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Life after an Abusive Relationship

Stories of Empowerment and Regained Life Control

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<p>The purpose of this study was to examine a group women in Finland that have in their past been in abusive relationships and to define the core resources that helped them to end the abusive relationship.</p> <p>With this empiric study I aimed to raise awareness, to bring new data and to increase the understanding of the complexity of an abusive relationship. I conducted the study through qualitative thematic interviewing with semi-structured questions. I used empowerment and life control theories.</p> <p>The results indicate that ending an abusive relationship tends to be a long term process and the abuse rarely ends to the break up. Due to its complex nature women need substantial resources to detach themselves from it.</p> <p>My work life partner Naisten Linja ry felt that a study like this provided useful information for them. They are intending to use this thesis on their English webpage.</p>	
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<p>Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tarkastella ryhmää naisia Suomessa, jotka ovat olleet väkivaltaisessa suhteessa ja selvittää pääresurssit ja voimavarat jotka auttoivat heitä lopettamaan väkivaltaisen suhteen.</p> <p>Tämän empiirisen tutkimuksen pyrkimyksenä oli lisätä tietoisuutta, tuottamaan lisää materiaalia ja lisätä ymmärrystä väkivaltaisen parisuhteen monimuotoisuudesta. Opinnäytetyö on laadullinen tutkimus jossa on käytetty teema-haastattelua puolittain strukturoiduilla kysymyksillä. Käytin tutkimuksessa voimauttamis- ja elämänhallinta teorioita.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti, että väkivaltaisen suhteen lopettaminen on yleensä pitkä prosessi ja väkivalta harvoin päättyy eroon. Väkivaltaisen parisuhteen monimuotoisuuden vuoksi naiset tarvitsevat riittäviä resursseja päästääkseen irti väkivaltaisesta suhteesta.</p> <p>Työelämäkumppanini Naisten Linja ry koki, että tutkimusaiheeni on tärkeä ja, että tutkimus tuotti heille hyödyllistä informaatiota. Naisten Linja aikoo käyttää tätä opinnäytetyötä englannin kielisillä nettisivullaan.</p>	
Avainsanat	voimauttaminen, elämänhallinta, parisuhdeväkivalta, väkivalta, voimavarat

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1 Introduction

Violence in intimate relationships is a topic which gets much media coverage and research yet when we hear stories of women that are undergoing violent relationships many of us keep asking the same question: *“Why does not she just leave her partner?”* We often also hear judgmental comments such as: *“If I were in her situation I would not stand violent behavior for one second”*. This inspired me to conduct a study to determine what resources are needed to end an abusive relationship and why it seems like such a struggle for many to detach themselves from an abusive partner.

Studies show that social- and healthcare workers do not always have sufficient knowledge nor training to work with women that are undergoing or that have been in violent relationships (Lähisuhde- ja perheväkivallan ehkäisytyön koordinointi ja osaamisen kehittäminen 2006: 13) therefore my aim was to provide useful knowledge that will increase the understanding of the complexity of relationship violence.

For this study I examined three women in Finland that were in their past in an abusive relationship. I conducted this qualitative study by using thematic interviewing with semi-structured questions. I used empowerment- and life control theories.

My working life partner Naisten Linja ry gave me the opportunity to choose a topic relating to family- or relationship violence. As Naisten Linja works with women that have been directly or indirectly affected by violence the gender that I focused in this study is women. Naisten Linja is planning to use this thesis on their English website.

First I am going to present the working life partner Naisten Linja then I will describe relationship violence in Finland. I will discuss the forms and symptoms of relationship violence and the cycle of violence. Finally I will present the purpose of my study, the empowerment- and life control theories and the execution of the study with the results.

2 Naisten Linja

Naisten Linja is a third sector organization that supports women that have been subjected to violence or the threat of violence and people that has a close one that has suffered from violence. Naisten Linja provides a safe and anonymous place to talk about the violence. They give guidance, support and advice through telephone services, internet services and support groups. All of these services are free of charge (Naisten Linja 2014).

2.1 Services

The telephone services are available in Finnish, Swedish and English which makes it easier for non-Finnish speakers to seek for help. The telephone services are available in Finnish six days a week and in English and in Swedish once a week. The persons answering the phone are trained volunteers.

The internet services offer free of charge guidance and support. The women gain access to them through a private username which is safer than having the answers in example sent through email. The answers will be given within 10 days and they will remain there for 60 days

Naisten Linja also offers open and closed support groups for women. The support groups are run by two professionals. The open groups are arranged once in every two weeks. There is no registration needed and any woman can come to them as she pleases (Naisten Linja 2014).

Naisten Linja does not gather qualitative research as such because all the contact with the people remains anonymous. That is why I was told studies like these are very useful for them.

3 Relationship Violence in Finland

According to research conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Finland is the second most violent country in Europe and 47 % of women have experienced physical or sexual violence after the age of 15 (Violence against women: an EU-wide survey 2014: 28-29). For women there is the highest risk to become a victim of violence in an intimate relationship: "Any woman regardless of their age, cultural background, ethnic origin, religion, lifestyle, educational level, financial or societal position can be a target of violence, there is no typical victim of violence" (Perttu, Mononen-Mikkilä, Rauhala & Särkkälä 2005: 12).

Relationship violence is common in Finland: over one in five women have experienced physical or sexual violence or the threat of violence by their current partner, every sixth minute a woman is abused by her husband or partner in cohabitation and every second week a woman in Finland dies as a result of a violent partner. About 50 % of women have been subjected to violence or the threat of violence by their ex-husband or partner in cohabitation and 36% of the violators continue the violence even after the separation (Perttu et al 2005: 13). Half of the homicides and murders of women are done by the partner whereas for men only one percent is killed by their significant other (Notko 2000: 14). Studies indicate that especially young women who live in cohabitation with their partner and women with small children are in the risk of relationship violence and approximately half of the women get physical injuries from the violence (Näre & Ronkainen 2008: 106).

Perttu (1999: 16) states that there is no singular determiner that explains violence in intimate relationships however there has been evidence suggesting that people tend to implement the model that was learned from home. In some families the usage of violence may have been an acceptable way to treat others or to solve conflicts or to react to negative feelings such as stress, anger, jealousy or other disappointments. It has been estimated that about 40% of men who use domestic abuse have themselves grown up in a violent home (Huhtalo, Kuhanen & Pyykkö 2003: 11).

The fact that the violator and the violated are known to one and another and share an emotional bond makes the situation more complex to handle: “The violence is tied up in everyday life and to an intimate relationship. The violence in a relationship or family makes it problematic and the definition of relationship or family as a place of closeness, safety and love is no longer simple” (Notko 2000: 2-3).

Notko (2000: 2) suggests that in our society there is a strong belief that it is the woman’s duty to maintain a successful, harmonious relationship and women may feel that they have failed at this due to the violence that is taking place. At the same time relationship violence does not fit into the image of a strong, independent and equal Finnish woman (Husso 2003: 62). These issues may lead to women being increasingly ashamed and covering up the violence that is taking place.

According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights the research of violence against women and setting goals to prevent it has only during the past two decades started on an international scale (Violence against women: an EU-wide survey 2014: 9). Husso (2003: 63) says that there was not much discussion about relationship violence in public in Finland before the mid of the 90’s.

3.1 Legislation & Services

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland states that multi-professional cooperation and special skills are needed to prevent and reduce violence in intimate relationships (Lähisuhde- ja perheväkivallan ehkäisytyön koordinointi ja osaamisen kehittäminen 2006: 13). There is clear need for improvement as the research conducted on relationship- and domestic violence is mainly in the hands of organizations and projects that have no actual obligations for advocating or conducting further research.

There are also other concerns with the quality of services provided: Notko (2000: 49) claims that many of the social- and healthcare workers dealing with victims of violence do not have adequate training to work with such clients and this can certainly hinder the process of getting sufficient help.

In 2009 the government set forth a project with The Union of Health and Social Care Professionals that targeted to prevent violence against women. There have been other changes in the legislation as well that have been aimed to protect the victims and to

enable to intervene with relationship- and family violence, yet Niemi (2010: 1249-1250) criticizes that the government has failed to go through the legislation holistically in order to determine the conflicts that occur in the legislation regarding the prevention of violence in intimate relationships. Luckily there can be some improvements seen in the legislation: in the end of 2013 stalking became a criminal act in Finland and it has been estimated that the stalking is mostly executed by ex-partners. According to Savon Sanomat (2014) there have been so far 50 reports of offence and it is estimated that yearly there will be around 250-300 reports of stalking.

