaped the delivery of services to the immigrants of Canada.¹⁶

In the mid-1980s, studies on organizations of women in Canada show a growth in the number of provincial and federal programs for immigrants, ethnic groups and groups of women. Nevertheless, the studies also acknowledge that these programs lack the resources necessary for becoming successful. Moreover, the studies on organizations of immigrant women and women in general claim that in an era of economic and political change, when the social welfare system is dismantled as a result of cost concerns, and because of a policy aimed at reducing the role of the government in public services, disadvantaged populations become targets of the cut-backs (Agnew 1996, 1998, 1998a; Brodie 1995; Tator 1996). Bai indicates that the increasing numbers of migrants, male and female, instead should have justified an increase in the resources allocated to the organizations assisting them (1992: 32). However, in spite of their financial and administrative limitations, immigrant and ethnic groups have empowered non-English-speaking, low-income women and men to confront the oppression of race and class. In the case of immigrant women, organizations have empowered women to challenge gender prejudices as well (Agnew 1996, 1998, 1998a; Bai 1992; Beyene et al. 1996; Das Gupta 1986; James, 1996). The studies just mentioned provide an understanding of the appropriateness of culturally sensitive social services and advocacy actions in dealing with immigrant and/or ethnic clients, as will be addressed in the next section.

¹⁶ We have to remember that voluntary organizations have been part of North American history. For instance, Barbara Roberts (1990) analyzes how the organization of women from the ruling class managed female immigration at the turn of the present century in Canada. Das Gupta (1986) study of the development of voluntary organizations for immigrant women in Ontario alludes to cases with an origin in the mid-1950s.

Culturally Responsive Services

The preference and felt need of immigrants for social and settlement services from organizations with employees and volunteers from their own ethnic or national groups led to the emergence of numerous immigrant organizations and agencies. It is believed that immigrant organizations are well suited to render services to immigrants, and resolve problems and concerns of people like them. Furthermore, as Beyene et al. argue, "it is the combination of settlement services and advocacy, the result of which is anti-racist community development, that make the ISA [immigrant service agencies] a fundamental component of anti-racist social services" (1996: 173).

Since the early 1990s culturally appropriate services have been promoted in some institutions, such as health care centres or welfare offices to increase accessibility of underserved sectors of population, including immigrant and refugees. Beyene et al. (1996) and Agnew (1998) maintain that some steps have been taken toward cross-cultural sensitization. Mainly in government agencies, these steps have led to hiring personnel from ethnic and racial groups and undertaking cross-cultural training for their staff. However, fundamental changes, like eliminating racist policies and offering services in a variety of languages or adopting affirmative action policies, have yet to be generalized.

Tator (1996) concludes her analysis of human service delivery in Canada thus:

In recent years, there have been signs of change within some mainstream agencies that are largely due to new multicultural and anti-racism policies established by funding agencies. However, in many cases, the nature of the change has been cosmetic rather than substantive; ad hoc and isolated rather than integrated and systemic; involving short-term interventions rather than long-term strategies. Organizational policies have been developed, but not implemented, monitored, or evaluated; training has been provided, but not in the context of anti-racist organizational change; community outreach has been initiated, but power has not been shared;

recruitment of board members and volunteers from minority communities has increased, but in largely token numbers. Thus, racial and cultural barriers to access and equity for people of colour continues to operate within most human service organizations (Tator, 1996: 169).

The analysis of social service agencies presented by Tator has another side. It is the lack of *accessibility* to services and service organizations of immigrant women, immigrants in general and other underserved sectors of the population. Associations of immigrants assist their clients in gaining access to the range of Canadian institutions by providing cultural interpretation, information, and referrals, and by making the appropriate interventions with those institutions to ensure that the service is accessible. Barriers that play a major role in accessibility to services are language differences, lack of cultural sensitivity among care-givers or agencies, and different cultural patterns of help-seeking.

It is worth mentioning that organizations of and for immigrants have been accused of duplicating services that other social service agencies and voluntary organizations were already committed to deliver. Beyene et al. (1996) argue that it is due to the lack of appropriate services by the dominant organizations that the presence of organizations of immigrants is relevant. They affirm that "the ISAs [immigrant service agencies] are both filling the service gaps and helping the 'mainstream' institutions to improve access" (1996: 179). The contribution of immigrant associations in the field of settlement is largely acknowledged. A comparative study of five countries (Australia, Britain, Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States) urged Jenkins (1988) to conclude that ethnic associations made important contributions in providing access to immigrants from an "ethnic-sensitive" practice. However, the entry of these organizations into service fields

fields traditionally dominated by other institutions, such as counselling, is rejected. “Behind this viewpoint there seems to be a belief that the ISAs are rather amateur, unprofessional organizations, providing assistance on a mainly volunteer basis. It is this outlook that lies behind the notion of ‘bridging’, in which the ISAs are to be funded as referral centres funneling their clients to the ‘professional’ service providers in the dominant institutions” (Beyene et al. 1996: 179).

Vijay Agnew characterizes the organizations of immigrant women and or women of color in Canada that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s as providing more than settlement services and social and recreational activities for immigrant and racial and ethnic groups. The author considers that the organizations of women have grown to embrace the provision of feminist-inspired services, such as counselling for women living in intimate abusive relations or provision of women’s health education. In the last two decades, established organizations are characterized by their dependency on government funding and, consequently, the provision of services through paid workers (Agnew 1998: 3).

In sum, although organizations of immigrants are viewed officially as providing referrals, interpretation and translation services, studies have shown that more is involved in the daily activities of these organizations. These groups provide directly some benefits to people from their own immigrant group by accessing jobs within these organizations and by referring clients and volunteers to other organizations in search of employees. They also provide spaces for participation at the level of board of directors or other volunteer activities promoting leadership roles (Agnew 1998: 33-34; Miedema and Tastsoglou 2000).

Financial Resources

Since one of the characteristics of the organizations of immigrant women that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s is their dependence on government funding (Agnew 1998: 3), this dependence affects their activities and their success. This particular problem is shared by many organizations of immigrants and immigrant women; insufficient funding is one of the major obstacles to the expansion and the success of their work. Groups of women all over Canada and numerous other non-profit and charitable organizations are similarly affected. However, this problem is not only about the amount of monetary contribution received by the organizations. It is mostly about how the funding is allocated. The relationship between the stakeholders is defined by the bureaucratic specifications established by the state (Agnew 1996; Abraham 1995; Ng 1996; Ng, Walker and Muller 1990; Sooknanan 2000). The need for financial resources has led to a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of receiving government funds.

Pal (1993) evaluates the objections to government financial support from the two extremes of the political spectrum. On the one hand, he argues conservative sectors of society consider that financial support to special interest groups by the state promotes an anti-business, anti-capitalist and anti-family agenda. Also, these groups are viewed as staffed with educated middle-class people who cannot adequately stand for the disadvantaged sectors they claim to represent. On the other hand, representatives of the left consider that government funding promotes a danger of co-optation and that the funding goes to

[...] less troublesome elements of a movement in an attempt to divide that movement, draw its community into an internecine fight over who got funding and who did not, and ultimately legitimize that portion of the movement least threatening to the social order (Pal 1993: 11).

Agnew supports the latter interpretation when she claims

[t]he allocation of resources by government agencies to community groups [is] a way to 'contain' the discontent of racial and ethnic groups outraged by the gender, race, and class discrimination experienced by their members. Dependence on government agencies structures the services offered by community-based groups and encourages the adoption of government priorities. As well, coordinating their work with existing social assistance programs requires community-based agencies to voice the needs of women in their ethnic and racial groups in more moderate terms than they believe the needs demand (Agnew, 1998: 104).

Therefore, many groups opted to refuse funding since they worry about co-optation and subordination. According to Leslie Pal (1993), most studies on the financing of organizations of women use the co-optation premise.

On the other hand, the most salient advantage of receiving government funding is that groups do not have to deplete their energy and time in fundraising activities when they are already understaffed or staffed by volunteers. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the new government funding guidelines have left many voluntary organizations without core funding. Core or operational funding is assigned to support main programs of organizations. This funding supports operating costs, rent, staff wages, office supplies, and administration. Project funding is a grant given for a limited purpose such as research or some specific services. A controversial case in point of the transformation of the provision of funding are groups of women from all over Canada which suffered from the 1998 changes in the Women's Program (Secretary of State) funding guidelines. In that

case, core funding was removed as a category to which organizations of women could apply¹⁷. Voluntary organizations of immigrant women suffered from that transformation as well.

Most of the voluntary organizations do not rely on monies doled out from only one government agency. In order to survive organizations tend to apply for grants from different government agencies. For instance, groups of immigrant women merge funds from Citizenship and Immigration, the Secretary of State (Women's Program and Multiculturalism Grants) and or other financial resources from provincial and municipal government agencies. In the late 1990s, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has entered into agreements with provinces¹⁸ on sharing responsibility for immigration and settlement related issues. The initiative had as an objective the devolution of responsibilities from direct administration and funding of settlement services to other levels of government. Manitoba signed the agreement in 1998¹⁹.

However, in the present era of economic restructuring or structural adjustment, cuts in the budget of different government agencies delivering social programs have provoked similar impacts in different organizations. In the case of immigrant

¹⁷ One of the most publicized cases on the impact of the changes to funding guidelines in 1998 was the situation of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). That year the federal government removed ongoing funding from women's groups. NAC was forced to struggle for 'project funding' with no success for what has been attributed to political implications. NAC proposed to investigate the impact of the changes in funding allocation on women's organizations (Lansdberg 1998).

¹⁸ This initiative does not include the province of Québec. In 1991, Québec assumed the responsibility for the administration of settlement and integration services under the *Canada-Québec Accord*.

¹⁹ The settlement realignment agreement between Canada and Manitoba also includes the *Provincial Nominee Program*, which allows the province to select a small number of immigrants to meet specific labour market needs.

organizations, “enormous amounts of human energy are essentially wasted each year in re-justifying and re-packaging their activities to suit the changing political priorities of a multitude of funders” (Beyene et al. 1996: 175).

The regular assignation of financial resources is under the procedure of “purchase of services”. This method is understood as the government determining the specific client needs for which it will pay, and so informs the organizations (Bai 1992: 24). Bai’s literature review on funding procedures characterizes the government grants to voluntary organizations as “short-term, non-renewable, and amount[ing] to only a small portion of the budget of a particular ministry”. He adds that the funding procedure and allocation “is insufficient for the services actually provided, is paid in arrears, is not paid for alleged duplication of services, and is surrounded by bureaucratic red tape” (1992: 24).

Another funding arrangement that affects voluntary organizations is the granting of tax concessions. This funding procedure needs to be included since government funding agencies have encouraged voluntary organizations depending on their funds to seek financial support outside the government institutions. Mainly, this funding arrangement means that probable changes on non-profit agency aims and objectives are required. The government urges voluntary organizations to acquire charitable status. Charitable organizations are non-political in nature and engage only in educational and charitable services. This change would imply the avoidance of any advocacy work by the organizations. However, it is acknowledged that they may aim for an educational agenda enlightened by a position that itself has a political outcome. For instance, pursuing funding for educational activities oriented to improve immigrant women’s conditions might have the benefit of accessing policymakers and opportunities for educating many

other people inside and outside immigrant or ethnocultural organizations. This agenda is not trivial when integration to Canadian society is understood as a two-way process, which involves commitment on the part of immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and on the part of Canadians to adapt to new people and cultures.

Some authors claim that the lack of necessary funding for immigrant social service and advocacy groups is linked to structural barriers rooted in discriminatory practices. The distribution of funds between immigrant organizations (including those of immigrant women) and the so-called mainstream organizations is considered unfair since immigrant organizations receive fewer funds. Counsellors and workers are also concerned about the differential wages they receive compared to their counterparts in mainstream agencies (Agnew 1998: 141; Beyene et al. 1996: 175).

Summary

This chapter addressed the particular situation migrant women face with respect to immigration and integration policies and regulations from a historical perspective. Immigration entry requirements, sponsorship, definition of family, access to language and marketable skills training, type of employment and work conditions are some of the aspects defined by Canadian policies. The gendered (and racial) aspects of the legislation, social policies, labour market and Canadian society are part of the analysis and the background to the development of voluntary organizations concerned with immigrant settlement and integration into Canadian society, mainly the growth of organizations by and for immigrant women. Similar difficulties and barriers to integration unite women with diverse experiences.

In this chapter I also attempted to describe the possibilities and constraints of non-profit organizations as they relate to Canadian society and the Canadian State. The organizations are developed because of needs of and demands for assistance to a growing number of migrants coming from the so-called “non-traditional” source countries. The literature shows that these demands are supported and, at the same time, constrained by a number of policies and regulations of the donor organizations (including cutbacks to funding of agencies in an era of fiscal restraint), mainly the State.

CHAPTER THREE

IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

Sounds of Silence
Breakfast done
Children Gone to School
Husband to work

Dishes,
Housekeeping
All chores done

I'm alone
No relatives
No friends
Just me and silence!

But wait, listen;
Voices from back home
Voices of friends and loved ones

I hear sounds,
Sounds of hopelessness,
Sounds of helplessness
Sounds of dreams long lost

Sounds of silence
Walls buzzing, twirling squeezing
An immigrant woman
Suffering in Silence

Suffer not Alone woman
Come, come;
Come to IWAM
Helping souls await

Essa Nana (Pseudonym)
Poem published in *IWAM Newsletter* No.22, December 1992.

In Winnipeg, both governmental and non-governmental agencies provide services to immigrants and refugees. The Settlement Unit of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the provincial government are responsible for admitting refugees and providing settlement assistance to them for up to a year through the Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP). Another governmental agency is the Citizenship division of the Labour Department, which provides settlement assistance through language training programs and educational accreditation. The government departments financially assist non-profit organizations dedicated to settlement services.

Most of the front-line settlement and adjustment assistance is delivered through non-profit organizations. A number of voluntary associations of immigrant and or ethnic groups and established social services organizations, such as the Citizenship Council of Manitoba, commonly known as the International Centre, have provided settlement services and support to the immigrant and refugee population in Manitoba. Throughout the years other generic or mainstream organizations have also developed programs which aim to provide services to different sectors of the immigrant population²⁰. The experiences of providing services, developing programs and advocating for immigrants in Manitoba has not been researched and remains largely undocumented. The exception has been a publication by Bowen Stevens (1993) who reflects on the years of experience in multicultural programming – the Immigrant/Refugee Health Program of the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (formerly Planned Parenthood Manitoba). Stevens produced a

²⁰ For example, the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (former Planned Parenthood) has developed culturally appropriate services in the area of reproductive health. Other organizations are the Employment Projects of Winnipeg (former Employment Projects for Women) and Age and Opportunity Centre in which approximately fifty percent and over seventy percent of the services users respectively are immigrants (Hakim and Angom 1999: 18-20).

guide for planning and implementing culturally appropriate programming²¹. A recent publication by the United Way (2000) describes the steps taken by ten organizations in Winnipeg to increase diversity within their own structure and develop greater cultural and linguistic sensitivity, improve accessibility or develop services for a growing diverse population.

Although the history of the organization is not the focus of this study, a brief consideration of its origins and further development will help to understand its foundation and relationship to the social context. The overview of the history of the association is based on interviews with participants who were involved in the emergence of the association or have been related to the organization for many years. The reconstruction of the history is based on memories and interpretations of what happened at that time. In addition, I had access to documents (e.g., newsletters, minutes of board meetings, briefs, conference reports, articles that appeared in newspapers and magazines, etc.) from that time that reflect some of the issues concerning the development of the association²² as well as some written presentations to conferences by women involved in the process.

²¹ Although the program is not oriented to cater to women over men, an estimated ninety five percent of the immigrant population the program serves is female (Hakim and Angom 1999: 18)

²² Several articles on IWAM's activities and position on immigrant women's issues have been published throughout the years in the local feminist magazine *Herizons* (for instance, see Sutherland, Vol. 1 No 9, 1983; Mitchell, Vol. 9, No 1 and Vol. 10, No 1).

Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba: Origins and Development

The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, located in downtown Winnipeg, was formally founded in February 1983. However, its origins can be traced to the early 1970s. This beginning is directly related to the activities coordinated by a group of immigrant women who used to meet at the Citizenship Council of Manitoba (the International Centre). Throughout the years a number of conferences, the Ethnic Women Conferences or Multicultural Women's Conferences, organized by and oriented to immigrant and visible minority women from different ethnic and national backgrounds, were the place for reflection about their own social condition. These conferences brought women from specific ethnic or national backgrounds²³ to showcase part of their cultural background and identity, but with time they also provided a forum which primary *raison d'être* was to discuss and define particular issues immigrant women confronted in the new society. The conferences were also intended to advocate for the provision of appropriate services, changes in legislation and public policy and increase recognition of women's contribution to society and their rights. A participant recalled the passage from organizing around cultural identity to seeking a voice:

[W]e said that something has to be done, we can't keep having these immigrant, ethnic women's conferences and do songs and dances and not actually resolve the problems. So what we did was to structure it a little bit more. And I think that it was the next conference that we held, probably 1977, and we structured a bit more in terms of all the demands that immigrant women had, language and all kind of things...I put it into a format. So we took all the issues from the ethnic women's conferences and wrote them all down and a number of us met in the living room of [one of

²³ Six conferences were organized during the 1970s and early 1980s. Four of the conferences addressed issues concerning women from Chinese, Polish, East Indian and Filipino backgrounds.

the women]... And I suggested that we write letters to all the departments and we asked them to respond to all the issues. So we divided all the issues in terms of ...and in the next conference we confirmed that these were the issues ...we started to put back the responses. We have done all these meetings and now we need to have a formal organization.

The conferences advanced a series of discourses about needs that became potential requirements of indirect and direct government intervention²⁴. A short presentation produced by Barbara Roberts (1981) at the last Ethnic/Multicultural Women's Conference summarizes a series of recommendations that were formulated year after year without successful implementation. At that time one of the resolutions made was that affirmative action programs for immigrant and visible minority women be implemented at the different levels of government. Also, women voiced their concern around needed programs such as training or re-training, promotional opportunities and the expansion of settlement programs with particular emphasis on access to language training by immigrant women. Other resolutions addressed the need for the government to inform about, encourage and subsidize language classes and daycare centres "so that immigrant women could go to language classes", and an alternative to language learning for homebound women by offering language classes on TV, and for the government to develop some policy for the sensitization of government workers on dealing with immigrant and refugee people (Roberts 1981).

In the early 1970s I was in the Multicultural Committee of the International Centre. We worked a lot with immigrant communities, not just strictly women, and we worked with newcomers not just to integrate to the community but to address some other problems. We tried to

²⁴ During the late 70s the Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba was concerned about immigrant women's situation in Manitoban society. The Council got actively involved in the advancement of immigrant women's issues and in supporting the development of an organization for and by immigrant women.

integrate them to the mainstream; the idea was for them to go out and participate in programs out there and so forth, through the International Centre. Along with that kind of work, we became aware that there were some unique problems for immigrant women. For instance, because of the way the community is structured or coming from their own ethnic groups. We were having some unique problems with respect to access to English, which did not exist for women. ESL was something that didn't exist, that was something that we eventually initiated. There were classes for the breadwinner and most of the people who came were men (...) Women are locked in their communities, there were just speaking their own languages and interacting within their own communities. It was not fair. The moms needed to interact with the school and with other institutions. They would function much better if they have access to English, if they could learn English or French, the official languages. This is empowering for them to feel that they can do things and they don't have to wait for the husband all the time.

The 1981 conference was meant to formulate a proposal from immigrant women of Manitoba to the first national conference *The Immigrant Woman in Canada: A Right to Recognition*. The federal government, in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Multiculturalism policy, organized the conference. It was the first national event having immigrant women as a focus (Multiculturalism Directorate 1981).

The national conference promoted further a move to the formation of an autonomous organization of immigrant women in Manitoba.

It was this occasion which marked a turning point in the history of IWAM as we know it and I (representative to the conference) returned to Manitoba with a resolve firstly to put in place a permanent/ongoing structure to closely examine the needs and concerns of immigrant women in Manitoba; and secondly to strategize how these concerns would be addressed and by whom (Jones 1993:7).

The first step was the creation of the "Immigrant Women Steering Committee" in 1982 and, with financial support of the Manitoba Department of Labour and Manpower, a research project was commissioned to assess the need for an organization of immigrant

women in Manitoba. The exploration was intended to compile a list of groups of immigrant women and ethnic groups and women's groups focusing on immigrant women in Manitoba. These groups provided basic assessment of the needs of immigrant women. The research also discussed the need for the development of an organization of immigrant women in Manitoba since no such a group existed. The advantages and disadvantages of creating a group of immigrant women, the type of group, goals and objectives, membership as well as the priority issues were also explored. The research was designed to facilitate the planning of a provincial conference of immigrant women. In February 1983, the committee consummated the first provincial conference addressing the situation of immigrant women of Manitoba. The conference gave opportunity to further development of IWAM. A motion was passed that "a Provincial Immigrant Women's Organization be founded immediately from this body of delegates at the 1983 Women's Conference".²⁵ IWAM had representatives in Brandon, Thompson and The Pas. Three years later, the organization co-sponsored and hosted the second national immigrant women's conference where the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada was formed. This body brings together provincial and territorial immigrant women's groups and acts as a national coordinating and pressure group for immigrant women.

Women participating in the first Manitoba Conference for Immigrant Women: *Action through Organization* discussed accessibility to human services, language

²⁵ Excerpt from the Proceedings of the Provincial Conference of Immigrant Women, Saturday February 19, 1983, Winnipeg.

training²⁶, employment and training, child, school and family. This conference was the initial step for the formal creation and development of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, an independent group of immigrant women aimed to providing assistance and support to other immigrant women. The development of the organization has been an initiative of a cross-section of women who represent different national, racial, ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. This non-profit organization became a legal entity registered under the Incorporation Act. In order to receive funding from the state the association needed to be incorporated, that is, to create a constitution and by-laws and to designate a board of directors responsible for the activities within the association (see Ng 1996).

In those years, the initiative rested on volunteer work. Access to a grant from the Secretary of the State enabled IWAM to hire a coordinator to implement programs and services for immigrant women based on the conference recommendations. Among the original goals of IWAM were "to lobby for changes which will facilitate the settlement and integration of immigrant women in Manitoba" and "to give recognition to the role

²⁶ Language issues were a priority of IWAM's agenda for a number of years. Women at the conference advocated a more active involvement of immigrant and non-profit organizations in language program development and instruction. These women were also concerned with house-bound immigrant women and seniors, immigrants 'not yet ready for the more traditional classroom programs' and people residing in rural and isolated areas of the province (IWAM 1983: 27-29). In 1984 the association also presented a brief to the Adult Continuing Education, Branch of Winnipeg on the Significance of Day Care Facilities for Adult Immigrant Women in ESL training and advocated, in 1987 against a proposed fee for summer ESL students. In 1988, the organization was able to deliver its own ESL program. Language is still recognized as one of the main barriers many immigrant women face in Canada. However, after advocacy efforts in Manitoba and throughout the country, services do not exclude them. Women had to wait until 1992 to see the Canadian government remove the explicit gender barriers from the language program. See Boyd 1986, 1987 and 1992 for a gender-based analysis of language instruction policy for immigrants.

and contribution of immigrant women in Canada". The April 1983 board meeting stated the objectives of the organization. These objectives were: to provide information on services available (referral); to coordinate and promote activities of common interest among different immigrant women's groups; to provide a forum for immigrant women in matters directly related to their settlement and adjustment into Canadian society; to facilitate the accessibility/linkage of immigrant women and immigrant women's groups province-wide. To some extent, these objectives have remained the same throughout the years. In spite of the emphasis on the promotion of contributions of immigrant women to Canadian society and of the awareness of gender, race and class issues that affect immigrant women, IWAM does not overtly perceive itself as a feminist group.

