



***“This is a man’s problem”:
Strategies for working with South Asian
male perpetrators of intimate partner violence***

Gary Thandi MSW
with Bethan Lloyd PhD

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Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence
Office of Applied Research
Justice Institute of British Columbia

Justice Institute of British Columbia
715 McBride Boulevard
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V3L 5T4

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Centre for Prevention and Reduction of Violence
Office of Applied Research
Justice Institute of British Columbia
715 McBride Boulevard
New Westminster, B.C.
V3L 5T4

Tel: 604.525.5422
Fax: 604.528.5518
Email: appliedresearch@jibc.ca
www.jibc.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research presents the perspective of 17 front-line practitioners who, together, have more than 200 years of direct experience working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence or their families. All the research participants – psychologists, program managers and counsellors, police and probation officers – are members of South Asian communities in the Lower Mainland. They emphasize that men are responsible for the violence they perpetrate. No one excuses them – their choice to perpetrate violence has resulted in significant physical, emotional and psychological harm not only to their wives but also to their children, their extended family and their communities.

At the same time, the frontline practitioners told the researcher that the majority of assaultive men do not set out to hurt their wives or their families. Most of the men, having learned cultural male privilege, struggle with gender role expectations that may be far beyond their ability to meet now that they are in Canada. When they drink alcohol – a major contributor to intimate partner violence in South Asian communities – they lose control over their strong emotions.

This research does not address instances of intimate partner homicide or attempted homicide. It focuses on men who are mandated by the courts to participate in community-based programs offered in the Punjabi language. Most of the offenders, therefore, have not served time in jail. Most of them are also first generation in Canada. The research participants make it clear that men born in Canada – second generation South Asian men – while different from their fathers are often raised with many of the same cultural patterns of behavior and belief.

Perhaps the thematic analysis of this research can be best summed up by the statement of one of the participants: “This is a man’s problem.” South Asian men need to take responsibility not only for their individual behaviour, but also for the family, community and cultural patterns that support violent behaviour. “Marriage is not just about the two of them,” said another participant. It involves extended families often connected across two continents and embedded in community and religious values that foster a belief in the social structures of patriarchy, the sanctity of marriage, the stigma of divorce and the importance

of reputation and honour. Every man can make the commitment to actively support the movement toward violence-free lives for their daughters, granddaughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers. By doing so, they support violence-free lives for their sons, grandsons, brothers, partners, fathers, and grandfathers as well.

The couple relationships are often complicated by the immigration sponsorship of not only the husband or wife but other family members. Husbands and wives, working to meet obligations both at home and abroad, may also be experiencing the stress of a new relationship in a new country with very different cultural norms. Underemployment in new immigrant communities is high – especially for those who come with postsecondary education – and this can be compounded by experiences of racism, alienation and isolation.

Despite these difficulties, a key difference of South Asian families caught in the cycle of intimate partner violence is the significant desire for reconciliation by both partners. Although frontline practitioners emphasize the importance of the woman having a true choice about whether to return to their marriage, they acknowledge the importance of recognizing – and respecting – this difference.

The frontline practitioners also agree that police intervention is essential for the cycle to be broken. The length of time between the police intervention, court appearances, probation and completion of the counselling program result in hardships for everyone in the family.

An equally important role for the extended family members – as well as members of the community – involves the man and the woman before the marriage happens. Pre-marital counselling and an increased awareness of the importance of compatibility require that extended family and other community members involved in supporting the marriage see the couple both as individuals and as partners as well as members of a collective culture. This is an extremely important aspect of anti-violence community action. Prevention – from the very beginning – requires that the man and woman be encouraged to know enough about each other to make a strong commitment that sees beyond their respective families and communities. This does not require a shift to an individualistic world view but it does require the recognition that they need to be able to get through difficult times together.

The researcher also met with a focus group of South Asian men engaged in a court-mandated assaultive men’s group counselling program. Unlike the individual interviews with frontline practitioners, which were conducted in English, the two focus groups were conducted in Punjabi. The men raised the same issues as the practitioners. They explored

why they became angry – and then violent. They believed they had changed – and that other men would change if only they knew what to do. They wanted to be free of “this kind of family trouble” – like everyone else, they want to have productive and happy lives. Perhaps most important, they didn’t want the violence to continue – not only the physical suffering, but also the emotional and psychological consequences that spread beyond the family and into the community.

There is very little research concerning intimate partner violence grounded in the experience of Punjabi Sikh and other South Asian men who are first generation Canadian immigrants. There is even less that includes experiences of marginalization and racism, differences based on sponsorship status, the influence of alcohol and the importance of initial police intervention. As a consequence, education and training programs for frontline practitioners – police officers, probation officers, social workers, counselors and psychologists – do not include the information they need when working with these communities. To help bridge this gap, the researcher created a composite case study – “The Singh Family” – based on this research. He analyzes the case study within the theoretical framework of intersectionality. Perhaps most important, he uses the literature and the research to outline what frontline counselors – and other frontline practitioners – require to deliver effective, culturally appropriate services to those, like the Singh family, who come to their offices and programs.

The recommendations put forward in this report focus on very concrete actions. They include the development and delivery of:

- Culturally informed and culturally appropriate education, training and professional development for frontline practitioners working with intimate partner violence and/ or alcohol abuse in South Asian communities;
- South Asian community initiatives that focus on pre-marital education not only for couples but also for extended family members;
- South Asian community initiatives that focus on concrete suggestions for how extended family members, community members, friends and colleagues can skillfully intervene to prevent violence from developing or escalating;
- A domestic violence court similar to the drug court designed to meet the needs of families and communities;

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- A provincial commitment to fund group counselling opportunities immediately accessible to men charged with intimate partner violence;
- A provincial commitment to fund sufficient mandated programs for those convicted of intimate partner violence as a way to avoid wait times that act against the principals of supporting appropriate family reconciliation and reducing the possibility of further violence;
- A provincial commitment to fund parallel programs for women whose partners have been convicted of intimate partner violence;
- Community-based programs that address the challenges of the immigration and acculturation process including underemployment and discrimination, issues of Canadian family law and laws concerning violence, cultural norms concerning relationships (including marriage and parenting), and
- Community-based programs focused on the strengths of fathers and grandfathers that includes material on the consequences of alcohol abuse and its relationship to intimate partner violence and the destruction of families.

As the research participants made clear over and over, “this is a man’s problem.” Women in South Asian communities have supported their sisters, daughters, mothers, friends and neighbours for many years and in many different ways. They have done an incredible amount of work to both stop the violence before it begins and help pick up the pieces after it has occurred. Now, the men in their communities, in their families and in their relationships must get involved – especially the elders. Community anti-violence action must focus on changing the environment in which violence occurs – not just the environments close to home but the program and policy environments that require culturally sensitive intervention and prevention initiatives.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2009, a researcher with the Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence (CPRV) at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) began interviews with 17 members of South Asian communities in Surrey, Abbotsford, Vancouver, Burnaby, and Delta. These counsellors, social workers, probation officers, police officers, activists and elders had a combined experience of over 200 years working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence. They had worked directly with thousands of men as well as with women and children from the same families. Researcher Gary Thandi also had experience as a probation officer, counsellor, social worker, and program manager with both the workers and the perpetrators. As a South Asian man, he lived in the communities being explored.

A member of the CPRV Core Reference Group – Dr. George Tien – had raised the possibility of engaging in this research the previous year. Based on discussions with colleagues in the South Asian community, he knew there was both the need to address this question of intimate partner violence and the desire to do so from a community action perspective. Dr. Bethan Lloyd, then CPRV Coordinator, held background interviews with several key people in the South Asian community who were already involved in working with this question. Out of these discussions came the research goal:

To determine and develop strategies for implementing more effective prevention, intervention and reduction strategies for male perpetrators of intimate partner violence in South Asian communities in Greater Vancouver, the Fraser Valley and other regions of British Columbia.

Research objectives included the development of:

- public discussion opportunities for South Asian community members and frontline practitioners involved in intimate partner violence work;
- material that could be used for training, education and professional development curriculum for a wide variety of frontline practitioners;
- recommendations concerning policy for institutions, organizations and agencies, and

- recommendations for further research, in particular program and policy evaluation and development.

The working title of this exploratory project – “A Process of Discovery” – refers to the lack of research and information concerning intimate partner violence in primarily Punjabi Sikh South Asian communities in North America.

The Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence and the Core Reference Group supported not only the research itself, but the formation of a Reference Group whose members from both the community and the JIBC had particular experience in the topic. (The mandate for CPRV and a list of the Reference Group members can be found in Appendix 1.) Reference group members were also given a draft version of this report and had opportunity to provide feedback prior to the final report being completed.

The qualitative interviews are based on the principles of a transformative paradigm that includes action research. This theoretical paradigm understands research as an ethical and systematic inquiry embedded in social relations and beginning from the standpoint of those living and working within particular communities. These particular communities have been – and continue to be – shaped, but not determined, by values arising out of the intersection of culture, gender, geography, generation and other individual and collective attributes.¹ Arising out of critical ethnography, this research has the ability to accommodate cultural diversity and has transformative potential in that it attempts to uncover systemic barriers that constrain the lives of those involved in the research.² Data from the interviews provided an opportunity for learning in three key areas:

- the experiences of South Asian male perpetrators from the standpoint of South Asian frontline workers who have contact with them in the minutes, days and months following an incident of intimate partner violence;
- what is happening in the lives of other families before, during and after the violent incidents, and
- frontline practitioners’ opinions concerning effective intervention and prevention strategies in reducing intimate partner violence in South Asian communities.

¹ Mertens, 2009, 2010

² Hilton et al., 2001

Such standpoint research provides an opportunity for frontline workers to share their tacit knowledge to “cross disciplinary boundaries and foster the development of culturally sensitive and competent partnerships and reform initiatives with other stakeholders in the legal, community, business, and professional systems” (Aldarondo & Fernandez, 2008, p. 29).

During the 1.5–2.0 hour interviews, Thandi used an interview guide with participants as they talked about their experiences with the assaultive men, their families and communities. They talked about their work over the years, including what they had learned about the influences of immigration experiences, family structure, community expectations, and alcohol. They talked about situations of violence and how these situations unfold, and what the assaultive men said they wanted to happen once the police were called, they went through the legal system and participated in mandated programs. They talked about how, as frontline practitioners and community members, they envisioned more effective prevention and intervention strategies (a description of participants and the interview guide are available in Appendix 2).

The interviews were recorded, then professionally transcribed, cleaned of all identifying information, and imported into qualitative data analysis software (NVivo). Through a close reading of three particularly rich transcripts, a codebook was developed based on identified themes. This codebook was used to work with all the interview transcripts. (the thematic codes can also be found in Appendix 2). Reference Group members also reviewed the codes and excerpts from the interviews, highlighting the themes they considered most important. As Gary Thandi began to write various drafts of what has become this document, he worked closely with Bethan Lloyd to develop a strong argument and organization for the interview data. The thematic analysis of the interviews is found in Chapter 2.

During this process, Gary Thandi developed two focus groups with South Asian men who were engaged in a mandated program following their appearance before the courts for perpetuating intimate partner violence. His report on these focus groups is available in Chapter 2.

None of this work was accomplished in a vacuum. Over the years, significant community-based action, agency initiatives, and academic work have addressed issues of intimate partner violence in both the dominant North American culture and within ethnically defined communities. Throughout this process, Bethan Lloyd and Gary Thandi engaged in a

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significant literature search based on these actions, initiatives and publications. They focused on

- a theoretical framework of intersectionality and critical multiculturalism;
- a methodological framework based on a transformative paradigm, critical ethnography, and community-based action research methodology;
- literature concerning intimate partner violence using the lens of intersectionality and a particular emphasis on work with men who batter;
- literature concerning intimate partner violence in South Asian communities;
- literature addressing South Asian culture, identity, history, experiences – in North America in general and British Columbia in particular;
- therapeutic frameworks based on the cultural context work of Rhea Almeida as well as safety conferencing and restorative justice; and
- counsellor training and education.