4 The Forms of Violence

In order to have a proper understanding of what resources are needed to end a violent relationship I found it necessary to mention the forms of violence as well as the symptoms that occur to victims of relationship violence. This is a crucial part as it shows how holistically the violence affects the victim in every aspect of her life and why it may feel overwhelming to end such a relationship.

The Wheel of Power and Control (Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014) presents different forms of violence that are used to achieve and uphold power and control and the submission of the partner. The forms of violence will eventually become increasingly brutal as the violence does not bring enough positive results for the violator. The victim's personal identity gets wounded and the victims' life space, which may include matters such as friends, hobbies, work and life generally, narrows down significantly (Huhtalo et al 2003: 18).

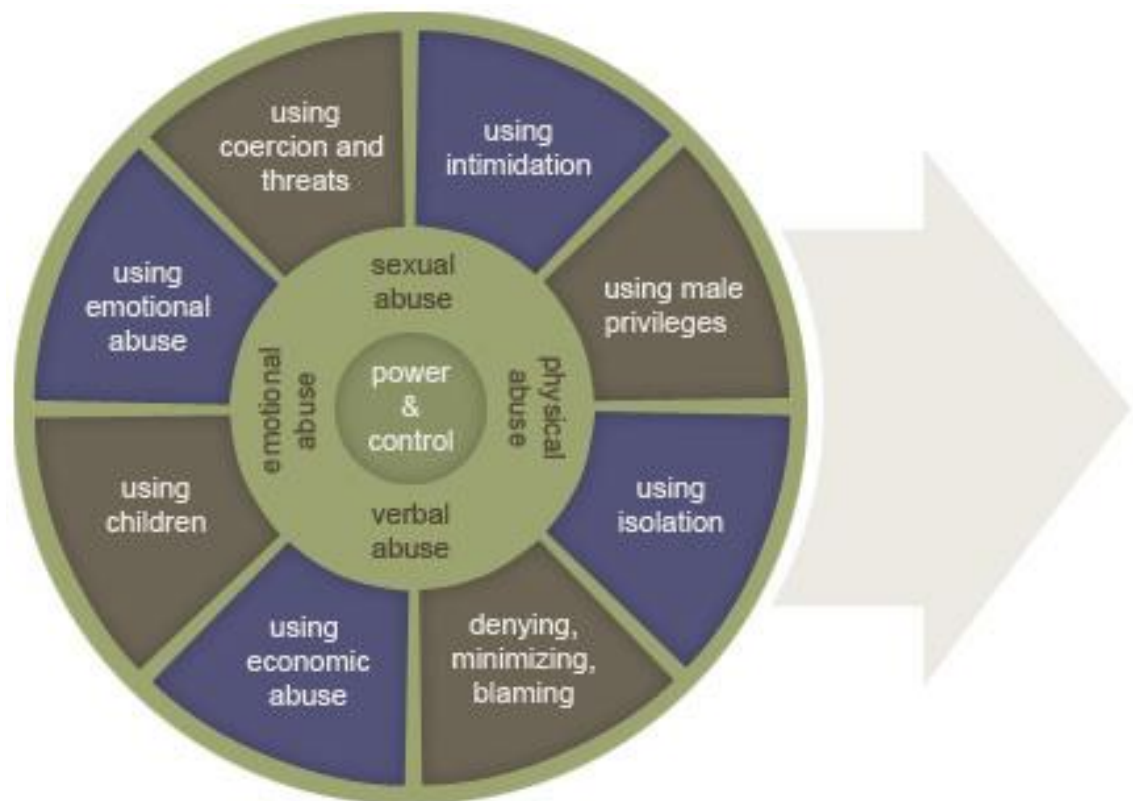


Image 1. The Power and Control Wheel, Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014

4.1 Physical & Sexual Violence (Fyysinen ja seksuaalinen väkivalta)

Physical violence can consist of any violent action that causes injuries or physical harm. If the physical violence is pre-planned the injuries are usually in places of the body that can be covered. Physical violence can also include force and the restriction of liberty (Perttu 1999: 13). Huhtalo et al (2003: 18) suggest that a partner who is suffering from a physically violent partner is also highly likely to suffer from emotional violence, control and manipulation on an almost daily basis.

Most often the term violence indicates to physical violence or the threat of physical violence. It can include with hitting, kicking, strangling also other measures of force and the deprivation of liberty. Physical violence is the easiest recognized. Violence subjected to women is in reality much more versatile and complex than just physical violence. It can be conducted in surprisingly many ways (Lehtonen & Perttu 1999: 37)

The usage of violence is always intended and goal-directed and the violator always has justification to why he is acting violently and he always directs the blame towards somebody or something else such as the partner or environmental factors. As the violence eventually increases there are more justifications made. The violator himself experiences an outburst of feelings that he feels are out of his control. These feelings may have been triggered by something the partner did or said and the violent act is used to redeem the control (Huhtalo et al 2003: 16-17).

Sexual violence damages the persons' self-determination as well as their identity and self-respect (Alkio 2000: 35). Sexual violence may include any sexual activities that the victim does not agree to or sexual activities that cause pain and humiliation. Sexual violence is one of the most effective ways of submission and it is often resorted to when other forms of violence do not bring wanted results (Huhtalo et al 2003: 18). Hurtful comments directed towards the sexuality or the body or controlling what clothes the partner can or cannot wear can be also classified as sexual violence (Näre & Ronkainen 2008: 132).

The man's controlling behavior is in many cases emotional violence with sexual elements to it. The purpose of control is to chain the woman's sexuality. Sexual violence has many forms. The men aim to check by various means that the partner is not with some other man. The woman's clothing needs to be according to the man's wishes. The man decides about what and how the woman can talk in the presence of others and with whom she can acquaint with (Näre & Ronkainen 2008: 151)

According to a study conducted in Detroit almost half of the victims of rape suffered from various traumatic symptoms whereas severe physical violence, such as stabbing or shooting only caused traumatic symptoms for about a fifth of the victims (Näre & Ronkainen 2008: 46). In Finland there is not accurate statistics on how common sexual violence is due to the fact that only a marginal percent of the cases are informed to the police. "Victims of sexual violence suffer even eleven times more depression than the general public, six times more social situations related phobias and over twice as much sexual dysfunctions. All of these have an influence on the persons' coping in personal relations as well as working life" (Alkio 2000: 35-36).

4.2 Emotional Violence (Henkinen väkivalta)

Emotional violence can be frequent verbal abuse, yelling, name-calling or nonverbal threat. It can also be following, disturbing and verbal threat. The destruction of objects and furniture and cruelty towards pets can also be considered as emotional abuse. The purpose of emotional abuse is to make the victim feel worthless about herself and to crumble her self-esteem, her own thinking- and processing abilities and her ability to *feel right*. It may include name-calling and repression. Often the partner aims to get the woman to think that she is emotionally disturbed. The partner denies or minimizes the violence and or blames the woman for the violence. Emotional abuse is always included in all forms of relationship violence (Perttu et al 2005: 10–11).

Emotional violence can be defined as any action which leads to the reduction of the victim's self-consciousness, self-respect and self-worth. This can be done both intentionally and unintentionally. Emotional violence can withhold a great amount of jealousy and as in the other forms of violence the violator is taking power and control away from the victim. Restricting the basic rights of the victim by for example taking away her right to choose or denying privacy or using isolation, bullying, scaring, and manipulation are also considered as emotional violence (Perttu 1999: 13–14).

Isolation is one of the combinations of physical and emotional violence. Isolation can be considered as behavior such as monitoring the partners' behavior or even as an extreme locking the person behind closed doors (Huhtalo et al 2003: 11). Näre & Ronkainen (2008: 14) state that the use of violence damages ones' identity which causes shame that furthers the isolation of the victim. Intimidation is a form of psychological violence. Like the other forms also this is used in the means of control. Mind-games are often used when intimidating the victim (Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014).

Victims of violence often describe the coercion and threats as worse than the actual physical violence and mild physical violence is usually a part of the coercion and threats (Niemi 2010: 1263). Coercion and threats have the same kind of a distressing effect on a person as physical violence has. Coercion and threats may also include the destruction of the personal items or property of the victim or scaring the victim with the threat of physical violence (Perttu 1999: 13). By using denial and blame the abuser is making the assault seem like the victim's fault or making the abuse that took place seem smaller than it in reality was. In some cases even total denial that the violence ever happened is

used (Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014). Children can be used as a form of emotional abuse (Perttu et al 2005: 10–11) and they are used as a tool of violence especially during break up situations: the violator can continue the manipulation and the situation remains traumatic for the woman (Huhtalo, et al 2003: 13).