Governed by a board of directors that come from and are accountable to immigrant women IWAM has served and to the funding bodies, the association was established on the basis of continuous assessment of immigrant women's needs. Nonetheless, the establishment of programs and activities aimed to address many of these needs is based on the experiences of the workers and board members in their interaction or work with immigrant women. The organization has occasionally implemented more systematic inquiries to explore women's needs and forward directions for changes that would alter women's conditions and status, such as barriers to access to English instruction, the immigration experiences of women and the most recent research on access barriers to social and health services.

IWAM's activist and advocacy orientation during its first years of operation was manifest. Board meeting minutes from the early years of the organization identified a commitment to the advancement of immigrant women and to increase their visibility by

advancing the goal of recognizing their contribution to Canadian society. The organization aimed to act as a formal liaison with government and other agencies to voice the problems and concerns of immigrant women in Manitoba. The way the group presented its view to government was in response to government requests for information, or because some policies were perceived as unfair to immigrant women. This form of advocacy was accomplished mainly through written submissions, such as presenting briefs about social policies or government programs. Usually, the documents looked at the detrimental impact these policies would have in the quality of life of this sector of the female population. On a few occasions members of IWAM met with politicians and senior officials to discuss the issues or mobilize women to participate in public demonstrations. The organization also provided referrals to other government and non-government agencies. Increased visibility brought more immigrant women looking for services. The minutes of the board meeting of March 1986 reflect the concern with the changes toward becoming a human service agency. The statement reads that "IWAM is a lobbying group not a service group or delivery service group. Concern has been expressed whether or not IWAM is getting away from our objective as a lobbying group". One participant claimed "(...) as [the board] became more focused on program development and program delivery the emphasis on that aspect declined". A year later the organization sought the introduction of issues pertaining to wife abuse and the need for change by expanding the mandate to include the provision of direct services. Therefore, for that and the following years the priorities were set on wife abuse, together with settlement services. In mid-1980s the inclusion of services for battered women was nurtured in a climate of rising legitimacy of new issues. Funding and community-based wife abuse

services and changes in the criminal and justice system were some indicators of the increased need and interest to address the issue. These changes provided the opportunity for an increased voice of immigrant women in the design of services (Ursel 1997). After collaboration with the design of services for battered immigrant women, and through lobbying to provide those services from IWAM, the “cross-cultural counselling unit” was created in 1988. Consequently, IWAM’s philosophy and programs were expanded. IWAM made a new service accessible. While in its first year of operation the “counselling unit” provided services to 52 women, in 1999 over 1200 women received services from the “counselling unit”.

IWAM began to provide personal direct services, doing one-on-one counselling, individual advocacy, referrals to other services and groups, and making educational services available to immigrant women. The organization evolved to center its focus on the provision of direct services. Nonetheless, it continues with the tradition of organizing annual conferences to look at the condition of immigrant women and the barriers they confront in Manitoba. In 1999, IWAM commissioned research to address the issues immigrant women face in dealing with the social services and health care system. The report included a series of recommendations IWAM was looking at implementing. The findings were disseminated in public events, for in-service training in non-profit organizations and presented to one government agency, the Department of Labour and Immigration.

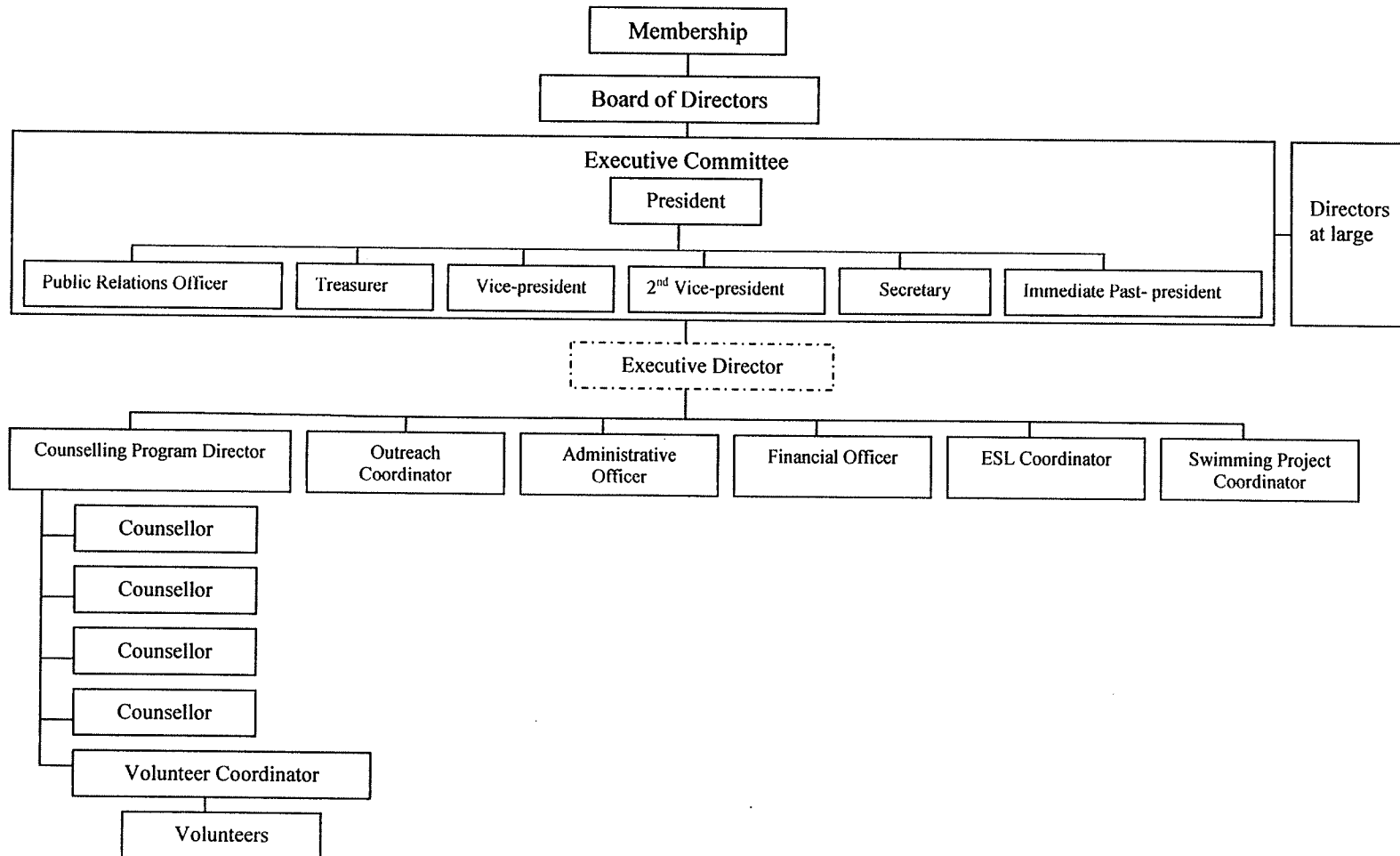
IWAM was willingly incorporated into the contract services of the federal and provincial government; political advocacy on behalf of the large population of immigrant women became a secondary priority to service provision. On their own, counsellors carry

out advocacy work on an individual basis. Besides the provision of services as an equal rights organization, IWAM still promotes issues concerning immigrant women as a collective through annual conferences; however, IWAM does not develop briefs to official documents on immigration and immigration-related issues such as settlement services as in the early years. The regular conferences and symposia and presentations on other events on behalf of the organization have been aimed to provide a forum for immigrant women, service providers and government representatives to discuss the reality for immigrant women and avenues for changing policies, procedures and legislation and to demand sensitivity to immigrant women. The conferences acted as spaces for reflection on the impact of legislation and public policies or service systems on immigrant women. They also present a series of recommendations to IWAM and other social service agencies and to the governments on different issues (e.g., access to justice system, immigration law and domestic workers, etc.).

In sum, the broad scope of the needs of immigrant women led to the constitution of a multi-issues organization (see Appendix 3 for an overview of the programs and activities delivered from 1985 to 1998 prepared by Margot Morrish and Jocelyn Proulx 1998), that is, an association that agrees on a series of goals and objectives addressed through different activities and strategies.

During the time of my research, IWAM was a medium-sized organization (about 10 full and part-time, permanent and contracted employees; see Figure 1) which responded to both newcomer needs and those of immigrants beyond the initial settlement period, in particular, immigrant women living in abusive intimate relationships. Drastic decisions made in 2001 changed IWAM's profile and future, as I will address later on.

Figure 1: IWAM Organizational Chart



Note: This chart reflects the structure of IWAM at the time of the research (April 2000-March 2001). The Executive Director was appointed by the provincial government on a temporary basis (i.e., 9 months).

The organization has been characteristic of many immigrant human service organizations since its central objectives are oriented to provide settlement services (e.g., information and referral, language training, recreational activities, public education, language interpretation, etc.). These services were accompanied by specific services to immigrant women who have lived or are living in violent intimate relationships. The counselling services include a therapeutic approach as well as individual advocacy on behalf of clients and liaison with a number of organizations.

Because of a wide experience with immigrant women of different migratory and citizenship status, the organization uses the term “immigrant women” in a very broad manner. Because of the different situations women bring to IWAM, the term “immigrant women” not only includes recent immigrants and permanent residents, refugees and refugee claimants. It also includes women who are Canadian citizens and permanent residents who have been for a number of years in Canada, but who still define themselves as “immigrants”, as they consider themselves to be distant from mainstream society in terms of their linguistic, racial and/or cultural backgrounds. Other groups of women who may require services from the organization are those who hold temporary status as visitors (i.e., temporary/guest workers, students or tourists), and “undocumented immigrants”.

In the following chapter I address the perspectives of the staff and members of the board around their work. A discussion of the factors that have facilitated and constrained IWAM’s work is included in the chapter. Since much of the work has been subsidized through public monies, special attention is paid to the relationship between IWAM and the government.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORK OF IWAM: SERVICES AND BEYOND

This chapter addresses the nature of the services provided by IWAM and activities addressing the needs and concerns of immigrant women. Based on the experiences and understanding of the workers of IWAM and my own observations as a volunteer, participant of several activities and as researcher, this section introduces the characteristics, successes and misunderstandings of the programs and other activities oriented to catering to the female immigrant population.

Most of the full-time workers at IWAM are dedicated to the provision of one-on-one services to women who are living or have lived in abusive relationships. Consequently, a large account of their experiences in working with immigrant women is directly related to and arises from dealing with the particularities of the issue. Nonetheless, the variety of needs and concerns of immigrant women challenge the daily work of members of the staff. When the cases fall outside the direct mandate of the counselling program, a large part of the role of the organization includes referrals to other agencies dealing with social services for welfare and subsidized housing, to clinics and hospitals for health care services, to Immigration for immigration status-related issues, to other immigrant and non-immigrant service organizations for employment and other settlement-related issues. After assessing the work of IWAM, I will address problems emerging from the engagement with the sources that have sustained IWAM financially, including workers' experiences and perceptions of their working conditions.

Cultural Responsive Counselling

The participants drew attention to one of the particularities of the services. The provision of cultural responsive/sensitive services is central to the understanding of their work.

I believe that 'cross-cultural' service is really to comprehend where the individuals come from, their experiences as individuals, their needs as individuals, their conflicts, their frustrations and the barriers that as immigrants they are confronting. Cross-cultural for me is to put in practice, or to try to put in practice or to use practically an intervention that helps the individual from the cultural view point. That is, respecting her culture, but also helping this person to understand that there is a new culture, a different system where he or she will have to combine both cultures to survive. Then, for me this is cross-cultural counselling. It is to respect the culture of the individual, its values, beliefs, and anything concerning their culture. Speaking of cross-cultural counselling, I believe that we have to be sensitive to the needs of the individual, where they come from, their personal situations, the circumstances that these people are confronting in a new country. And I always believe, that everyone of us has to put in a bit of effort in order to understand the individual that is in front of us. Cross-cultural counselling to me is being sensitive, understanding of the individual that is in front of me in her totality (...) I have to understand that today the client is in a good, joyful state and that tomorrow she comes very depressed. To understand that the session that I had planned with her was supposed to cover certain issues, but in this circumstance it is not possible to talk about that today. The client has something else in mind, something that is more important to her than the issues I planned to work with her. To understand that there is a constant mourning in the individual who has left her culture behind, her family behind, a personal history behind. Then, for me it is to understand that mourning process, that loss that maybe will remain in that individual for the rest of her life.

I think the most important thing here is the commitment with the cross-cultural counselling, our work with immigrant women and then, respect to their determination. I think that I organize myself along those lines, when I do assessments of the different women coming here. I believe I have an open mind. I love to learn. So, when a woman comes with one situation and I observe that the case is similar to that other woman. But, at the same time there is something unique about this person. There are different issues and how she wants to deal with that.

We have a lot of strengths because of the diversity of the people here. Because we are working with people, we have the entire understanding because we come from other places ourselves. We have different backgrounds here, we work with people from different parts of the world and for us it is a challenge too because we have to deal with differences. For instance, I am from [this place] and working with [people from that place], some of these people I never dealt in my life before and we have our own struggles here in order to come to a point that we can coexist too. I felt a lot of struggles before too in just trying to understand, I made a lot of mistakes too in dealing with some of the cultures because what you might take for granted someone might think that it is an insult. In time you learn and you move from there.

These passages illustrate the philosophical approach counsellors and other workers take in dealing with a diverse clientèle. The counsellors talked about the characteristics a cross-cultural service provider should possess. First, appreciation for the cultural context of behaviour, that is to say that women have to deal with a series of situations that are related to the migratory process and the process of incorporation to a new society, and counsellors have to be aware of this process. Also counsellors considered is important to be open to learn from their clients' particular experiences, and together with this comes flexibility and empathy. Awareness of their beliefs, attitudes and values is also a characteristic that contributes to satisfactory work.

One of the counsellors clearly stated that she has learned much about her own culture and about other women's cultures. She realized that her work should exceed the description of cultural traits and codes of behavior to enter into an analysis of the socio-political and historical factors influencing the encounter with her clients.

For instance, in [my region of origin] we are politically very divided and we are very passionate when it comes to define our political views. When I left my country for political reasons I felt that I hoped that I wouldn't have

to see anybody from the political ideology I was escaping from. When I came here I realized that that was not possible. Now I have had the opportunity to have here people in front of me who held the political ideology opposed to mine. Now I see these people with a lot of respect and I have understood that I as well other people have been victims of political systems. That woman, who comes from the right or from the left, she is the victim of a system in which she believed, and now she is here. I respect that a lot.

This case provides an understanding that people from similar backgrounds, in this case the same home country, have very different world views and experiences than the counsellor. Therefore, this participant talked about the intricacies of the cross-cultural work with other national or cultural groups, but also on working within her own cultural or regional group. Altogether, cross-cultural, sensitive counselling is also about gaining personal awareness about one's own cultural values, biases, social position and worldviews.

The professional profile of the workers, and in some cases their constant personal quest for professional development, allowed them to work with a wider clientèle than that of their own linguistic or national and regional backgrounds. Nonetheless, a large clientèle is reached because of the language and cultural skills of the different workers.

At the time of the completion of their university degrees, most of the counsellors had not been formally educated in a social work program that emphasizes multicultural competence. However, they communicated the continuous need for upgrading their understanding of the cultural background of their clientèle. The workers have developed some strategies to overcome the shortcomings of their initial formal education in that area. These strategies have been: upgrading courses at the university, individual inquiry of written materials on different cultural groups, continuous discussion between workers

at the workplace and other organizations, personal research outside working hours, personal development through participation at conferences or workshops, research for presentations to other organizations and participation in committees dealing with issues such as social work, violence, health, sexuality and spirituality. No formal in-house training has been developed to deal with a multicultural clientèle.

Daily interaction with immigrant women has helped counsellors to challenge some of their original or mainstream understanding of domestic violence. For instance, they have adapted the model called “cycle of violence”, a model that assumes the universality of the stages through which victims of intimate violence go through, because women from different cultural groups, in particular those of Vietnamese and Chinese cultural background, do not recognize their situation in the western-originated model.

It is worth mentioning that the enhancement of counsellors’ professional training and expertise in social work is as important as the fact that they have a similar cultural, linguistic or immigrant background as their clients. They also mistrust the philosophy that establishes that personal experience alone can help other people dealing with similar situations. However, the identification that the client has with the counsellor by virtue of some evident similarities, such as immigrant background, is highly emphasized as positive in the counsellor-client encounter. In several occasions the workers have indicated the lack of recognition of their expertise and credentials on the part of other professionals in the social service and health care area as well as by representatives of the funding bodies. A participant explained:

I would say that certain departments of the government do not understand what our services are. They are not conscious of the needs of our communities, they are not conscious of what it means to provide cross-

cultural counselling, they are not conscious of the needs of the *immigrant* families. This is a big obstacle. Another obstacle might be the lack of consciousness of some mainstream organizations, and also immigrant organizations that IWAM is an organization devoted to provide services to immigrant women living in abusive relationships. They don't respect that.

Despite the fact that they highly value their professional background, the participants used metaphors based on family relationships to bridge the gap between "client" and "counsellor". The use of family metaphors is not unheard of among other organizations of women; according to Vaid (1999/2000), these are "culturally specific metaphors" also used by many South Asian groups in the United States oriented toward addressing domestic violence.

I think that the strength of the organization is the ability to have all these women together and then, you know, it's like a force, a strength, bringing all these women together, providing this place. I know women that when they come here, they have gone to a lot of places and when they come here there is just the feeling of being home and the staff is a big strength too because I think the staff really reach out to the clients. We don't set up this difference 'you are the client and I am the staff'. Everybody, to me, is operating on a system of equity and we don't have this high and low. And we don't have this that you have to sit here and me there. Everything is organized in such a way that makes it possible not to even leave a chair. Here it is more open, people come and they would drop in and walk into the kitchen. They have a good feel. This is a good thing.

Altogether, the work carried out by counsellors and other workers is characterized as respectful of cultural values, beliefs and practices of the clients, in relevant language and developed with input of clients. The workers' eagerness to learn about other cultures, acknowledgement of own beliefs, attitudes and values, empathy and use of appropriate communication skills and strategies that are congruent with a person's values are other characteristics of the practice.

Role of the IWAM: Empowering Women

An empowerment approach to counselling goes hand-in-hand with the understanding of problems that immigrant women face in a new society. Services for a multicultural clientele have to begin from understanding the individual and social conditions of these women. Besides psychological and physical disturbances (e.g., depression, homesickness, anxiety, anger, stress, powerlessness) migrants experience when they arrive in a new society, the ability to adjust and integrate (e.g., learn the new language, find a suitable job, face discrimination, etc.) into the new society can be a difficult and prolonged process for some women.

Women seeking services to deal with abuse often fear being ostracized and isolated from their communities if they identify or seek help for abuse. Women are the main bonding agents in keeping families together, divorce or family conflicts are often considered as “dishonoring” or “shaming” by the standards of their culture and communities, therefore women are pressured to stay in abusive situations. Furthermore, abuse is conceived as a private matter, and consequently many immigrant women believe they have to restrict exposure of abuse within their own family. For migrants coming from cultures where abuse might be differently conceptualized (i.e., “discipline”) and experienced than in Canada, or at least in Canadian legislation, it can be difficult for some immigrant women to identify their conditions as abusive. Contacting the police – one of the most advertised actions to stop domestic violence – might not be an option for women who come from regimes where military and police forces are perceived as tools of oppression. Under these circumstances, integration into society can be even more

strenuous, in particular if women are single, with children, do not speak English, do not have information about social services available to them, do not have the support of extended family members or strong social networks, and have spent many of their years in Canada within the confines of their homes. For counsellors these circumstances can be more challenging with the emergence of new issues such as mail order brides, refugee women victims of war, children witnesses of violence, and women struggling over the custody of their abused children, as the program director stated it in the 2000 Annual General Meeting.

Participants explained their work to me:

I will talk to the woman about other resources for her to know and then, I think that women who don't know anything about the outside they are so afraid and they see themselves very small. Then they know that there is help outside, a lot of people are there to help her to stay on her own two feet. I think that she grows bigger, she has more understanding about the system in here, and I think that she has more power. The way she talks to her husband, the way she let him know that she is not stupid, that she knows about this and this and this. That empowers the woman. She is not small anymore, now she knows that she has choices that she doesn't have to stay in the relationship. If she wants to stay, she stays, but she lets her husband know that 'I love you, I want to work on this relationship that's why I stay, not because if I go out I'll die'. For some women this is a very slow process, some others learn very fast.

My goal is to help them everyday to move toward where they can do it on their own, and the quicker the better. Sometimes they don't know that they can do it, because they have been used to being controlled at home, controlled at work, controlled everywhere so if you are reinforcing that dependency they will always feel like that. (...)

If you are controlling, if you are not opening more doors for them, you are not empowering the woman. That means getting to know them and being able to look beyond the abused person, it's looking at the total picture. When I talk to a client I want to find out what are their strengths, what are their weaknesses, what's their potential.

I also see my role is to open doors for them. I'm not going to say, who is she? To me that's not my concern. My concern is to empower people and to make sure they can go as high and as far as they possibly can. Because I know that's how they will realize happiness, that's how they will grow as people, they will feel about themselves, and they will be independent, and when there are independent and feel strong and can do for themselves then they can meet the challenge.

Counsellors at IWAM apply an "empowerment" approach to their daily work.

Empowerment is defined as access to and control of resources. The work is oriented to increase women's capacities to choose and take action. Immigrant women who live or have lived through abusive intimate relationships are not only disempowered before their partners or other abusive people in their lives, but usually also because of their subordination as a consequence of predominant social, economic and political models. Immigrant women experience multiple internal cultural and social barriers and external structural barriers that heighten their vulnerability (see Abraham 2000: 106-131). In order for the clients to confront those barriers counsellors facilitate the process of empowerment by increasing internal strength and creating awareness about the right to determine one's choices in life.

A great deal of counsellors' work involves one-to-one efforts to empower low-income, single and in many cases monolingual women. Immigrant women who access IWAM very often have pressing subsistence needs which may require immediate and direct intervention. Such needs may include assisting with legal matters, finding suitable accommodation, including referrals to women's shelters, and assisting to organize financial support. Direct intervention secures primary needs and establishes the

counsellor as someone who is able to help, thus laying foundations for further more subtle interventions.

Individual Case Advocacy

In providing services for immigrant women IWAM's service providers are involved in one level of advocacy: individual case advocacy. The counsellor acts as an advocate for individual clients in addressing problems faced by the client. Client advocacy is one expression of the political dimension of the organization. The counsellors work with individual women to navigate government agencies (e.g., immigration, housing, social assistance, etc.), the health care system, the legal system and other organizations. The advocacy role usually involves direct, circumscribed and evident struggle with social service agencies because of attitudes, regulations or laws that are perceived as unfair or harmful. One of the workers explained:

We advocate for the clients... For example, I have a client, she has been living here for ten years, but she has very little command of English. Because her children are now six and ten years old, the [welfare] worker said: 'OK, your child is six years old you have to go to work, no more stay home'. Otherwise they will cut her off [the financial support]. I think that she needs to learn more English, so I go with her to the welfare worker and talk to her about her need of English. She has to deal with the school, the doctor, with the outside world, and she doesn't want to stay in the factory anymore. She wants to have a better job because since she came she has always worked in the factory until the husband and her broke up, and now she needs to learn some English. The [welfare] worker said "OK, for six months". And now she is in the program for two years, going for English because every six months I talk with the worker again and I ask for some extension for classes because she is doing well at school, and she has four children. If she goes now to work how much money can she make? It's not worth it. The children have to go home for lunch, if not she has to pay a lunch program for them and then the youngsters they have to go to day care and with the minimum wage this is not possible. She doesn't get a lot of money from welfare, but at least she has time with her children and can

take care of them at lunch. I feel so bad about her situation and I take her to welfare and ask the worker to understand her case.