Over 250 scholarly articles, newspaper articles, websites, books and reports were reviewed during the time of this project. Researchers, advocates and frontline workers from a variety of disciplines (psychology, sociology, social work, public health, communications, women’s studies, post-colonial studies) have been involved in research and publications concerning intimate partner violence within South Asian communities in Canada, the United States and England. Many of these draw on intersectionality to investigate cultural diversity and cultural difference. Intersectionality proposes that people’s experiences are shaped by the intersections of systems of power and oppression. By exploring intersectionality, power and oppression can be viewed within particular groups as well as between particular groups.³ As Bograd (2005) notes, “intersectionalities color the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained” (p. 27). As will be seen in the case study, the theoretical framework of intersectionality can also be used to better understand the experiences of South Asian men – not to minimize or justify abuse, but rather to consider methods to better intervene and/or prevent the

³ Thiara, 2010

violence. Above all else, the safety of the victim/survivor and her children is paramount. An ethical approach, however, does not see women and children as isolated individuals but rather caught in a much larger cultural web:

Culturally sensitive, expanded definitions of both “battered woman” and “batterer” are necessary for ethical intervention. The intersection of gender, race, class, culture, and sexual orientation radically shapes the experiences of men who batter and women who are battered, whereby certain women and men are more entrapped within contexts of violence than others. (Almeida & Durkin, 1999, p. 315)

It is extraordinarily important that therapeutic frameworks, counseling programs and counsellor training and education recognize the implications for practice of an intersectionality perspective. Using the literature and this research, Gary Thandi has developed a case study of the Singh Family that ends with a significant discussion of what is required for agencies, community-based programs, and frontline practitioners to offer culturally appropriate practice. This is available in Chapter 3.

The Conclusion, Chapter 4, includes recommendations for further action. These address the importance of culturally informed and culturally appropriate education, training, and professional development for frontline practitioners as well as South Asian community initiatives that address issues of pre-marital education not only for couples but also for extended family members. The recommendations suggest the province address the development of a domestic violence court, more immediate counseling opportunities for partners who wish to reconcile and a reduction or removal of wait times for the mandated programs required by men who have been convicted of assault. The recommendations suggest community members address the development of programs that address the challenges of the immigration and acculturation process including underemployment and discrimination, issues of Canadian family law and laws concerning violence, and cultural norms concerning relationships (including marriage and parenting). Community members should also build on the strengths of South Asian fathers by providing father-child programs that include information on substance abuse and intimate partner violence and build on community concerns about how to intervene skillfully to prevent violence from developing or escalating. Moving into action is essential. Thandi also initiated and delivered a workshop addressing community members’ role when they become aware that intimate partner violence is occurring within their extended families. The report on the “South Asian Community Champions against Domestic Abuse” workshop is included in Appendix 3.

While considerable effort, albeit with limited resources, has been exerted in efforts to aid victims/survivors of intimate partner violence and their children, significantly less consideration has been given to working with male perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Additionally, feminists and women’s organizations, while supportive of efforts aimed at changing men’s abusive behaviours, have legitimate concerns that such work should not be done at the expense of reducing the already limited services available for women and children.⁴ While research on men who batter is limited, there is even less focus on South Asian males who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, particularly looking at effective intervention and prevention strategies with this population. Intimate partner violence programs for assaultive men, with few exceptions, remain culturally neutral and only recently have scholars noted the role of race, culture and ethnicity in assessments and interventions:⁵

The gap in this area has meant that, in terms of culturally appropriate services, South Asian men have been denied the opportunities presented to their white counterparts, and South Asian women and families have not benefitted from any of the advantages that may subsequently ensue from attempts to change male attitudes and behaviours. (Guru, 2006, p. 158)

It is hoped this research project can help reduce some of this gap.

NOTE:

“South Asian” refers to first-, second-, or later-generation immigrants or citizens in the west. In this report, unless otherwise stated, South Asian will refer to first-generation immigrants. However, as evidenced by the literature review and research project, second and later generations retain many of the cultural traditions and practices of their parents.

⁴ Guru, 2006; Simbandumwe, Bailey, Denetto, Migliardi, Bacon, & Nighswander, 2008; Izzidien, 2008

⁵ Bent-Goodley, 2005

CHAPTER 2: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Seventeen interviews with frontline practitioners who work with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence, the victims, and/or children were audiotaped and transcribed. Prior to beginning the analysis, each transcript was reviewed several times. Using three particularly rich transcripts, prominent themes were identified and a codebook was developed. NVIVO software was used to code the identified themes. Additional themes were identified as analysis progressed and were added as necessary.

Participants noted that several factors can contribute to stressors in a South Asian family, and that when handled poorly instances of intimate partner violence may result. At the same time, they were clear that the men are fully responsible for choosing to act violently when they instead could have acted in other, less harmful ways. They were equally adamant that police intervention is necessary to protect the victim and that without such intervention the violence would escalate. The participants observed, however, that after police involvement, the criminal justice system response that followed did not adequately address the needs of both the perpetrators and the victims.

Key themes identified through analysis include:

- the learning of strict gender role attitudes from an early age, which includes the use of alcohol as a sign of masculinity, that ultimately are both beneficial and detrimental to South Asian men;
- the frequent over-involvement of extended family and the considerable influence, both positive and negative, they wield – especially the men’s families;
- the stigma that both men and women feel, and that is reinforced by extended family members, that keeps them from seeking help from others;

- most couples want to reconcile after police involvement, and long court and counselling waits create undue hardship for victims and perpetrators and may ultimately place victims at greater risk;
- interventions need to be strengthened so that they meet the linguistic and especially cultural needs of perpetrators and victims – including possibly involving extended family members who do not condone violence;
- and prevention initiatives that address marriage compatibility, focus on educating men and women prior to marriage, and that involve community members – especially non-violent males and male elders.

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During the interviews it became apparent that first responders and counsellors have a complex understanding of their work with South Asian men convicted of intimate partner violence. Recognizing the difficulty of supporting the men without defending their actions, one men’s counsellor said, “It’s a big statement what I am saying right now. . . .They did not want to do this.” Another men’s counsellor observed, “From our practice, we recognized that men actually wanted better lives. They wanted to stop being violent.” The research participants were just as clear, however, that there could be no excuse for the violence. No matter what stress the men were experiencing as first-generation immigrants, as men confronted with both traditional and changing gender role expectations, they acted out of an expectation that they would not have to deal with the consequences of their actions.

Several research participants argued that for men to be violent towards women is not an explicit part of South Asian culture – certainly no more so than in other cultures. Participants indicated that regardless of ethnicity, men who are violent towards their intimate partners have either learned or discovered that they can use violence to get their way (participants often described this process as exerting power and control) and that these men have low thresholds for stress and are quick to anger. Participants also noted that male perpetrators of intimate partner violence choose their victims – e.g., they will lose control on their partner, but not their boss.

Nevertheless, most of the research participants indicated that in many South Asian families, gender roles are reinforced at an early age, and these viewpoints can greatly influence how they interact with their future partners. A men's counsellor indicated that boys learn they will benefit from these roles:

They learn they can demand. With the mother, they don't explain. They say "I need it. Just give me".... So that's the same style they use with their wives.

At the same time, several participants noted that South Asian men suffer the costs of gender role expectations, with high expectations that they be the family provider and the head of the household. This factor often leads to stress for first-generation immigrants and brings them into conflict with their partners. Recognizing that entrenched gender role expectations often change with the immigration and acculturation experiences of the men, one counsellor emphasized that their work has to take into account the changes – and tensions – that arise because of these changes.

Alcohol misuse, in some instances, is both an extension of the men's male privilege and a way in which they, albeit in a dysfunctional manner, address the shame and pain that arises from changes in gender role expectations. All 17 participants noted a high degree of co-occurrence of alcohol misuse and incidents in which the police are called because of intimate partner violence. "Alcohol is very much part of the macho male image" in South Asian communities, said one participant, a men's counsellor.

1. "I'm a man": Learning cultural male privilege from birth

Participants argued that male privilege manifests itself within South Asian communities differently than in other communities. They pointed out this privilege is systemic – and systematic. It happens from a boy's birth, through his developmental accomplishments and includes the marriage ceremony itself, where traditionally the woman leaves her family to become very much embedded in and defined by his family. One participant, a probation officer, observed that there are different degrees of male privilege and of gender roles, including "what is going to be accepted, what isn't going to be accepted." Another participant, a men's counsellor, said they learn gender expectations not only from their fathers but also from other older, married men in the community:

The older people will say: "Oh if you are getting married, you have to show your wife that you are her boss right, on the first night. So you should be sexually very

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aggressive on that day and she will be scared of you for all her life”... And being a child, maybe five, six years old, listening to those stories, that’s the way their beliefs develop. That’s a huge part back in India.

“And as it begins, so it continues,” this participant said. The husband will continue to assert his dominance through physical abuse: “Oh, I asked my wife to do this. She said ‘no,’ so then I slapped her. I taught her a lesson. I showed that I’m a man.” What is pernicious in terms of being a role model for younger men listening to these kinds of stories is that it may all be a front:

Maybe he is not doing those things at home, maybe he is scared of his wife but in front of that fire he will say that “I’m a man.” But listening to those things, as young people, teenagers or young boys, that’s how the belief system develops. “I have to be in control. If she’s not listening, then I need to use force.”

From birth, some men may have very little significant communication with their fathers. This men’s counsellor observed that they develop their understanding of communication between couples based on what they witness between their own parents – where the fathers may be very directive with their wives. And this may continue after the man marries when he sees how his father treats his new daughter-in-law. One counsellor who works in a program for women, told how, during a visit to a community centre, she was asked for some brochures that outlined services for women experiencing violence and abuse. She was surprised to discover where the brochures were going to be placed:

They were kept in the woman’s washroom. Because they said that they had some really aggressive South Asian fathers-in-law, who were bringing their daughters-in-law here, and they would not want the daughters-in-law to connect with me. They were actually ripping off the brochures.

A men’s counsellor noted that that some South Asian men may have grown up in homes where their fathers or other adult males were not only violent towards their spouses, but also towards anyone else who they perceived had insulted or disrespected them. This counsellor suggested an implication that these men will react rather strongly to perceived slights committed by their intimate partner rather than choose a less extreme approach.

High expectations are placed on women in their marriages, where they are expected to maintain a supporting, rather than equal, role. These often unrealistic expectations are

enforced not only by their husbands but, perhaps more significantly, by the extended family as well as the community. Women are expected to work outside the home; to take care of domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning and primary child-rearing responsibilities; to take care of their in-laws; and to be actively engaged in providing support at community events. Failing to meet these demands may result in both emotional and physical violence.

As one participant, a women's counsellor, noted, the husband does not stand alone in asserting his male privilege: "his whole male society also thinks that even if she's working, she should be doing the same amount of work at home." It's very difficult for a woman raised in this context not to adopt the same views of her place in the relationship, the family and the community. A probation officer observed that it may be women who turn the attention from the man perpetrating the violence to the woman who is the victim of the violence:

I hear women talking about it. Now, I'm going to speak frankly on this here, I hear MY mom talking about it with ladies of her generation. You hear about a murder and "Well, what could she have done that started this off?" And, immediately the victim's role is brought into this.

This perspective reinforces, for first-generation immigrants in particular, that men's violence is justified and men who have perpetuated violence will argue that their wife is not meeting all her responsibilities or she's arguing and disagreeing. And if a woman were to leave the abuser or make plans to leave (and the man became aware of this), his use of extreme violence (including murder), may be seen as justified by some community members for her having 'dishonoured' him.

Regarding second-generation and later-generation men, most participants noted that while these men are generally more open to equality within a relationship, many get 'stuck' within their cultural male privilege and may not be willing to lose those benefits. One participant, a probation officer, observed that the second generation may have been raised in a home where gender roles were clearly defined, indicating "I can't think of anything more influential than what's happening in their home." Another participant, a men's counsellor, observed that while many second-generation men have been quick to adopt certain aspects of Canadian society, the concept of gender equality has not been one of them. Another men's counsellor said that while many men date outside of their ethnicity, when it is time to marry they may look for a South Asian partner. The men, or their families, may go to South Asia to look for a spouse, believing they will be able to find a 'traditional' girl who will adhere to

more strictly defined role expectations than their Canadian-born counterparts. However, as one participant, another men’s counsellor, observed, conflict may arise because the women they marry may be less traditional than anticipated:

People from India, especially girls, are coming with a good background, an educational background and they don’t take it anymore. They’re assertive, they don’t want to be abused, so the values clash.