Economic abuse withholds power and control and has the features of emotional violence in it. Economic violence can include the restriction or controlling of the victim's financial assets, the stealing of the victim's money or other assets, forcing or pressuring of selling the house, or financially cheating or using the money in a wrong way and intentional lying and discursion (Huhtalo et al 2003: 11). The use of male privilege can be conducted by being in control of the decision making, defining a hierarchy between men and women, defining clear roles of men and women or treating the partner like a servant (Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014).

5 The Symptoms of Relationship Violence

There are several symptoms that a person living in a violent relationship may experience: Perttu (1999: 31) states that a violent relationship creates constant stress and leads to emotional injuries such as traumatic stress.

5.1 Traumatic Stress & Crisis (Traumaattinen stressi ja kriisi)

“Violence is a traumatic event and the symptoms of the victim can be considered as symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The symptoms may be shown in the behavior, personal relationships, emotional life, personal features, social life and health state” (Kalavainen et al 2006: 18–19). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms are shown generally a few weeks after the trauma but some of the symptoms may occur after several months or even a year (Narsistien Tuki ry 2014).

According to Perttu et al (2006: 18–19) Traumatic symptoms are a natural reaction to a traumatic event. With them the victim aims to regain emotional balance. One can never get used to the traumatic events and therefor repeated traumatic events cause an emotional crisis. Traumatic stress can be seen as anxiety, restlessness, inability to focus, fears, anger, hatred, nervousness, guilt, despair and severe depression. The victim may

also suffer from eating disorders, sexual problems, insomnia and nightmares. The victims often have thoughts of suicide and they may even attempt suicide. They may also experience somatic illnesses such as stomach problems, pains, nausea, and dysrhythmia and infarcts (Perttu 1999: 31).

Violence may also cause tiredness and memory problems. It crumbles the self-esteem and the ability to trust others. The victim may experience emotions such as fear, guilt and shame (Kalavainen et al 2006: 18–19). Powerlessness, inability, feeling of falling to pieces, loneliness, isolation, submission and the questioning of the validity and authenticity of own emotions can also be seen and it is challenging to let go of the violent relationship as the victim gets no distance from it (Notko 2000: 11).

Outsiders may notice behavioral symptoms that can be mistaken for mental health symptoms. This may lead to misunderstanding and *double-victimizing* where outsiders such as professional helpers make the victim again a victim by accusing her of the violence. “The man gets upset of his hysterical, edgy partner” and by dealing only with her symptoms the victim is prescribed with calming medication that may make the situation even more confusing for the victim (Perttu 1999: 31). Traumatic symptoms are not an indication of a psychological dysfunction or substance abuse (Kalavainen et al 2006: 18-19) although according to Perttu (1999: 31) they may lead to self-medication with alcohol, tranquilizers or other medication which might in turn eventually lead to an addiction.

Traumatic stress leads to a traumatic crisis that affects the person holistically. The violator tends to make the victim and outsiders doubt the emotional stability of the victim.

Both physical and emotional violence causes a traumatic crisis to the victim and affects her self-esteem, self-image and self-worth. Living in constant fear is very insulting, emotionally stressful and it leads to the forming of symptoms. Emotional and physical violence can be compared to torture, where the victim's will and self-perception are crumbled and dominated to the will of the torturer. The victims tend to have a surreal feeling that may lead to the denial of the event, feeling guilty, negative self-perception and feeling of insecurity (Narsistien Uhrien Tuki ry 2014)

6 The Cycle of Violence

The Cycle of Violence is an essential part of the study because it gives further understanding to what the victims are going through and why it is hard to detach oneself from the relationship.

Relationship and domestic violence tend to have a cyclic mentality which has three periods: the tension phase, the violent phase and the honeymoon phase. At first the cycle proceeds slowly but after time it accelerates and the violence tends to become more brutal because the violator is not getting enough positive results from it or when the victim starts questioning the control. This ruins the foundation of a healthy relationship and is extremely harmful for the victim's personal identity. The violence tends to start as emotional violence and it quickly leads to the reduction of the partner's living space. When the cycle of violence starts again the victim neglects this as repetition but sees it as two different situations and the violator blames the victim for the difficulties throughout the process (Huhtalo et al 2003: 17-18).

The cycle of violence narrows down the victims possibilities to make decisions and to judge them (Kalavainen et al 2006: 10).

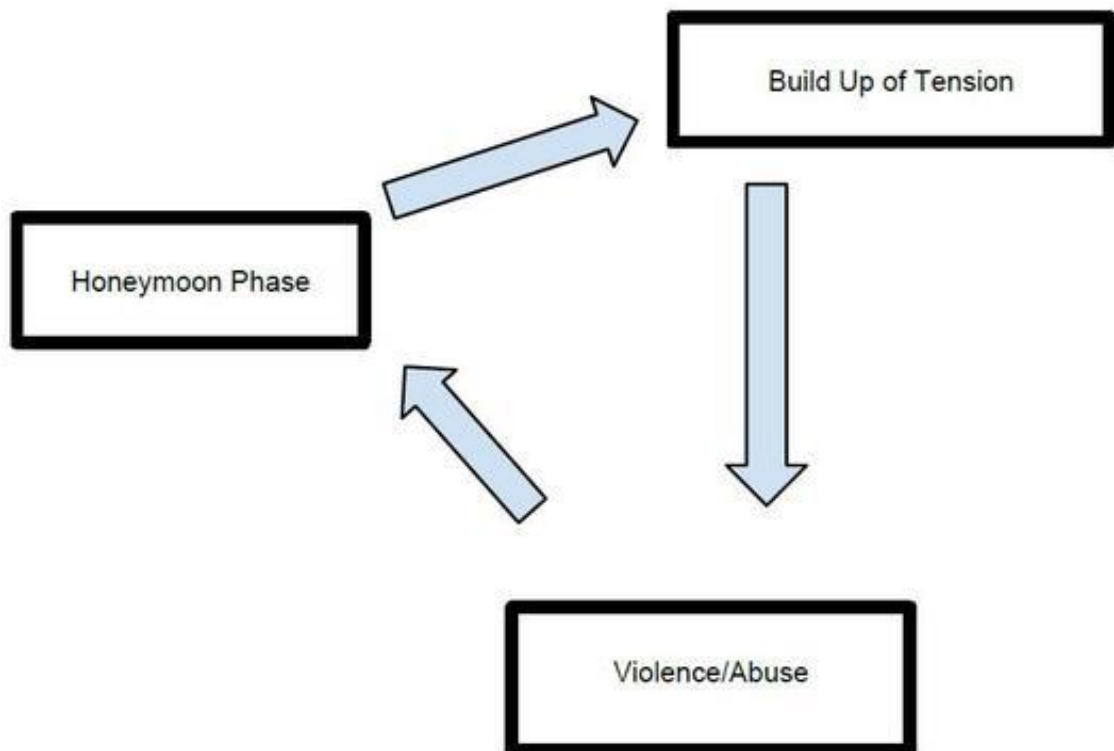


Image 2. Cycle of Violence, Fly Free Organization 2014

6.1 The Three Phases of Violence

When the tension starts to build up the violator does not know how to face these issues. It is typical to blame the victim for the tension. By doing so the violator gets a reason to use violence against the victim (Fly Free Organization 2014). When the tension grows physical assaults such as pushing slapping or emotional abuse such as verbal accusation or humiliation of the partner may occur. At the same time the victim tries to stay cautious, stay quiet and to act on the violators wishes to prevent the violence from happening. She changes her behavior to keep the harmony in the relationship. This does not stop the violent phase, it only prolongs the tension phase yet it may create an illusion for the victim that the situation is under her control (Fly Free Organization 2014).

It may greatly vary how long it takes for the first cycle of physical violence to take place, it usually happens faster when the victim starts questioning the use or the level of control. Eventually the violence tends to become increasingly brutal as the earlier used violent methods bring no longer the needed results or satisfaction to the violator (Huhtalo et al 2003: 17-18). When the violence does occur it may include physical and sexual abuse or the use of weapons (Perttu 2000: 30).

After the violent act the violator feels relief that the built tension has gone. The violator does not recognize his own responsibility for the violence, rather he feels that the partner pushed him into the violence however he struggles with the fear of abandonment and makes an effort to regain the affection of the partner. The victim struggles with the mixed feelings of confusion and hurt and fails to recognize the cycle of violence that is taking place. The victim may partially or completely blame herself for the assault and the victim believes that the violator is wanting to and planning to change even though the violator fails to see his connections and responsibility to the act (Fly Free Organization 2014).