This passage illustrates the role of the advocate as preventing the consequences that a social policy might have in an underprivileged woman. The counsellors work on reversing questionable decisions that affect one particular case. The resulting decision and action might be used as a precedent for other clients. In order to support this strategy, volunteers have been regularly assigned to provide support and interpretation service.

The participants are aware of the way the lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity of generic services affect culturally diverse clients.

The difference between what we call mainstream or Canadian services is that there is no identification [between workers and clients]. We as immigrants have gone through experiences more or less similar to those of our clients, maybe not the same but similar. For instance, the barrier of the language is one of them. We identify ourselves with that client, and the client, the most important is that the client identifies herself with us. They indicate that to us. On the other side, "in other places, [the counsellors] asked me that I have to do this and I don't believe that I could do that". They have told me: "You really understand me", "you know what you are talking about, you are not asking me that I do that because you know about my culture, my country, my family". Then, there is an identification of the client with the counsellor and of the counsellor with the client. We understand of all the implications that changes and situations immigrants are going through.

Mainstream people they don't see the cultural differences, or differences in values, as a big thing. They probably talk about that, probably they learn about cultural differences, but to apply it into the counselling or into the way they treat people I think that's very limited. They do learn, they do know about cultural differences, but apply that knowledge to the way they treat people, I don't think it is happening as much as it should.

The organization is neither capable nor interested in the delivery of every possible service to their clients or other immigrant women seeking services. However, the lack of

appropriate services in different areas of needs challenges the day-to-day provision of services of IWAM. Provision of services to those whose needs could not be addressed by other institutions is a central element in the identification of themselves as a “unique” agency. The characteristics of the clientèle (i.e., immigrant women) they are committed to service play the largest role in the definition of the type of services they are able to provide. Nonetheless, they are compelled to provide a wide range of services to address a number of issues, such as provide cultural interpretation to mental health experts or coordinate activities with disability organizations. Therefore, when referral to other services has not been successful, IWAM has found itself providing services beyond the particular programs funded by the governments because it is difficult to turn away those asking for help. Gillian Creese (1998) found similar patterns within agencies providing settlement services in Vancouver. At IWAM many of these extra activities were done on a volunteer basis (i.e., personnel volunteering their time or through the use of volunteers).

Internal Organizational Issues

A number of issues were raised when participants were asked about obstacles or shortcomings of the organization. Some of these issues were related to the internal issues and relationships of the organization. Other issues were raised in relation to funding attainment.

Although the organization aims to empower women who access the services, one of the participants considers that there are certain unmet steps that would empower women to participate in Canadian society.

I see the board as middle class immigrant women, frankly, as myself with a little bit of education or whatever else. Women don't have to have the feeling that this is for a certain group of people, because we are immigrant women and the purpose is settlement and all immigrants have financial difficulties. They try to settle in and even after they settle many people who started using the organization, in their early arrival days, are the people who probably still might use some of the services as they grow into Canada. They also can contribute back so the board grows. I think as [the clientèle] grows and develops in Canada, they should become part of the membership, they should become board members, I think some of them do. I think that they probably don't know about it, don't think about it, they don't see this organization as a place where they can come, work together, learn together other than coming for counselling.

This participant openly raised the question of empowering women not only to take control over their individual lives by participating in one-to-one encounters with counsellors, but also to encourage them to participate in other aspects of the organization. A number of women participate in other programs, but they have not become part of the membership or at least do not participate actively in the membership.

The issue of how power is distributed within the organizational structure is an interesting one. Most of the participants agree with the inclusion and encouragement of women with different expertise getting involved in the process of decision-making. However, as Agnew (1996) observed, social class and class skills are important characteristics in determining which community members go on to become staff and Board members. By virtue of their skills, middle class boards help secure funds for the organization. In their work on Britain, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) found that representatives on the boards of voluntary organizations tend to be already involved in similar organizations because there are practical problems, in finding participants for the

board, such as how to determine who would be representative of the group or bringing women knowledgeable of the structure and function of non-profit organizations.

Other internal issues identified by the participants are as follows:

Power relationships between staff and board were considered as an obstacle.

Some members of the board are not very conscious of their role. They are not committed enough to continue moving for the growth of the organization.

Sometimes there are members who run to become members [of the board] but they don't come to the meetings or they don't fully integrate themselves to know the dynamics of the board (...) I see more and more that the organization grows when individuals try to learn, if we care for the organization and for the growth of the organization. I don't see any problem, but other members who put in their names don't even try to learn.

Some power and power struggles sometimes come into place and that's a major weakness I see. On one side we have a unity and a common goal; on the other side there is a power struggle.

Even though the participants expressed that they were bound by a common vision and commitment to immigrant women's issues which has produced "unity" among the members, some of them were cognizant of the presence of power struggles. A paradox is present in the accounts between unity building and respect for diversity. There is a lack of organizational model to deal with cultural differences of the members of the board and staff. While counsellors apply a cultural sensitivity model in their work with clients, the organization has been unable to deal with the differences among the staff and the board.

As one participants indicated;

I think that we need to look at what do we mean by being culturally sensitive and what are some protocols for operating and to be fair and equitable, to communicate openly. I think that we tend to see things from our viewpoint...maybe the power is not so much, that is just one or two people. But we tend to see things from different viewpoints and that's hard

to change. It happens with the broader society and immigrant people, then it is difficult to put yourself in the other persons' shoes and to say what that person really means and how can I respond in a way that wouldn't create or increase the problem or the issue (...) The cross-cultural piece, we practice it with the clients, but we don't practice it internally.

Differences can create barriers as well. However, not all problems should be attributed to cultural differences²⁷,

I think that the other piece is a strong management. We can't manage people and then people may not still feel comfortable. We have to do both, the cross-cultural piece, sort out the cultural elements to get them into a strong management. You cannot have one without the other. I think that we try to have a good management, but the other piece hasn't come in.

The lack of stable and strong management has repeatedly been mentioned as an obstacle to the work of IWAM. Due to lack of paid administrative support (i.e., an executive director), the board had to take over micro-management activities; the relationship between board and staff has been tense. The roles of the members of the board and the staff were not clearly defined. The lack of role definition made people make decisions that proved unhealthy for the organization, such as unilateral decisions, a confrontational approach to problem solving, or venting internal problems or dissenting approaches to management to representatives of funding bodies. This type of behaviour and attitude eroded the morale and trust of each other, including funders. It is worth noting that the time invested by volunteers in management activities to the board also contributed to overwork and burn out.

²⁷ Discussions on how to reconcile in the political practice multicultural diversity within the feminist movement have become an important issue within feminist circles. (see Ackelsberg 1996, Yuval-Davis 1996)

There is another issue that might have repercussions on how high the voices of the members of the board can go when they are involved with other organizations that depend on the funding provided by the government, or if members of the board work for the government.

I think that my feeling is that the organization needs to be more vocal, needs to be more in the public eye, needs to be political, I think that there have been some disadvantages, I think that funding has always been a big issue. Leadership has been a problem in the context that... I think that ...hmmm...my opinion, please understand, because I can be totally wrong... because I wasn't there, so I am qualifying and I don't want to be judgmental of anybody, but may come across that way... I suspect that some individuals who were in the organization also have close relationships with government and in positions where, if they become very vocal, that they wouldn't do well in their careers. I put it in that way, as delicately as I can put it. So if they were out there very vocally saying things might not be the best approach, I think that is not representing the best of the organization.

The implications of dependence on government for immigrant and women's organizations are further explored in the following section.

Financial Arrangements

The state has been the primary source of revenue of IWAM. Different levels of the government (i.e., municipal, provincial and federal) have contributed to the financial sustainability of the association. The main agencies contributing financial resources have been the provincial Department of Family Services, through funding for programs oriented to cater to the needs of women living in abusive relationships, and the Department of Labour through its Citizenship, Settlement and Immigration branch. Another important source of funding has been the Secretary of State, through its

Women's Program and Multiculturalism Program. Occasionally IWAM has received monetary contributions from the city of Winnipeg. Other minor contributions have been collected through provincial government gaming grants. Small amounts of revenue have also come from membership fees, cash and in-kind donations. Although it does not present a tangible amount of income, volunteer work is another important source of support utilized to accomplish the agency's objectives. Volunteer work is largely unrecognized in the financial statements.²⁸ However, by mobilizing numbers of volunteers, non-profit organizations such as IWAM subsidize in large part other programs and activities, including those financed by the government.

The work of IWAM has been shaped by the requirements imposed by the funding arrangements the organization has contracted with the government. However, this relationship also involves a series of personal connections and interactions that make possible the flow of funds. These connections may act as facilitators or restraints for the attainment of successful or desired outcomes.

²⁸ The 1989 IWAM annual report considered "making more use of our volunteers who are willing to help" (1989: 24) as a means of increasing funds, this time in kind. In the early 1990s it was observed that counsellors had to spend a large amount of time facilitating communication between clients and public service providers. The development of the volunteer program was justified on the grounds that the staff suffered from heavy workload. Later, a few of the treasurer reports published on the annual reports recognised the work of the volunteers (in the different areas) as a form of 'in kind' contribution to the organization, but with clear financial purposes. These statements demonstrated the way volunteers have subsidized the finances of the organization. While volunteer work is a substantial resource for the organization's daily activities and might even allow volunteers to gain 'Canadian experience' by increasing their employability, it has the downside of perpetuating "the role of women as unpaid workers and caregivers" (Ruble and Shaw 1991: 146). Further, Rublee and Shaw also perceived that the "overuse of volunteers in social services may make it even more difficult to convince governments that funding and resources are inadequate" (1991: 146). It appears to me that the inclusion of the volunteer work within the treasurer reports aimed to address the value of the unpaid labour received by the organization, and made funders aware of that contribution.

Funding Process and Its Implications

Different financial arrangements have bound IWAM to the different departments of the government. The major relationship has been through a "Purchase Service Agreement" contracted with the Family Violence Prevention Branch of the provincial government. Through that type of contract, IWAM was engaged by the government to deliver some of the direct services on behalf of the state. Through this contract the agency of the provincial government has "purchased" services from the organization. This multi-year contract was renewed on a regular basis. The other departments of the provincial and federal governments (i.e., Citizenship and Multiculturalism Branch of the provincial Labour Department and the federal Secretary of State) have provided financial support on an annual basis to specific short-term programs. In some cases, funding was renewed for the continuation of the same program, in other cases, new project proposals were developed to apply for grants. Lack of stability of financial resources has been an issue of regular formal and informal discussion among the staff and members of board of IWAM. I will address this issue when discussing working conditions below.

Criteria for accessing federal funding through the Secretary of the State were revised in 1998. That year Status of Women Canada revised its criteria for federal funding for eligible initiatives affecting women. These new guidelines have been affecting women's groups everywhere in Canada. Similarly, the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba has been compelled to confront this challenge. The *Women's Program Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Guidelines* (Status of Women 1998a) establishes new administrative constraints, such as new accounting procedures, bureaucratization and professionalization requirements. Since these new guidelines were

implemented programs are no longer funded. Funding can be obtained on the basis of projects, which are usually funded for a period of one year. New proposals have to be submitted year after year for the maintenance of the activities of voluntary organizations.

That same year, the Multiculturalism program of Heritage Canada, a program intended to facilitate initiatives and responses to ethnic, racial, religious and cultural conflict, including removal of barriers to equitable access to services, also moved away from continuous program funding to short-term projects with measurable end-products. As one participant said, “they wanted something more concrete to come out of it”. Those outcomes might determine the possibility for future funding.

The redirection of funds through the renewed program guidelines affects women’s organizations and other non-profit organizations that deal with issues such as the impact of racism in several ways. Among the impacts is that these project-oriented programs involve more administrative and bureaucratic procedures. At the same time, this means more control over the direction of the groups. The fact that the groups will not receive core or long-term funding means that they would have to compete among themselves for their projects to be approved. Furthermore, the projects are intended for short-term financial support, which means a growing anxiety at the end of the period. Non-profit organizations have to develop expertise in preparing proposals, something that might require time and resources. For instance, IWAM received funding from the Secretary of State to cover administrative expenses and to organize activities that were flexible to the needs of immigrant women. “Core funding” promoted financial stability, which enabled IWAM to concentrate on advocating for and reaching out to a group of women who were excluded from existing services. A participant recalled,

First we started having funding and they never questioned, when we started, in twelve years they never questioned what we did with the money. We only reported the activities, the programs that we implemented, which were OK for us to do. But in this last decade or the end of this last decade the funders, especially the federal government want us to focus more on [short-term] projects.

Q: What are the benefits and the shortcomings of these changes?

At first it was hard because the money was not coming precisely on time and this impacted in some way our workers and was stressful for us as board members, but we dealt with it the best we could. One of our workers had to learn to do proposals. That was something that she had to learn.

Once the rules changed the pursuit for funding has become more uncertain and stressful. Financial support to prepare proposals is not covered by the funding bodies and there is no security in the renewal of grants or proposal approval. Volunteer work of paid workers and members of the board is needed to prepare proposals. Sometimes staff and members of the board were able to openly consult with representatives of funding bodies in the preparation of proposals. This procedure has the advantage of advocating for the purpose of the project in a personal and direct way, but it also might present some constraints to the original proposal through acceptance of changes proposed by the officers, which may or may not coincide with the overall goals of the projects. Good personal relationships built through constant verbal communication and visits (e.g., to consult with the workers or to “participate” in public activities such as Annual General Meetings, presentations, celebrations, working groups, etc.) have proved crucial for IWAM’s operations. Problems are created if these personal relationships break down or deteriorate.

The policy based on subsidy for an approved project means periodic and intermittent income and not necessarily long-term funding. Because the agency program financial arrangement has been changed, many of the programs already in existence suffered setbacks. The work of the organization became less responsive and more inflexible to the emerging needs of immigrant women. The alternative seemed to rest on increasing volunteer work or overwork among the staff. This strategy has the potential to produce discontent, uneasiness and discouragement. Furthermore, this model of funding allocation has effects on the investment of expertise and energy on the part of the staff and members of the board. In order to survive, the agency needs to examine at all the alternatives available to support the already existing programs, as well as expanding the services according to clients' new demands and needs. Consequently, other activities at the organization are pushed aside to accommodate these new challenges.

In explaining the financial situation of IWAM, personnel explained to me how funding has been allocated:

On one side we have the counselling area. This is a fixed contract which is renewable every three years. Of course it can be interrupted any time by the funders. There is a security of that signed contract for a period of three years, but if for any situation the funders consider that the service is not accessible or if the service is not provided according to their standards, at any moment they can decide that the service closes. Especially when the end of the contract approaches, nobody knows if it's going to be renewed or if it's going to be discontinued, if there are going to be changes or if not. On the other side, we have other projects. Before, the government used to give money to run programs [core/operational funding]. That is, we used to know that we had this program and for that we used to receive a certain amount of money, which was good. Now in order to practically subsist the organization has to keep writing and presenting proposals, writing small projects. We depend completely on whether the project is approved or not; the money may or may not come. Let's suppose that we submit X project to develop an activity with the community, with the clients, and let's say that we require twenty thousand, thirty thousand

dollars. Maybe they give you the money bit by bit, every three months, or an amount at the beginning and another amount at the middle of the project and another amount when the project has ended. Maybe, some will give you the money at the beginning.

Q: Does that modality affect the administration of the project?

It does create instability because there are personnel who depend on these kinds of projects in order to obtain their salary. When it is a bit unstable it produces tensions, because we don't know if the money is coming, we don't know if I am going to get my salary or the same salary or even if maybe I won't get any more work in here. The projects have to be run according to the money that [funders] give us. But then, the organization has to keep thinking what new project we can present.

What I have noticed with that change [from operational to project funding], which I believe is really absurd, is that sometimes they give money to run a project that is for six months, for which there is not enough time to reach our proposed objectives. Or sometimes we run the project but there are very big limitations when we realize that the project will be successful only if we go a bit further. This presents limitations to us because after a period of three to six months in a project it is practically at the end of the sixth month when you realize if this is working or not.

I consider that the government expends more money in small projects...for instance, they support the development of a research project, we do the research, there is that much money, but after the research is done what do we do? Only if the government approves another amount of money for us to do a second phase of that research, to put that research in practice, that money for the first phase becomes worthwhile to have spent. Very nice the report, but there you have it. I believe that when the government used to give money for programs the results were constant and evident.

They used to say that we have to provide programs. All the little programs that we used to do, like art and public presentations, all these used to come from that funding. Once all these were cut back the board was having problems finding money for staff.

Now the projects have to be time limited, one year, two years, six months, it has to have a beginning and an end. They said no more core funding. Core funding means you get certain amounts of money every year just to keep your office open.

Q: Has this new format affected you?

It hasn't affected me, we have gotten more money. More money has come since the project funding started. More money came because we have good proposals and the only thing is that they are asking you is to be creative, asking about what things you want to do, asking the organization to focus on what the goals are and not doing everything you have to do. We told them what we want to do and they gave that money, the research, the conference. Now we have to come up with another idea of what we are going to do and if we can come up with a two or three year project, we won't have to make it every year to go there.

This worker considers that she has been successful,

Because I have been working in the area for a long time and I know the issues. I am really concerned with the issues affecting immigrant women. And I keep my ears to the ground to understand what are some of the big issues and how we can tackle those and develop a proposal around these issues.

In spite of this optimistic view and success in obtaining financial resources through the new guidelines, not everyone is comfortable with the tensions produced by having to produce proposals year after year:

[The change] has affected us very much because a worker also has the feeling of instability. Sometimes if your heart is being disturbed your brain cannot produce all the things that you have to do.

At first it was hard because the money was not coming precisely on time and this impacted our workers in some way and was stressful for us as board members, but we dealt with it the best we could. One of our workers she had to learn to do proposals, that was something that she had to learn. It was a little difficult and we had to be very careful how to manage the money. And now they are still saying that we have only this amount and we have to see how to allocate it and we always have to explain to them how we did allocate it.

In the last few years, submission of proposals to different programs of the government has been imperative to IWAM's survival. This survival mood makes it

difficult to plan ahead, to assure stable staffing. During my interaction with the organization I have noted the pressure and anxieties surrounding the need for elaborating new funding proposals before the submission date was over.

While IWAM has been struggling with new funding arrangements to support the broader objectives of the organization, the counselling unit has continued to provide its services to immigrant women survivors of domestic violence or women living in abusive situations. Although at the time of the interviews participants were more secure about the stability of this multi-year program, stability did not come without obligations.

IWAM already always is going to get the contract with family services for five years. In that matter there is no need for proposals, but meeting the standards, meeting requirements, filling all the forms, filling all the statistics. That took a lot of time and the board seemed to be always focusing on that: meeting the needs and always having to please the funders. And when I said the funders I say Family Services. The other funders give money and once you give your report that's it.

The production of administrative documents has been an important part of the obligations the contract imposed. The methods used by the government to determine if the dollars were appropriately spent were: statistical reports, audited financial statements, provincial program standards, financial reports and external evaluations. In numerous instances the staff tried to direct attention to the government's preoccupation with reporting the number of clients served and other quantitative information. However, quantitative information says little about these women, whether clients or counsellors. The collection of quantitative data seems to legitimize the service because such data assigns the seal of "truth". The instruments used are intended to measure the effectiveness of the service; however, they cannot evaluate the program as a program intended to

change women's lives. The larger goals of programs dealing with human subjects are usually qualitative rather than quantitative. Although quantitative data such as those showing incidence of domestic violence have led to the development of shelters and legal policies, the inclusion of qualitative criteria will be useful for the assessment of human service programs for women. The results of qualitative evaluations should present a more accurate image of the interventive work. These outcomes might bring systematic data for the development of new programs and/or changes in current procedures. However, many questions can be raised about the aim of the evaluations. The evaluations might be planned to improve the performance of the organization, to measure the effectiveness of the programs, or to "grade" the staff and members of the board. The different actors involved in the organization might have a different view of the evaluations.

It is interesting to notice that informal support is also provided through the association. This informal "service" is not quantifiable and seldom recognized, for instance, the role of volunteers in providing support to clients, or the impact that bringing women together might have in overcoming isolation by extending ties outside the organization. As Jenkins and Sauber (1988) argue, "[s]uch support often takes forms not easily recognizable in terms of standard service delivery categories, yet allows the newcomer to cope with the circumstances faced. Both recognition and appreciation of these informal supports are necessary for an effective liaison between associations and the formal provider system" (1988: 102-103).

Funding bodies are interested in the fulfillment of requirements established in the contract. Sometimes the following of the rules is closely monitored by representatives of

the government. This close involvement in the daily operations of the organization results in limited autonomy of the organization.

When you deal with funders you have to satisfy their requirements, and when you satisfy all those questions they have, there is no problem.

Because the board is the employer, as long that the members of the board agree that we follow the constitution, as long as we perform in a very positive way, never was there a problem with the funders.

There are tensions. But I think that it's a double edge sword because IWAM needs the money. This is the mentality, IWAM sees the funders as people who have to be kept happy because otherwise they might withhold the money. I believe that shouldn't be the case because I think funders are using taxpayers' money, first of all, to fund programs.

I feel very sad sometimes the way that we lift or credit so much the funders. We are doing them a big job. This job is so important that the government should be providing the services to immigrants, they should be thankful that we are doing it. Because this is a job that is needed, it is not that we have made up this thing. We have to look at that.

I think that from my experience on the board, I feel that when the funders approach us they don't give us options. They brought a design for the organization to be applied and if that is not applied they won't give us more money. I felt it that way, I don't know about other people, but [this relationship] is vertical.

However, control is not only exercised through a scrutiny of the extent to which IWAM has delivered the service described in the contract. Personal relationships between IWAM and government staff also shape the funding process. Good personal relationships create trust among the parties, an important characteristic of "partnership" between non-profits and government.

Working Conditions

In the previous sections I have addressed some of the implications of unstable funding for IWAM. Level of salary is another of the indicators of the value assigned to IWAM's work by the sponsor of the programs (i.e., provincial government). Low wages, overwork, overload and unpaid or volunteer work have been common topics of conversations among the personnel and members of the board at IWAM. The reality and perception that staff receive low salaries and that they are underpaid has produced frustration and anxiety, and has raised voices of discontent and prompted action. The participants compared the wages they received with respect to formally and informally trained personnel working in the same area, and indicated the need to acknowledge additional skills such as knowledge of dealing with cultural differences and the asset of speaking other languages. The comparison shed light on the disadvantaged position that IWAM counsellors occupy in relation to outside workers. The Union (CUPE) that has represented the staff used this argument to further investigate the gap. In March 2000 the Union submitted a report to IWAM containing a formal comparison of salaries with other organizations providing similar services.

Participants reflected on the level of salaries:

My opinion is that the communication is not enough. The relationship should be stronger and get more support from the funders, some of funders. And when I say support I am talking about salaries and I am talking about that the funding is very low in relation to other organizations...We have a cross-cultural profile and we have to be paid more than any other; in comparison with other workers from other organizations we have 10 to 15 thousands dollars lower salaries. That doesn't look very good in my eyes.

Q: How would you explain that difference?