A participant, a men’s counsellor, suggested that many immigrants who arrived in Canada in the past 10–60 years brought many of their traditional values here and passed them down to their children, while their counterparts in South Asia became, over time, “more modern.” This men’s counsellor suggested “a cultural time warp” occurred here, noting that many South Asian families in a Canadian city such as Surrey are more traditional than many of the families currently in South Asia.

In terms of sponsorship, when the situation is reversed and the man is brought into the woman’s family because he is being sponsored by his spouse, the couple may live with the woman’s family out of economic necessity. As another men’s counsellor noted, this is not considered “culturally appropriate” and the man will make it clear through his behaviour and actions that he does not want to stay with his in-laws. If it is not possible to move (e.g., because of financial circumstances) violence may become one way in which to assert control.

2. “It’s up to me”: Gender role expectations

Participants acknowledge that men use violence in order to maintain power and control in their relationship – and this may be compounded for some immigrant men who may feel they have lost status and stability during the immigration and acculturation processes. A men’s counsellor observed that traditional values become “warped” and defending the family becomes over-protectiveness:

Instead of being the defender, he starts becoming overprotective. He starts becoming too controlling because that value now becomes warped and it turns into something else because he’s relying on that value for a sense of self-preservation, family preservation.

Similarly, participants argued that the gender role expectation that men support their families financially becomes excessive. While he unrealistically expects the woman to take on child-rearing and household maintenance as well as full-time employment and extended family duties, the man unrealistically expects himself to be the primary provider and head of the household in a new country where his education and experience may not be recognized and his English language skills are limited. Although both men and women want to be successful in Canada, a probation officer believed that the men feel making this happen financially is really their responsibility:

At the end of the day, yes, "if she works, it helps, but really, if she doesn't, it's up to me"..... They just seem to own more of it than I find anywhere else... That's one of those items that just really fuels a lot of their frustration.

Another probation officer suggested that the men strive to project the image of being successful, and this leads to significant work/life imbalances:

As a group they are proud individuals. They want to succeed in any capacity and I think for a lot of the people that came over, it was such a driving force to succeed that they would do it at any cost. I often talked to the men about, you know, how do you balance family versus career or money and building a home for yourself? And it always seemed to be balanced or tilted towards more success, towards career and money.

Even in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, where South Asian populations are large, research participants say that both husbands and wives can feel significant social isolation as they try to juggle their responsibilities. They have generally lost the much larger support system that they would have had in South Asia. A probation officer observed:

There are certain stresses to being in a Canadian community, if you've been raised in the South Asian culture...It's a different way of living and it brings different types of stresses. There is a degree of isolation, and even regardless of having a huge South Asian community, you are still a minority and there are stresses that come with that.

Participants noted that employment-related stressors, including under-employment and employment that is physically difficult, where they may be mistreated, and where they feel devalued or where they see little opportunity for advancement, contribute to stressors at home. Furthermore, men may have difficulty adjusting to changes in gender roles related to

employment if, for example, they are not earning enough to support the family, earning less than their spouses, or adjusting to family members whose roles are dramatically changing in a new environment. A women’s counsellor observed that in her experience:

The biggest loser of this migration process is a South Asian male ... women change, not because they want to but they have to. Children change because they are affected by the values in the schools.... He’s losing his kingdom in the home because his wife and children have changed

Several participants noted recent immigrants will see what South Asian and other immigrant men who have been in Canada for decades have been able to accomplish financially and place great pressure on themselves to achieve similarly. They overextend themselves, for example, by owning a home they cannot afford and then work long hours to maintain the lifestyle they have set up. One probation officer said the men participating in mandated programs because of intimate partner violence often appear confused by what has happened, by the contradiction between the image they have been working to maintain and the shame of being involved in the justice system because they resorted to violence: “People would automatically say ‘I own a car. I own a house. I’m a successful South Asian male and I shouldn’t be here [in this program].’”

Very few of the men, one men’s counsellor noted, will recognize or acknowledge that part of the difficulty they face may be due to racism even as they describe experiences that are clearly racially motivated:

They’ll name incidences of driving a taxi and being spat on by a white man but not really naming that as a racial violence. They might say, “Oh well I would never get a job there, because I’m brown” but not really understanding that part of racism.

This participant noted that the men have to have enough space in their lives, enough social privilege, to step back and see what is happening to them at times: “You’ll rarely get the first generation really getting a good grasp of racism....I often say, ‘You have to have some privilege to experience lack of it.’” The difficulty with much of the work in this field and within immigrant communities, the participant argues, is that the researchers wait for community members to raise issues of racism using sociological language and, if that doesn’t happen, they conclude that racism isn’t an issue: “I think that we need to look at it a little bit deeper.” As one participant said, there is too much to lose by acknowledging that things might have been better if they had never come to Canada:

They're really socialized to put on a very strong front, to say "I can handle anything. I can bear anything. I am now here in Canada and I can't complain about Canada. This was where I was trying to get to and I can handle it."

Racism is just one form of discrimination the men may face. A men's counsellor noted that immigrant men may not be aware of their rights at work, and therefore are mistreated by employers (e.g., having to work overtime, being paid less than what they are supposed to be). This participant pointed out that often it is South Asian employers, knowing that their employee will not complain, who engage in this form of discrimination.

3. "Those men have two problems": Alcohol abuse and violence

One of the most significantly dysfunctional ways that men "handle it" is by drinking alcohol to excess. Every participant noted that alcohol abuse and violence are correlated with men believing they have the right to drink as much as they want. It appears to give them permission both to act out their cultural male privilege and to respond to the stresses of gender role expectations, social isolation, immigration/acclulturation stress, obligations to extended family, and racism-related stress particularly as evidenced in under-employment and credentialism (where immigrants' credentials are not recognized in Canada and therefore they cannot find work that matches their skills).

Within South Asian communities, men have been socialized to believe alcohol use and even misuse is socially acceptable. South Asian popular media emphasizes alcohol as a way to socialize and to resolve stress or conflicts and this pressure to continue drinking is normalized. A men's counsellor indicated:

I think there is a cultural part that men drink. A lot of times men will say, "Oh, I didn't want to but, you know, the guy he took the drink and he put it in my hand and he opened my mouth and he put the alcohol in my mouth." I've seen it, in my own family.

One participant, a community elder, said that the situation socially is often made worse as men who do not drink or have quit drinking are still often heavily pressured to drink by their male friends and relatives and that some men fear that to refuse is disrespectful.

One participant, a probation officer, suggested that a major source of conflict between South Asian couples may be because men are able to drink as much as they want to and

women are expected not to drink at all. Not only does drinking remove the man from his responsibilities outside of work, any discussion of it is seen as disrespectful:

The husband comes home and consumes vast quantities of alcohol at his own will, whenever he seems to want to, and that can cause a lot of feelings of injustice, feelings of, “why does he get to drink his face off while I have to take care of the kids and do other things?” And then the minute that’s raised as a point of discussion by the wife, that becomes a disrespectful sort of communication.

This “disrespect” is also used as a reason to keep drinking: “because we keep fighting and because she doesn’t listen to me, I use alcohol.”

Although alcohol abuse may increase because of stressors in everyday life, participants argued that it is also a way to avoid discussing some of the issues that may be under the couple’s control. In particular, there may be significant unresolved financial issues such as investments or sending money to family in India or domestic issues such as the supervision/rearing of children or the interference of in-laws.

Alcohol abuse is one situation where some of those interviewed said that men will actually acknowledge racism as a factor. “On a couple of occasions,” a police officer noted, “I’ve run into people who would say ‘Yeah, I drink because I face racism at work’ or ‘I can’t get used to the White culture and so as a result I turn to alcohol’.”

Participants advised that while alcohol abuse and intimate partner violence co-occur frequently, they could recall numerous personal and professional instances of interacting with men who had abused alcohol but had not perpetrated intimate partner violence, or had perpetrated intimate partner violence but were not under the influence of alcohol. No matter what the reasons for drinking, all the people interviewed said alcohol could never be accepted as an excuse. A men’s counsellor suggested:

In our community, people say that men abused their wives because they were drunk.... The way I see it, those men have two problems – they have a drinking problem plus they are also abusers.

B “MARRIAGE IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE TWO OF THEM”

The extended family is involved before a couple marries, during the marriage, and both before – and after – the violence occurs. Participants indicated that a marriage is not considered a union between the man and wife, but rather as a union between two families. A man’s obligations to his family remain strong even after marriage. A participant, a men’s counsellor, argued that because of family interconnectedness events that occur as far away as South Asia can significantly affect couples in Canada. Separation and divorce are considered stigmatizing, especially among the first generation, that, as a probation officer observed, “don’t see it as an option at all.” While separation and divorce are especially stigmatizing for women, participants noted that men too can feel such stigma, as it may be seen as a failure on their part as heads of the households in keeping their families together. Several participants argued that the pressure to remain married, even when one or both are not happy in the marriage, is a major source of conflict.

1. “We didn’t imagine this stress”: South Asian extended families

For South Asians traditional cultural practice is to be both closely connected to their extended family and, frequently, to live within an extended household arrangement. A couple may have little to no opportunity to spend time together just as a couple. As participants observed that the obligations to the extended family – especially the man’s family – are as great or even greater than the obligations to each other. Major family events, such as marriages where the needs of extended family must be tended to by the host family, often will increase instances of arguing or intimate partner violence in the days leading up to and following such events. A police officer observed that “domestic violence or arguments seem to increase around that space.... Anything that takes a lot of money, planning and the introduction of lots of family coming in, and then having to host them, seems to put a stress on.”

Couples frequently argue over the actions of each other’s extended families, and several participants indicated that many couples are both unable to identify extended family over-involvement and lack the skills to address this effectively. A participant, a counsellor, observed that the men in counselling would eventually realize the over-involvement, and indicated that the men would frequently say that “‘we didn’t imagine this stress ... and we didn’t have any idea on how to deal with these things in a better way. We didn’t have those

skills’.” Another participant suggested that the man may be caught in the middle of conflicts between his own family members – such as his mother – and his wife, who within a patriarchal family may compete for his favour. This men’s counsellor indicated that men will say: “‘I’m sick and tired of being caught in the middle of my wife and my mother.’ So there’s that family dynamic, that triangulation.” Men who engage in violence may believe members of their own family should not be spoken badly of by their spouse, nor should any of their in-laws ‘interfere’ with his family:

In their mind they have a justification for using violence, based on the fact that her family is interfering and they don’t have any place to interfere “Her family should not be supporting her, should not be taking her side in our marriage because if they do then she’s not loyal to me. Now she is loyal to her own family.” So there’s sort of this issue of loyalty arises.

When the man sponsors his own parents, the dynamics within the household can change. A police officer described a common theme when speaking to the victims: “everything was fine until his parents came to the country. Now all of a sudden it seems like he’s a changed guy. All of sudden he’s now taking their side a lot more or our relationship has since been hampered.”

Even if a couple decides to move out own their own because of conflict within the extended household, the families will still remain closely connected to them and still be heavily influential. They will often see each other several times a week at social gatherings, or daily in cases where children are being dropped off with extended family and picked up when the couple is working. A men’s counsellor observed that:

There’s still socially a lot of interconnection ... as opposed to this very nuclear lifestyle that would be compared to the western world. Right? [Couples in the west] may get together with their friends in the evening or plan a holiday – that’s a lifestyle still foreign to many of my clients.

While traditionally in South Asia the woman lives with her husband’s family, in Canada it depends on who sponsors whom. A participant, another men’s counsellor, argued that a man who is sponsored and lives with his in-laws will not feel comfortable there. Considerable conflict may arise between him, his spouse and her family as he feels such an extended household arrangement is “culturally inappropriate.”

Nearly all participants noted that an extended family household arrangement, if members of that family do not condone violence, can be a major source of support to a couple. One participant, a men's counsellor, indicated that "it's a wonderful system if people can get along. It's a terrible system if people can't get along." A child protection worker observed that:

In a lot of the domestics that I have had, it's usually there is no extended family ... there's actually more protection I think when there is an extended family If there was extended family, the children usually wouldn't be at risk The stress is not on one person to do everything or the wife to do everything. You're not cooking, cleaning, working and taking care of the kids, it's sort of spread out between everybody.