After the abuse the violator projects repent and may even give presents for the violated. He may ask for forgiveness and may promise that he will never act violently again. The third stage is also known as *the illusion of happiness*. The violated may believe that the violator will change. Within time the cycle tends to repeat more often and the violence

tends to escalate. As the cycle escalates there might no longer be peaceful times. Then the victim has no clue when the violator will attack or what he will do to her. The victims describe this type of life as walking on eggshells. Eventually the victim loses control over her life, the life control is replaced by the needs and desires of the violator. The victim lives in a permanent crisis, gradually losing her ability to judge the severity of danger (Perttu 1999: 30).

7 The Purpose of the Study

With my study I aimed to find out what resources are needed to end a violent relationship as to increase the understanding of violence in relationships. Husso (2003: 62) claims that it is impossible to understand violence and the effects of it on the subjects unless the victims themselves discuss about their experiences and that is why I interviewed women that have first-handedly gone through a violent relationship.

As long as there is no discussion of the sufferings of those who have been subjected to violence and as long as the experiences are not dealt with, researched and analyzed, violence can be reasoned as a tool of handling problems and violence can be prevailed and understood as an acceptable way of acting (Husso 2003: 65)

The target group was three women in Finland who have been in abusive relationships or marriages in their past. I found these women with the help of my working life partner Naisten Linja that published my interview inquiry in their webpage and in social media. I had no criteria for the age of the women or the length of the relationships in fact I preferred having women participating that were from diverse backgrounds.

7.1 Empowerment (Voimauttaminen)

Freire first introduced the world with the concept of empowerment. In the book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996: 14) he discusses how all human beings have the ability to analyze the world in a critical manor and to form dialogue with others. He criticizes the basic teacher - student hierarchy as both of these individuals have something to give and to learn from one and other and he stresses on the importance of individuals finding

the right tools that raise ones' consciousness and the ability to view the world through critical lenses.

Freire was giving power to people - or actually helping them find the power within by educating poor peasants who were illiterate and therefore could not take meaningful part in the society.

I work and I transform the world. And as those who have been completely marginalized are so radically transformed, they are no longer willing to be mere objects, responding to changes occurring around them; they are more likely to decide to take upon themselves the struggle to change the structure of society, which until now has served to oppress them (Freire 1996: 15)

In the same way women in violent relationship, although oppressed by an individual rather than the society need to regain their consciousness and to regain control over their lives. Adams (2008: 81-83) states that self-empowerment means people taking power over their own lives and that everything that people achieve in terms of gaining control and achieving change follows not only from outward behavior but also from how empowered they feel. Women who feel empowered are likely to set higher goals for themselves' in life and this reflects on their outward behavior.

Freire (1996: 29) argues that the oppressed are in fact fearful of the freedom as this would mean that the oppressed would have to change their inbuilt model and to start taking command over their own actions as to become autonomous. This is one issue that should be taken into recognition when working with women that are undergoing relationship violence: they are likely to possess hesitance of ending the relationship not only due to romantic reasons but also due to the inbuilt perception of reality and the fear of autonomy.

7.2 Life Control (Elämänhallinta)

As violence is ultimately about taking power and control away from the victim (Huhtalo et al 2003: 9) the victims can be seen to lose their life control. Life control is a concept that can have changing meaning to different people. In this thesis I have defined life control to mean the skills, resources, personal strengths, decision making, self-esteem

and other things that the women felt they had. I was interested to find out what effect the violence had on their life control and how long it took to recover and regain life control over their lives.

A person's self-esteem is closely linked to life control. When a person's self-esteem gets damaged it also has a significant effect on the life control of the person. Self-esteem can be redefined as self-value or self-confidence. Having independency over ones' choices regarding her life is an important part of it. When this independency for one reason or another is distorted the person becomes dependent on other people. This will have a negative impact on the self-image and self-determination as the person may no longer realize what choices should be made or what type of a life the person wants. (Keltikangas-Järvinen 1994: 18-22).

A victim of violence often feels helplessness which intertwines with self-accusation and feelings of inferiority (Jokinen 2007: 65). Victims often have difficulties of putting the situation into words and the victim may feel that outsiders would not believe her or would think that she is exaggerating. The victim may feel so overwhelmed by the whole situation that she has no power to react to the violence or to defend herself and this will take a toll on her self-esteem, this creates a strong sense of hopelessness (Jokinen 2007: 71-72).

According to Kallionpää (2012: 13-14) every person has his or her unique resources and difficulties in life can unveil these unused, potential resources. The term resources, is complex and resources can be classified to both inner and outer resources that become accessible when needed. The inner aka personal resources can include parts such as knowledge, coping strategies, self-esteem, trust, the feeling of control and the strength of the inner me, whereas the outer resources can be classified as social support. However as relationship violence tends to be a traumatic, ongoing event that damages the self-esteem, feeling of control and other resources and assets, a victim of violence tends to have quite limited resources and lacks the power to stand up for herself (Karhuvaara 2013: 7-8). A positive self-esteem is closely linked to the life satisfaction, the quality of life and the control over ones' life. It has effect on everyday life, both personal and professional, it affects what kind of goals a person sets for herself and it projects to everyday life satisfaction (Keltikangas-Järvinen 1994: 35-49). In this study I have defined resources to include also other assets such as work, money or other possessions that the women felt helped them in ending the abusive relationship.

8 Study Methods and Execution

I went through the topic idea with a coordinator of Naisten Linja after which they published my interview request in their webpage and in social media. I was contacted by three women and I interviewed all of them for this study. We agreed the interview times and places with the women via email and phone and the women got a clear understanding of my topic and why I am doing such a study prior to the interview.

Because the topic was highly sensitive I decided to meet the interviewees' separately. I used qualitative thematic interview as a research method. Qualitative thematic interview was a suitable research method as the answers of the women were based on their own experience and it was unknown what kind of answers would be obtained (Hannila & Kyngäs 2008).

In qualitative research the study targets are individuals with their unique experiences. The purpose was to find common themes or denominators and it was important to preserve the individuality of each of the participants (Varto 1992: 79). Thematic interviewing was an essential part to qualitative research or studies as it gave structure to the interview and I had a clear understanding of the study objectives prior to the interview (Varto 1992: 51-53).

I asked both open and closed questions in the interview. The questions were semi-structured. I gave room for the women to share their experiences and thoughts. The main goal was to understand the resources they felt helped them to end the relationship but due to the complex nature of relationship violence I needed to build a deeper understanding of the situation they were in. For developmental purposes I asked did they feel the support they got was adequate.

I interviewed three women that had all been in relationships or marriages where different forms of violence occurred, the interviews lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. After the interviews I transcribed the interviews and I gave color code names for the women before analyzing the common themes that had emerged. I left code names for the women in order to conceal the identity of the women and to make it more clear for the readers to categorize the participants. The codes that I used were X1, X2 & X3.

X1: fourteen years in an abusive marriage, the woman came from a foreign background and the ex-husband is a Finn

X2: a year and a half in an abusive relationship, lived in cohabitation together in Finland, both are Finns

X3: two years in a violent relationship, lived abroad in cohabitation, the woman is a Finn and the man came from a foreign background

9 Results

I found many commonalities between the answers of the women; they all suffered from several forms of violence and they were all greatly affected by the violence even after the relationship or marriage had ended. The importance of having adequate resources such as a support network became visible as the violence and control made the women less autonomous and altered their perception of reality. I used direct quotations of the women to cover the themes that we went through.

9.1 How the Violence Originated

All of the women felt that there were many signs of violence already in the beginning. Emotional violence started long before the physical violence. One of the women felt that alcohol greatly impacted the disputes. Huhtalo et al (2003: 12) state that disputes and arguments are a part of any relationship, and that an argument can be seen to become unequal and violent when fear becomes a part of it.

X1: "In a way I think the violence started in the beginning even when I didn't realize. The first year things were happening that I didn't realize were a part of the process... I can say that the signs were there but much much later I noticed that there was violence. Not physically not very often I think it probably started maybe after ten years the physical threat, holding grabbing and pushing..."

X2: "It started already during the first months, almost immediately. He started being so jealous and controlling but I didn't really get it then. Also I wanted to spend all my time with him then and I was so happy and kind of flattered that someone wanted to spend that much time with me. The actual

physical violence started about after a year but really there were warning signals already way before.”

X3: “It began of jealousy and possessiveness. The physical violence started later.”