There are all kinds of explanations and I am sure that all have different views of this. The funders, if I were a funder I probably think that this is a non-profit organization, there are people that make less than you and you should be happy that you have this. That could be one perspective, from where I am coming, and I am coming from a very strong position of advocator for equality and justice. I found that this is totally overlooked and that even could be understood that this is discrimination. It is a devaluation of the immigrant community that I strongly advocate for and I believe that when I pay taxes we pay equally to anybody else and when we get paid we should get the same treatment. I have very, very strong opinions on this. It hurts. The difference is there, is everywhere and people talk about it and they complain. When we go to meetings colleagues from other agencies complain about their salaries when they are making 40-45 thousand and they feel that they are underpaid, and when we come over here and we are under 30 thousand it's like a slap in your face. I feel hurt, I feel very, very hurt. I have been here for [many years]. I feel that I deserve equal treatment. I went to the same university. I had to take the same exams that everybody had taken. When you study the same books and write the same exams, pay the same taxes and you get this inequality, it makes you wonder, doesn't it?

(...)we are all talking about the same thing, because you start to really see and then feel hurt and our rights not considered as citizens of this country. That's the political piece.

I think that for those who work in here, one of the major obstacles is that we have low salaries and we don't have a benefit package. So, sometimes I feel disadvantaged with respect to other workers in the area of social work. I have a friend who has a bachelor in social work just like me and he makes over 40,000 dollars a year and some more than 30,000 and they say that they are underpaid. And I say, look at me, not even thirty, who is underpaid here?

In spite of the differences in salary and the frustrations related to the lack of recognition that might be gained through earning an appropriate and equitable salary, the personnel is committed to their work.

Actually we, those who work in this organization, observe the difference in salaries between our organization and other organizations providing the same type of services. And when I say other organizations I'm practically talking about Canadian [mainstream] organizations. The difference in salaries between them and us is immense. Staff here are a very committed personnel in providing the services women need and deserve, and when

we provide services we don't see those differences in salaries or benefits between Canadian organizations and us. We see women's needs and we have a responsibility for our clientèle that is looking for services.

We should all be building, looking beyond where we are now. I am here, I am not getting paid well for what I am doing. But you know my satisfaction is that I am doing a good job, and knowing that I am investing in tomorrow and beyond, and when the next person comes here, she won't have to go through my struggles. I am paving the route to make it easier for someone else in the future, and for making it easier for all of us together. We have to stop this, that selfishness.

No matter how different we are, we have a common goal. That common goal is to provide equality for immigrant women and that's a very, very strong strength that we have here and that's very beautiful. We may not know at the time how to express that unity, but we are very, very united. Maybe a few people are a little off, but it doesn't make all of IWAM. That's the major strength and professionalism; when we come to work we provide excellent work. We are working many, many hours, we don't care about the hours. We don't work to get paid. People need the services, that dedication, that determination and the respect that we have for immigrant women in general is a strength. We are very much needed and all the women we work with tell that to us.

If I wouldn't have this job I would do this work for free. It's not a matter of the money that we are getting or not getting, that's not my point here. I pay my bills and I have a roof over my head and have my clothes over my body. I am satisfied, I am content. That's not what I am talking about. I am talking about equality, respect. It's a matter of principles. Just because I am an immigrant woman or we are immigrant women we don't work less than anybody else. If we are going to provide an income let us have a scale for everyone equally. To me it is a matter of principle, it's not the money although I need the money to pay my bills. But for me it is a matter of principle, that's the passion in my heart, to fight for equality. It's a matter of principles and respect for the immigrant community. You don't have to forget that this organization is a model for all the immigrant women in this country, or at least in this province. If you are saying that we don't have to fight for equality, what do you say and do for this woman to fight for equality and self-respect when we are not doing that for ourselves. It's like living in an abusive relationship, do what I say but don't do what I do, and this is a very important piece.

We have to realize that we are doing [the government] a service by providing for them cheaper [services] because they should have this services in a government office and pay the social workers what they are

paying to their employees, not giving them these peanuts to do this job and then...like we are begging them to do the job. We have to understand that we are doing them a favor, not that they are doing us a favor. We are doing the government a favor. We are providing these services cheaper.

Participants see it as a responsibility of the state to ensure that the needs of immigrant women are met. They also see these arrangements as cost effective for the government. In a study of community-based social services in Québec, Shragge (1990) concludes that “state policy attempted to use community-based services as a less expensive option to the expansion of the state sector” (1990:146).

Alternatives to Funding Relationships with Government

Aware of the limitations that government financial sources might impose on any organization, and to reassure financial security, IWAM has tried to expand its sources of revenue. The main step toward that objective was to apply for registration as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act. However, after three attempts in early 1990s the organization has not been successful in its attempts to obtain the status that will allow it to access monies from foundations such as the United Way or the Winnipeg Foundation. In response to the refusal from Revenue Canada, the association worked to reword its purpose and activities. However, the changes were not considered satisfactory. One of the main reasons for the refusal has been the fact that IWAM’s purpose did not benefit an appreciably important class of society, but just immigrant women. Serving immigrant women was considered to provide for a sector of the population that already has special status under the Charter of Rights. Moreover, some of the objectives and activities of the organization were not deemed “charitable”, such as the “advancement of the recognition

of the role of immigrant women in Canadian society”. Since this was one of the main objectives of the organization, this statement was interpreted to reflect the political nature of the organization and of some of the activities. The government does not confer charitable status to organizations that carry out political activities.

In 2000 IWAM started the process of amending its constitution to restrict the scope of its purposes in order to succeed in becoming a registered charity. For some of the participants in my research, this transformation would bring much-needed funds to improve and expand services and programs. Other members have expressed that avoiding a confrontational discourse does not mean a resignation from the consciousness-raising role of the organization. However, for others this change might represent losing sight of the original role of IWAM. The discussion went as far as expanding services of the organization to the ‘immigrant family’ and changing the name of the organization to “Immigrant Family Resource Centre”²⁹.

Financial constraints and limitations to request funds from foundations to expand programming led IWAM to partner with other organizations to plan and deliver programs. During the time of my research, IWAM was successfully delivering an advocate training program in the area of women’s violence with the Sexuality Education

²⁹ The change of name was not only based on financial needs. In spite of their gender-centered service delivery, the participants emphasized the centrality of the family for the clients and in clients’ culture. Because of family conflicts arising from the immigration experience, such as changes in gender roles or intergenerational conflicts due to more ready integration of the offspring, the participants felt the need to expand services to embrace the whole family. The idea of expanding services for immigrant families was discussed and presented to the membership. IWAM’s board went as far as proposing a change in the name of the organization to reflect this need. However, the membership challenged the proposal on a number of premises. The reasons ranged from questioning the readiness to absorb a growing clientèle to the changes that this decision would bring to the identity of the organization.

Resource Centre (SERC). By holding charitable status SERC could access and manage funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation.

By becoming a charitable organization, IWAM might become completely depoliticized, and similar management and monitoring by the government might be imposed. Besides, by not accessing funding sources, IWAM might become increasingly invisible. Sooknanan (2000) outlines some resistance strategies that might be applicable to IWAM, for instance, diversification of funding sources and coordination of projects, interdependence and sharing with other non-profit organizations that can aid in funding allocation. However, after energy-draining months, in particular of volunteer members of the board, and possible lack of credibility from members and outside organizations and the public, IWAM faces a hard road to recovery.

The "Transition Period"

In March 2001 the departments of the provincial government that contracted services from or subsidized programs of IWAM announced that they would no longer support IWAM in the role of providing direct services. There was no prior indication or consultation about this move, including indication of changes that would have been necessary in order to secure the renewal of the contracts during the year 2000. In retrospect, one of the initial signs came two months earlier with the sudden resignation of the executive director. No reason was given to the board for her resignation, but this might have been enough for the funders to consider that they were not able to contract out the organization. Nonetheless, one of the departments responsible for immigration, the Department of Labour, made a commitment to support the organization financially in an

advisory capacity to the government. The representatives of the government, as well as the Ministers of the departments³⁰, encouraged the continuation of the original role of IWAM as broker between the women and service organizations and as advocate, mainly through the development of social policy analysis and research. This proposal was received with doubts by a segment of the membership who considered this move as another intervention of the government that could be detrimental to the autonomy of IWAM. Doubts were expressed about the willingness of the government to fund “advocacy” work when the political character of this work tends to preclude such funding.

Representatives of the funding bodies claimed that there were several indications that these changes might happen. In 1995 there was a program review, followed by an audit in 1996 and the intervention of an acting executive director. Recommendations appear not to have been implemented. Throughout the years, members of the board and staff had contacted the government to present their concern about IWAM’s internal problems. They also indicated that the recommendations presented in a commissioned needs assessment in 1999 had not been successfully implemented. To this series of events, the 2000-2001 board of directors responded that while the government had seconded another executive director and set the responsibilities this person should carry, the review of the early recommendations was not mentioned (some members of the board did not know about their existence). It was also stated that proposals were submitted to address some of the recommendations of the needs assessment. Knowledge and information gathered through research was shared with the public. Members of the board

³⁰ See “Sale Wants to Restructure Association”, *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 26, 2001.

considered that they should not be held responsible for actions taken or not taken by past boards or members of those boards. In addition, approval of the direction taken by the last board during the year 2000 was extended by the representative of the government.

Representatives of the funding bodies participated closely and actively in a “planning committee”³¹ set up to assist the organization to redirect its activities, and in the “immigrant women’s resource centre committee”, established to address the mandate of the membership. Members of the board claimed that the reorganization of services was happening, but that those changes could not be achieved completely in a short period of time.

There are many details in the events that followed, but at this juncture it is more important to ask why the events happened and what lessons they have for IWAM (as well as for the government and other organizations). As already discussed, dependence on the attainment of funding from the government has brought limitations to the organization. Nearly exclusive reliance on funding from the government poses limitations that have not been long debated. Resisting reliance on the state is one of the lessons learned. However, the alternatives might also present obstacles.

After the process through which the government imposed a series of requirements, such as seconding an executive director, including representatives of the government as

³¹ The creation of a ‘planning committee’ that brought together IWAM’s members of the board and representatives of the government was a top-down decision included in the acting executive director contract. The original name of the planning committee was ‘advisory committee’. After discussions on the meaning of an ‘advisory committee’ and the role of the government in the business of the organization, the members of the board decided that in order to create a more equal partnership through this committee the name should be changed to ‘planning committee’. In spite of that, this ‘governmental technology’, as Sookninan (2000) would put it, was imposed to make sure that the governmental intervention through the acting executive director was successful in the eyes of the funders.

members of the “planning committee”, and later on in the “immigrant women’s resource centre committee”, as well as in the selection process of a new executive director, IWAM decided not to get advice from the government representatives on whom to hire as a consultant in assisting the association through the transition period. However, this contract did not come without limitations. The consultant only had three months to solve pending administrative issues and help in guiding the process through a renewed mandate.

While other organizations might be more able or appropriate to provide IWAM’s services, a change of contractor may not come without conflicts. Other organizations had to become prepared to accept the new contract, negotiate for it, and prepare for the implications these changes will bring to their organizations as a whole. In particular, the incorporation of services for immigrant women within “mainstream” organizations which might not have strong organizational policies and commitment to diversity means that changes of their policies becomes a fundamental premise. To avoid disruption of services, the government changed the contractor to the Nor’west Cooperative Community Health Centre, but did not change the staff responsible for counselling and interpretation coordination services. Also the location of the “counselling unit” remained the same.

IWAM helped to identify issues faced by immigrant women, and the government appeared to have expected the organization to address these problems. Such a large task to be accomplished with scarce resources would bring pressure and internal struggles when no follow-up resources were allocated. IWAM’s lack of capacity to tap into other sources of revenues besides the government, and the lack of acknowledgment of the need

for additional resources to address those issues as recommended by the government, have contributed to a relationship of growing mistrust between the two sides.

It is appropriate to conclude this section by borrowing Sooknanan's words. This author, who reflected on her own experience as coordinator of a project funded by a government agency, argues that "[f]or immigrant and visible minority women, state funding and partnerships have left community workers tentative and suspicious of state representatives and state processes" (2000: 77).

Summary

Based on workers and volunteers involved in the management of IWAM, this chapter inquires into the approaches to service delivery and other activities the organization is involved with. Mainly concerned with immigrant women experiencing violence in their intimate relationships, counsellors defined their work as "culturally sensitive". Linguistic matching (through counsellors or interpreters) for allophone clients (i.e., those who do not speak English) is considered a requirement to provide services to immigrants. But this is not enough; checking personal ethnocentric and stereotypic images and assumptions of migrant women coming from same country as the workers or from other parts of the world is a premise to daily work in the organization. Respect for the clients' self-determination, a basic principle of the "empowerment" approach, is one of the chief aspects in the delivery of services. Nonetheless, the work is not done with ease. Workers are confronted with the diverse experiences and needs of immigrant women looking for support and solutions from other social service agencies. Their search is not always successful.

Furthermore, in the last few years IWAM has gone through major changes. The lack of administrative support due to funding shortages, and the struggles to acquire more or at least secure funding to sustain existing programming on a regular basis, has led the staff to characterize the work at IWAM as overloaded, undervalued, low paid (and sometimes unpaid) but necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE

CLIENTS: THE QUEST FOR INTEGRATION AND THE ROLE OF IWAM

Although one of the central programs of the organization is providing one-to-one counseling to women living in intimate abusive relationships or having experienced abuse, not all the clients request that particular service. Counselling immigrant women also involves issues of resettlement or integration into Canadian society, and IWAM refers women to other agencies that deliver specific services related to their individual needs. I have interviewed and interacted with clients who have received different services and activities catered by IWAM. I have also interacted with clients of other agencies that make use of the interpreter or support volunteer pool organized by IWAM. Nonetheless, the majority of the twenty-five interviewees were clients of the organization's "counselling unit". Most of them have participated only in this program and they have conveyed their stories about the services provided by IWAM counsellors. Whereas clients approach IWAM to confront abuse and or consequences of leaving abusive relationships (e.g., divorce, family custody, housing, financial assistance, etc.), many of them also are in need of settlement or integration services (e.g., referral to training for labour force re-entry or to upgrade language proficiency, immigration issues, need for an interpreter to access the health care system, etc.).

The stories of marital or domestic abuse and of settlement and integration difficulties contained in this chapter are those of the clients or consumers of services at IWAM that I have interviewed. Because these interviewees do not represent a proper sample of the whole population, the implications of these stories cannot be generalized to the whole clientèle or participants of other services and activities at IWAM. Further, they should not be understood to represent the population of immigrant women in Canada at large. The opinions and experiences of the participants of this study are their own. Nonetheless, the participants contributed to the understanding of immigrant women's needs and concerns, how these are tackled by the organization, how the programs have affected, and are perceived by, the clients. Therefore, rather than making generalizations my attempt is to illustrate some aspects of the situation of immigrant women in a new society.

As survivors of marital abuse and breakup or transiting through marital conflict, these women were willing to offer their stories in more or less depth to highlight their situation as immigrant women in Canada trying to obtain a better life for themselves and their children. Nevertheless, they have shared other aspects of their experiences as immigrant women, which may shed light on their social condition. Some women thanked me for the interviews and hoped that this would help other women who have been through similar situations. The recollection of stories triggered painful memories and some emotional moments were shared through the interview process. The participants were aware of counselling services of IWAM and had been working with the counsellors on some these issues raised in interviews. However, I am not aware if participants

brought forward new or past issues arising from my interviews with them in subsequent counselling sessions.

Language barriers, and the low level of English language skills of the interviewees, made some encounters challenging. However, in these cases the participants were willing to make extra effort to tell their experiences. In cases where participants spoke English or Spanish fluently the communication captured in more depth the issues of concern to these women. In the case of Spanish-speaking clients, the interviews were conducted using a mixture of English and Spanish.

Many of the clients did not tell me their complete stories. Some of these women seek help from different service providers because of unfortunate circumstances. They do not want to be exposed more than they already are. Some women avoided talking about the specific circumstances that forced them to seek help at IWAM. Their belief that marital abuse is a private issue made the sharing of their experiences more difficult. Margaret Abraham (1999), a scholar studying the abuse of women among South Asian immigrant women, also comments that the perception of marital violence as a private matter, especially among immigrants, limited the access to interview South Asian abused women. The participants preferred to avoid further exposure to shame that may come from talking about certain issues to a stranger like me. On one occasion the participant said that the initial reason was “something from the past”. She preferred to leave those things in the past. Although I volunteered and participated in different activities that involved the clientèle, not all the interviewees had met me before the interview, and I had to reassure them about the confidentiality of our conversation several times during the interview. I performed only one interview with each participant.

The following section presents a number of issues raised by the participants in relation to their struggles to integrate into Canadian society. Although these aspects did not constitute the focus of the interviews, a disclosure of the obstacles and difficulties these women have endured while adjusting to a new social environment does contribute to a better understanding of the immigrant experience. In many cases these difficulties are the reasons for seeking services of immigrant organizations or programs for immigrants. Other sections address clients' relationship with IWAM and other service providers.

The Implications of Immigration

The following are some of the most salient issues that women shared in their interviews concerning their experiences and situations as immigrants in Canada.

Language

Of the twenty-five clients that participated in the interviews, all but one had a mother tongue other than English. With five exceptions, all these women had little or no contact with the English language previous to their arrival in Canada. In those five cases, the women came from countries where the cultural and social impacts of the British or Americans were strongly felt as an outcome of a long history of colonization. These women had received some formal education in English. Two of them had completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in English. The languages spoken by the other participants were Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog, Tigrinia, Amharic, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Hindi or Punjabi.

The lack of proficiency in English is a major obstacle to the adaptation of the participants to Manitoba. Language difficulties are still a constraint even when women had participated in some form of language training, usually sponsored by the government. After several years in the country, most of these women continued to struggle with English. Most of the women considered that their English was “not good” or that their English accent was not “perfect”. Except for the women coming from countries where English has become a central aspect of daily life, all the other women had obtained only a very basic, non-specialized English training in their home countries or in Canada. The time spent in ESL courses in Canada has been very short. Most of the women attended language classes at the time of arrival. However, they had often withdrawn from the courses due to the need to enter into the labour market. Social and economic pressure to sustain their families, in Canada and sometimes abroad, prevented many women from attending language classes upon their arrival. In some cases, the need to stay at home while their children were growing up, because of the lack of affordable childcare, kept them too busy to attend English classes. Few of these women actually regained access to ESL.

With respect to the types of courses, most of the women who participated in language courses have done so on a part-time and or short-term basis. They attended part-time English courses for specific purposes. One of the participants attended a course on “English for Academic Purposes”, with a training allowance, so as to gain appropriate language skills for university studies. “English for health care aides” has been a popular course among the participants. It is intended to assist in employment preparation and improve employability in areas related to health care.

The participants had positive experiences in learning English. However basic, these courses helped women to contact other people and to learn rudimentary language skills.

I was going to school [English classes], that made me feel a little bit better.

School helps that one gets out of the stress. One goes and communicates with other people. There are people with different languages and the only language for communicating with them is English.

IWAM helped me a lot, because in those days I was pregnant. I needed to learn English and I could not go to classes because my stomach was very big. They had this English program for immigrant women with children and seniors... They used to come to pick me up and take me home. To me that was great because I learned the language and, in addition, I met other people that were in the same situation I was. We made friendships.

However, some of the participants noted an inadequacy in the type of courses they attended. Several participants reported low levels of literacy in their own mother tongue. The lack of basic learning tools impedes them in the learning of a second language. One of the participants was perplexed by the amount of handouts the teacher provided to the class. She also talked about the terminology used in class as inappropriate: "the teacher tells me to write this [sentence] in negative. Negative? What is negative?" For immigrants with little formal education some programs might be too academic for their specific needs. The opposite might also be true.

Except for the English speakers or those who have participated in educational systems largely in English, the rest expressed a desire to improve their language skills. They were motivated by the desire to broaden their employment opportunities. Language was recognized as an important tool for adaptation and integration.

I need English. If I speak English very well I can do anything. If I study and understand I can go anywhere. I wouldn't need any translator. I wouldn't need help, I would do it by myself. If I don't speak English I can't do anything. I would need help, help always. If I had English I would do it by myself.

Lack of subsidies for attending language acquisition courses prevents these women from moving beyond their minimal language level. Women also lacked knowledge of available language training that might be suitable to their situation.

On three occasions, I was asked for tutorial assistance in English. Two of the participants needed some help with school assignments and the other woman needed someone to help her improve her conversational English. I recommended they talk to their counsellors about this particular need. I also suggested they talk to the outreach and volunteer coordinator of IWAM, who coordinates an English tutorial program that the organization runs with volunteers.

Even when immigrant women have learned English, many are unable to understand complex legal situations, or cope with highly stressful circumstances in a second language. A participant said,

My English is not enough and [my husband] was doing so many things to me. I didn't want to talk to him, I didn't want to fight with anybody. My English is not enough, I was crying and I couldn't do nothing.

The research also demonstrated that even after several years in Canada, many immigrant women lack the language skills to communicate even basic problems in English. One of the reasons immigrant women access organizations such as IWAM is directly related to their need for interpreters.

Work Life

A major preoccupation of the participants was economics. At the time of the interview, 12 out of 25 participants were unemployed and receiving Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). Many of these women were attending employment or language training. A number of women on EIA are taking some short courses such as “English for health care aides” in order to get into that industry. One of the participants had been accepted into a university program. Eight women were holding full-time jobs outside their home. The remaining five women were receiving financial support from their husbands or other family members. Two of the women supported by their husbands were studying to re-enter the labour market in the areas of social work and health care. Of the eight women employed full-time, three were working in the health care industry, one in the food industry, two in cleaning or janitorial jobs and two in the garment manufacturing industry.

The work experience trajectories of the participants reveal that women had worked before coming to Canada, and since they arrived. While at times some participants had to temporarily leave the work force because of their responsibilities at home, lack of support from family members or the lack of opportunities in the Canadian labour market, other participants had to enter the labour force to contribute to the household income. Employed or not, these women shared stories with me about their education or the lack of it, their work experience in their countries of origin, and about their unmet expectations once they arrived in Canada.

In many cases, once in Canada the women interviewed were not able to pursue their own careers because they “needed to study again”, “needed to start all over again”,

“needed Canadian work experience”, “I needed to go back to the University”. Other participants explained: “I am a doctor, but in Canada I am zero. It costs me a lot of frustration”, and another summarized the experience of immigrants in the two ends of the social spectrum as: “Someone said to me that this country is the paradise of the working class and the hell of the professionals. That is because here a professional has to start all over again”. Therefore, these women face barriers in transferring their occupational skills in the new society. Just like the formally untrained women, these career women had to join the Canadian labour force in dead-end, low skills jobs, which are undervalued and poorly paid.

Most of the participants did not have the ability to communicate in one of the official languages when they arrived, and they acknowledged that this was the major obstacle to better job opportunities.

Work without English is very hard, just cleaning!

I knew that as an immigrant woman I had to be very good to be hired and I had to be better than the other people, the other people who don't have the diploma, but are Canadian born and speak good language.

Discrimination in the workplace was also stated as another deterrent in accessing employment.

I think that they believe that because you come from certain countries and because you don't know English, here they think that you are ignorant. Sometimes, you can even have more knowledge.

You know that here we have to confront racism and discrimination. The discrimination [in my area of work] is somehow hidden. They won't say to you, but are not a dummy. You realize that very soon. Because you are not white they don't give the job. Sometimes it is not the language as much, but the skin color. Because I see white immigrants and these people get the job, good positions. I have been here for ten years. I have been looking for

work and nothing. How can you explain that? Pure discrimination, but they don't show you that in your face.

Most of the accounts the participants give of their work experiences document a variety of problems faced in the workplace, such as the lack of choice, long and underpaid hours, exploitation and discrimination. On the other hand, they were willing to be employed in any type of occupation in order to survive.