2. "All the obligations are very stressful": Sponsorship and family support

Besides being highly influential in the man's relationship, a men's counsellor suggests, the extended family may also have expectations that affect his marriage in a "very significant way." A police officer observed that the man may have an obligation to send money back home to family, which can be a source of conflict as his spouse may instead want the money to be used to become established here in Canada. Or, as another participant observed, the couple may argue over whose family member to sponsor as "they have to work hard to sponsor somebody." This participant, a men's counsellor, noted that these obligations can be quite intricate, sometimes requiring the man's relatives to marry someone as part of the agreement:

With immigration, there is something that is attached to these arranged marriages, other obligations, which should not be there. "We are bringing you to Canada, and then you are going to help these family members to come to Canada. You have to sponsor, or if your brother comes here, then your brother has to marry so-and-so, so that person can come [to Canada]." There are so many negotiations they do, all don't go that smoothly [and then comes] the conflict with the blame. "Your side has not done this," wife will say, husband will say. So a lot of blame goes on.

A police officer argued that the man may have to work two jobs in order to show he is financially capable of sponsoring and supporting someone, thus creating work/life

imbalances. The obligations may continue even after the person arrives in Canada. A men’s counsellor noted:

When a person comes here and gets established, then he has a responsibility to bring family to Canada. And not only bringing them to Canada, but also accommodating them when they come here, they stay with that person. All the obligations are very stressful.

This participant also indicated that, as the head of the household, the man may in particular experience considerable stress trying to meet these obligations. Additionally, he will feel especially ashamed if these obligations, because they were unreasonable and created too great a hardship, are not met. He may be “socially humiliated” when a bargain is not kept as it hurts his reputation amongst extended family and community members:

When it’s the woman who is to blame for a bargain not being kept, she doesn’t feel as socially humiliated, but the man is feeling that they agreed...and everybody knew it, and now they are not doing that and [he feels] social humiliation.

3. “You all need to get along”: *Izzat* and *Sharam* – The stigma of divorce

A men’s counsellor suggested that immigrants migrate to places where they feel comfortable, which means they may settle close to family, friends and others who speak their primary language. This participant observed that many South Asian immigrant men, particularly those who do not speak English, may only look for (or they may only find) work with South Asian employers and they may only shop, do business and/or socialize with other South Asians. In addition to this limiting their contacts, the counsellor indicated that this also means that when something is happening in that man’s life, others in his circle may find out quickly.

Participants noted that there is considerable stigma on others finding out that a couple’s relationship is not doing well (whether there is violence or not), and participants observed that most men and women will not seek out assistance from family, friends or formal counselling services to address their difficulties. A participant, a child protection worker, argued that terms such as *izzat* and *sharam* mean a great deal to a South Asian individual, and such words do not necessarily translate well into English (loosely translated, *izzat* means “honour” and *sharam* means “shame”). The participant indicated that the full effect on the person may get lost in the translation: “there is a difference. You translate it, it

sounds the same. But really there is a difference.” Furthermore, a participant argued that such stigma may be a “source of violence – the lack of a solid relationship but with the pressure to keep it together ... that’s different on a cultural level.”

In referring to intimate partner homicides that have occurred in the South Asian communities of British Columbia over the past decade, this child protection worker argued that:

If divorce and separation didn’t have a huge stigma, a lot of this [murders of South Asian women by their spouses] wouldn’t happen. That’s what I think with non-Indo-Canadian families. When it gets to the point [relationship is not working], a lot of them would leave whereas with Indo-Canadian families, sometimes they don’t leave that relationship

Not only is stigma felt by a man and woman who are in a troubled relationship, but this stigma is further compounded by the pressures placed upon the couple by extended family and community members to remain together at virtually all costs. A participant, a probation officer, indicated that “within that family, you’re going to get people coming in, ‘Oh, well, why do you want to divorce? We can work this out, this is all workable. . . . There are solutions, divorce isn’t the only option’.” At the same time, these family members are reluctant to involve community social service agencies as “they don’t believe in that. What they say is that if you go to the community services or other services, they’ll break your family.” A men’s counsellor observed that extended family ‘interventions’ also extend to a man’s alcohol abuse:

How they handle it [the man’s alcohol abuse] makes things sometime worse. The interventions which happen in general mainstream community, it’s not easy either. But they will go for outside help, they will . . . do intervention with the help of professionals, in some cases. That doesn’t happen in our community.

Family members may intervene out of fear of what others within the community might say about them if a marriage within their family fell apart. A men’s counsellor suggested that for arranged marriages, those who arranged it (the “vicholas”) may fear that if it falls apart that they will be blamed, and therefore they may become involved:

“Oh, what are people going to say about us?”...So their thing is, “you all need to work together. You all need to get along.” I mean, it often is very superficial, just to say you

both need to stay together, you both need to be better at working out your issues, you need to listen to us and stay together. Like, “we’re your elders,” or “we’re the people that set you up” and “you owe us that respect.”

In addition to being “superficial” interventions, extended family interventions, as another men’s counsellor observed, often re-enforce the man’s cultural male privilege:

You’ll often hear in the extended families they’ll say “oh, we’ll go and educate her so that she will not do this again” meaning call the police. So you know even the language being used is very male dominant, culturally male dominant.

It was also observed that some men who do separate (for example, because of a court order requirement) may not be ready to reconcile, although they are often pressured to do so by extended family members, as significant highly stressful issues still remain unresolved. A men’s counsellor observed that “in the beginning, you are more worried about [the] woman’s side because pressure was there. These days, we are also noticing on men also. They are not ready to go back, they are not ready to unite, but they are pressured.”

C “I WANT MY FAMILY BACK”

An overwhelming majority of men want to reconcile, and frequently the only thing keeping them from doing so is a court order. Men most often want to reconcile for two major reasons: because of the stigma attached to separation and because they love their children and want to keep their family together for the sake of their children. Some men may reconcile even though they have little interest in having a meaningful relationship with their spouses. The desire to reconcile is one of several ways that South Asian men’s experiences prior to and before being charged with intimate partner violence is markedly different from that of their Caucasian counterparts. South Asian men are more frequently married, have children, and have shared assets than their Caucasian counterparts. Such differences become more pronounced when they are arrested and then progress through the criminal justice system.

1. “He won’t leave She won’t leave”: The desire for reconciliation

While women feel the greatest degree of stigma from separating, participants indicated that men also feel it – that as the heads of the households they feel great shame in not being able to keep their families together. Participants cited this fear of stigma as one reason men may want to reconcile. Participants also believed men want to reconcile because they love their families, in particular their children. A participant, a police officer, suggested that the physical violence rarely extends to the children; “I think it’s frowned upon more if you hit your nine-year-old son or daughter then it is to hit your wife. I hate to say that but that’s the way I think it is.” A probation officer observed that most men would say “I want my family back. I want my wife back How do I do thisWhat course do I need to take so that the courts are satisfied that I can go back home?”

A women’s counsellor argued that the desire to reconcile, by both the men and the women, is so strong that both are willing to violate a court order that prohibits them from having contact, and “within a week or two weeks, they will be together. That’s huge – you can see the difference between the mainstream community and our community.” A men’s counsellor observed that men who initially indicated they were done with the relationship will later reconsider their decision:

I’ve even had cases where men will say “that’s it. I’m done. No more. Nada.” And then, they’re going through the group and you see them and they’ll say “well, I talked to so and so and I think he’s going to try to see if they can talk to my wife’s family.”

While men may turn to family members, they will not access social service or criminal justice systems in order to assist with reconciliation:

They don’t feel that anybody in the system is really going to be helping me get my life together with my wife. So they’ll rely on community members, there’ll be mediation, things that happen. They are motivated to continue and there’s always more than one thing happening at the same time

The man may want to reconcile even if he does not love his wife. This participant noted that with some men who reconcile, there is a sense that “maybe he’s not totally loyal to his wife, but he won’t leave her. He won’t end the marriage. He won’t choose to do something different. She won’t leave. She won’t end the marriage. She won’t do something different.”

2. “That’s huge, you can see the difference”: Cultural contexts

While the overwhelming majority of South Asian men and women want to reconcile after the man is charged with assault, in contrast, as a men’s counsellor observed, with Caucasian couples “it was, more often than not, the relationship had ended and it was like good riddance The less they can see of each other, the better.” Participants also observed that South Asian immigrant men charged with intimate partner violence are much more likely to be married to, have shared assets with, and have children with the victim compared to their Caucasian counterparts, and therefore the couples are much more connected to each other and more is at stake if the relationship were to end. A counsellor who works with mainstream and South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence described some of these differences:

With South Asian [clients] ... mostly people are with the same partner. And, and mostly it’s their first marriage and the only marriage. Sometimes rarely you get second marriage [And] we are getting mostly people who are married and most of them have children. In mainstream we’re getting people who are girlfriend/boyfriend, they are not married yet, and violence happened and they were charged. Sometimes the violence happened early on, when they were building that relationship, so generally they don’t want to continue in that relationship.

Another difference relates to the role of alcohol in the offence. A police officer noted that with calls related to some type of domestic conflict he attends (which may or may not entail violence) involving Caucasian couples, often they are either both drinking alcohol or neither are, whereas with South Asian couples, a large percentage of his cases involved the man being heavily intoxicated and the woman having not consumed any alcohol at all:

I can just remember going to calls and you’re dealing with the drunk Indo-Canadian male, sober female Indo Canadian. Many times we have gone to Caucasian [calls] where both parties are sober, one person doesn’t need to be taken away to jail to sober up Somebody goes to another residence to cool off for a while and that’s the end of it.

Additionally, another participant, a child protection worker, noted their interventions are different when it comes to South Asian families and child protection issues:

The parents are always together. It's not like [a child] can go live with the other parent "Okay, so you can go live with dad" or "you can go live with mom." Both parents are going to be together.

D POLICE INTERVENTION AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Police intervention was deemed necessary to protect the victim from further harm, and without it participants unanimously believed the violence would not only continue, but likely escalate. They also indicated that many men who have been arrested will not use physical violence again out of fear of police consequences, although they argued the men still have to learn effective relationship skills – which they suggested can only be accomplished through counselling.

The criminal justice system process that follows the man's arrest is considered less effective than the initial police intervention; a men's counsellor indicated that "I still think the criminal justice system is a very effective intervention. But I think what needs to be different is that the system needs to move faster for men and women both." Another participant, who also counsels men, described a typical scenario that occurs in court. The man is arrested. He is then taken to jail and released within 24 hours with bail order conditions that require that he not return home, and to not have contact with his wife and children. He then lives with relatives, and goes to court, where he is "asked to bring a lawyer, and some people don't even know that they can defend their case themselves. So, they go and spend \$6,000 or \$7,000 to hire a lawyer," who will continue to put the matter over in court.

This participant argued that six months or longer will have passed when the couple has been living separately, and the "frustrations start happening, and the girl's parents or relatives will take her to the Crown and she will write something saying, okay, 'I'm sorry, I want him back because my children miss him' kind of thing – excuses, you know." The man's lawyer may then ask that his client receive a court order that does not give him a criminal record, a request which is often granted. This court order also requires the man to report to a probation officer and attend counselling. Depending on the location, the wait for counselling can be from a few months to well over a year. A men's counsellor observed that:

By the time they come to the [counselling] program nine months have passed ... so the system is not very effective, it's not working right away when they need it. So they

need it right away, when violence occurs in the family. They need it at that time. Men need somebody to talk to, to go to a counsellor right away. And the woman can go to a counsellor right away, and then make sure the children are safe[The men] lost so much, they lose their job, they lose their prestige, they lose their respect in the community, they lose a lot of things in the community, right? So, they are more angry after that. They don't treat their wife with respect after that, or her family. So, it's really a very, very dangerous situation, to stop the violence this way.

1. “I just thought about police”: Police intervention is effective

Pro-arrest procedures, holding the man in custody for 24 hours and having a no contact order in place, enhanced victim safety while also giving the man some ‘cooling off’ time. Such cooling time, a probation officer stated, is considered essential and “without it I think we would see a lot more serious domestic violence situations.” All 17 participants predicted that without police intervention, the physical abuse would not only continue but would escalate. A participant [who](#) counsels men suggested that the police intervention has a major psychological impact on the men, one that they will remember, and argued that for most men the experience of being arrested is a factor in [them](#) not acting physically violently again:

When police intervention happened, after that physical abuse is gone. There is no physical abuse in most of the cases, they stop. The police intervention workedThat was amazing, even before coming to counselling they have done that part on their own ...“That incident happened, police took me, now I never touch her. We had argument but I went out and I just thought about police. I didn't want to do it, go through it again.” It's a big impact.