9.2 The Forms of Violence that Were Experienced

I found it helpful to mention all the forms of violence that are used in the previously mentioned Power and Control Wheel (Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa 2014) so that the women could define what forms of violence were used in their relationships and marriage. As expected all off the women suffered from several forms of violence in their past relationship or marriage. There were many correlations between the violence that the women experienced even though they were different aged, different ethnic backgrounds and the extent of the relationships varied.

Some of the violence that was conducted the women found difficult to put a certain category because it had elements of many forms of violence in it. According to Perttu et al (2005: 10) it is typical that different forms of violence go hand in hand and many forms of violence and control are hard to be distinguished. I listed the forms of violence that at least one of the interviewees experienced.

Even though physical violence did not happen that often the women felt that there was emotional violence and the threat of violence present. Alkio (2000: 33) argues that physical violence can be classified as burdening for the psyche as the death of a loved one and the fear of the violence stays present in the relationship even during the peaceful phases. Certain sounds and scents may strongly trigger the memory of the violence that took place.

X1: “There was holding, grabbing, pushing... It did not happen that often. There was more of the threat of violence present...”

X2: “He was physically violent a few times during bad arguments, it always happened after an argument. Quite often I felt he provoked me into an argument.”

X3: “Yes there was physical violence, but it did not happen immediately. First there was something small like pushing, later after weeks or our arguments got worse and he hit me.”

All of the women felt that emotional violence was there before the physical violence. According to Jokinen (2007: 19) emotional violence may be verbal or nonverbal and it can take many different forms such as “submission, humiliation, yelling, swearing, pressuring, mockery, name calling, threatening, controlling, minimizing, scaring, harassing and accusing”. Emotional violence is used to both control and restrict the victim’s life and it can be just as powerful and effective as physical violence. Physical violence tends to proceed emotional violence. It can be challenging to prove or even acknowledge emotional violence that is taking place. The most effective and sometimes the only way to identify emotional violence is by focusing on the symptoms of the victim. Stress is constantly present, other symptoms may be sleeplessness and various psychosomatic symptoms (Jokinen 2007: 65).

X2: “There was extensive jealousy, control, putting me down... I am not a strong person, I do not wear the right clothes, I am such a difficult and negative person, and nobody else will ever bear me...”

X3: “The jealousy and possessiveness got worse and nothing I did or said gave him the confidence that I would not cheat on him.”

All three women felt that their life space was reduced. Näre & Ronkainen (2008: 151) argue that in many situations just the knowledge of control is enough to make the woman stay at home in order to avoid further conflicts. This unfortunately this does not have any reduction on the man’s attempts to control the partner.

X1: “I think isolation was more a result that I was a foreigner. I didn’t have a strong network, I had lack of confidence I could do many things that I wanted but... it was a result of many things including. Some things are difficult to put to one category like asking me to get out of the car and leaving me in the middle of nowhere when my kids were in the car.”

X2: “It’s hard to describe the amount of control. I had to be at reach within all time. This got worse after he lost his job. He could literally use all his time on me. Everything I did was wrong. I started panicking if my phone ran out of battery because I knew he would try to contact me and we would have arguments later about it.”

X3: “I was quite young and I wanted to go party and to have fun with my friends. He was six years older. He constantly lived in the thought that I would cheat on him so he did everything to stop me from going. Later it

was not just stopping me from going partying, he was thinking that maybe I will meet a man at the gym and cheat on him there. It was hard trying to keep some sort of harmony when there was all these restrictions. I loved him and I felt like... he just wanted to take care of me and that was his way of loving me.”

Only one of the women had children, and the woman felt that the children were also used as a way of control.

X1: “He was using them (children) and was using them very much after due to custody and money and conflict situation. I don't know didn't he care that the children were there or did he choose to insult me when the children were there. He was saying things like “I will take the children away from you. You will go to a nuthouse and you will never see them again”. He lost his temper also to the children but he was not physically violent towards them. You feel guilty you take the father away you have to keep in touch and that way he can still manipulate after divorce.”

All of the women felt there was a threat of violence and scaring present. “Violence always has a mental element to it. Most typically it is the threat of violence. From the women's violence associate feelings fear is the highest” (Näre & Ronkainen 2008: 151-152). Quite often just the threat of violence shapes the woman's behavior by for example staying home to avoid conflict.

X1: “The first time it became really physical I had to go to the doctor was after the separation, I didn't expect it anymore because we had separated. Before only there was threat like with a fist in front of my face so the threat was very much there.”

X2: “My ex often broke something that belonged to me if I “got him upset” which meant I disagreed with him. He broke my telephone several times but he always got a new one for me the next day. He couldn't bear if he could not get contact to me at all times... There was quite much threat and scaring but instead of making threats he actually did those things if I did not agree on something.”

X3: “When I later thought about it my father was in many ways like my ex. I was kind of used to having some threat of violence in my childhood home even though he never hit my mum and maybe that made it more ok to tolerate it from my ex.”

All of the women felt that the men were using male privilege as a way of control.

X1: "I think yes in the relationship he had a strong idea of the things that are not right for him to do for example cleaning I had to do by myself even though we were both working fulltime and if he had the idea we should let's say learn golf he went with his friends and I should figure it out when to do it. He could do things as priority and I should figure it out who takes care of the children when I go do it."

X2: "He thought he was automatically smarter and had more authority because he was a man... I don't think that his impression of his superiority only related to me, it was also other people. Nothing was ever his fault and he could have done things better than anyone else in the world. By everything I mean everything even if it related to things he was completely clueless about. I was the one that had a higher education and got a good job, he lost his job and many friends because he could not see other peoples' sides to things."

X3: "My ex was a typical example of a *macho*. He had a very strong belief of what kind of behavior was ok for women and what wasn't. He came from a different culture and we were living in his home country so I many times let him choose too much about everything because he knew how the system there worked and what was ok and not ok for women."

9.3 The Effect of the Violence

All of the women felt that the violence had a substantial effect on them and had significant effects on their life control. They only realized the severity and impact of it a long time after the relationship ended. Huhtalo et al (2003: 9-14) states that relationship violence eventually changes the behavior of the victim to represent the reality of the violator. "When the first punch takes place the victim no longer asks for the justification of the treatment. She blames herself by wondering what she did wrong again for making the partner hit her".

X1: "well I think that umm... I can see the changes afterwards like looking backwards I can see I was a shadow of myself and the situation brought the worst of me out. So all the issues that I had not sorted out about my youth and relationship with my parents all kind of things that were my weaknesses instead of having someone to support me with them I had someone who used them against me to put me down."

X2: "I almost lost contact to many people because of this. I wasn't at all myself I was always tired and stressed out. I had dysrhythmia and other illnesses quite frequently. I didn't feel like seeing anyone. I came home straight from work. I did not even talk much anymore it was easier to avoid the arguments."

X3: "I was not myself at all, I wanted to die. I even thought about killing myself, I did not see any way out of the situation."

9.4 Ending the Relationship

Two of the women felt that ending the relationship was a long process. According to Jolkkonen & Varjonen (2002: 27) it may be even harder to detach ones' self from a violent than a non-violent relationship. It can be especially challenging for the women to express their desire to end the relationship either due to the fear that is present or because they are no longer used to making choices according to their own needs and interests. As undergoing violence is a traumatizing event which causes the victim to lose her ability to judge the severity of danger (Perttu 1999: 30).

X1: "I would say that really seriously only once before real time I tried to end it. The difference between first time before I started to think about leaving I still had the idea of marriage: this is forever, you do what you need and this will last forever. When I started to think no this is not possible I suggested therapy. He didn't want. I was afraid and started to prepare how to manage, with the kids, the money the apartment. He found that paper where I had made plans and then he agreed to go to therapy. What made me stay was the therapy: he made an effort and things got better in the beginning. It lasted still a couple of years but my attitude was changing. I was questioning is this forever. One of the big problem was with alcohol and his drinking. He drank a lot. At first I didn't mind, I was young and wanted to party as well. After having children I did not want to party anymore. Drinking made him a bad person. Some people become happy, some get sad and cry he became a bad person. It wasn't just with me it also caused problems with his friends and others."

X2: "We lived together. I know this is a bad reason to stay together but I was struggling financially and I was working only part time. I couldn't have afforded to pay the rent and the bills alone. Also he had moved to my city because of me. I felt somehow guilty and responsible of him and he knew how to manipulate me. He had lost his job and he had lots of anxiety and pains. For the last six months of the relationship we were living together but we were not really together. Still he controlled me like we were together."