At that time, I was very depressed because of all the difficulties. They didn't know about all I had been through and I had no interest to work there. I knew that I had to do it, but I had no interest in this job, I didn't have any choice. I didn't have a choice to be a nurse here and then I didn't have trust to go back [to my country] because of my kids, I wanted to be here for my kids and I wanted a better future.

In order to overcome these problems, some of the participants decided to upgrade the skills they already had or to learn entirely new skills. However, some of the women spoke about the barriers to upgrading their skills such as not qualifying for specific training programs because they were not Employment Insurance beneficiaries or welfare recipients or because the studies leading to careers that might pay well in the future were exceedingly expensive. One of the participants considered that she was too old to acquire Canadian credentials because the process was lengthy.

In spite of the need for well-paid employment, few of the participants have held long-term secure and rewarding jobs. Most of those who did are involved in the health care system. This phenomenon is not lived without ambivalence. Although hired in the same field, Nadia felt that her employers failed to recognize all her expertise because she did not have "Canadian experience". "They hired me because I was a nurse for twelve years before coming to Canada, but they just hired me as health care aide". After

expensive retraining as health care aide and having to settle for underemployment, Nadia said, "Today I am happy that I did it".

The different situations the participants confront through their work experiences might be in part explained by their stage in the life cycle. For instance, for single mothers with young children and without appropriate training and language skills the possibilities offered by the labour market are limited. Childcare responsibilities and holding a low paid job are incompatible for women in this situation. Low salaries, lack of child support payments and lack of childcare services impedes these women's entry into the labour force and perpetuates their dependence on the social assistance program offered by the state. Dependency on social assistance is not lived without shame by these women. One of the participants acknowledged that she would accept any type of job to avoid using social assistance. Another woman commented on the strategies she used when asked about economic support of her family in order to avoid being ostracized for being a welfare recipient.

When people ask me at school what my husband does I don't want to tell them that I am divorced and that I am on welfare. I make up a place where my husband works and that's it...I don't want people to know.

For another participant who has never been a recipient of income assistance, "welfare" is understood as offensive:

I didn't want to go on social assistance because I couldn't understand how many people abuse that system and I feel bad and I didn't want to use that system. I was raised that way, you have to make your own life. That's why I didn't take it.

However, for recipients of social assistance, this is an opportunity for upgrading their language skills. They expect to enter the labour force with the possibility to earn better salaries.

In sum, language proficiency is related to employment opportunities. The need for immediate entry into the labour market at the unskilled level acts as a negative force that reduces the opportunities for second language acquisition and increases the attrition of ESL students. The labour market dictates the level of language proficiency required for different types of work. The labour market in which many of these women may be readily accepted requires minimal second language oral skills. For unskilled non-English speaking immigrant women the incentive for improving their language skills is minimal in absence of financial support.

In addition to language problems, women expressed their lack of understanding of how the labour market works. They do not know about the protocols and requirements to obtain a job-related interview or how to answer questions on a job application form, and other job searching techniques. Certain terminology, such as having to develop a “portfolio” or a “resumé”, are foreign to their understanding.

I didn't know about resumes, because that doesn't exist in my country, what a cover letter is and how to write one... That stuff that I needed for life, for survival. I don't know anything about it.

I don't know if I can get [the job] because they say that it is a poorly filled application here and they don't call you, they throw it in the garbage.

In sum, these immigrant women have difficulties in deciphering the unwritten rules of the Canadian labour market. For instance, the economic importance of marketing themselves is not completely understood by immigrant women. Some women believed

that because of their qualifications and work experience they could obtain employment upon arrival in Canada. However, their credentials are in many cases not legally valid in the new country and employers expect immigrants to have previous “Canadian experience” before they consider hiring them. A woman who held a certificate and years of experience as a technician in the health care area said, “they should recognize what we bring. They should give immigrants the benefit of the doubt”.

Some of these women have sought the assistance from agencies that provide services to women or immigrants to operate in the Canadian labour market. These women experienced a wide range of situations in their encounter with these organizations. In general, their training experiences were positive. However, the one-to-one contact with the employment counsellors was not always positive. Some women would like IWAM to become more involved in job search programs. I address the experiences of the participants with other non-profit organizations and other institutions in another section of this chapter.

Relations at Home

The participants commented on other aspects of life that are of relevance to their adaptation process into Canadian society. In spite of the differences between these women, most of them spoke about their situation in relation to their families in the immigrant context. Family connection and interdependence is highly valued. The absence of members of their families, close relatives and extended family was reported as one of the factors affecting adjustment. Family provides emotional and instrumental support to women.

If she [a woman] does not have access to money for baby sitter she can't [study]... I had to go there [English classes], I had not family to ask for, I didn't have friends. And then, when I started to make friends I wasn't comfortable to leave the children and ask because the friendship was different than the friendship back home. If you are a mother and you have to leave, I think children tie you, it is like you are restricted if you don't have the resources.

What I needed was my family.

One feels isolated, lonely. One feels that there is no family here.

On the one hand, family ties promote social security. On the other hand, family relationships also promote social control. Women commented on the transformation of gender roles precipitated by the migratory process. Women, and for that matter men, are caught in conflicts between different cultures, viewpoints and practices. Because a large number of the participants have required counselling from IWAM on family violence related issues, abuse in its different forms constituted an important topic of the interview.

One dimension of abuse women experienced is deprivation of money or lack of control over it. This form of abuse was a reality for housebound women, but also for working women. Men left women without access to money or without control over their own wages.

Everyday [my daughter and I] didn't have money to go for groceries, to talk on the phone ...even when I phoned [to my country] I had to pay [my husband] because I didn't want to listen to his complaints...

He said to me that I should give him the money for the bills and I said to him, "I don't have money to give you for the bills because today is not pay day, pay day is on Thursday". He started to yell and yell and he was out of control and I just went to get the garbage to take it outside and he was frying some chicken and he said to me "Aren't you going to give the money?" And I said, "I have no money unless you want me to go and rob the bank". He came up to me with a fork on his hand, I thought that he was to stab me with the fork and he stick his finger like this in the tip of my

nose and I couldn't back away". ... He said to me "Don't use the water in the house and don't use the light." For that whole week I never take a bath, I never use the light. For Christmas my friend gave me a little basket and in that basket there was a candle, a big candle that was the candle. I used it at night or in the morning to see if I am putting on my clothes inside out. When I went to work I kept water from work in a bottle I take it home with me. That's the water I used in the morning to brush my teeth, to wet my towel and I just clean myself and I go to work.

In abusive relationships the lack of English proficiency is used by men to exert more control over their partners.

He is not happy, he wants to kill me sometimes. He knows that he has power...if I go anywhere he calls the police, because he knows that my English is not enough. He knows that I don't have family, I don't speak English. He has power. He has done many, many things to me.

He didn't want me to know English because if I knew English I could talk to other people, know more about life here.

The maneuvers or power tactics utilized by women's husbands, and at times by other family members to restrain women, have fostered isolation and abuse. For instance, immigrant women are restrained from revealing their abusive situations due to the belief that their legal status of "sponsored" by their husbands might affect their residence in the country. Fear of deportation, not only of themselves, but also of their partners and other family members, forces women to stay in an abusive relationship³².

³² On one occasion, I was at the offices of the organization and there was a need to answer to a phone call from a Spanish-speaking woman. Since the Spanish-speaking counsellor was not present at that time, I was asked to take the call. The woman was fearful of being listened to by her husband and wanted to arrange a way to see a counsellor. She revealed a lack of knowledge of how to move around the city (i.e., lack of knowledge about the public transportation system) and the difficulty of leaving home to visit the organization since her husband is in the house during daytime hours. She also disclosed that she did not want to have other institutions and people, such as the police, involved in her situation due to a fear of deportation. However, she was looking for a way out of the abuse and confinement. Before she could reveal a place where a possible encounter with the counsellor was arranged she hung up. Her husband was coming through the door.

Although already a Canadian citizen, one of the participants did not know that the threats of her relatives of deporting her back to her country of origin were empty. Fearful of being deported she spent a number of years in abusive relationships. Once she realized that in her case her sponsor was not able to deport her, she regained control over her situation. By claiming authority to deport their wives or sponsored relatives, the sponsors, usually males, exercise power and contribute to perpetuate a dominant role within the relationship. Lack of knowledge of the legal issues concerning their immigrant status and lack of orientation to the adequate human services keep women in state of fear and dependency.

Immigration can be a stressful situation. For refugee claimants the incertitude of their status may contribute to increased antagonism in family relationships,

Sometimes you think if they don't accept us in this country, what we should do? We have to go. And from there everything becomes more complicated and then you start fighting with the person that is beside you! Then, you realize that here in Canada you don't have to keep up with that!

It seems that although the stress is put on both men and women, men are more likely to use violence in order to deal with the situation. It takes time for the women to realize that violence is not tolerated in Canada. The participants recalled that in their countries of origin abuse and domestic violence are usual and do not compel women to leave a relationship. Although sometimes the police may be involved, women are not protected. It is expected that women should stay in the relationship. Domestic violence might not be a criminal offense in the countries women come from. Legislation on domestic violence is a recent phenomenon. Only 44 countries have adopted specific legislation to address domestic violence (Innocenti Research Centre 2000).

The women interviewed talked about their struggles to please their husbands and their families and to find a place for themselves. Although these immigrant women are different from each other some of the issues they confront are repeated through the different women's stories. Cultural and social expectations place human relationships into structured roles and hierarchies, where members of a family are expected to conform to their specified role in order to sustain family balance according to the patterns of their country of origin.

Margaret, who came to Canada as the result of an arranged marriage, expected to marry into a more liberated relationship and become able to pursue personal aspirations.

I come from an open family. They allowed me to work; they allowed me to study. I thought that because I would marry an educated person who has been living for so many years in Canada, someone modern, I would have a good life. What happened was the opposite. My husband didn't allow me to have friends, he said to me 'you can't study' 'you can't work'. I had to stay at home and just do the housework.

Although sharing the same ethnic and national background, Margaret and another participant were surprised that after years of living in Canada their partners and their families would not have changed some cultural practices and beliefs. Their respective husband's families migrated to Canada decades ago. Nonetheless, "they still think that in [my country] things haven't changed". These participants recognized that when certain practices such as dowry or arranged marriages have not changed, other practices such as having increased access to acquire higher education, becoming professionals and exercising their own careers have allowed the position of women to change over time. For instance, these two women have completed studies that are considered non-traditional for women in their home countries and possibly in Canada, and they expected to have

independent careers. In Canada, the agenda of cultural preservation is pursued by migrant families, while the counterparts living in other parts of the world are becoming increasingly influenced by Western culture. The lack of awareness or recognition of social and cultural changes intensifies the dilemmas within newly formed couples, between transnational families and in the future life of women who end up ostracized from their own original society and from their local counterparts.

After separation these women did not have the choice to return to their country since it would have meant shame, loss of family honor, and consequent social ostracism for them and their families. "I was sick of the way women are seen in my country. Divorced women are not considered to be good." These participants believe that in Canada divorced women or single mothers are socially accepted. "Here in Canada nobody knows me. I can be free".

In a comparison of the situation of women in her country of origin and in Canada, Kim claimed,

In [my country] women used to stay at home and take care of the children and the husband. In Canada, women and men go to work. At home the man doesn't help. He sits on the couch, in front of the TV and the woman has to do all the work, cook and clean and take care of the children. At night the man goes out with his friends and he comes back at midnight. All this results in problems at home. Women can't take that anymore.

In some cases the participants claimed that their husband did not support them in exploring their own opportunities in the new country. Most of the women were socialized to work outside the home in their own countries of origin. In fact, they had participated in the labour force before coming into Canada. However, once in Canada their husbands prevented them from pursuing a career or joining the labour force. Their husbands did not

support them to study or work in order to prevent these women from being changed by Canadian society and losing good moral values³³. These women have spent many of their first years in Canada taking care of their children and doing homework.

A participant who spent the last ten years of her life at home taking care of the house and children claimed,

I was tired of always doing the same thing and the children are grown ups now. That has brought a lot of conflicts at home. [Men] don't understand that one has her own head and that one would like to do a variety of things, to achieve some objectives, that one has her own plans. One is not going to act improperly! To a Latina, parents teach since she is very little how to act, one more or less knows. Men believe that one is going to do things that one shouldn't do!

About her future plans the participant said:

He doesn't like that. Before I was all the time at home and he asked me why should I go now to work outside the house. Now I am going to be a bit more independent. Men do not want that one knows more than they do because they feel bad about that. But, I don't see any problem. One gives them the authority anyway, they are the masculine figure, and the man always is going to the man. He is the man of the house.

She goes on to say:

He is bothered by [my plans]. He does not support my plans. He says that if I want to do I have to do by myself.

As for the financial support for achieving her goals she is counting with financial support of the government through student loans since her husband does not provide her

³³ I have held many informal conversations with immigrant women about the images they, and in particular their male counterpart, hold of 'Canadian women'. Many women expressed that their partners did not want them to become 'Canadian' which meant to become 'loose'. Abraham argues that South Asian men assume that they must control their women's sexuality in what they perceive as a sexually permissive culture (1999). At the same time, a growing number of immigrant women are contracting marriage to Canadian males. This tendency sheds light on the perception national males have of foreign women (Philippine Women Centre of British Columbia 2000).

with that needed assistance. This woman has decided to change her own position at the cost of possible family conflicts.

This woman raised a few questions concerning the role of women within her society and culture. Femininity in Latin American culture is constructed in terms of inferiority, dependency and submissiveness to men, holding honorable moral values, and self-sacrificing by resisting personal fulfillment. Many women face cultural constraints based on gender role prescriptions to the extent that they are prevented from participating actively in many social activities such as work or education. In addition, there have been material conditions that prevented their participation, "I was at home because we decided that it would be cheaper since I didn't have skills to get a good paid job. It would be cheaper just to stay home. So, I was at home, basically".

However, the participants have developed strategies to confront and overcome these constraints. For instance, a few financially dependent women who were determined to upgrade their education challenged their husbands' financial control by seeking loans to pay for their studies. A participant explained:

I didn't have the resources because my husband wouldn't provide me any money to pay a baby-sitter to go and develop myself, for taking courses. Then I had to stay at home hundred percent. Then, when the kids started to go to school, I started to use the time when I wasn't working at home, I was taking a course and I started to plan things around that time. However, I was limited because my husband never provided, even at lunch time I had to be at home because he didn't want to pay the lunch program.

The stories of these women illustrate the fact that like other types of families, immigrant families are changeable institutions where individuals constantly negotiate their position. In many cases, conflicts arising from the discrepancies between what

women should do and what they want to do precipitated the connection with IWAM. In other cases the conflicts and abuse were solved through separation or divorce before coming to the organization.

Isolation

A common thread of women's experiences is isolation. In the cases of abused women, isolation contributes to the perpetuation of abuse. Among the factors related to the isolation of abused women were the lack of friends and relatives, the lack of financial and material resources, the lack of language skills that disempower women for seeking assistance and relating to society in general, the belief that abuse is a private matter, the belief that "sponsorship" will be dropped if women reveal their abusive situations, and the fear of deportation. It is also the case that women are isolated from society due to lack of knowledge of the Canadian legal system.

Sometimes women explained that they had been able to make "friends". However, they had reservations about what to confide or not to these "friends". "One couldn't say that I had made friends. I have gotten to know people, who at their own time they have been kind to me"; "friendship has been different than the friendship back home (...) I was kind of isolated, at home with the kids. So, I tried to make friends with people, I tried to learn as much. But, I wasn't working, so I was lonely."

[When my children were growing up] I didn't have a lot of friends. There is not much time. I was too busy with the children; it was like working in a daycare. Nobody helped me.

It is hard to make friends in here... In here, I think that we are very busy, everybody is working, and then go home. There are a lot of people with

different backgrounds, different cultures, different religions. I think these are the things that are holding us.

These women had not been able to expand their social networks. In her study of Somali migrants to Winnipeg Nancy Buchanan reflected on the role that women's groups had in improving the situation of immigrant and refugee women. Women's groups could become a place for the Somali women in Winnipeg to gather and share their adaptation problems. Buchanan recommends that this is important to help alleviate some of the stress and feelings of isolation that women experience. She also supports an approach where women's issues be considered as society's issues (Buchanan 1996: 126). Her recommendations go further to include IWAM as a potential place to create a support group for Somali women, as well as to develop preventative programs and enhance links between service providers (Buchanan 1996: 130-131).

Seeking Services from IWAM

At IWAM, issues which concern adaptation and adjustment into the new society are addressed in the one-on-one or group sessions with the counsellors, in any casual conversation with women and in different workshops or conferences organized by the group. However, a major reason for requiring services from the organization has been the experience of abuse suffered by clients within their intimate relationships. Stories of abuse went from undisclosed or partially disclosed to underplayed to disclosed in detail. Although the particularities of the intimate relationships of the clients were expurgated from this account, the stories illustrate the type of services these women required and their needs beyond those services. They disclosed stories on violence or the exercise of

power of one spouse (usually the man) or in-laws over the other (usually the woman). In some cases, women had to confront the additional challenges of accommodating to international marriages with Canadian-born or immigrant men without much previous knowledge of their counterparts. Other cases concern the abuse perpetrated against elderly immigrant women by their husbands, their adult children and other family members. These women are particularly susceptible to the family members' attempts to intimidate them by threatening to withdraw their sponsorship.

Most of the participant clients did not know about IWAM for many years after their arrival. Some of them expressed regret for their lack of knowledge of the services. "If I'd have gotten to know this organization when I just came to Canada ... I wouldn't have to go through that time when I didn't know what to do, that I didn't have any help"; "I am sorry that I didn't know [about IWAM] before". Many of these women had lived in abusive situations in the silence of their homes. It was after years, even decades of violence, after divorce, police intervention or sudden realization of their situation that they sought the support the organization offered. In most cases, women had been referred to IWAM by friends or acquaintances. Only in a few cases had they accessed IWAM through other human service providers (i.e., immigrant and generic organizations). Two of the interviewees approached IWAM shortly after they attended a presentation by a counsellor at a school or at a neighborhood meeting in their apartment block. "If [the counsellor] wouldn't have organized that meeting and told us the types of help that they offer, I wouldn't have known and I haven't heard of other similar meetings". It can be argued that the lack of knowledge of resources available, including the existence of

agencies of and for immigrants, is the product and at the same time the cause of a reinforcement of isolation.

The majority of the participants in this study were separated or divorced at the time they approached the organization. They were seeking assistance for dealing with the consequences of their separations. The women who were married were seeking counselling to deal with conflicts arising within their marriages or orientation to other human service organizations and programs for immigrants.

Services obtained from IWAM

All the issues previously discussed were identified by the participants as the most salient aspects of the integration process to Canadian society. Although IWAM is not mandated to directly address certain needs such as employment, these questions are addressed at the level of the organization. IWAM provides referral services to other organizations.

Gaining knowledge of resources

IWAM provides instrumental assistance for immigrant women. The organization orients women to access other services and resources that they might need. A crucial role of the organization is to provide information and referral to respond to the specific needs of clients. Women reported that through IWAM they learned about legal services, shelter, public housing, income assistance and so forth. In many cases, the counsellors helped these women to complete application forms. Amelia identified some of the ways in which IWAM is able to help immigrant women:

The counsellor helped in everything. Counselling covers everything: emotional support, if you need money they tell you what you have to do to get financial support and other resources that are out there in the community, such as the police, how to get a restraining order and things like that. All these things you don't know about. And in turbulent times it is more difficult to get to know about the resources available for your children and yourself. They helped me a lot to solve my problem.

Amelia went further to explain that her participation in the organization has helped her to gain knowledge of Canadian society. She also gained assertiveness through learning about the Canadian social system.

The fact that they give me counselling helped me to understand how things are here in Canada. Then I positioned myself, I told [my husband] "this is wrong, you have to change". That gave me certitude. That helped me to be sure where I was standing, that what I was thinking was right, that I wasn't wrong. That gave me the security that if he left me I wasn't to be hungry, I knew what kinds of resources were available. I told him, "if you don't change your behaviour, the way you treat me, I won't allow that you stay here".

I have learned that if you have a problem that you don't know how to solve and you don't know how to look for the right resources that are out there; you need a place, a person you trust to get that step to go for yourself, to help yourself. You need that. And if you don't count on that, you can't... I don't know what would have happened to me, but I probably wouldn't have been strong enough to go and fight, and go throughout the whole court process, and I probably would have let my husband do whatever he wanted, because I didn't know how to fight. I believe that in many situations if you don't know how to go about, you need someone to point out the resources in the community.

However, for one of the participants, the disclosure of all the available resources was not enough to satisfy her.

They just told me, if you leave your house these are the things that you are going to need. You are not going to contact your husband and they tried to explain me few other things. But counselling, like marriage counselling, what is related to the couple or on how to treat the problem directly... was not there.

Q: What did you expect?

That they counsel you in more depth. That they make you see the future that one is going to have after the separation.

Besides gaining knowledge of resources available for abused women this participant expected counselling on how to deal with the future of her family.

Individual Case Advocacy

Intercessions by the counsellor facilitate women's contacts with mainstream services such as social assistance or the justice system. Welfare workers are more attentive when the client is referred by the organization and has an advocate. For instance, one participant remembered that one day she received a letter from "welfare", but she did not understand what the letter said. The counsellor was on holidays. When the counsellor returned from holidays she got an appointment, and they realized that she was being cut off from government assistance. The participant recalled the counsellor obtaining a quick appointment with a worker from Income and Employment and her situation got resolved. She also recalled that workers from "welfare" were surprised that she had already gotten an appointment bypassing some previous steps for accessing the system. She was pleased that the counsellor was able to help her with that. Otherwise she would have been unable to pay her rent.

Bridging the Language Barrier

Language is critical for communicating their problems with the counsellors. For those non-English speaking participants, the services were considered more appropriate

since they could speak the same language as their counsellors. Not all the participants had that opportunity; however, they felt that they could speak enough English to be understood.

The fact that you can talk about your problem in particular when you have problems with the language, that gives you the security that they understand you and also allows you to think better about what you can do in your situation.

It is not so hard to me now that I speak English but still I feel more comfortable if I can express myself in my language. Although some people laugh at me because sometimes I get the information wrong.

Sonia goes further to explain her difficulties in expressing herself in another language.

When I came here and I talked about being a mother who loved her kids, it was that I didn't have to explain, because it's the same culture. They knew when I was talking about my feelings that I was scared to lose my kids. I didn't have to use words that I didn't know, if I needed a word that I didn't know in English, I always could use my Portuguese word and she would know. But, besides the words, it's not even the words. The words are an issue when you don't have the right words to express your feelings. This is a big issue. But, the biggest issue was to transmit that feeling and because the culture is the same when I talked about motherhood is like it was an understanding she [the counsellor] had.

The counsellors' knowledge of her mother tongue helped the participant to bridge the nuances of culture manifested in the particularities of the native language. These nuances and the deep feelings the clients tried to convey are considered to be understood when the service provider speaks the same language.

Although most of the participants talked about their relationship with their counsellors and the importance of expressing themselves in their own language, some of them have occasionally required interpretation (oral translation) services to deal with

other service providers. The counsellors themselves and volunteers are expected to provide for that need. However, for Yolanda, the lack of ability on the part of the organization to obtain an interpreter to deal with the legalities of her divorce upset her. She noted that the need for an interpreter was one of her main concerns when she approached the organization. She felt that she was not able to actively participate in the divorce arrangements due to lack of proficiency in English and the lack of interpretation.

Another participant expressed her views on the interpretation program. This participant has volunteered her time and skills interpreting for other clients.