Another men’s counsellor suggested that an additional benefit of police intervention is that it “exposes men to a number of resources that they were not aware of, that they didn’t know they could have access to,” such as the counselling program to which the men have been referred.

While the police intervention can be effective and often necessary, participants expressed concern over the way men are treated after the arrest and as they go through the criminal justice system. They argued this treatment has a direct effect on how well the men will respond to subsequent interventions. A probation officer suggested that police and other

frontline workers could benefit from greater awareness around some of the dynamics that may be present with the South Asian families with which they deal:

I think that there's sort of a mentality that it's "us versus them" and not a deep understanding of what's going on in the home and sort of just a blind approach to "there's violence. Let's take him away." And no sort of recourse as to what that means for the family or what that means to this individual.

Several participants observed that the man's threat to the victim, as well as the stress he experiences, is highest when he is released from police custody and cannot return home because of a court order, and the lack of services at that time is of concern. Another probation officer suggested that:

I think we need to work out some way, where after that violence has happened, that the offender isn't left to fend on his own. That is not the time to leave him on his own, and yet that's exactly what we do, South Asian and non-South Asian, for both.

Some type of offender support services was suggested. One participant, a child protection worker, believed an outreach worker could accompany the police, and provide information, support, and referrals to the men, as well as members of the family, where needed. Participants suggested such services initially may result in the man not responding as negatively to subsequent interventions and may enhance the victim's safety.

2. "A huge gap in time": Court, probation and counselling

While participants stated that the police intervention within the criminal justice system is effective, a lack of information for the men on what to expect as they navigate the court and bail systems, the long court waits and delays, and an adversarial court system renders the whole criminal justice system much less so.

A men's counsellor suggested the men needed to better understand the court and criminal justice system, as they "don't know what happens, what's Crown, what's a judge, what their roles and responsibilities are, so that kind of help is needed immediately." Participants believed that if the men had greater awareness about what the court system is like they may have fewer negative opinions about it. As well, as another men's counsellor observed, the men did not know "the length of it, the amount of time it can take I don't think anybody knows it until they're really part of it." Long delays in having the matter brought to court

results in the energies of victim and extended family members (from both sides) being spent to find a way to bring the man home. Another men’s counsellor indicated that:

Women were already feeling guilty, they have already said “sorry” to the man. Her parents or other relatives have already made commitments to the man’s family, “okay, our daughter is not going to call the police again, you can come back home.” So it’s too long a process, and then by the time they come to the counseling program, everything is maintained out there. There’s no need for that.

A women’s counsellor suggested that a court system that is “adversarial and punitive” leaves both perpetrator and victim feeling that the court system cannot help them. This counsellor argued that because of such a system, any types of services and interventions that follow “are not adequate at all. So the response is not adequate.” Another participant, a men’s counsellor, echoed these thoughts; “if you label somebody as a criminal, it’s pretty hard to take that wall down,” when it comes time for him to attend counselling.

Several participants expressed concern that in future instances of violence, the victims and other family members will be less inclined to call the police because of their negative experiences around long court delays and a system that pits the man against his spouse. Long court waits and subsequent long waits for counselling programs (to which only men on probation can be referred) shift the focus from what the man did to what has happened to him. A participant who counsels men also argued that the longer the delays, the more the man’s shame builds. Without having learned the skills to manage these emotions, their shame ultimately turns to anger, and the anger may be turned back onto their spouses at some point.

After the court disposition the man reports to a probation officer who can have considerable influence on the man’s behaviour. A probation officer noted the important roles that frontline workers in the criminal justice system, such as police officers, bail officers, probation officers and counsellors, play and how they can positively affect change if they are willing to talk to the men and be patient with them, in order to have these men understand, “what brought them there, and get an understanding of their role in it.” However, if the worker “treats them like they’re less than human then I don’t think you’ve done any good at all. You’ve basically continued to humiliate and shame this person and really, those strategies don’t work.” All 17 participants argued that if frontline workers want to truly change men’s behaviours, they need to be culturally competent, and several noted that

cultural and linguistic competence is still lacking within criminal justice and social service systems. A men's counsellor argued:

There needs to be what I call a cultural audit done of all services. We have people saying "you need to be more culturally sensitive." Yeah, okay thank you. We learn to say "Sat Sri Akal, here are some samosas" but you're not taking the time out to learn those interventions.

Another participant, a police officer, suggested that those who are bilingual and can communicate with the men are often doing it in addition to their regular work, and therefore end up doing much more work than those who only speak one language:

What's the reward for knowing a second language? Here we are, had I not known a second language, I would have been out of here on time and now all of a sudden you're staying longer or you're acting as more of an interpretation role and sometimes from an organizational point of view, it may not ... not to sound disgruntled, that's not the point here... but it may not always be reflected in terms of appreciation.

Participants believed more qualified frontline workers who can speak Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu or other South Asian languages need to be more actively recruited in order to better work with immigrant South Asian men. At the same time, participants noted that just because someone speaks the same language does not make them culturally competent.

After the criminal court matter ends, a perpetrator may be ordered by a judge to report for one year or longer to a probation officer who is responsible for ensuring the man abides by the conditions of his court order. If there is a condition for counselling, the probation officer may refer the man to an assaultive men's program. The probation officer assesses the man and will rate the man as "low," "medium" or "high" risk to re-offend violently against his spouse (one participant familiar with the process questioned whether there is such a thing as a "low" risk male perpetrator of intimate partner violence). South Asian men who are rated "medium" or "high" risk are then referred to a group program for South Asian men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, which is funded by the British Columbia Corrections. Participants believed this group counselling program is effective for reasons such as: it is culturally relevant; it is offered in the men's first language; a group format lets the men know they are not alone in their struggles; and the men are able to call each other on their abusive comments/behaviours so they learn from each other and listen in a way that they otherwise might not if it was a counsellor doing the challenging. A participant noted

that such counselling would also be effective with second-generation men, as the examples are ‘cultural’ and would be familiar to these men as well.

While the program can be effective, many participants believed it could be improved in order to better serve South Asian families’ needs. Participants familiar with the program suggested that the program should be opened up to include “low risk” men and for men who want to attend voluntarily – as no alternate services exist for these men. They also observed that some regions have excessively long waitlists for men to get into the programs. These participants argued that having counselling closer to the offence date, when the incident is still fresh, would be more effective than programs that start six months, a year or even longer after the offence. One participant, a child protection worker, noted that “there could be a huge gap from the time the incident happened, to the intervention: “Like just in behaviour modification, like that’s huge.” Participants also believed that separate services should also be provided to victims, given the high number of men and women that reconcile. One participant, a men’s counsellor, observed that:

95 per cent will want to continue with the relationship. So we need to have or design a program to look at their needs because that woman and man are, after the incident, still going to continue to live together. So in that case women need support and the counselling because if a person has gone through an abusive relationship, that person needs support and counselling.

Participants also suggested that the men’s group should be expanded to include some sessions with couples who have reconciled or plan to reconcile. One counsellor suggested:

Those couples that are ready, where there’s been enough work, the woman has done her work and the man has been in treatment, I think some flexibility to program service delivery model where you bring in some kind of co-joint therapy where ... where you actually bring couples together who may be interested in dealing with issues like communication patterns, dealing with issues around conflict that continues to emerge.

Several participants noted that while the counselling is mandated for men, support and/or counselling services could be offered to women who would come on their own volition. One participant, a men’s counsellor, argued, however, that in instances where a woman wants to reconcile with the perpetrator the woman should attend counselling or support services as a precondition before Crown Counsel considers lifting that part of the court order. Currently

Crown Counsel or a judge will allow for contact if, first and foremost, a victim wants it, and: if sufficient time has passed since the offence, there have not been any further offences, and if the man has started or completed counselling. The participant suggested that given the frequency with which South Asian couples want to reconcile and the long waits for group counselling such a precondition will give the woman an opportunity to learn more about her rights as well as allow her to develop a safety plan – information she can use as she re-enters the relationship. The participant indicated such an approach is not intended to be punitive towards the woman – and that if she does not want to attend then she would not have to – but that such a factor should then be considered by Crown Counsel when determining the risk posed to the woman if contact were allowed.

While participants argued for improvements to how the criminal justice system operates, criticism was also directed towards other governmental and non-governmental systems. A participant, a men’s counsellor, argued that government ministries from within the criminal justice system and social service system, as well as non-profit agencies, need to work better together in order to serve the needs of families affected by intimate partner violence:

Each ministry, they don’t work together They run their programs a different way ... they want to run their program their own way. Same thing in non-profits, they don’t work together ... people don’t have focus on the issue, each agency [thinks about] how they can benefit.

A women’s counsellor noted that governments are sometimes more interested in giving a little funding to as many organizations as possible to keep them “all happy” rather than considering which organizations are best suited to deliver such services. Furthermore, competition among agencies for limited funding leads to a reduced overall impact for the targeted communities:

Putting one against the other, kind of competing for the same pie, all the people writing proposals, these are taking time, [there is] overlap, one agency does something this year and then next one will start something next year, so altogether they feel no connection and [there is] not much impact in the community.

3. “The justice system is one piece of the pie”: The role of extended family

Participants argued that given the influence extended family members have on the man frontline agencies need to consider ways to incorporate extended family members into the

intervention. They envisioned ways to involve family members effectively once the men have been charged, as well when they are placed on probation orders for intimate partner violence. For example, a probation officer suggested that a bail supervisor can work with the man to identify family members who can provide him with shelter if he is not allowed to return to the family home. Ideally, these family members would provide support as well as ensure the man does not re-engage in violence. The participant argued that the victim should be contacted, so that she can provide names of family members whom she thinks would be positive influences on the man.

A men’s counsellor suggested that the man’s father, if appropriate (e.g., the father is not violent or has been violent in the past but has learned from that experience) can play an important role in changing the man’s behaviour:

The justice system is one piece of the pie in a man’s life. It’s not the whole of it. You know, the justice system will get involved for a little while but the rest of the time quite often, if he relies on his extended family, the father can play a tremendous amount of role in trying to create some harmony.

Another participant, a probation officer, advised that other men, such as those who have been abusive but have changed, could also act as mentors:

They’d be mentors to the ones that have abused their partners, to show there is hope. Especially the ones that actually have been convicted of assaulting their partners and then have, if I can use this word, been “rehabilitated” or changed their attitudes and their thinking, and they have improved. So, it’s like the person that’s part of AA for twenty years, kind of like that. And, use that person as a role model to say that change is possible and “if I can do it, you can do it.”

Using children as a motivator to change within any intervention was cited often by participants. A men’s counsellor observed that talking about men’s children is

one way to engage them with the change process. They are willing to do anything when they know that “this will be helpful to my children.” So they are quite devoted that way. So when we talk about how to be a good father and all, they, they are with you. Then they will say, “Okay, how else I can strengthen my family? How could I make my relationship with my wife stronger? Because ultimately it will help my kids and

whole family.” So then there’s a way for them to recognize that family strengthening, relationship strengthening, is needed.

E “THEY’RE ACTUALLY NOT COMPATIBLE”

Several participants believed prevention initiatives aimed at victims of violence have been effective in raising the numbers of reported assaults to police, and, while difficult to quantify, participants (especially those who have worked in the field for several years) observed they are seeing younger men being charged, which, they suggested, means victims or their families are calling earlier – rather than years and years going by before someone calls police. The participants attributed this to greater awareness and credited community activists and ethnic media for educating South Asian communities about intimate partner violence and what people can do about it. Participants also suggested that increasingly more and more individuals and families (including new arrivals and those who have been here for decades) are not willing to tolerate abuse and greater education in schools (namely children being taught to call 911 when someone is in trouble) are factors in the perceived increase in calls to police.