X3: "I left my ex after I found out that he was cheating on me. It is so ironic that he was constantly so focused on me possibly cheating on him and then he was the one who cheated on me. I moved back to Finland so he really did not have the possibility to stay in contact with me, I don't know how things would have gone if I had stayed there."

9.5 Violence after Ending the Relationship

Two of the women experienced violence after ending the relationship.

X1: "The first time it became really physical I had to go to the doctor was after the separation, I didn't expect it anymore because we had separated. Before only threat with a fist in front of my face so the threat was very much there."

X2: "My ex came often to my work place. He at times waited for me near my house, called me and texted me all the time and kept ringing my doorbell. I never called the police or made a report. I didn't really believe that it would have changed anything because he didn't care about any rules or laws. Eventually as I gave no response the stalking started stopping but I got emails from him even years after, even though I kept blocking them. He probably knew my email passwords as well and that's how he could keep sending the messages. I mean of course he knew. He wanted to control every single aspect of my life, why would my email have been any different."

9.6 Recovery

Husso (2003: 63) states that the recovery of abusive relationships is a slow process. The women felt that it took years to recover from the violence and regain their life control and empowerment. One of the women felt they needed to get better life skills than what they had before the relationship because she could see herself going towards an abusive relationship with the next partner. One of the women had broken up quite recently and she was still recovering from the break up.

X1: "I think to really recover about 7 years. I could quite soon function but to go deeper to understand the whole situation that I am not crazy, it took longer. Recovery is not just to make peace but to understand the things that are you that helped to recover and try to not be in the relationship again. I'm too dependent, I'm not respectful of myself enough. I had to change my behavioral pattern. It happened in the next relationship again after that. Controlling and stalking taking regular contact not accepting a no, sending email full of insult. Until I said I don't want to meet you or go to coffee because you're insulting me."

X2: "It's been almost four years since we broke up. I thought I recovered pretty much immediately. After that separation I felt like I had just got out from prison. But it took me many years to really process what happened, and I don't think I have even now completely processed all of it. Really I didn't really get how bad my situation was, only afterwards I am shocked that I let someone treat me like this. It is kind of like staring at a painting

with your nose attached to it. Of course you see it but you don't *really* see it. At least I didn't see it."

9.7 Unofficial and Official Support Network

All of the women had at least some type of unofficial support network, which they found to be highly important. However the women felt that the support network did not always give them the type of support that they needed. The women felt that the presence of close ones, whether it included friends, relatives, their children or even pets had a huge significance. One of the women felt that she could not have ended the relationship if it were not the support of her friends and family, another woman felt that the children gave her strength to end the relationship. The violence had gotten so bad that she feared that the children might end up motherless and that made her understand that anything is better than that.

Jolkkonen & Varjonen (2002: 35) argue that the perception of human beings and humanity has a strong relation to what kind of help should be offered and what is possible to offer to the victims of violence. I believe that this perception also affects what type of help the victim seeks for: is it enough to just talk about the violence to close friends or should police, health care and social workers be involved or would it even make any difference if they were informed.

X1: "In a way I was quite isolated in that way that I didn't have the network that knew me for a long time, family relatives school friends and so on. Most people I knew through him. I didn't have my own friends that much, I didn't have that safety network. Maybe parents or someone close can figure out even without telling them that something is wrong. But I had good friends, some friends did help me."

X2: "I told only a few people about this violence and I didn't tell them all of it. Of course they wanted to help me and they gave all advices that were mostly linked to that I needing to end the relationship. But I wasn't ready to end it and my friends wouldn't have had energy to listen for week after week about the same problem that I was not ready to fix. So I often pretended that things were better than they were."

X3: "I was living in a foreign country. I had friends but not that close ones. Still I was in constant contact with my friends and family in Finland. Now that I live in Finland I get lots of support from my mum and my sister, I don't know how I could cope from this without them."

The amount of help the women sought from official sources varied from no help to some help. None of the women made a report to the police or demanded conviction. Lehtonen & Perttu (1999: 14) state that women generally tend to seek help from unofficial sources such as from friends or relatives. Only about one in four women seek help from an official source such as the police or the healthcare.

X1: "Kriisipalvelu, health center, therapist... the most important was Kriisipalvelu Mielenterveysseura for foreigners. I got to see someone quick, I saw the same person many times and they deal with all kind of problems that happen to foreigners. It was not so called proper therapy but emergency therapy. Until then I had never called the police or gone to the doctor but after he moved out he came to my house, we had an argument he tried to strangle me. I called the police then I put the phone down and didn't make a report after all. Later I went to a doctor and the doctor checked me."

9.8 Three Core Resources

I asked the women to define three most important resources that they felt helped them to detach themselves from the relationship or marriage. I specified that resources could be people, work, personality traits, material assets or any things that came in mind. The answers had many commonalities.

9.8.1 Resource 1: Support Network

The women felt that the presence of close ones, whether it included friends, relatives or their children had a huge significance. One of the women felt that she could not have ended the relationship if it were not the support of her friends and family, another woman felt that the children gave her strength to end the relationship. The violence had gotten so bad that she feared that the children might end up motherless and that made her understand that anything is better than that.

9.8.2 Resource 2: Personal Traits & Values

One of the women felt that her upbringing had a great significance in ending the relationship. Violence was never used in her childhood home and because of this she had different expectations for the relationship and she kept demanding for better treatment. Another woman felt that her personality traits helped her. She described herself as a problem-solver who could deal with difficult issues as they came and she would worry about them later. The third woman felt that her physically demanding hobby may have had some positive impact on her personality and it gave her more ability to cope with stressful life situations.

9.8.3 Resource 3: Official Networks

All of the women had some official network that they either sought out to or that they were a part of that they felt helped them cope with their life.

X1: Therapy: “we had started therapy but we never talked about the violence, it was about our life and about his drinking. He was making an effort. Going to therapy started bringing a bad atmosphere to the house so we stopped going. I regret that we stopped going. The violence was never addressed in the therapy we started having normal life again and afterwards the violence started again. I went for the therapist alone again and it eventually took the guilt and inferiority away from me. I understood that my basic human value is stepped on and then I realized I can’t be treated like this.”

X2: Work: “It wasn’t just about money. I also got lots of self-respect and feelings of success by working. It was at one point the only place where I could get some distance to the relationship. It was a huge resource for me.”

X3: Voluntary work: “I was volunteering for an organization that was helping homeless animals. Later when I thought about it I got a lot more out of it than what I gave. I never told anybody from there what was actually happening in my life and I was happy that nobody there knew. Once a girl there asked where I got my bruise from but of my hobby it was easy to cover it with that.”

9.8.4 Outside Help

Näre & Ronkainen (2008: 9-12) discuss how in today's postmodern society individuals are called to take responsibility of their own actions and choices: "an individual herself should be capable to evaluate risks and to evaluate the reality of other people, different situations, various information and the represented reality: everyone should be capable to draw the lines to protect their intimacy." Näre & Ronkainen also mention that unlike before femininity and vulnerability do not automatically qualify for protection and that outsiders do not necessarily give any sympathy to those who do not take responsibility for their own lives despite all the knowledge and information that is out there. With pre-judgments like these women may find it harder and more shameful to ask for help.

One of the women got outside help, another felt that she had a big emotional obstacle from getting help, and one of the women felt that it would have been useful to get outside help but the whole situation back then was so stressful and emotionally burdening that she was using her energy just to cope with everyday life. She also mentions that if she had seen her situation in the eyes of others she would have maybe went to get help but because she did not get any distance from the situation she did not realize how bad things actually were.

X2: "It's so difficult when you don't see your own situation, what a shitty and helpless situation you are in because you never get distance from it and that is the last thing the person wants, he does not give you distance because he is so scared of losing you. I never went to therapy but I think it might have helped. Friends don't always know how to help and not all of us have someone to talk to about this. I wish that relationship violence would be talked more about in schools and such. It is still kind of a taboo, it happens but at least I always had this picture that the victims were kind of like those cases that let anyone step over them."

9.9 Additional Thoughts and Advice

The women felt they did not get adequate support from their close ones. According to Huhtalo et al (2003: 10) when outsiders do not interfere with the violence it increases the adjusting and the submission to the violence, making it more normal and acceptable. The women felt that violence needs to be discussed and advocated in Finland.