The only thing that I didn't like very much is that you spend a lot of time volunteering and I believe that we should get paid. They are not utilizing the resources available. For instance, I have interpreted in the court and I believe that they give you some money and to me they never give me anything...I see that they are not offering me the things that are already available. I don't know what their situation is but...because I have been in some workshops and all those who interpret have the right to get paid and they are not taking advantage of that. [These resources] are there and obtaining them won't affect IWAM in any way. I believe that this economic support might be available for volunteers. I volunteer from the bottom of my heart to help other women, help them from the viewpoint of our cultures. But if that support is there...

IWAM secures accessibility to services for non-English speakers women. Accessibility to many mainstream institutions would not be possible without the assistance of immigrant organizations or through informal systems of assistance (e.g., family relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc.). Therefore, universal and sometimes appropriate access to services is not always guaranteed³⁴. One of the participants requesting services from social welfare was asked to get an interpreter. "The [welfare]

³⁴ It has been argued that an important aspect of equitable access to human services is the availability of trained interpreters (Bowen 1993; Bowen and Kaufert 2000).

counsellor told me to look for someone to help me and I phoned the International Center and they asked me “how long have you been in Canada?” and I said: “10 years”. “Oh, ten years!” “They cannot help you anymore for free, I had to pay money”. The situation of this woman in accessing social services grants an example of a new modality (i.e., fee for service) to providing interpretation services implemented by the International Centre³⁵. For low-income people this is not an option. To some extent, IWAM has been filling in the gaps the implementation of this system has produced. That is, besides providing interpretation for their own clients, IWAM provides volunteer interpreters to other service providers.

Role of Immigrant Counsellor

In addition to the need for linguistic match the participants also talked about the closeness that sharing the same “cultural background” or migratory experiences with the counsellor brings to the success of the counselling process.

When I came here it was like they see the big picture, they look at your cultural background, they look at what you do inside this culture. They see the big picture. That’s what I thought, that’s why it worked for me here. That’s why it helped me because I could see that [the counsellor] really understood what I was talking about. I don’t think that anybody could help me, even if it was a good program, if they couldn’t understand me not just because of the language, but the situation, my feelings, everything what was involved.

When you deal with a counsellor who’s an immigrant herself, she knows what you are talking about. Even if the country is not the same and the

³⁵ The introduction of fee for service models to support the shortage of funding for certain programs has been one of the strategies that many immigrant organizations have implemented. (Whittleton 1999). I argue that although this modality might help to achieve the objective of providing revenues to underfunded or unfunded programs, this model also prevents low-income immigrants from access to services.

culture is not the same, she knows what you are talking about. Even if her experiences are a little different, her language is different, but she knows what you are talking about. She knows what you have gone through, the problems in a different country, because usually she had her own experiences to tell her what you are going through.

The fact that you have the experience [of being an immigrant] qualifies you to help other people who are going through that same situation.

When I came here, [to IWAM] I realized right away, they come from another country too, they may have had similar experiences too. They know exactly what you are dealing with and you know that they deal in a different way than the Canadian do, they think in a different way.

[In here] I feel emotional support, understanding, and it helped with their advice. I guess it is very important for people from another country because they perfectly relate to what people go through when they come to a strange country. It is very stressful. And without help it is impossible.

The participants spoke of the importance of counsellors but regularly mentioned their preference for immigrant counsellors. They felt that this was important, as the counsellor would be familiar with and sensitive to their problems. They might also be valued for sharing the same cultural background or familiarity with it. Overall, it is the “immigrant experience” which makes the services more appropriate for these women. This commonality appeared to facilitate a feeling of being understood and the development of needed trust for disclosure of problems (Agnew 1998a).

Cross-culturally Sensitive Counselling

Cultural constraints, such as believing that wife abuse or domestic abuse is a private matter, or that certain practices are ethically admissible, began to be challenged through their encounter with the counsellors:

For me, before I decided to leave [my husband] I thought it was okay. I thought that it was what the marriage was all about. Because you take the vows for better or for worst until death would come. So, whatever he does to you during those times is okay. I thought that it was okay. He always told me that I was his property, so I just assumed that if I am his property then it's okay to do whatever he wants with me. Like the land, you can work it or you cannot work it. You can do whatever you want. You can cut it up into small pieces or whatever. We do need to know that it's not okay.

I was taught that a woman is nothing, that men have to do everything. The man has to decide for you, you are the man's object and I never realized that I was brought up in that way as I see it now. In that situation, in my relationship, I knew that I was abused but I didn't realize that it was so bad. The men are being brought up in the same way, that you have to control your wife, you have to tell her what to do, tell her what you wanted to do. She has to be your slave and she has to listen to you, you can hit her, you can beat her up and nothing happens to you. You don't have to separate, you don't have to go through divorce, divorce is the worst thing that you can do in your life. God would never forgive you for that. All that I had to put it behind, I was brought up that way.

That was very difficult for me and I didn't understand. [My counsellor] is Christian too and she told me that 'you don't have to be abused'. I was thinking that they taught me wrong, because if you are a Christian you can take, you have to take it. This is nobody else's business, men can do whatever they want to do and nobody taught me a different way, that the Bible allows that it's not wrong that you leave your husband, that you walk away from that relationship that is not what god wants. I knew that it was not right that the men beat you but they told me all the time that it was not my business what the man is doing.

Another participant's circumstances were not different. She had earned higher education in her country and was able to see her future as a professional. However, once in Canada and she had to confront an unexpected reality. Conflicts emerged when she had to accommodate herself to the desires of her husband's family. She had to economically contribute to the family and without accreditations and or support from her family to suit her qualifications to the new reality she ended up in menial and care-giving positions. She struggled between what was expected from her (i.e., pleasing her family) and her personal

desires. She reported that the counsellor helped her to understand that she did not have to tolerate the abuse that she suffered from her family.

The counsellor helped these women resolve their marital and family conflict as being between a personal desire to leave or avoid the situation of abuse and the cultural constraints and to a need to become informed about the options and resources available to them. In other cases it is not clear to what extent the help of the counsellors in promoting awareness of this association pushed them to the decisions they made. However, since most of the interviewees came to the organization after they had separated from their husbands, it appears to me that some of the women made their own decision to leave. They showed self-determination and confronted the consequences of leaving. Nevertheless, once decisions were made these women had to confront the reality of having to reconstruct their lives. The services they received from, and the resources reached through the Immigrant Women's Association facilitated their understanding of the Canadian social system.

Breaking Isolation

Talking to the counsellor or going to the organization has played a substantial role in lessening the unavoidable loneliness and isolation that is often part of immigrant women's lives. Helena, who stays at home most of the time to take care of her children, felt bored. Her state of isolation and boredom was increased by her lack of "good English", family and friends. Therefore, IWAM's connection represented an escape from that routine:

Sometimes I get bored and I talk to [my counsellor] like if she were my sister, I feel better. And sometimes I have a fight with my husband, and I don't have people to talk to and if I talk to my friend other people might know it too. So, I know the counsellor can keep it, because it is her work, that's her job, I can tell everything to her.

For another woman, who at the time when she approached the organization was in Canada without family and friends, the "main enemy has been the loneliness. I haven't made friends, anybody to talk to." The fact of finding a place to go and being listened to was important: "By being able to talk to [the counsellor] I just felt more comforted."

Although the women found a trusting environment where they could express themselves, they noted that this has been done on a one-to-one basis. Some of them have participated in group activities (e.g., support groups and programming involving more than one woman), still they expressed that they have not been able to make friendships that extended outside the organization. With few exceptions, they are not active participants of other activities within the organization. Lack of time and lack of knowledge of these other programs and activities act as barriers for their participation.

The lack of kinship and friendship ties in Canada heightens these women's feelings of isolation and loneliness. Nonetheless, the users of services and participants in the organization have made the organization a place where to some extent isolation is broken. During my work within the organization it was not uncommon to hear women qualifying the organization as "home". While one of the participants considered IWAM as "a family that I have here" when she does not have other family to count on, another one went as far as considering her counsellor as a "mother". "[The counsellor] is like a mother to me, this place is like a family. I have no family here. I was sponsored by my

husband, now I am divorced". The metaphors of "home", "family", "mother", "sister" appeal to a nurturing space where these women feel comfortable.

Although it has been within their own families that these women have experienced violence and social inequality, they have encountered in the organization safety and support and renewed a sense of belonging, a space that might seem or is more safe and familiar than others. Of course, this metaphor in the situation of attainment of services is a precarious one since the distance between the counsellor and the client is preserved and it is supposed that women receive services and then should go ahead on their own. In my regular interaction I also realized that some other women have claimed that every time they come back to the organization, in particular those who volunteer, they "come back home". While many of these women come to the organization due to family conflicts and break down, it is the organization that provides a closer place to the ideal family.

Agnew (1998a) and Vaid (1999/2000) also assess the use of kinship denominations as a way of narrowing the distance between service providers and clients. Agnew argues that it is the lack of familiarity with the concept of social service, which promotes the use of such terminology to address their counsellors.

Empowerment

"Empowerment" is a central idea and practice in the development of appropriate counselling at IWAM. This process allows women increased involvement on the matters that affect them. The participants described the effect of IWAM on their lives as follows:

Because they are not going to tell you what you have to do, you have to take your own decisions. But, the fact of knowing that there is someone who supports you makes you feel much better and more confident to know how to use the resources.

I wouldn't look at this as the place where I would try to get solutions or answers. Maybe, I wouldn't find a solution here, but I found something that would guide me where the solution was or to change my view, to look at different angles of the situation. It is hard to explain. It was a process: you come and talk and you tell what you are really scared of. Then, they said, 'OK you are afraid of this, but there are other choices'. They guide you to look for that.

I've got nice advice on how can I build myself. In a way you have to do it on your own, nobody can do it for you. I know that. She [my counsellor] is very patient with me, that helped me a lot.

I am going to tell you one thing. Maybe two months ago, before I started coming here, I was fearful of going anywhere. Today I go everywhere and this is because here they have encouraged me to go by myself. I say to myself, if I make a mistake, what can happen? The surest possibility is that they wouldn't understand me, but I always can try again. I am not more fearful anymore. I don't feel weak, I feel strong (she laughs).

IWAM's strategy, that empowered immigrant women seeking services rather than just telling them what to do, was the right mechanism for overcoming their problems. Empowerment allowed these women to determine the issues themselves and take action to implement transformation in their lives.

Awareness of Services

I also assessed the knowledge women had of other activities and programs at IWAM. Most of the women were not aware of other activities or services provided by IWAM. Some of them replied by asking me about other services and activities. The

women who recognized other services did so on a limited basis. Only one woman recognized the variety of programs. She also had participated in several of the programs.

Experiences with Other Service Providers

The participants shared their experiences in dealing with other human service organizations, mainly mainstream organizations. In some cases they did so in order to provide a comparison with the services received at IWAM.

I can tell you about Lombard St., I realized that people promise you help and of course you believe in them. I am very open minded and I believe in people, they seem sincere, they are adult people, they seem to understand perfectly. But, it is hard to understand your situation completely because they need to be in your same shoes. Because if you lived so many years, you were born in Canada, is hard to explain how it is difficult, without help, without family, without close friends, it is extremely difficult. It is hard to explain. And they promise you, they promise, you wait and then you realize that you have been a bit naïve.

As I suggested in a previous section, cultural compatibility, which encourages the client's confidence that she is understood and accepted has been an important feature of what women expect and appreciate from the services. Cultural incompatibility has been expressed as a feature of their encounters with mainstream organizations.

I tried to go for counselling but they [the counsellors] have grown up here, they are all from here and they don't really understand, they try to understand you. You don't feel that they can understand you because you have grown up in a total different world and your experiences, what you have gone through your life, is not the same as here. You can't expect that they can understand you, who you are and why you feel that way. Because they don't have the background that we have...They work in a different way. The lady that I had before, she was a very nice lady...she is a good counsellor, but she acts in a different way because she has grown up here and you can't blame her. I got more here [at IWAM] because of my background and they came from other countries too and they know exactly

how we have grown up. They understand better, and my counsellor, I think that in a lot of ways she had grown up in the same way as me. I feel that she knows exactly what I mean when I talk and then I talk to a Canadian woman and I think that she listens to me but I don't know if she really can understand why I feel that way.

Q: You didn't find that these organizations were helping you?

I didn't want to go back again because I had the feeling that they don't understand me. I didn't feel really comfortable and that's not their fault. It just the feeling that here they understand you and that they can give you more because they know. And in a way I can express my feelings. You know, my English is so bad that it is very hard for them to listen to me and understand me and sometimes I can't express myself, so I have the feeling that I can't understand too.

Amelia had received counselling from other organizations as well. However, she said that the place she remembers the most is IWAM:

You can't really trust them [the counsellors] because of the barrier of the language. For example, sometimes I couldn't trust to tell all my problems because I didn't know how they would respond to that, if they really would help me or not. In English many things are not completely understood because you are not speaking your own language. They never offered me an interpreter. Also, there was a time when I didn't believe in counselling, but then I realized that I didn't understand what it was all about. The counsellor from IWAM explained how the system worked, things that the counsellor helps you to see. I also understood that there are things that are confidential.

This passage illustrates the lack of orientation to the Canadian human service system. Counselling may be devoid of meaning or rejected by people who come from countries where these services do not exist or where they are associated with the needs of those who are "crazy". The principle of confidentiality is another concept that may not be easily understood. Amelia spoke about another characteristic of a human service organization that she visited:

I didn't find the kind of support that I was looking for. I found the people very cold in there, as if they were robots. It was different from when I saw [the counsellor at IWAM]. She came, she hugged me. (The participants' eyes filled with tears).

In continuing with her comparison with the services received at IWAM Amelia said:

You know that in our culture there is more contact among people, including more physical contact, and here they are fearful of that. We have boundaries too, but not to that extreme, that's a big difference. In our culture, we do that so the person feels more supported.

The experiences of these women with mainstream organizations affirm the need for linguistically and culturally appropriate counselling within those agencies. The participants have a perception that mainstream services are ethnocentric and lack the tools and conditions for appropriate assistance. In sum, the culture of the Canadian social services organizations is understood as "cold" or not being able to be in the "same shoes". Tamara explained the way a counsellor at one mainstream organization exercised power and created dependence on her.

Sometimes the counsellor, it is as if she has a muffin in her hand. Sometimes, she opens it and gives it to you. That's very good. Sometimes, no, stop, she closes it [her hand] and you get nothing. No more support. Sometimes, it is very good. You can breathe. Sometimes, you can't breathe any more.

Not all the clients considered linguistic and cultural compatibility or incompatibility to be an important question. Emilia has been in Canada for a few decades, and until the moment she was referred to IWAM she had always interacted with mainstream organizations, claimed that the only requisite a counsellor should have is to

be “open-minded”. She reported good client-counsellor relationship with both counsellors at IWAM as well as other organizations.

Summary

The experiences shared by the clients portray the barriers and difficulties women confront in a new society. Language skills, access to employment and language training and employment in some cases to professions participants have been trained for, social isolation, intimate abuse are all factors contributing to the need to acquire services for immigrant women.

Overall, the experiences of the participants in requiring services and participating in IWAM’s programs and activities have been positive. To some extent the findings in this study argue for the advantages of having service providers that share the immigrant experience and linguistic background as their clients. However, there is a need for looking into the experiences of women who have dropped from the services or former clients as well as immigrant women in general and examine the types of assistance received from immigrant and non-immigrant organizations. Because this research is not intended to evaluate the organization, but to unveil the perspectives of participants in different roles, I did not systematically look into the limitations of the services among former clients.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

This research provides a case study of an organization of and for immigrant women. Although the study is intended to contribute to the knowledge of the organizations of immigrant women in Canada, it cannot be assumed to speak for all the groups of immigrant women in Manitoba or for that matter within Canada. The historical overview of IWAM is limited to the information collected through the review of archival materials and from the members who were working between early 1999 and early 2001. The organization has its inception in the early 1980s, however, the insights and perspectives of a number of members who have participated in the earlier development of the organization do not appear in this thesis. A similar claim could be made for the number of clients, volunteers and participants to the numerous programs of IWAM. Nonetheless, this study exposes many aspects of how IWAM operates.

The purpose of this thesis has been to look into the role of organizations that provide services to and advocate for immigrant women. The data from this case study reveal that IWAM is an organization that, even with differential emphases throughout its history, has provided services and advocated for immigrant women. The analysis of the what IWAM's clients and staff had to say about the services revealed two key elements of successful delivery of services. First, the services have been respectful and culturally appropriate. Second, by providing alternatives and not dictating what clients should do the staff has been successful in using an empowerment approach to counselling.

Some other key characteristics of the organization have been the provision of services to women living in intimate abusive relationships; client accessibility to other programs and services outside the organization, and relationship to other social service organizations; and the provision of a space for political representation to immigrant women. IWAM has been preoccupied with the diversity of needs and barriers immigrant women face in Canadian society. However, the organization has been limited in addressing those needs due to insufficient resources.

IWAM, as other immigrant women's organizations in Canada, has evolved from the need to provide representation to a growing diverse immigrant population to the provision of services to underserved women. Immigrant service organizations are the result, in part, of the assessed inability of mainstream organizations to provide services in the languages of the immigrants and to the lack of understanding of immigrants' cultural background and settlement and integration experiences (Beyenne et al. 1996). In general, Canadian institutions should recognize the role played by organizations such as IWAM. Since IWAM has filled the gaps in the service that other institutions fail to provide, it has fulfilled an important role. IWAM's personnel and volunteers have been the providers of numerous referral services to other immigrant service organizations or "mainstream" institutions. This work helps to improve the access of immigrant women to these institutions, in particular to mainstream agencies.

In order to establish themselves as formal organizations most groups of immigrant women have lobbied the government for recognition of gaps in services and allocation of resources to their own organizations. Although the government has responded to the identification of gaps in services for immigrants since the 1960s, the work of the

immigrant women's movement to advocate for the particular needs and interest of their constituency began to become visible in the 1980s. Immigrant women advocates maintain that immigrant women were outside, yet motivated by the second wave of the women's movement. In Manitoba, some Canadian women were supportive of the efforts of immigrant women to make visible their concerns and interests before Canadian society and the government.

The state has played a major role in the struggles of immigrant women's organizing efforts. In responding to immigrant women's demands the government began to allocate resources. This achievement did come with restrictions, as it is demonstrated in the literature. Organizations of immigrant women, and immigrant service organizations in general, are largely dependent on government funding. This is certainly another important feature of IWAM.

The state facilitates the development and maintenance of immigrant organizations, but both parties are not often able to exercise a proportionate amount of power. Still, both the government and immigrant organizations share the objective of contributing to a successful integration of immigrants into Canadian society. For instance, a comparative study of the development of immigrant women's organizations in two Italian cities (Bologna and Florence) reveals that strong directives from the government of Bologna together with a strong feminist tradition have contributed to the growth and development of immigrant women's organizations. However, it is the presence of immigrant women's organizations that translated into better living conditions for immigrant women. Without the same support in Florence, immigrant women were found to be more exposed to discrimination, exploitation and racism (Orsini-Jones and Gatullo 2000).

However, in an era of growing fiscal restraint, government resources for human service provision are becoming increasingly limited. This reality translates into increasing unpaid work. Faced by the needs of clients, members of IWAM feel a sense of obligation to provide services. Sometimes that work is done on a volunteer or unpaid basis; as Lee notes, “[t]he line between paid and unpaid work is tenuous for immigrant women working in the settlement sector” (1999: 99). The expansion of unpaid labour in the delivery of continuously shrinking social programs (i.e., privatization of welfare) is becoming a visible characteristic of women’s groups.

In spite of the structural constraints and the changing political and economic circumstances, many organizations of immigrant women have been successful. Organizations of immigrant women have also been successful by the mere fact of surviving throughout a changing historical time characterized by a neoliberal philosophy. The survival of organizations of immigrant women means that they have created new resources for meeting the needs of incoming groups of immigrant women. Many studies suggest that survival is linked to the maintenance of funding (i.e., government funding). Therefore, the decisions made by the organizations are shaped by the parameters imposed by the governments. IWAM’s story and the sudden changes they are experiencing in the year 2001 speak of the vulnerabilities faced by the non-profit sector, in particular those faced by organizations of immigrant women. Unfortunately, the organization has faced many obstacles due to internal problems, and lack of clear lines of communication which translated into an increased loss of autonomy and credibility before the funding bodies. The lack of reliable sources of funding has largely contributed to the instability faced by IWAM during the last few years.

This study has demonstrated the need for services and the importance of a space to advance the concerns of immigrant women. Because of the latter, IWAM is still striving to keep its doors open. The meaning of having a place for immigrant women, where women can drop by, have conversations with staff and other women, as well as participate in formal programming is important. This factor is not easily measurable; it is of little or no interest to funders. This results in the devaluation of the personal validation, confidence-building, empowering and supporting aspects of women's organizing. In spite of this setback, factors such as the need for service provision and participation and changes in policies are still motivating forces for survival. Once more IWAM will prove that women's unpaid work is infinitely flexible, and consequently capable of concealing a lack of resources or need for changes. As the shortage of funding for regular programs and lack of on-site management had led IWAM's staff and board members to make up for that lack by volunteering hours, members of the new board will maintain the commitment to raise and address the issues faced by immigrant women. In the analysis of the role of immigrant women in the settlement sector Lee concludes "[u]nder restructuring, the financial costs of providing even [these] narrow and truncated rights of democratic citizenship to newly-arrived Canadians is transferred onto immigrant communities themselves, and within these communities, to women" (1999: 102).

Of course, reduction of public spending goes in a direction contrary to the needs of immigrant women in Canadian society. In spite of the changes toward promoting immigration from skilled immigrants and consequently reducing potential "state dependent" immigrants, many organizations, programs and services need to be sustained. Moreover, as has been demonstrated in the past, the profile of the newcomers and the

needs encountered in the immigrant context shape the social services delivery and advocacy work. Therefore, newcomers with a different profile (e.g., newcomers recruited through the business-oriented program) will bring new challenges to social programs. For instance, the recognition of foreign credentials and work experience is an issue that will need to be further addressed.

Government and non-profit organizations working with immigrants reflect a common denominator in assisting immigrants to settle in the new country. Collaboration is necessary. “[H]owever valuable it may be to develop some shared ground and nurture cooperation among those whose interests, goals and understandings partially coincide, it is also essential to the feminist standpoint to open and maintain a space of difference in which a critical perspective can flourish and drive work in new directions” (Judd 1999: 220). While women’s organizations need to be held accountable to fiscal control, these organizations should be respected for the role they play in providing a supportive environment to women. The increasing accountability measures that urge organizations to develop more efficient and effective management practices and administration only add another layer of control to overworked immigrant women and their under-recognized work.

The relationship between the governments and non-profit organizations needs to be reviewed, whether these are of and for women or not. For that matter, the purposes of working together and “commitment to equity, mutual accountability, trust and respect” (Owen 2000: 134) should be stated. Owen adds that “[T]he power imbalance inherent in the relationships between government and NGOs might be improved by including in the

service contracts the responsibilities that government and its employees have, thereby building some form of mutual accountability into the relationship” (2000: 134).

The conception of accountable relationships or “partnerships” between stakeholders should be at the center of the discussion. The lack of efforts for a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the different actors and institutions involved in the last instance affect those most in need. Since immigration numbers are expected to increase, partners that manage immigration have to act quickly to respond to the changes at the level of service provision, advocacy and policies.

The government of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg are promoting immigration into this prairie province. Resulting increase in numbers of immigrants and refugees should theoretically stimulate appropriate governmental allocation of resources to organizations providing services to immigrants. Policies and regulations should address women’s experiences of the settlement and integration process as distinct from that of men’s. Immigrant women’s experiences are shaped by the gendered nature of policies and regulations such as often processing women under the category of family class. The legal dependency can contribute to women’s vulnerability to increased control by sponsors. In addition, sponsored immigrant women are not able to obtain social assistance or government subsidized housing. The experiences of immigrant women are also affected by the type of work and training opportunities available to them. For instance, many immigrant women are found in a segregated and dead-end labour market such as the garment industry. The role of immigrant women within the family (e.g., child rearing and other household responsibilities) might also affect their access to training and other services established to assist women’s integration into Canadian society.