Participants believed that while women in the anti-violence field have been working on the issue for years, continued prevention efforts need to also include elders, religious organizations, schools, and men who are not abusive or have abused in the past but have since changed. All 17 participants emphasized the importance of involving all of these community members in any sort of prevention initiative. A probation officer argued that:

It’s a huge opportunity for the South Asian community to really kind of say, “Hey, you know what? You guys have been pointing the finger at us all these years, saying that you guys have a real problem with relationship violence. Hey watch us, watch us fix it.” We can do that and we can be a huge leader in that. But we have to go beyond what other communities have done if we’re going to make that difference.

Another participant, a women’s counsellor, noted that prevention efforts need to be coupled with intervention efforts: “they both go hand in hand. So knowledge created through dialogue and discussion ... then supporting it in services.”

1. “Before they become problems”: The need for pre-marital and post-marital counselling

South Asian couples could benefit greatly by attending pre-marital counselling or education sessions where couples can learn about what types of issues and stressors they may encounter when they are married. A probation officer participant argued that:

We could do a better job of making sure that before they get married there is a program in place that these people have a chance to explore some of the budgeting things, the family relationship issues, all the stresses that are going to come in life How are you, as a unit, going to deal with some of those pressures? Bring in the relatives. Bring in the in-laws and talk about some contentious issues that are going to come up. You know, there’s a family function on a Saturday for this side of the family and there’s one on the same day for the other side of the family. What happens? Where do you go? You know? Or your wife’s making more money than you. How do you deal with that? Your family’s had to move in with you because they’re elderly. How do you deal with that? Those kinds of things. I don’t see why we don’t work on those kinds of problems before they become problems

This participant suggested that religious institutions can take a lead in such an initiative:

I know the Catholic Church has a program that if they want to get married, if a couple wants to get married in their church, they have to take the educational program with the priest or the cleric or whoever it might be at the church. But why don’t we have something like that? We have hundreds and hundreds of weddings every weekend at different temples and why don’t we have a program before a person can use that temple or use that facility ... [a] 2 to 3 day program.

The participant indicated that religious institutions could charge the families extra, on top of whatever wedding fees are charged, in order to bring in facilitators to work with the families. While acknowledging that these institutions may be fearful of trying something like this out of fear that they may lose parishioners, the participant argued that if it were “across the board,” the same way it is with all Catholic churches, such concerns would be extinguished.

A men’s counsellor also argued that greater awareness among both men and women in South Asian communities is needed about what counselling is: “the word ‘counselling’ is still negative and that’s why, although they know the counselling is available, they won’t come.

We need to educate them ... about what is counselling is and why they need it.” This counsellor argued if the stigma around seeking counselling was reduced, more couples might access it before the relationship deteriorated to the point of abuse.

2. “What person would be compatible?”: Increasing community awareness

Arranged marriages may sometimes be based on bringing someone to Canada with little attention being paid to whether a couple is compatible. Participants argued that heads of households may also be more concerned with having their children come to Canada, so that these people can eventually sponsor them, rather than whether there is compatibility between spouses. These men may remain in the marriage, but are not happy. A child protection worker indicated that:

They are having these marriages, they could be in love with someone else but they're marrying the girl they've never seen to come to Canada. She gets pregnant. They're going to live together forever but not happily If you're with someone you don't want to be with there's going to be problems.

Participants emphasized the need for community members who are arranging marriages to look at the compatibility of the couple, such as whether they share the same interests, have the same educational background, etc. Failing to do so, they argued, will lead to great conflict between the couple and lead, potentially, to the perpetration of violence by the man against his spouse.

Education around compatibility in marriage (whether an arranged marriage or a ‘love’ marriage) could also be focused on after a couple marries, so that community members understand that sometimes relationships simply do not work out. Participants argued that families of perpetrators and victims, as well as the perpetrators and victims themselves, need to accept that ending a relationship is a viable option. A participant, a child protection worker, believed that one of the reasons that domestic homicides within South Asian communities occur is because couples remain together even when the relationship has become very strained and toxic – that if both were willing to walk away earlier, the outcome may not have been so tragic.

This education can also extend to the pressures extended family members put on families in crisis. Several participants advised that even when the couple separates, others in the community apply pressure on both the victim and the perpetrator to reconcile, without an

interest in addressing what prompted the separation in the first place. The pressure applied on the man by community members in particular may make him feel as if he has failed in his role as a man, which can increase his frustration – and this may ultimately put the victim at greater risk. Therefore, while couples understand that they can reconcile, they, and other community members, also need to understand that reconciliation may not be the best course of action – especially when the perpetrator remains a danger to the victim, or when the relationship cannot be salvaged, and the only reason the couple wants to be together is because of familial or cultural pressure to do so. Changing attitudes in the community and reducing the stigma around separation and divorce may ultimately increase victim safety.

3. “There’s not enough being done to deal with ... coping with life”: Community Education Initiatives

Participants argued that both men and women, either prior to arriving in Canada or shortly thereafter, should be advised of their rights, of Canadian laws, and of the roles of frontline workers – especially police who back home are often seen as corrupt and as people to avoid at all costs. One participant, a police officer, suggested a course be developed:

Having an immigration education course for all immigrants, you know, this is the police. This is what the police look like. This is a fire fighter. This is what a fire fighter looks like. This is EHS. This is what an ambulance attendant looks like. This is their role and as part of their role, they will ask you stuff like your name, your address because they need to confirm certain things. You trust these people.

Participants argued that given the high number of immigrant South Asians that continue to settle in Canada frequent education around gender equality and the harm of intimate partner violence directed at community members is necessary. Also pointed out was that, just like some men, there are women who blame the victim or make excuses for the violent men and therefore greater education initiatives must be directed at both male and female community members. Furthermore, community education, it was argued, needs to focus on both the emotional and physical harm women may experience, and the emotional short-and long-term harm suffered by children who witness abuse. One probation officer even suggested that the psychological harm experienced by children who witness abuse is equal to the psychological harm that children who suffer direct abuse experience.

Participants observed that the ethnic media has done, and continues to do, a very good job of covering social issues such as intimate partner violence. This outreach via media, because of the number of people that can be reached, was mentioned frequently by participants as an effective prevention strategy. It was suggested that some of this prevention could also take the form of dramas or television shows that both entertain and educate. Participants believed that community forums, while not necessarily reaching the people most in need given the abuser and victim would likely not attend them, can still be effective in creating dialogue among community members. Such dialogue, a men's counsellor noted, is beneficial given South Asian communities were not discussing such issues ten or fifteen years ago.

Participants who work with both mainstream and South Asian families suggested that greater prevention efforts aimed at youth are needed. One participant, a men's counsellor who works with both mainstream and South Asian families, indicated greater focus on life skills and relationship skills for male and female youth is needed:

When we ran the programs in English for mainstream, a lot of the guys would say "I wish I'd had this in high school. I wish I'd learned these kinds of skills in high school." And, I don't know if they do these things, – I mean, there is a pressure to do the academic course work and get them ready for the world. But, maybe there's not enough being done to deal with the social, emotional part of life ... in coping with life

4. "This is a man's problem": Engaging in community anti-violence action

Participants envisioned a significant role for men in preventing intimate partner violence in South Asian communities. A female participant noted that men are already taking on a much larger role in this regard, which she considered "refreshing":

I've seen, more South Asian men involved ... some of my other colleagues who I work with, you know, who have stepped up and who say "well violence against women isn't just a women's issue. It's our issue and it impacts our partners, it impacts our daughters, it impacts out families."

Another participant, a male, observed that recently men and women have begun working more closely together to reduce intimate partner violence in South Asian communities:

In the beginning, the women started working alone and they thought “it’s our issue, we have to deal with it, men could not be helpful.” It’s both. Men should be part of the intervention or social intervention also We have not said that openly in the community. I think we have not, in a leadership role way, said that very loudly – that this is a man’s problem and men needs to get help or they have to change.

A men’s counsellor advised that true change will occur when men all speak out against intimate partner violence:

I saw so many men coming to my office and they were crying that “my daughter is in an abusive relationship, I can’t do anything”, right? So it’s not only women’s issues, also men’s issues too. And the men, they need to come forward and openly tell these men that “whatever you are doing, it’s not the right thing. It’s unacceptable.” That’s I think we need to bring some kind of social change

5. “I know you need help”: Education around calling the police

Given that all participants believed that without police intervention the violence would continue and escalate, several believed that there is a constant need to educate women about this fact through media and outreach work. Equally important was education about the need for women to call police in order to protect themselves and so that the men could understand there were consequences to their actions and have to undergo counselling in an effort to change their behaviour.

Given the role that family members play, the importance of educating them – especially the woman’s family – was also deemed necessary. One police officer noted that a South Asian woman may tell a family member about abuse in hopes that this family member will act upon what he or she is told – thereby easing her fears about having to call the police:

It’s a matter of semantics but in our community, semantics is a big thing. If you’re not the one who called, you can honestly say “I didn’t call the police on you. I just told my brother that you hit me” It’s so they can deflect, so they can still have that relationship with the partner and say “I didn’t call the police on you but I know you need help.” They just don’t want to be seen as the one that’s sending them to jail.

Furthermore, a men’s counsellor suggested that, given the valuing of children in many South Asian families, education initiatives aimed at community members should especially

focus on the short- and long-term emotional harm suffered by children who experience abuse (even when they do not directly witness the abuse). This counsellor indicated that community members need to understand that calling the police may be the only option to protect the children and their mother, especially if the man continues to engage in violence.

F MALE PERPETRATORS SPEAK THEIR PIECE

The 17 individual interviews were followed by two focus groups. Focus group participants were South Asian men who were on probation and enrolled in the Branch-funded Relationship Violence Prevention Program – Cultural Edition (RVPP-CE). RVPP-CE is 17 sessions in length, three hours per session. Probation officers assess their South Asian clients using the Community Risk Needs Assessment and the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment. If rated as medium or high risk to re-offend, clients are referred to RVPP-CE. The RVPP-CE program facilitators then conduct their own assessments, and if appropriate, they accept the client into group. Reasons for not being appropriate for the group include mental health conditions that prevent clients from being able to understand and participate in the group, being rated low risk, or not understanding the language (Punjabi) in which the group is facilitated. During each session two facilitators are present – one female and one male – so that respect and healthy communication can be modeled.

Gary conducted two focus groups in the Metro Vancouver/Fraser Valley area, which included a total of 18 men (9 in each group). The first group lasted 90 minutes, while the second was 75 minutes. The men in both groups had completed 15 of the 17 group sessions. They had been approached a week earlier and given information concerning the purpose of the research and the focus group and a consent form that included agreements concerning confidentiality and anonymity. To further encourage their participation, only handwritten notes would be made and the focus group would not be recorded. This information was repeated prior to starting the focus group and participants were also told they could choose not to answer any question and that they could leave at any time. The facilitators also indicated they would debrief with the group members after they finished participating. After participants signed the consent forms, the focus group began.

Gary conducted the focus groups in Punjabi and asked four questions which the program facilitators also wrote on a white board in Punjabi:

- What are the factors that lead to intimate partner violence in South Asian communities?
- What interventions do you think are most effective when there is an incident of intimate partner violence?
- What do you think men in South Asian communities can do to address this issue in order to reduce instances of intimate partner violence?
- What else do you think would be effective in preventing intimate partner violence?

1. “Why does the man get angry?": Factors contributing to violence

Respondents suggested several factors may contribute to conflict between the husband and wife – factors that often escalate to the point of violence. They reported “habits” from back home; family obligations; involvement/interference from relatives; alcohol and drug abuse; and lack of education/awareness about the skills to deal with conflicts with their spouses and family members are all factors that may lead to intimate partner violence. A participant commented that prior to attending counseling, he did not realize the many factors in why the “man gets angry” – now that he does he has actively tried to address them.

A participant noted that when he was a child, women were told to “shut up” and they would. Now, he observed, they are willing to speak up and some men cannot handle that. Further, he indicated that men are brought up to consider themselves the main decision makers and when their spouses do not agree with their decisions they get angry. Another participant from the other focus group stated that “it’s a different system here and the systems don’t match.” When asked to elaborate, he indicated that in India the woman is considered lower in status than the male and this is reflected in the domestic arrangement where the man works and the woman remains at home. In Canada, he said, both husband and wife work, but the man does not realize that “she works hard, works eight hours,” then comes home, “makes food, looks after children.” The participant suggested the man has to realize that his expectations need to change in that “he needs to be more involved in his family.” He believed that both the husband and wife need to better understand that living in Canada requires adjusting to “new ways” and that they are often both stuck in the system that they followed in South Asia. “We can’t follow the ‘speed’ of this system,” he added.