X1: "It is important that relationship violence is talked about Finland. Finland is a very violent country in my opinion home violence is a big problem and everybody knows someone who has been in a violent relationship. One thing that did not help I don't know is it a Finnish thing or all over the place people around me were very neutral or uninvolved I would have liked to have friends to take a more active part they kind of knew but they didn't ask did you need help what's going on when I went to their house for the night with the children this is not normal and they should have asked what's going on but they didn't. You have to try to be a little more involved without judging more like asking what do you need have you seen someone to help you is there violence with the kids... People don't have to tell you what to do they can ask you what you need. If people ask questions do you need help are you ok it's easier than for the person to say "yes I need some help". Everyone is staying for many reasons in a violent relationship: some because they love the man, some have kids and do not want to leave and it is useless to criticize it makes you feel more like crap."

X2: "I don't remember a single lecture in ground school or in high school about relationship violence and still in every class there are probably people who have grown up in violent homes or that will end up in a violent relationship. I think that is just horrible."

X3: "In Finland relationship violence is much more talked about than in many countries. For example there where I was living it was so normal for men to be more machos and to be like in charge of the family. And much more difficult to be taken seriously and to get some help. In Finland there are many places that help can be found from it's just there's just such a big obstacle to take the help that is offered."

10 Findings

As I started working on my thesis my basic assumption was that relationship violence has an effect on the victim and it is challenging to end such a relationship but I did not have clear understanding of what exactly makes ending an abusive relationship difficult or how important it is to have adequate resources within the process. This study gave me insight of how holistically violence in intimate relationship affects not only the person but her behaviour and her sense of autonomy and how it is increasingly difficult to make such life decisions after losing partial or most of ones' autonomy. Also I gained more understanding of the traumatizing aspect of the violence and how the victims of violence are not able to comprehend the severity of their situation due to the constant trauma that they are undergoing.

I found three participants to be enough for such a study as the answers were subjective. “Qualitative studies do not aim to make statistical generalizations, they aim to describe a certain event, to understand certain functioning or to give sensible interpretation of a certain phenomenon” (Eskola & Suoranta 1998: 61). Due to the fact that the answers of the participants had so many commonalities I felt that a bigger survey group for this study was not needed.

As expected all of the women suffered from not just one but several forms of violence which significantly altered their behavior, self-image and their view on life. This enforced the perception that violence is a form of control. When individuals start losing control over their life and they gradually grant their autonomy to the partner ending the relationship becomes a more complex process in comparison to ending a regular relationship. The women highlighted the importance of having proper resources and support in not just ending the relationship but also managing life after the relationship had ended.

Defining the resources that helped the women to end the relationship was a question where I felt the women struggled the most with, yet all the women mentioned first the importance of having some type of a support network so clearly having other people such as friends and family was a highly significant resource for them. One woman stated that during the relationship she very much felt she had no resources whatsoever but looking back there were things in her life that she got resources from.

11 Ethicality and Validity

As my topic was highly sensitive I paid close attention to the ethics at all stages. I preserved the anonymity of the women by creating codes to represent them and I conducted the study in a way that preserves their identity at all time. I arranged the interviews in quiet, calm, safe surroundings that I and the participants agreed upon and I conducted the interviews separately.

As the experiences of women that have been subjected to violence are extremely prone to rejection, misunderstandings and doubt (Husso 2003: 62) I paid lots of attention to formulating the questions in a way that they were not accusing or misleading and also I had done research beforehand on the topic to have an understanding of relationship violence.

The participation was completely voluntary and if I saw signs of the participants becoming uncomfortable we took a break and I again emphasized that the participation was completely voluntary and that we would not need to address any themes that the participant felt uncomfortable with.

I also gave my working life partner and the women interviewed a clear understanding of my topic and why I am conducting such a study. To ensure validity I used direct quotations although there may be slight modifications of some sentences structures as a result of translating two of them from Finnish to English.

12 Conclusion

This study suggests that having strong resources and adequate support from the society and close ones are important factors when ending an abusive relationship. Increasing the awareness is necessary in our society so that there is increased understanding about relationship violence and the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship model. Advocating helps people to understand that inactive support from close ones and society may in fact normalize the abuse and make the situation worse.

Adequate resources are needed when ending an abusive relationship. What these resources are may vary by personality although there seem to be commonalities, such as having a support network, having certain personal traits or values and getting support from outside organizations.

Relationship violence seems to have a profound and holistic effect on the life of the victim and her self-esteem and it may be extremely difficult to end the relationship and to break the connection to the abuser. Even though I expected that several forms of violence would have likely occurred in the violent relationships I was surprised to hear how holistically the violence was presented in all aspects of the women's lives. This supports the theory that the forms of violence go hand in hand and that emotional violence is always included in relationship violence.

For all the interviewees the recovery and regained life control seemed to be a long term process and for some it is still an ongoing process. The violence had greatly affected

them as a person. In two of the cases the violence did not stop after the relationships ended instead it seemed to escalate after the breakups.

13 Discussion

The aim of this study was to further the understanding of the complexity of relationship violence by getting more insight to what resources were needed in ending the abusive relationship and to determine what makes it challenging to end the abusive relationship. I felt that the study method I chose was the right approach for such a study, as I was interested about the experiences of individuals that detached themselves from abusive relationships. I collected data from a topic that I felt has not been much touched in other studies.

Even though not all participants used outside help such as therapy all of the participants agreed that it might have been useful or it was useful to see a therapist because friends and family do not always have proper tools to address the issue or are too afraid to address the issue. All of the women also mentioned certain personality traits or personal values that were important resources in ending the relationship.

I found the data collected from three women to be large enough for such a study because in qualitative study the answers are subjective and a big group of study participants is not needed. The empowerment theory and life control theory formed a strong basis for my study. Understanding what is empowerment and what is considered as life control helped me to formulate the questions for the study and to understand what relationship does to a person at a holistic level.

I believe that this was a beneficial study topic because violence in intimate relationships is common in our society and we are very likely to both directly or indirectly work with clients and co-workers that have suffered from violence in relationships. Although there is increasing information existing about relationship violence, it is advocated and new laws are slowly created to ensure the rights and protection of the victims it is still a huge dilemma in our society and there is always need for further research and studies to help prevent the violence, to support the victims, to help the offenders in getting help and tools and to advocate. Many Finns do not understand how common relationship violence is

and how much it affects not only the person but also the close ones and the surrounding society.

Although it is widely agreed the relationship violence is condemnable and should be prevented many individuals feel they do not have tools to address the issue or to help a close one or an outsider such as a neighbor who is suffering from an abusive relationship. I find it extremely important that the preventative work would be started at a very young age to teach children the difference between an abusive relationship and a healthy, equality projecting relationship model where conflicts are not solved with violence. After all we live what we learn.

As a suggestion for further research I feel that a similar study conducted on men would be useful. As a developmental suggestion for my working life partner Naisten Linja I feel that more focus on preventative work of relationship violence would be needed, for example by arranging small courses or seminars where individuals are helped to notice signs of relationship violence and given tools to help friends and close ones who suffer from violence in intimate relationships. As the crumbling of self-esteem is always a result of the abuse a project that aims to boost the self-esteem of the victims of violence through creative approaches such as different forms of exercise, learning new skills, using animal assisted therapy and so forth would be highly recommendable.

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Image 1. The Power and Control Wheel Family Crisis Centers of Northwest Iowa.

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Image 2. The Cycle of Violence. Fly Free Organization. <http://www.dv-resources.org/cycle-of-violence.html> accessed 22.8.2014

Haastattelupyyntö

Hei!

Olen kolmannen vuoden sosionomi opiskelija Metropolia Amk:n englanninkieliseltä linjalta Helsingistä ja olen tekemässä opinnäytetyöni naisista, jotka ovat olleet väkivaltaisessa suhteessa / avioliitossa menneisyydessään.

Etsin haastateltaviksi naisia, joiden kumppani on ollut väkivaltainen ja pyrin selvittämään mitkä olivat ne voimavarat jotka auttoivat suhteen lopettamisessa.

Opinnäytetyöni tavoitteena on kerätä lisää tietoa aiheesta ja sitä kautta tukea niitä, jotka ovat tällä hetkellä väkivaltaisessa suhteessa.

En käytä opinnäytetyössä kenenkään nimiä tai muita tietoja, joista haastateltavat voitaisiin tunnistaa.

Voimme sopia tapaamispaikan jossakin pääkaupunkiseudulla.

Haastatteluun menee noin tunti ja se on yksilöhaastattelu.

Mikäli olet kiinnostunut tai haluat lisätietoa minut saa kiinni sähköpostitse tai puhelimitse alla olevista yhteystiedoista.