Research on the situation of immigrant women reveals the implications of immigration policies in women's lives as well as their position in the social structure (see Canadian Woman Studies 1999). Research on immigrant women's settlement and integration experiences also reveals barriers to integration such as lack of fluency in English, insufficient meaningful employment opportunities, isolation, lack of accessibility to training programs, social and health care services and discrimination (see Canadian Woman Studies 1999; Djao and Ng 1987; Miedema and Nason-Clark 1989; Rublee and Shaw 1991; Vissandjée, Weinfeld, Dupéré and Abdool 2001). In fact, together with race and class, gender in immigration studies is becoming an important aspect in research development. Research is not only intended to contribute to the existing body of literature on immigration, but to raise awareness of immigrant women's conditions in different sectors of society, including governmental and non-governmental institutions. After more than twenty years of research in the "immigrant women domain" in Canada, the barriers faced by immigrant women are still very much existent. The findings have not translated into policies that include a gender perspective. For social and institutional change to happen there is still a need for development of strategies of resistance. For instance, Creese (1998) looks for increased participation in advocacy work on the part of immigrant organizations in order to resist the forces of restructuring. This advocacy work should be enmeshed in a series of demands of other social movements such as the anti-poverty movement, through coalition advocacy with immigrant and non-immigrant and women's organizations (Creese 1998; Lee 1999). In addition, by working in collaboration with other organizations, immigrant women can have increased access to services when the availability of programs for immigrant women has declined.

Voluntary or non-profit organizations, their structure, functioning and interconnections, provide an important arena in which to observe the concerns, needs, interests, as well as the way these are addressed in order to provide needed services and produce social change within Canadian society. This is a history of the relationship of constraint and autonomy between the larger environment and the daily activities of a small women's organization. The thesis showed that women feel contradictions, frustration and even anger to internal and external constraints to their work. I hope that this thesis has illustrated women's satisfaction for the work they themselves have done and other women have done on their behalf.

I would like to point out that a number of *policy recommendations* could be drawn from this study:

- Increase recognition of immigrant women's organizations. Immigrant women's organizations have grown and developed out of the need for providing for their own practical needs. The work of immigrant women has the potential of considerable impact on the society at large.
- Increase multicultural training and education of "mainstream" organizations. The knowledge and experience of women working with other immigrant women should be shared in order to assist other organizations to develop policies geared to increasing accessibility and inclusiveness – including policies to increase immigrant minority representation within the workforce of mainstream organizations – and to sensitize front-line workers.
- Increase collaboration with other organizations. Various organizations hold similar mandates and objectives, therefore, it is important to explore the development of

relationships on the basis of commonalities. Initiatives in common would promote the advancement of immigrant women in Canadian society. Collaboration would ensure optimal use of each type of organization by immigrant women.

- Increase collaboration with government on the basis of trust and mutual respect. Better communication between funders, in particular government staff, and non-profit organizations would contribute to this collaboration. This collaboration should include a better understanding of the role of immigrant organizations and the state.
- Commit to the allocation of appropriate and longer-term (multi-year) funding. Immigrant service organizations are constrained by the uncertainty of year to year funding allocations. Long-term funding permits organizations to plan and develop appropriate activities and initiatives.

References Cited

Abraham, Margaret

2000 *Speaking the Unspeakable. Marital Violence among South Asian Immigrants in the United States*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

1995 "Ethnicity, Gender and Marital Violence among South Asian Immigrant Women in the United States" *Gender and Society* Vol. 9 No. 4:450-468.

Ackelsberg, Martha

1996 "Identity Politics, Political Identities: Thoughts Toward a Multicultural Politics" In *Frontiers* Vol. 21 No.1

Agnew, Vijay

1998 *In Search of a Safe Place: Abused Women and Culturally Sensitive Services*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

1998a "Tensions in Providing Services to South Asian Victims of Wife Abuse in Toronto" In *Violence Against Women* Vol. 4 No.2

1996 *Resisting Discrimination. Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

1993a "Feminism and South Asian Immigrant Women in Canada" In Israel, M. and N. K. Wagle (eds.) *Ethnicity, Identity, Migration: The South Asian Context*, Toronto: University of Toronto.

1993b "Canadian Feminism and Women of Color" *Women's Studies International Forum* Vol. 16 No. 3.

Anthias, Floya

2000 "Metaphors of Home: Gendering New Migration to Southern Europe" Anthias, F. and G. Lazaridis (eds.) *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe*, Oxford: Berg.

Anthias, F. and G. Lazaridis

2000 "Introduction: Women on the Move in Southern Europe" In Anthias, F. and G. Lazaridis (eds.) *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe*, Oxford: Berg.

Anthias, F. and N. Yuval-Davis

1992 *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*, London: Routledge.

Badets, Jane and Tina Chui

- 1991 *Canada's Changing Immigrant Population*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada and Prentice Hall Canada.

Bai, David

- 1992 "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Voluntary Sector: The Case of the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association" In *Human Organization* Vol. 51 No.1

Becerra, Rosina

- 1997 "Can Valid Research on Ethnic Minority Populations Only Be Conducted by Researchers from the Same Ethnic Group?" In De Anda, D. (ed.) *Controversial Issues in Multiculturalism*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Beyene, Dawit, Carrie Butcher, Betty Joe, and Ted Richmond

- 1996 "Immigrant Service Agencies: A Fundamental Component of Anti-Racism Social Services" In James, Carl E. (ed.) *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Service Sector. A Case for Change*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Berg, Bruce

- 1995 *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed., Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon.

Berry J.W. and J.A. Laponce (Eds.),

- 1994 *Ethnicity and culture in Canada: The research landscape*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bissoondath, Neil

- 1994 *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, Toronto: Penguin

Bjerén, Gunilla

- 1997 "Gender and Reproduction" In Hammar, Tomas et al. (eds.) *International Migration, Immobility and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, New York: Oxford.

Boyd, Mónica

- 1986 "Immigrant Women in Canada", In Brettel, C. and R. James Simon (eds.) *International Migration. The Female Experience*, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld

-
- 1987 "Migrant Women in Canada. Profiles and Policies" *Immigration Research Working Paper* No. 2.

Boyd, Mónica

1990 "Immigrant Women: Language, Socioeconomic Inequalities and Policy Issues" In Halli, S., F. Trovato and L. Driedger (eds.), *Ethnic Demography: Canadian Immigrant, Racial and Cultural Variations*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press.

1992 "Gender issues in immigration and language fluency", In Chiswick, B.R.(ed.) *Immigration and Ethnicity: Canada and the Unites States*, Washington D.C.: The AIE Press.

1998 "Gender, Refugee Status and Permanent Settlement" *Gender Issues* Vol. 16, No. 4

Bowen Stevens, Sarah

1993 *Community Based Programs for a Multicultural Society*, Winnipeg: Planned Parenthood Manitoba.

Bowen, Sarah and Joseph Kaufert

2000 *Methodological and Policy Issues in Evaluation of Health Interpreter and Language Access Services*. Final report. Canadian Heritage.

Brettell, Caroline and Patricia deBerjeois

1992 "Anthropology and the Study of Immigrant Women" In Gabaccia, D. (ed.) *Seeking Common Ground. Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States*, Westport: Greenwood Press.

Brettell, Caroline and Rita James Simon

1986 "Immigrant Women: An Introduction", In Brettel, C. and R. James Simon (ed.), *International Migration. The Female Experience*, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld

Brodie, Janine

1995 *Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Buchanan, Nancy

1996 *The Adaptation Process of Somali Refugees in Winnipeg: The Role of Adult Education*, Unpublished Masters of Education Thesis, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Buduhan, Cleto

1972 *An Urban Village: the Effect of Migration on the Filipino Garment Workers in a Canadian City*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

Buijs, G. (ed.)

1993 *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Identities*, Oxford: Berg.

Calliste, Agnes

1989 "Canada's Immigration Policy and Domestic Workers from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme" In Vorst, J. (ed.) *Race, class and Gender: Bonds and Barriers*, Toronto: Between the Lines.

Canadian Council for Refugees

1999 *Proposed Changes to the Immigration Act: Gender Analysis*. Internet WWW page, at URL:<<http://www.web.net/~ccr/genderan.htm>>

Canadian Woman Studies

1999 *Immigrant and Refugee Women*, Vol. 19 No.3.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

1999 *Building on a Strong Foundation for the 21st Century. New Directions for Immigration and Refugee Policy and Legislation*, Ottawa: Author

Chant, S. and S. A. Radcliffe

1992 "Migration and Development: the importance of gender" and "Conclusion, towards a framework for the analysis of gender selective migration" In Chant, S. (ed.) *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, London-New York: Bellhaven Press.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

2000 *Facts and Figures 1999: Immigration Overview*, Ottawa: author.

Côté, A., M. Kérisit and M.Côté

2001 *Sponsorship...for Better or for Worse. The Impact of Sponsorship on the Equality Rights of Immigrant Women*, Canada: Status of Women Canada.

Creese, Gillian

1998 *Government Restructuring and Immigrant/Refugee Settlement Work: Bringing Advocacy Back*. Working Paper No. 98-12, Vancouver: Research in Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis.

Das Gupta, Tania

1986 *Learning from Our History: Community Development by Immigrant Women in Ontario 1958-1986*, Toronto: Cross-Cultural Communication Centre.

Djao, W. and Ng R.

1987 "Structured Isolation: Immigrant Women in Saskatchewan" In Storrie, K. (ed.) *Women: Isolation and Bonding. The Ecology of Gender*, Toronto: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Driedger, Leo

1996 *Multi-Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities*, Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Fischer P., R. Martin and T Straubhaar

1997 "Should I Stay or Should I go?" In Hammar, Tomas et al. (eds.) *International Migration, Immobility and Development: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, New York: Oxford.

Gabriel, Christina

1996 "One or the Other? "Race", Gender, and the Limits of Official Multiculturalism In Janine Brodie (ed.) *Women and Canadian Public Policy*, Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Co.

Ghalam, Nancy

1995 "Immigrant Women" In Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada. A Statistical Report* Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Catalogue 89-503E

Gwyn, R.

1995 *Nationalism without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Hakim, Catherine and Georgia Angom

1999 *An Analysis of Barriers Facing Immigrant Women and their Families in Accessing Health and Social Services*, Unpublished report, Winnipeg: Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba.

Halli, Shiva, Frank Trovato and Leo Driedger (eds.)

1990 *Ethnic Demography: Canadian Immigrant, Racial and Cultural Variations*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press.

Hyndman, Jennifer

1999 "Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy. A Current Snapshot" *Canadian Woman Studies* Vol. 19 No 3

Immigration Legislative Review Advisory Group

1997 *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Generations*, Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada

IWAM

1983 *Action through Organization. First Manitoba Conference for Immigrant Women*, Winnipeg: Author.

Innocenti Research Centre

2000 "Domestic Violence against Women and Girls" In *Innocenti Digest* No.6.
Florence: UNICEF

James, Carl E. (ed.)

1996 *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Service Sector. A Case for Change*,
Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jenkins, Shirley

1988 *Ethnic Associations and the Welfare State: Services to Immigrants in Five Countries*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Jenkins, Shirley and Mignon Sauber

1988 "Ethnic Associations in New York and Services to Immigrants" In Jenkins, S.
(ed.) *Ethnic Associations and the Welfare State: Services to Immigrants in Five Countries*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Jones, Beryle

1993 "Looking back but looking forward" *IWAM Newsletter*, March 1993 Vol.1
No.23

Judd, Ellen

1999 "Afterwords: Opening Spaces for Transformative Practice" In Porter, M. and
E. Judd (eds.) *Feminist Doing Development. A practical Guide*, London and
New York: Zed Books.

Kalbach, Warren

1994 "Growth and Distribution of Canada's Ethnic Populations, 1871-1981" In
Trovato, F. and C. Grindstaff (eds.) *Perspectives on Canada's Population*,
Toronto, Oxford University Press.

Kelson, G. and D. DeLaet (eds.)

1999 *Gender and Immigration*, New York: University of New York Press.

Khayatt, Didi

1994 "The Boundaries of Identity at the Intersection of Race, Class and Gender" In
Canadian Woman Studies Vol.14 no.2

Knocke, W. and R. Ng,

1999 "Women's organizing and immigration: Comparing the Canadian and Swedish
experience." In Briskin, L. and M. Elisson (eds.) *Women's Organizing and
Social Policies in Canada and Sweden*, Kingston: McGill-Queen's Publisher.

Landsberg, Michelle

1998 "Liberals quietly feed NAC to the Barracudas", *The Sun Star*, November 22:
2A

Lee, Jo-Anne

1999 "Immigrant Women Workers in the Immigrant Settlement Sector" *Canadian Woman Studies* Vol. 19 No.3.

Lewycky, Laverne

1992 "Multiculturalism in the 1990s and into the 21st Century: Beyond Ideology and Utopia" In Satzewich, V. (ed.) *Deconstructing a Nation: Immigration, Multiculturalism and Racism in 90s Canada*, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

Li, Peter

1988 *The Chinese in Canada*, Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Manitoba Labour and Immigration

2000 *Manitoba Immigration Statistics Summary. 1999 Preliminary Report.*
Winnipeg: Author.

2001 *Manitoba Immigration Statistics Summary. 2000 Preliminary Report.*
Winnipeg: Author.

Martin, Jeannie

1991 "Multiculturalism and Feminism" In G. Bottomley, M. de Lepervanche and J. Martin (Eds.) *Intersexions*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Matas, David

1996 "Racism in Canadian Immigration Policy" In James, Carl E. (ed.) *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Service Sector. A Case for Change*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mies, Maria

1991 "Women's Research or Feminist Research? The Debate Surrounding Feminist Science and Methodology", In Fonow M. and J. Cook (eds.) *Beyond Methodology, Feminist Scholarship and Lived Research*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Miedema, Baukje and Evangelina Tastsoglou

2000 " 'But Where Are You From, Originally?' Immigrant Women and Integration in the Maritimes" *Atlantis* Vol.24 No. 2

Miedema, Baukje and Nancy Nason-Clark.

- 1989 "Second Class Status: An Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Immigrant Women in Fredericton" *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 2.

Mitchell, Penni

- 1996 "Head Tax Rescinded: Immigration Rules against women" *Herizons* Vol. 10 No. 1.

-
- 1995 "Domestic Policy Criticized: Dependent Status Keeps Women in Their Place" *Herizons* Vol. 9 No. 1.

Mohanty, Chandra T.

- 1991 "Introduction. Cartographies of Struggle Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism", In Mohanty, C., A. Russo and L. Torres (eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Moore, Henrietta

- 1988 *Feminism and Anthropology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada

- 1991 *Multiculturalism: What is it really about?* Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

Multiculturalism Directorate

- 1981 *National Conference on Immigrant Women: A Right to Recognition: the Immigrant Women in Canada*, Ottawa: Multiculturalism Directorate, Secretary of State.

Ng, Roxana

- 1991 "Finding Our Voices. Reflections on Immigrant Women's Organizing" In Wine, J. and J. Ristock (eds.) *Women and Social Change. Feminist Activism in Canada*, Toronto: James Lorimer and Co.

-
- 1993 "Racism, Sexism and Immigrant Women." In Burt S., L. Code and L. Dorney (eds.) *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

-
- 1996 *The Politics of Community Services. Immigrant Women, Class and State*, Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Ng, Roxana, Gillian Walker and Jacob Mueller (eds.)

- 1991 *Community Organization and the Canadian State*, Toronto: Garamond Press.

Ng, Winnie

- 1982 "Immigrant Women: The Silent Partners of the Women's Movement." In Fitzgerald, M., C, Guberman and M.Wolfe (eds.) *Still Ain't Satisfied! Canadian Feminism Today*, Toronto: The Women Press.

Oakley, Ann

- 1981 "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms" In Roberts, H. (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Orsini-Jones, M. and F.Gatullo

- 2000 "Migrant Women in Italy: National Trends and Local Perspectives" In Anthias, F. and G. Lazaridis (eds.) *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe*, Oxford: Berg.

Ortner, Sherry

- 1984 "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26.

Owen, Tim

- 2000 "NGO-Government Partnerships" *Journal of International Migration and Integration* Vol. 1, No 1.

Pal, Leslie

- 1993 *Interests of State. The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism and Feminism in Canada*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Patton, Michael

- 1990 *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pedraza, Silvia

- 1991 "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender" *Annual Review of Sociology* 17.

Philippine Women Centre of B.C.

- 2000 *Canada: The New Frontier for Filipino Mail-order Brides*, Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.

Reinharz, Shulamit

- 1992 *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Reitz, J.G., and Breton, R.

- 1994 *The illusion of Difference: Realities of Ethnicity in Canada and the United States*, Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute.

Roberts, Barbara

1981 "Immigration and Settlement: Immigrant Women's Perspectives", Paper presented at the *Ethnic Women's Conference*, Winnipeg: Author.

1990 "Ladies, Women and the State: Managing Female Migration, 1880-1920. In Ng, R., G. Walker and J. Mueller (eds.) *Community Organization and the Canadian State*, Toronto: Garamond Press.

Rockhill, K and P. Tomic

1994 "There is a connection: Racism, Hetero/sexism and Access to ESL" *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme* Vol.14 No.2.

Ruble, C. and S. Shaw

1991 "Constraints on the Leisure and Community Participation of Immigrant Women: Implications for Social Integration" *Society and Leisure* Vol.14 No.1

Shragge, E.

1990 "Community based practice: political alternatives or new state forms." In L. Davies & E. Shragge (Eds.), *Bureaucracy and community*, Montreal, Black Rose Books.

Simmons, Alan

1999 "Immigration Policy: Imagines Futures" In Halli S. and L. Driedger (eds.) *Immigrant Canada. Demographic, Economic, and Social Challenges*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sooknanan, Rekuda

2000 "The Problematic of "Partnerships" and Funding for Immigrant Women's Communities: Exploring Governmentality" *Atlantis* Vol.24 No.2.

Smith, D.E.

1987 *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Stafford, James

1994 "Welcome but Why? Recent Changes in Canadian Immigration Policy" In Trovato, F. and C. Grindstaff *Perspectives on Canada's Population*, Toronto, Oxford University Press.

Statistics Canada

1999 *The Nation Series. 1996 Census*. Internet WWW, at URL: <<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo25a.htm>> (accessed on September 30th 1999)

Status of Women Canada

1998 *Gender-Based Analysis: A Guide for Policy-Making*, Ottawa: Author.

1998a *Women's Program Eligibility Criteria and Assessment Guidelines*, Ottawa: Author.

Sutherland, Brigitte

1983 "Immigrant Women Hold Public Forum" *Herizons* Vol. 1 No.9, Winnipeg

Tator, Carol

1996 "Anti-Racism and the Human-Service Delivery System" In James, Carl E. (ed.) *Perspectives on Racism and the Human Service Sector. A Case for Change*, Toronto: The University of Toronto Press.

Thobani, Sunera

1998 "Racism, Women's Equality, and Social Policy Reform" In Ricciutelli, L., J. Larkin and E. O'Neil (eds.) *Confronting the Cuts: Sourcebook for Women in Ontario*, Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education.

Tyree and Donato

1986 "A Demographic Overview of the International Migration of Women" In Brettell, C. and J. Simon (ed.) *International Migration. The Female Migration*, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld.

United Nations

1995 *International Migration Policies and the Status of Female Migrant*. Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, Population Division, New York: Author.

United Way of Winnipeg

2000 *Connect, Respect and Understand. Addressing Cultural Needs and Sensitivities in our Community*, Winnipeg: Author.

Ursel, Jane

1997 "Considering the Impact of the Battered Women's Movement on the State: The Example of Manitoba" In Andrew, C. and S. Rodgers (eds.) *Women and the Canadian State*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vaid, Jyotsna

1999/2000 "Beyond a Space of Our Own: South Asian Women's Groups in the U.S." *Amerasia Journal* Vol.25 No.3

Vissandjée, B., M. Weinfeld, S. Dupéré and S. Abdool

2001 "Sex, Gender, Ethnicity, and Access to Health Care Services: Research and Policy Challenges for Immigrant Women in Canada" *Journal of International*

Whittleton, Holly

1999 "Settlement Services for Immigrants and Refugees in a Changing Environment", paper presented at Third National Metropolis Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Winnipeg Free Press

2001 "Sale Wants to Restructure Association", *Winnipeg Free Press* 26 April.

Yuval-Davis, Nira

1996 "Identity Politics and Women's Ethnicity" In Moghadam, V. (ed.) *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Zlotnik, Haina

1995 "The South-to-North Migration of Women" *International Migration Review* Vol. 29 No.1.

APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORMS

Consent Form for Review of Documents of Immigrant Women's Association

Immigrant Women, Social Services and Advocacy in Manitoba: How Women Organize

I, _____, on behalf of IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, agree to participate in the above titled thesis project. The purpose of the project is to contribute to the understanding of the ways immigrant women from different ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds are engaged in public activities aimed at servicing and advocating for the needs of immigrant women in Canada. It will examine the foundations for establishing programs for immigrant women and the changes that have been introduced to the organization and its programs throughout its history. The research is intended to highlight the tensions and contradictions with which organizations of immigrant women have to deal in order to provide needed services to a displaced and discriminated population.

The project is being conducted by Paula Migliardi, a masters student in Anthropology at the University of Manitoba. The study has been approved by the Ethic Review Committee of the Anthropology Department.

I understand that the student would review information of the association available in public records. The student will review newsletters, annual reports, conference reports, research reports, and any other documents that could enlighten aspects of the research. The student will ask the association for permission to utilize any public document. Any citation, photocopy or reproduction of articles, documents or reports must be approved by the association and copyright regulations applied. I understand that there is no foreseeable risk involved in the project and no personal benefit stemming directly from this research. The association will not be compensated for our participation. However, I understand that this work, by advancing our understanding of our difficulties and as a review of the effectiveness of the associations to which we dedicate much of our time, may help us in our endeavor.

The archival research will occur at a time that is convenient with the personnel in charge of the resource centre. I understand that the participation of the association is voluntary and I may decline permission to use any specific document of the association. The association can receive answers to any questions about the study at any time.

I understand that Paula Migliardi can be called at 779-6955 if I have further questions about the study. Paula Migliardi's advisor is Dr. Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, telephone 474-6330.

Again, I understand that the association is free not to authorize the utilization of documents and that the association must give permission for the reproduction of articles, documents or reports in the student's thesis. I also understand that the researcher will provide a copy of her dissertation to the organization.

IWAM agree to participate in this project.

Your signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Immigrant Women, Social Services and Advocacy in Manitoba: How Women Organize

CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED

I, _____, agree to participate in the above titled thesis project. The purpose of the project is to contribute to the understanding on the ways immigrant women from different ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds are engaged in public activities aimed at servicing and advocating for the needs of immigrant women in Canada. It will examine the foundations for establishing programs for immigrant women and the changes that have been introduced to the organization and its programs throughout its history. The research is intend to highlight the tensions and contradictions with which organizations of immigrant women have to deal in order to provide needed services to a displaced and discriminated population.

The project is being conducted by Paula Migliardi, a masters student in Anthropology at the University of Manitoba. The study has been approved by the Ethic Review Committee of the Anthropology Department.