Men mentioned the influence and involvement of extended family and other community members as a major source of conflict for South Asian couples. A participant indicated that during his upbringing in India he would hear men make comments such as “a man that can’t control his wife is weak” and that if a woman was not listening to her husband they would say “you’re not man enough” to control her. He explained that some men may see a relative or neighbor be violent with his spouse and think “if I use violence, then maybe she will learn.” He indicated that even if this method may in fact not have worked, the man will still think that it is still worth trying. He noted other people placed great pressure on the man to be controlling, by talking about him and making statements such as “if he can’t control his wife, why should anyone listen to him?” Another participant advised that his own mother was the most vocal in her criticism of him, making comments about other couples such as “look at him, he controls his wife, why can’t you?” He believed that men’s mothers “were controlled, now they want to control,” and indicated the man is often caught in-between his wife and mother. Another participant indicated that the conflict with his spouse began when he found out that she had sent money to family in India without his knowledge.

Most of the men believed both husband and wife lacked the skills to handle their anger in order to deal with conflicts in an appropriate manner and that, as one participant noted, “drinking doubles the anger,” although it did not cause the violence.

2. “We can change if we know what we need to change”: Intervention strategies

One participant argued that the treatment by police is the same whether someone commits murder or commits a more minor offence. (He described a “minor” offence as one where no weapons were involved and where the victim was not in danger): “They didn’t give us an opportunity to talk, they just took us away.” When asked what they could have done differently, he said:

Speak to us, listen to us, talk to us respectfully. Don’t turn us into criminals I was handcuffed and fingerprinted – it felt like I had done such a major crime I’m cooperating, I don’t need to be treated that way. I’m right here, I’m not running.

Many of the participants felt, as South Asian men, that they were prejudged and treated differently by police and other frontline workers they came across as their charges

proceeded through court. One man indicated he was treated the worst by a South Asian police officer.

Many of the men were also critical of the court system. One participant argued that a lawyer costs \$5,000–\$7,000, and for an immigrant who earns \$8/hour it will take several years to pay it back. He indicated that this is a debt incurred by the whole family given the family usually reunites. He suggested all the money spent on police, the defense attorney, Crown Counsel, the judge, and other court and criminal justice staff could be better spent on education and prevention.

Participants were asked how long it took between the date of the offence and when they started counseling. The shortest reported wait was six months while the longest was two years. The majority of men indicated it took about one year after the offence date to begin counseling. Aside from one man who had been charged in the past, the participants said they did not realize how long the court process would take. These same men also reported that their spouses did not know how long the court and counseling process would take. One participant described his experience this way: “Every month they keep putting it forward.” He reported that for each court date he had to take a day off work. The whole matter likely cost him close to \$ 10,000. “I could have gone without a lawyer and got the same thing [same court disposition] but I was too afraid.”

This participant indicated he was sorry for what he had done but was too afraid to say that in court initially, because he was unsure of what the consequence would be for admitting such a thing. While he knew that a Duty Counsel and interpreter were available at the courthouse, he could not locate either and argued that offices in the courthouse where he could find these individuals should be clearly marked. The other participants in that particular focus group all agreed that they found their court system experience similarly intimidating. One participant said that anyone he spoke to in court advised he should talk to a lawyer but no one told him that he if he wanted to plead guilty he could handle the matter himself. He described the whole court process as a “business” for those who work there and that no one seems to be there to help the men.

A few participants suggested that some men will turn to family members for help if they are violent or feel they may become violent, and that this is important as men and women “should not hide it” as it only “creates more problems.” One participant added, however, that in his experience “relatives don’t give neutral advice.” Instead he argued, and several participants concurred, that more counselling options should be made available to men who

realize they could be violent or who have been violent. When asked if they would have attended counselling on their own volition, they said “no.” At the same time, they believed that if such services were available and advertised – and more importantly if men and women knew what counselling actually was and could understand there is a benefit to it – they may have acted. One participant added that if he knew what the consequences could be if he did not come – namely that the relationship could worsen, and he could be arrested, have to go to court, incur great expense, be placed on a probation order and required to attend counseling – then he would have come to counselling much sooner. “We can change, if we know what we need to change,” he advised.

3. “No man wants this kind of family trouble”: Effective Reduction strategies

Men talked about what they had learned in the program, including the importance of trust, open communication, and the need to work on relationship issues before they escalate: “The man needs to share what is inside, what is bothering him. He will just say ‘forget it,’ but then it all comes out at once.” Others felt that both the man and woman tend to keep things in and that both their anger escalates when it all comes out. Men also talked about learning how to communicate with their partners in order to discuss and set healthy boundaries in their dealing with extended family members. A participant suggested it is necessary to work on these issues, as “no man wants this kind of family trouble.”

A participant indicated that often neither the husband nor the wife spend enough time with their children and that they need to find activities they can all do together as a family. Several participants indicated that they had learned they needed to treat their spouses equals in domestic relations. One revealed that he had begun to share some of the responsibility of doing the dishes as well as helping the children with their homework. Another man said that since the offence and subsequent court/probation matters, he and his spouse realized their relationship needed to be worked on and they were communicating more. Several participants said that if a man has a problem with alcohol, and that if many of the problems are caused by or made worse by his alcohol use, then he needs to quit.

A participant joked that if they cannot change, then they should “go back.” He then became more serious, arguing that in India there “was lots of time, but here there is no time. . . if people cannot handle and adjust to that, then maybe they do need to go back.” Another participant stated that if the relationship is not working, then both the man and wife have to seriously consider “moving on.”

4. “Don’t want this to happen to others”: Prevention strategies

Most participants in one focus group agreed with one participant’s comment that he wished that he had attended such a class prior to coming to Canada. These men suggested such a class could cover topics such as Canadian laws, the potential consequences of failing to abide by such laws, Canadian customs, and the differences both men and women may encounter between their own customs and customs here. Several of the men believed that they would not have ended up in the RVPP-CE program if they had known some of the above prior to or just after immigrating to Canada.

When asked by the researcher if they would have gone voluntarily to such sessions, they all indicated that they would not have. Several men, however, indicated that attending a program as a mandatory requirement prior to immigrating was much more preferable than what they ended up going through (i.e., being arrested, being placed on a no contact order, going to court and being placed on a probation order). Participants believed that governments should fund both these types of programs, as well the counselling programs that can be taken before violence occurs or before it escalates.

Most participants from both focus groups also indicated that greater awareness is needed. While participants suggested regular discussion of intimate partner violence is necessary through South Asian media, they believed it was as just as important to talk about regular conflicts and “information on why arguments happen” between spouses even if there is no violence. One participant indicated that South Asians “sit together and watch TV,” therefore finding a way to deliver messages through entertainment is also important. He gave an example of “nataks” (soap-opera type dramas that many South Asian families watch) as a medium where such messages could be delivered. Another participant argued that religious organizations could also try to discuss these issues at their premises, because so many South Asian people congregate there. He also believed that religious organizations may be especially good sites to do prevention work because men cannot be there while under the influence of alcohol.

Both focus groups concluded with an open question for men to add anything on topics/issues that had not been covered. Men in both focus groups used it as an opportunity to re-iterate that they are capable of change and that they believed a better way existed to deal with intimate partner violence than the system that is in place.

CHAPTER 3: INTERSECTIONALITY: THE SINGH FAMILY

Little research exists on the prevalence of intimate partner violence in North American South Asian communities. One study of 165 female South Asian respondents in Boston found that 35% reported violence at the hands of their partners.⁶ Another study of 160 South Asian women found 48.8% of 160 had been physically or sexually abused by their partners.⁷

The fact that minimal statistical data exists on rates of intimate partner violence in South Asian communities “itself speaks volumes about the invisibility that shrouds the topic” (Dasgupta, 2007, p.3). In particular, there is little critical literature grounded in research that addresses the complexity of intimate partner violence in the everyday context of Punjabi Sikh first-generation Canadians, including experiences of marginalization and racism, differences based on sponsorship status, the influence of alcohol, and the importance of initial police intervention. As always, an investigation of intimate partner violence from the theoretical perspective of intersectionality must acknowledge that any individual act of violence is a choice made by that individual:

Cultural mores, religious practices, economic and political conditions may set the precedence for initiating and perpetuating domestic violence, but ultimately committing an act of violence is a choice that the individual makes out of a range of options. (Kaur & Garg, 2008, p. 74)

As a contribution to the literature concerning intimate partner violence from this perspective, the Singh Family case study has been developed and analyzed within the conceptual framework of intersectionality.

⁶ Raj and Silverman, 2002; Dasgupta, 2007

⁷ Silverman, 2002, cited in Almeida, 2009

A INTERSECTIONALITY: A THEORETICAL MODEL

While the Singh family is a composite, the complexity of their situation is not uncommon among South Asian immigrant families. The literature on South Asian immigrant families, as well as the data emerging from qualitative interviews conducted in the “A Process of Discovery” research project makes clear that while each individual story is unique such complexity within those stories is common.

Some or all of the intersections of patriarchy/sexism, immigration, acculturation, extended family, and substance abuse may factor into any type of work with South Asian immigrant families affected by intimate partner violence. In the discussion that follows, an intersectionality framework is used throughout. Each category is reviewed separately for the sake of simplicity; however, one must remember that it is through the intersection of these categories that we can best answer the question “What is happening?”

The conceptual framework for the A Process of Discovery research project is critical race theory as well as feminist and critical multiculturalism leading to an understanding of intersectionality that proposes people’s experiences are shaped by the intersections of systems of power and oppression. Within this framework, categories such as gender, race, culture, class, age, dis/ability, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc. are socially constructed. No one category can adequately define one’s identity or social location, and an individual category cannot be empirically separated from the others. Various categories or identities intersect in ways that make the effects of their whole greater than the sum of their parts. Based on a particular social location and time, these categories can be arranged both laterally and hierarchically and a person can experience privilege via one or more categories while at the same time experience multiple oppressions via other categories.⁸ In terms of looking at intimate partner violence, Bograd (2005) writes “intersectionalities color the meaning and nature of domestic violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained” (p. 27).

⁸ Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999; Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio & Parker, 2008; Bograd, 2005; Fellows and Razack (1998 cited in Sundar, 2008); Hernandez, 2008; Kallivayalil, 2007; Sundar, 2008; Thiara, 2010

Intersectionality requires greater analysis of “race” as well as “multiculturalism,” going beyond superficial views to consider critical race and critical multiculturalism. Critical race theory considers how race is socially constructed while critical multiculturalism “is concerned with issues of justice and social change: how domination occurs and how it shapes human relations in families, the workplace, the schools, and everyday life” (Almeida, Dolan-Del Vecchio, & Parker, 2008, p. 18). Intersectionality also addresses criticisms of early feminism, such as its failure to address the needs of diverse groups of women.

The ways in which women experience violence, the options open to them in dealing with that violence and the extent to which they have access to services to help them are all profoundly shaped by the intersection of gender with the other dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, class, culture, and nationality. Intersectionality, therefore, has much to offer in exposing women’s diverse experiences of violence and their different needs in response to it and can inform the development of policy and service delivery so that they are better targeted to meet those needs.⁹

While intersectionality has been used by scholars in addressing the multiple oppressions faced by women of colour, a similar approach can be used to better understand the experiences of South Asian men – not to minimize or justify abuse, but rather using an intersectionality framework to consider methods to better intervene and/or prevent the violence. As noted elsewhere, the safety of the victim/survivor and her children is paramount.

A thorough literature review using the focus of “South Asian culture” was conducted. It became clear during the review and through consultation with reference group members from the research project that defining a monolithic South Asian culture is impossible as well as inappropriate. Falicov (1995) defines culture as:

those set of shared world views, meanings and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a multiplicity of contexts, such as rural, urban or suburban setting; language, age, gender cohort, family configuration, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology, migration and stage of acculturation (cited in Maiter, 2003, p. 367).