Aurinkoisin Terveisin;

Tea Taanila

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Gsm: 044-5254586

Muita auttavia tahoja

<https://www.naistenlinja.fi/fi/julkinen/muita+auttavia+tahoja/>

Apua naisille

Turvakodit tarjoavat asumis- ja avopalveluja lähisuhdeväkivaltaa tai sen uhkaa kokeneille ympäri maata.

Raiskauskriisikeskus Tukinainen antaa tukea ja ohjausta seksuaalisen väkivallan tai hyväksikäytön kohteeksi joutuneille sekä heidän läheisilleen.

Monika-Naiset tarjoaa palveluja väkivaltaa kokeneille maahanmuuttajataustaisille naisille ja lapsille usealla kielellä.

Suomen Mielenterveysseuran kriisikeskukset auttavat erilaisissa kriiseissä. Valtakunnallinen kriisipuhelin tarjoaa välitöntä keskusteluapua kriiseissä oleville ja heidän läheisilleen numerossa 01019 5202. Mielenterveysseuran SOS-kriisikeskus antaa henkistä apua ja tukea äkillisiin sekä pitkittyneisiin kriisitilanteisiin. Mielenterveysseuralla on myös alueellisia kriisikeskuksia ympäri maata.

Kuntien ja kaupunkien sosiaalipäivystykset auttavat kiireellisessä sosiaalipalvelujen tarpeessa. Lähimmän sosiaalipäivystyksen yhteystiedot löytyvät puhelinluettelosta tai kunnan sosiaalitoimen verkkosivuilta.

Ensikodit antavat tukea vanhemmuuteen, elämänhallintaan ja itsenäiseen selviytymiseen.

Amnestyn Joku raja! -kampanja on suunnattu naisiin kohdistuvaa väkivaltaa vastaan.

Diakoniatyö on Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon tarjoamaa apua erilaisissa kriisitilanteissa oleville ihmisille.

Nettiturvakodissa on neuvontaa, keskustelufoorumi ja tietoa väkivallasta.

Tukinet - kriisikeskus netissä.

Apua.info antaa tukea jaksamiseen erilaisissa kriisitilanteissa

Kirkon perheasiain neuvottelukeskukset antavat keskusteluapua elämän erilaisissa kriiseissä.

Nyyti ry tukee tiede- ja taidekorkeakouluopiskelijoita useissa kaupungeissa.

Demeter on avoin linja naisille, jotka käyttävät tai pelkäävät käyttävänsä väkivaltaa.

Seta ry tiedottaa, auttaa ja kampanjoi seksuaalisen tasa-arvon puolesta. Seta tarjoaa monenlaista tukea ja apua lesboille, homoille, bi-seksuaaleille ja transihmisille, myös puhelimitse.

Narsistien uhrien tuki ry tarjoaa jäsenilleen tukipalveluita.

Al-anon on tarkoitettu alkoholistien läheisille.

Suomen vanhusten turvakotiyhdistys Suvanto ry:llä on lakimiespäivystys, puhelinneuvontaa sekä ryhmätoimintaa Helsingissä.

Kirkon palvelevassa puhelimesta on mahdollisuus purkaa kaikkia mieltä painavia asioita. Suomenkielinen päivystys numerossa 01019-0071 on avoinna su-to klo 18-01 ja pe-la klo 18-03.

Nettikartano tarjoaa naisille maksutonta, luottamuksellista ammattiapua erilaisten elämäntilanteiden solmujen aukaisemiseen. Naistenkartano ry:n sosiaalialan ammattilaiset neuvovat ja ohjaavat naisia heidän yksilöllisten tarpeidensa mukaan.

Rikosoikeudelliset asiat ja neuvonta lakiasioissa

Rikosuhripäivystys tarjoaa neuvontaa ja tukihenkilöitä rikosuhreille sekä todistajille. Rikoksen uhrin, hänen läheisensä tai rikosasiassa todistavan on mahdollista saada Rikosuhripäivystyksestä tukihenkilö maksutta. Rikosuhripäivystyksen auttava puhelin numerossa 0203 16116 ma-ti klo 13-21 ja ke-pe klo 17-21.

Naisasialiitto Unionin juristipäivystys tarjoaa maksutonta lakineuvontaa naisille Helsingissä.

Tukinaisen juristipäivystys Helsingissä on tarkoitettu seksuaalista väkivaltaa kokeneille. Ajan juristin tapaamiseen voit varata maksuttomasta juristipäivystyksestä 0800-97895 ma-to klo 13-16.

Oikeusapu on tarkoitettu vähävaraisille henkilöille oikeudenkäynnistä aiheutuneita kuluja korvaamaan. Lähisuhteessa tapahtuneen väkivallan uhrin saavat

Poliisin sivusto pari- ja lähisuhdeväkivaltaan liittyvästä lainsäädännöstä

Ensi- ja turvakotienliiton sivusto pari- ja lähisuhdeväkivaltaan liittyvästä lainsäädännöstä

Rikosilmoitukseteko

Poliisin sivusto lähestymiskiellosta

Käytännön oikeusopas väkivaltarikoksen uhrille

Asianajajaliittoon kuuluvat kaikki suomalaiset asianajajat ja liiton verkkosivuilta voi hakea asianajajia esimerkiksi paikkakunnan mukaan.

Valtion oikeusaputoimistoissa annetaan oikeusapuun oikeutetuille kaikenlaisia asianajopalveluja useilla paikkakunnilla.

Maahanmuuttajat

Monika-Naiset tarjoaa palveluja väkivaltaa kokeneille maahanmuuttajataustaisille naisille ja lapsille-

Pakolaisneuvonta ry antaa oikeudellista apua ja neuvontaa turvapaikanhakijoille, pakolaisille ja muille ulkomaalaisille Suomessa

Suomi.fi tietoa suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta ja julkisista palveluista usealla kielellä

Maahanmuuttovirasto tiedottaa maahanmuuton periaatteista ja käytännöistä

Vähemmistövaltuutettu on viranomainen, jonka tehtävänä on edistää etnisten vähemmistöjen ja ulkomaalaisten asemaa sekä yhdenvertaisuutta ja oikeusturvaa Suomessa.

SOS-Center tarjoaa kriisiapua Suomessa asuville ulkomaalaisille ja heidän perheilleen numerossa (09) 4135 0501 ma-pe klo 9-15.

Väestöliiton Kotipuu antaa neuvoja ja järjestää vertaisryhmiä maahanmuuttajaperheille.

Duo-projekti tukea kaksikulttuurisille pareille ja perheille

Ihmisoikeusliiton Kitke! -hankkeen tarkoitus on ehkäistä kunniaan liittyvää väkivaltaa.

Monikulttuuriyhdistys Familia Club

SAIMIT - thaimaalaisten naisten mentorointihanke

Asuminen

Kelan asumistuki

Turvakodit tarjoavat väliaikaista majoitusta, neuvoja ja apua lähisuhteessa väkivaltaa tai sen uhkaa kokeneille.

Ensikodit tukevat perheitä ja vanhempia vanhemmuudessa ja elämänhallinnassa.

Suomen Punaisen Ristin Nuorten turvatalot tarjoavat väliaikaista kriisiasumista alle 19-vuotialle nuorille useilla paikkakunnilla.

Avioero ja erotilanne

Duo-projekti tukea kaksikulttuurisille pareille ja perheille

Väestöliiton lakitietoa avo- ja avioliitosta

Asianajajaliittoon kuuluvat kaikki suomalaiset asianajajat ja liiton verkkosivuilta voi hakea asianajajia esimerkiksi paikkakunnan mukaan.

Valtion oikeusaputoimistoissa annetaan oikeusapuun oikeutetuille kaikenlaisia asianajopalveluja useilla paikkakunnilla.

Uskallanko lähteä, riittävätkö rahat? Ensi- ja turvakotien liiton tuottama opas

Kunnian nimissä tehty väkivalta

Monika-Naiset tarjoaa palveluja ja salainen turvakoti väkivaltaa kokeneille maahanmuuttajataustaisille naisille ja lapsille.

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STM oppaita 2005:7. Kenelle lyönnit kuuluvat? Kuntaopas pari- ja lähisuhdeväkivallan ehkäisytyöhön

Opas ikääntyneiden kaltoinkohtelusta sosiaali- ja terveydenhoidon ammattilaisille

Käytännön oikeusopas väkivaltarikoksen uhrille

Kansainvälisiä linkkejä

Hot Peach Pages on hakemisto eri maiden väkivaltatoimijoihin.

WHO:n raportti: Väkivalta ja terveys maailmassa

Euroopan neuvoston suosituksia naisiin kohdistuvaan väkivaltaan liittyen.

Epacvaw - European policy action center on violence against women