I understand that my participation involves an interview with Paula Migliardi that will take approximately 45/50 minutes. The student will ask me questions about my participation in the association. The interview will be tape recorded to allow the student to listen carefully to me. Names mentioned on the tapes will be replaced by pretend names (pseudonyms) so that the typed information will be confidential. I understand that Paula Migliardi will transcribe and use sections of the interview in her research. The audio tape will be erased after the project is over, or given to myself, if I so desire. I have been assured that all information will be combined and compressed to preserve my and others' identity. I understand that there is no foreseeable risk involved in the project and no personal benefit stemming directly from this research. I will not be compensated for my participation. However, I understand that this work, by advancing our understanding of our difficulties and as a review of the effectiveness of the association to which we dedicate much of our time, may help us in our endeavor.

The interview will occur at a time and place convenient to me and Paula Migliardi, such as my home. My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time by simply telling the student. In case of withdrawal from the interview the information already given will become part of the research only under my consent. If I feel tired and wish to stop the interview or prefer to continue at a different time, that is fine. I may also refuse to answer any questions. I can receive answers to my questions about the study at any time.

I understand that Paula Migliardi can be called at 779-6955 if I have further questions about the study. Paula Migliardi's advisor is Dr. Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, telephone: 474-6330.

Again, I understand that I am free not to answer any particular question and that I can withdraw my participation and interview from the project at any time without any disadvantage to myself.

I agree to participate in this project.

Your signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDES

A review of the consent form and of ethical issues concerning the research will lead the interview. The following interview schedules were not intended to be rigid questionnaires. The questions are only a guide to the process of the interview.

Board member Interview

- a) Can you tell me about your involvement with Immigrant Women's Association? How did you learn about IWAM? How/when did you become a member of the Board? In which areas of the work of the association are you involved with the group? What IWAM/your position means to you? How has IWAM changed during your participation in the association?
- b) What services does the association provide to immigrant women/clients? How could you describe the women you have to advocate for and assist every day? Why do you think immigrant women come here? What are the needs and concerns clients have that IWAM is/has been incapable to provide for?
- c) Can you describe the relation the association has with funding organizations (i.e. government agencies)? (Probes: How are the programs are funded? Have been like that always? How do you see the funding process (proposal, accountability, etc.)?)
- d) Can you tell me about IWAM's relationship with other organizations (including mainstream)? Do you work in partnership with other organizations? How would you describe the linkage between the association and the other social services in Manitoba?
- e) Can you tell me about the strengths of IWAM and the effective outcomes of IWAM's work? Conversely, what do you think are the obstacles to the accomplishment of IWAM's goals? Where would you like to see the association in the future?
- f) I would like to dedicate few minutes to talk about you own background, settlement experience (country of origin, reasons for migration, accessibility to services in Canada, etc.) work, participation in other organizations, etc.

Staff member interview

- a) Can you tell me about your involvement with IWAM? How did you learn about IWAM? How long have you been working here? What type of activities do you do at the association? Are those activities what is expected from your job? Have you done other kinds of works in the organization? What IWAM/your position means to you? How has IWAM changed during your participation in the association?
- b) What does the association provide to immigrant women/clients? How could you describe the women you have to advocate for and assist every day? Why do you think immigrant women come here? What are the needs and concerns clients have that IWAM is/has been incapable to provide for?
- c) Can you describe the relation the association has with funding organizations (i.e. government agencies)? Have you had any direct relation with funders? How can you describe that relationship?
- d) Can you tell me about IWAM's relationship with other organizations (including mainstream)? Do you work in partnership with other organizations? How would you describe the linkage between the association and the other social services in Manitoba?
- e) Can you tell me about the strengths of IWAM and effective outcomes of the association's work? Conversely, what do you think are the obstacles for the accomplishment of IWAM's goals? Where would you like to see the association in the future?
- f) I would like to dedicate few minutes to talk about you own background, settlement experience (country of origin, reasons for migration, accessibility to services in Canada, etc.) work, participation in other organizations, etc.

Client interview

- a) Can you tell me when did you first come to IWAM?
- b) Why did you come?
- c) How did you know about IWAM?
- d) Could you tell me about your experience in the program or services? What do you think distinguish the services and activities provided at IWAM? Have you consulted other organizations or institutions for similar or other services, what was that experience like?
- e) What would you like IWAM offer to you that is not offered or included in the programs at the moment?
- f) Finally, I would like to dedicate few minutes to talk about you own background, settlement experience (country of origin, reasons for migration, years in Canada, accessibility to services in Canada, etc.) work, participation in other organizations, etc.

Each interview will formally finish by appreciating participants for their time, disposition and enlightenment. I will answer any questions they might have about the project. I will also assure them that a copy of the thesis will be available to the organization for them to consult.

APPENDIX 3

DOCUMENT REFLECTING IWAM'S HISTORY

This appendix includes a copy of a chronology that highlights IWAM's accomplishments from 1985 to 1998. The document was publicly distributed at IWAM's 15th Anniversary Annual General Meeting and annual Conference.

Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Inc.



Accomplishments
1985 -1998

Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Inc.

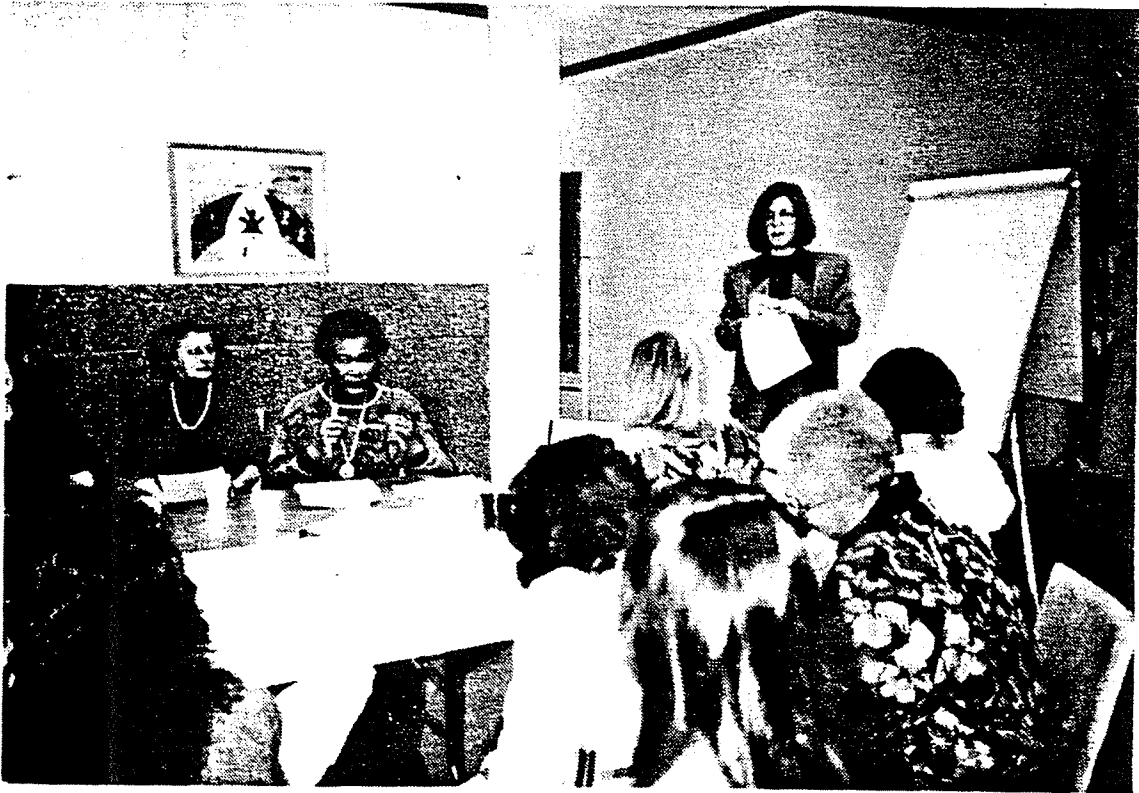
Accomplishments 1985 - 1998

Prepared by:

Margot Morrish - Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship

**Jocelyn Proulx - Resolve: Research and Education for
Solutions to Violence and Abuse**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba
June 1998**



Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Accomplishments 1985 -1998

Introduction

The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba can trace its beginnings to the early 70's. The late Mrs. Sonja Roder, then Executive Director of the International Centre of the Citizenship Council of Manitoba, coordinated a series of conferences involving women from the Chinese, Filipino, East Indian, Jewish, Pakistani, Polish and other ethno cultural communities. These women came together to discuss many issues, problems and concerns faced by immigrant women and made recommendations that were published as conference proceedings. This pioneering work, served as a reference to establish settlement policies and programs and demonstrated the great need to organize the immigrant women of Manitoba.

In February of 1983, immigrant women from all walks of life, were invited to participate in a conference that formed the basis for the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba. That conference was sponsored by the International Centre during the directorship of Mrs. Elizabeth Willcock. The conference recommended the formation of an interim board of directors. A group was elected and drafted a constitution and by-laws. Almost immediately, a coordinator was hired to implement programs and services for immigrant women based on the conference recommendations. IWAM moved into a new location on Fort Street, and was pretty well on its feet, running its own programs. Strong support was always available through the International Centre.

This booklet outlines some of the many accomplishments of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba from 1985 to the present. The accomplishments were categorized into four broad areas:

- Programming
- Conferences
- Publications and Materials
- Presentations/Networking/Consultations

While this outline cannot reflect the variety and richness of IWAM's contributions, it will provide you with an idea of the extensive work that has been accomplished. The staff, board and volunteers of IWAM have made a difference in the lives of immigrant women, their families and in the community at large.

Note: IWAM history based on an article by Virginia Guiang.



Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Accomplishments 1985 -1998

Programming

Winnipeg

1985

- Delivered an Assertiveness Training Program for women funded Immigration and Settlement Manitoba.
- Drop in sessions for women began and continued to the present.
- Started monthly forums on issues concerning immigrant women which continue to the present.
- Established regional representation and activities in Brandon and Thompson and ongoing regional outreach.

1986

- Delivered "Training Place for Immigrant Women" a job re-entry program of Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.
- Established ongoing community outreach
- Organized Laotian Women's Night. Over the years sponsored many cultural awareness activities with women and community members.

1987

- Representation from Portage La Prairie established.
- Hosted a multicultural celebration for International Women's Day. Events were also held in Brandon and Thompson. Each year IWAM continued to recognize the strengths of immigrant women by holding a March event.

1988

- Sponsored first Settlement Language Training Program class with federal and provincial government support. Involvement in ESL continued program delivery continued to the present.
- Officially opened the counselling services in October, to help immigrant women and families experiencing domestic violence. Over the years, the services expanded to include public education and consultation.
- Founded an artistic and cultural development program. Formed the Circle/Square Arts Group.

Programming

- | | | |
|------|------|--|
| 1988 | ☛ | Sponsored the research project: "An Evaluation of Offshore and Manitoba Orientation Needs and Services", funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. |
| 1989 | ☛ | Settlement Language Training Program (SLP) class was held. |
| 1990 | ☛ | Sponsored year long workshop series in cooperation with the Free Vietnamese Association. |
| | ☛ | Consultant hired to develop and deliver 3 group therapy/support groups. |
| | ☛ | Sponsored workshops and an art exhibit with immigrant visual artists in cooperation with the Citizenship Council of Manitoba. Supported art, creative writing, theatre, crafts, cultural displays and dressmaking. |
| | ☛ | Offered Speech Craft and Communication course. |
| | ☛ | Expanded a resource centre. |
| | ☛ | Delivered a Settlement Language Program (SLP) class. |
| | ☛ | Established volunteer network and ongoing volunteer bank. |
| | 1991 | ☛ |
| ☛ | | A Lunch Fit Program was offered with City Parks and Recreation to provide mild exercise for working women during lunch hour. |
| ☛ | | Sponsored educational workshops with Indo-Chinese women's groups and ongoing outreach with ethno cultural communities. |
| ☛ | | Provided emergency and legal assistance for immigrant women. |
| 1992 | ☛ | Completed a project with Victor Mager School to provide an educational series for Spanish speaking people. |
| | ☛ | Settlement Language Program held 4 classes. |
| | ☛ | Continued educational forums, a drop in centre, the Circle/Square Arts group and community outreach. |
| | ☛ | The counselling unit increased client services, networking and developed a support group for Middle Eastern Women in partnership with the University of Manitoba. |
| | ☛ | Participated in development of Popular Theatre Alliance's play about immigrants called "How do you do?". |

Programming

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1992 | • Volunteer interviewed immigrant teens from several communities and identified the need to provide supports for teens and mothers. |
| 1993 | • The Community Based Language Training Program (CBLT) held 3 classes.
• Counselling Program developed protocols for social work student field placements from the University of Manitoba.
• Began pronunciation classes with Red River Community College that continued to 1995.
• Held juried art exhibit called "Emerging Cultures" at Main Access Gallery in cooperation with the Citizenship Council.
• Conducted 2 focus groups for single mothers and for immigrant women in academia.
• IWAM held its 10 th year anniversary. |
| 1994 | • Signed a five year contract with the Department of Family Services MB to provide services to immigrant women who are abused. A five year strategic planning sessions was organized.
• Counselling program continued to provide client services, referrals and networking. Links with other service providers were built.
• Provided social work practicum, field work and other placement opportunities.
• Forums, outreach and arts groups continued.
• Presented cross cultural sessions on "Vietnamese Families Perspective" with Vietnamese Women's Association and "African Family and Canadian culture" with the African Women's League of Manitoba.
• Conducted a St. John's Ambulance workshop called "Life Saver Challenge".
• CBLT was conducted in 7 classes. |
| 1995 | • Held classes in practical dressmaking.
• Developed and presented staff/volunteer socio-drama on Cultural Dynamics.
• CBLT held 3 classes.
• Developed program for young women with Boys and Girls Club. |

Programming

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducted workshops on family violence prevention in Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg funded by the Can. Women's Foundation.• Received recognition award from the International Year of the Family Secretariat for outstanding contributions to the success of Family Year '94.• Client counselling and support groups continued• Delivered 2 month training to client support volunteers.• Presented cross cultural stories for children with the Family Centre of Winnipeg. |
| 1996 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosted Citizenship Court for new Canadian citizens.• Conducted workshop on Bridging Culture and Cross Cultural Communication at Red River College Diversity Day Celebrations.• CBLT held 3 classes• Co-sponsored events for the Elimination of Racism Day with the Manitoba Advisory Council of Women.• Advised the delivery of the Multicultural Partner Abuse Prevention Program.• Based on Family Dispute Services recommendations, completed a review of IWAM programs and operations and developed board and staff orientations and an updated procedures manual.• Ran 3 Credit Circle information sessions on starting a home business.• Held a visual arts seminar for immigrant artists.• Conducted 2 visible minority youth forums in conjunction with the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women.• Offered skills training courses on dress making and sewing.• Expanded and updated the resource library.• Conducted Health Aging Seminars with Women's Health Clinic. |
| 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing counselling, outreach programs, monthly forums, volunteer training, and drop in centre.• Conducted research and held a settlement forum with communities from the former Yugoslavia with a grant from the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. |

Programming

- 1997
- Partnered with the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club to offer programs for new immigrant women and children (NOPAC).
 - Conducted a pilot project with Community Legal Education Association to provide legal clinics for immigrant women.
 - Volunteer program expanded.
 - CBLT ran 2 classes.
 - Other ESL programs were sponsored with Culture, Heritage and Citizenship including: English for Professionals and Math and English for students at South Winnipeg Technical School - off campus program.
 - Held International Women's Day Poetry Reading.

Brandon

- 1985
- Regional group was named "International Women Together". Developed a resource stand at Tong Sing grocery store, sponsored refugee children to summer camp and held social activities and workshops.
- 1987
- Established ongoing annual International Women's Day events.
 - Hosted workshop on "How to Set and Execute Goals".
- 1989
- Sponsored a Settlement Language Training Program class.
- 1992
- Held a breast cancer awareness workshop. Helped Westman Multicultural Council organize ESL and other community events. Organized ethnic cooking classes and picnics.
 - Participated in "Brandonorama" and held workshops "Health Styles 200".
 - Held a Tenth Year Birthday Party on May 8, 1992.
- 1995
- Hosted several workshops and symposium on family violence prevention with Brandon University Women's Program.
 - Ongoing involvement with Heritage Festival and community events. Ongoing sponsorship of workshops, such as Healthy Aging, dancing and craft classes.

Programming

Thompson

- 1986 ✎ Organized ongoing craft sessions and workshops.
- 1987 ✎ Held ongoing International Women's Day events.
✎ Developed and supported community events and participated in women's coalitions.
- 1990 ✎ Consulted on Meech Lake Accord, participated in community events and hosted Citizenship Court reception.
✎ Participated in working conference to build a stronger community and racial harmony.
- 1992 ✎ Formed Circle/Square Arts Group .
✎ Sponsored seminar on women and breast cancer.
- 1995 ✎ Established office, expanded community involvement and ongoing involvement in women's issues.

Portage La Prairie

- 1988 ✎ Ongoing networking, cultural entertainment and membership recruitment.



Conferences

- | | | |
|------|----|--|
| 1983 | ta | The first Provincial Conference on Immigrant Women was held on February 18 and 19 with over 100 delegates. A board was formed to develop an immigrant women's organization. |
| 1984 | ta | Conference on the Rights of Domestic Workers with 150 participants from the Philippines, the Caribbean and a variety of backgrounds, held at the Holiday Inn. |
| 1986 | ta | Sponsored "Winning Women" conference at the Marlborough Hotel with over 200 participants. |
| | ta | Co-sponsored and hosted the 1st National Conference on immigrant women called "Immigrant-Visible Minority Women - Forward Looking Strategies for the 90's" with participants from across Canada.. Resulted in the formation of the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada. Two Manitoba representatives were elected to NOIVMC. |
| 1987 | ta | Sponsored "Towards Constructive Family Relationships", a conference on wife abuse funded by the Secretary of State. |
| 1988 | ta | Held a provincial conference on the future concerns of immigrant women. |
| 1990 | ta | Co-sponsored "Changing Roles of Immigrant Women Conference", with the Pakistan-Canada Cultural Equation. |
| | ta | Annual Symposium "Vision for the 90's". |
| 1991 | ta | Annual symposium "Moving on and Reaching out". |
| 1992 | ta | Annual symposium "Immigrant Women and the Family". |
| | ta | Mayor Bill Norrie proclaimed Immigrant Women's Day to coincide with International Women's Week in March. IWAM events were held annually. |

Conferences

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| 1993 | to | Tenth Anniversary Conference and Banquet called "Partnership for Power". |
| 1994 | to | Annual symposium "Youth within the Family Dynamics". |
| 1995 | to | Coordinating agency for the Western Canada Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies conference and annual meeting. |
| | to | Annual symposium "Families in Transition". |
| 1996 | to | Annual symposium "Immigrant Families Facing the Realities of the 21st Century. |
| | to | Co-sponsored "Family Harmony" conference with the Multicultural Partner Abuse Prevention Program. |
| 1997 | to | Annual symposium "IWAM - Working in Partnership with Community Builders". |



Publications and Materials

- 1985 ✎ Produced regular conference and annual reports.
- 1986 ✎ Completed a video tape called "Making Canada our Home" funded by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.
✎ Started publishing a quarterly newsletter.
- 1987 ✎ Developed a facilitator's manual on adaptation skills based on a workshop series funded by Immigration and Settlement Branch.
- 1989 ✎ Published the first of three editions of "Voices" by Circle/Square Arts Group. Three booklets of poems, storied and visuals portraying the experiences of immigrant women.
- 1994 ✎ Produced a brochure and poster about IWAM services.
✎ Developed counselling procedures manual.
- 1995 ✎ Counselling program wrote notices and information on family violence in several languages.
- 1996 ✎ Updated and revised counselling and operating procedures manual.
- 1997 ✎ Completed Volunteer Training Manual.



Presentations/Networking/Consultations

Over the years, IWAM has worked with many groups in the community, the province and across Canada. Following is a sample of IWAM's contributions and partnerships.

- 1985
- Began networking with the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Manitoba Committee on Wife Abuse, Manitoba Intercultural Council, Immigrant Women's Employment Counselling Services and the Interagency group on Immigrant Concerns.
 - Lobbied the federal government on the need for ESL for immigrant women who were not destined for the work force.
- 1986
- Met with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and presented a brief to the Parliamentary Task Force on Child Care.
 - Presented to Winnipeg School Division # 1 on maintaining summer programs and eliminating ESL fees.
- 1987
- Made submission to the Health and Welfare Canada Task Force on mental health issues affecting immigrants and refugees.
 - Consulted on the Citizenship Act in Edmonton Alberta.
- 1988
- Presented to Standing Committee of the Secretary of State, Women's Program on maintaining and increasing women's programming.
 - Presented brief on citizenship to the federal government.
 - Presented brief to the Minister of Health on midwifery and to the Manitoba Task Force on Meech Lake
 - Participated on the Winnipeg Service Providers Network of 20 women's organizations
 - Presented a paper on affirmative Action at the UN End of the Decade for Women conference.
- 1989
- Presented briefs on child care needs of immigrant women to the Provincial Task Force on Child Care and on literacy training needs to the Provincial Task Force on Literacy.

Presentations/Networking/Consultations

1989

- Made numerous public education presentations to ethno cultural groups, churches and social services.
- Consulted on the paper "Immigrant Women in Canada: A Policy Perspective" published by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Met with the Manitoba Women's Initiative Hearing Committee and the Labour Minister regarding pay and employment equity.
- Consulted with the Minister of Employment and Immigration and other government officials on women's issues, IWAM's concerns, multiculturalism, and health policy.

1990

- Presented to Minister of Health on the legalization of midwifery.
- Presented to Osborne House crisis workers.
- Participated in the annual Immigration Levels Consultation of the federal government.

1991

- Worked with the Manitoba Coalition of Shelters, Winnipeg Service Providers and Child and Family Services.
- Presented at a Banff, Alberta Conference on "Women and Mental Health - Women in a Violent Society".
- Addressed language training issues with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

1992

- Presented at Immigration Awareness Week
- Addressed immigration concerns of domestic workers.
- Presented brief to the legislative assembly on Bill 98, the Multiculturalism Act.

Presentations/Networking/Consultations

1993 - Present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to make numerous presentations at social services, public events and in the community. Cross cultural presentations were made in many locations including: Osborne House, Oak Park High School, Vietnamese Cultural Centre, University of Manitoba - Faculty of Social Work, IRCOM House, Adult Education Centre, and Reading Aids of Winnipeg, Red River Community College, University of MB, South Winnipeg Technical Centre.
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocated for services for refugee claimants and for those threatened with deportation by abusive husbands and for employment equity. • Raised funds to ship home the remains of Sureta Khan who was murdered by her husband. • Participated with networks on multicultural parenting, women's health, and midwifery.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbied against new immigration fees and worked on many issues including family violence, discrimination, ESL and settlement. • Advised government of impact on immigrant women of privatization of home care services. • Participated with the Cross Cultural Committee Against Domestic Abuse on a workshop series addressing culture and family issues.
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with federal Minister of Immigration about the negative effects of low immigration levels to Manitoba. • Continued networking with many groups including the International Centre/Interfaith, Mount Carmel Clinic, Employment Projects for Women, Community Financial Services, Taking Charge, Manitoba Cross Cultural Coalition on Violence Prevention, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Culture, Heritage and Citizenship Manitoba, Klinik, Fort Garry Women's Centre, Fort Garry Family Centre, Health Sciences Centre, Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Harvest, Villa Rosa, Women's Health Clinic, St. John's Ambulance, Nygard International, Manitoba Fashion Institute, CARFAC - Canadian Artist Representation, Winnipeg Police Services, Women's Advocacy Program, Revenue Canada, Portage Women's Centre and many more...