⁹ Thiara and Gill, 2010, p. 42; see also Kallivayalil, 2007

Culture needs to be considered as a dynamic force rather than a monolithic entity. It is constantly contested and therefore undergoes constant transformation, adaptation, and reshaping.¹⁰

The term “South Asian” includes someone who immigrated from or is a descendent of an immigrant from South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka; additionally, the term can include persons from places such as Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean and Europe who trace their origin to nations in South Asia. The region is linguistically diverse and world religions practiced there include Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Sikhism. Such diversity is not only found between countries, but also within the various regions and provinces within each nation.¹¹

According to 2006 Census data, 1.3 million South Asians were living in Canada, and that number could grow to between 3.2 to 4.1 million by 2031. They are the fastest growing immigrant group in Canada, and among the fastest growing groups in the USA. The majority of South Asians live in Ontario and British Columbia, particularly in the regions in and around Toronto and Vancouver. In British Columbia, the largest South Asian group can trace their heritage back to Punjab in India and follow the Sikh religion. Over 262,000 South Asians live in BC: 27.5% of Surrey’s and 10 % of Vancouver’s population were South Asian, and almost 75% of Abbotsford’s visible minority population is South Asian – with 90% of that group being Sikh. Over 84,000 households spoke Punjabi in Surrey, and over 32,000 spoke Hindi.¹²

In the next sections, the influence of patriarchy, types of marriages, *izzat* and *sharam*, and the role of extended families in South Asian communities is considered. This is followed by a discussion of the effects of immigration (including marginalization) and substance abuse. While other factors are undoubtedly present, the above were most frequently identified by research participants as being the most significant when intimate partner violence occurs within first-generation South Asian homes (and just as likely, many of these factors – to varying degrees – would be present in non-first-generation South Asian homes where

¹⁰ Samuel, 2010; Thiara, 2010; Volpp, 2005

¹¹ Ahmad, Riaz, Barata, & Stewart, 2004; Assanand, Dias, Richardson, & Waxler-Morrison, 2005; Ayyub, 2000; Das & Kemp, 1997; Grewal, Bottonoff, & Hilton, 2005; Kallivayalil, 2007; Lalonde et al., 2004; Maiter, 2003; Merali, 2009; Papp, 2010; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Singh, 2009; Tran, Kaddatz & Allard, 2005; Vittala & Poole, 2004

¹² City of Surrey, 2008; Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly & Titus, 2009; Lindsay, 2001; Shariff, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2010; Tran et al., 2005; Walton-Roberts, 2003

violence has occurred). Within the discussion of each intersecting trait is further analysis of how that trait influences the dynamics within the Singh family.

THE SINGH FAMILY

Charnjit is a 34-year old landed immigrant from the Punjab, India, who has been in Canada for 10 years. He was sponsored by his spouse, Jaswinder. Jaswinder is 32 years old and has lived in Canada for 20 years. They live in Abbotsford, British Columbia, with their two children, ages nine and seven.

Jaswinder came to Canada with her parents and a younger brother. They were sponsored by her older sister Paramjit and Paramjit’s husband (who is actually a relative of Charnjit’s). Jaswinder’s mother is both a homemaker and works seasonally on a farm while her father, who was a professor in India, works as a security guard. They lived in a basement suite for several years before purchasing a modest home.

This was the first relationship for both Charnjit and Jaswinder; they never spoke prior to the marriage as the marriage was arranged. When Charnjit first arrived in Canada, the couple lived with Jaswinder’s parents. Several verbal conflicts occurred during that first year, mainly between Charnjit and his in-laws. Jaswinder, pregnant at the time, moved out with her husband in order to maintain the peace.

Charnjit has worked steadily as a labourer since arriving in Canada. He works long hours because he wants to make enough money to sponsor his parents to Canada, as well as buy a large house for them to all live in together. (Although she does not tell her husband, Jaswinder has some concerns about living with her in-laws, as she feels they judge her whenever she visits them in India.)

Jaswinder also works full-time as a cashier at a grocery store. Her parents look after the children when both she and Charnjit are working.

Charnjit and Jaswinder argue frequently, especially when he is intoxicated. His alcohol consumption has steadily been increasing during the 10 years he has been in Canada, and while Jaswinder is concerned about this, she has never told anyone else – that is besides her in-laws. At that time, her mother-in-law told her, “What’s the big deal, if he drinks? Let him, he works hard,” while her father-in-law told her that “this is a family matter, and it should stay in the home.” Charnjit’s drinking has even worsened of late

– when her husband drinks so much that he cannot go into work, Jaswinder is left to call his employer and makes up an excuse as to why he cannot come into work.

The typical arguments when Charnjit drinks revolve around his accusing Jaswinder's parents of mistreating him when he first came to Canada, and he makes derogatory statements about them in front of his wife. He also often threatens to move back to India, and take the kids with him. When she asks him why he wants to return to India, he tells her he hates his job, that he had a much easier life back in India, and that he has no one that he can socialize with. (Compared with his current life, when he lived in India he had many friends in his village.) He also swears heavily, saying very derogatory statements not only about his in-laws, but also about Jaswinder. This is all done in front of his children.

Adding to Jaswinder's stress is the fact that there has been considerable conflict in her parents' home of late. Her younger brother refuses to agree to an arranged marriage being proposed by her sister's husband. Because he sponsored the family her parents feel indebted to him and believe they must agree with his choices.

Charnjit comes home one night after putting in extra hours at work and find his wife and children are not there. He becomes upset because he is hungry and wants dinner. He calls Jaswinder's cell phone and she tells him she is at her parents' home; she went to pick up the children, and then decided to stay to discuss some family matters. There has been great conflict between her parents and her brother over her brother's refusal to enter into an arranged marriage, and she is trying to ease the tensions. She tells Charnjit that she will be home shortly.

Angry, he slams the phone down and then he begins to drink alcohol. Jaswinder decides that she better come home right away, hoping that the quicker she arrives home, the less angry her husband will be.

Charnjit confronts Jaswinder upon her arrival home. He yells at her and accuses her family of causing problems in their relationship. Jaswinder also becomes upset, accusing him of drinking too much and not spending enough time at home with their children. She also questions his sending money back home to his parents, as they are trying to save up to buy a home and they can barely make ends meet as it is. He becomes enraged, and slaps Jaswinder twice across the face. Charnjit then tells her that if she tells anyone he'll do to her what "those other men did to their wives" –

referring to the spate of murders of South Asian women by their spouses in BC over the past decade or so.

Jaswinder and Charanjit’s nine-year-old son, Harmeet, worrying about his mom’s safety, calls the police. By the time the police arrive, everything has quieted down. Jaswinder is hesitant at first to tell them anything, although she eventually admits that Charanjit slapped her. She asks if the police officer can just warn Charanjit about his alcohol misuse and anger – to scare him a little bit. The officer explains that he cannot do that because an offence has taken place. He says Charanjit will be charged with assault. The officer also informs her that he will be contacting social workers as her children were exposed to the abuse.

Charanjit is held in custody and appears in court the next day. Jaswinder attempts to have charges withdrawn but is told by Crown Counsel that such a decision is not up to her. Charanjit is released on a bail supervision. This order requires him to attend a future court date, report to a bail supervisor, and to not have contact with Jaswinder and their children or go back to the family residence. Charanjit, therefore, has to stay with his relative – the same relative who is married to Jaswinder’s sister.

During the weeks that follow, Jaswinder receives several calls from both her own relatives

as well as Charanjit’s (including several calls from her in-laws) all asking that she withdraw the police charges. She has to constantly explain that it is Crown Counsel that decides if charges will proceed or be dropped, that she has no say in it. Some of these people not only do not believe her, but they also blame her for Charanjit having to spend the night in custody and not being allowed back to the family home.

Many family members and friends also call to see what they can do to facilitate Charanjit and Jaswinder’s reconciliation. From Charanjit they learn that he feels all of the couple’s problems are caused by Jaswinder and her being “too involved with her family.” Most do not bring up the alcohol and domestic abuse – and even those who do place equal responsibility on Jaswinder and Charanjit for the couple’s problems: to them, his abuse is no worse than her “meddling family.” Some members of his family even blame her for “raising her children improperly” because it was her nine-year-old son who had called the police. She also feels pressure from her own sister Parmjit – whose husband helped bring the family to Canada – who tells her how “embarrassing”

this is for the entire family and wants them to reconcile as quickly as possible – before more people in the community find out what happened.

However, despite these pressures, her own parents, other family members and even some of Charnjit’s family – have stood by Jaswinder through these very difficult times.

1. Patriarchy in South Asian communities

The overwhelming majority of literature reviewed, whether focused on victims/survivors, perpetrators, or families in general, does not problematize the whole construct of “culture” within South Asian communities. The focus instead is on a feminist-informed analysis of patriarchy and how it has been used by men and women alike to justify abuse in South Asian communities.

While “the vast majority of religions including Muslim, Sikhism and Hinduism outline the importance of equality amongst males and females, traditions generally contradict such views and segregate the two gender groups” (Uppal, 2005, p. 5). Violence may be used to ensure such segregation remains by those who benefit from such arrangements. In a patriarchal home, the male is considered the head of the household, chief provider, and chief decision-maker while the woman is responsible for looking after household chores, including having greater responsibility in childrearing. She may have no rights to property. While children are highly valued, males have been historically given preference over females. Even while South Asians may adapt to mainstream norms and practices in their work setting, they may remain traditional within the home.¹³ While not all South Asian men subscribe to such rigid patriarchal attitudes, many benefit from them.¹⁴

A woman’s purity is highly valued and there is an expectation of her being a virgin prior to marriage. Displays of affection between the husband and wife within the extended

¹³ Abraham, 2000; Ahmad & Reid, 2008; Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999; Assanand et al., 2005; Ayyub, 2000; Bhatt, 2008; Dosanjh, Deo & Sidhu, 1994; Ely, 2004; Gill, 2007; Grewal et al., 2005; Maiter, 2003; Merali, 2009; Mooney, 2006; Nayar, 2004; Rastogi, 2009; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Shariff, 2009; Singh, 2009; Singh & Tatla, 2006; Sonpar, 2005; Vittala & Poole, 2004; Zhu & Dalal, 2010

¹⁴ Ahmad, Shik, Vanza, Cheung, George, & Stewart, 2004; Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009; ; Ayyub, 2000; Balzani, 2010; Bhanot & Senn, 2007; Kanukollu, 2010; Sharma, 1998

household are considered inappropriate.¹⁵ The man expects sex whenever he wants it and does not consider it sexual abuse if he forces his wife to have sex with him.¹⁶ Abraham (2000) advises “within the context of traditional South Asian patriarchal marriages, men initiate the sexual act, define its nature, and determine when it ends, while women rarely have any say in the matter” (p. 95). Research in the West and in South Asia indicates abusive men are also more prone to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, acquired outside the marital relationship, compared to non-abusive men. Furthermore, abused women may not feel safe in asking for safer sex from their spouses and therefore are susceptible to sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.¹⁷

Even in the absence of family pressure, women may feel an obligation to fulfill certain roles because of cultural expectations and obligations.¹⁸ Indeed, the victim/survivor may not even recognize the abuse if it is occurring. The greater degree that a woman accepts patriarchal norms, the less likely she is to seek help as she may not even characterize a situation as being abusive.¹⁹ Additionally, ethnically diverse women may “find themselves ‘on the margins’ and do not necessarily identify gender oppression as the primary frame through which they understand their lives, even when they live with the violence and abuse from the partner or ex-partner” (Nixon & Humphreys, 2010, p. 150).

2. Types of marriages in South Asian communities

Both love marriages and arranged marriages are common in South Asian communities. Arranged marriages are considered an alliance between two families. They may be arranged by elder extended family members, who continue to be influential in a married couple’s life.²⁰ Transnational arranged marriages, where either the male or female living in the West travels to South Asia to find a spouse, are also common. The majority of family members sponsored by Canadian citizens or permanent citizens are spouses, and 60% of them are women. The “desire to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional family system has led families of Canadian males to seek marriage partners for them from their home countries”

¹⁵ Abraham, 1999; Sonpar, 2005

¹⁶ Hasyim, n.d.

¹⁷ Decker et al., 2009; Raj, Liu, McCleary-Sills & Silverman, 2005; Silverman, Decker, Saggurti, Balaiah, & Raj, 2008

¹⁸ Grewal et al., 2005

¹⁹ Ahmad et al., 2004

²⁰ Ahmad & Reid, 2008

(Merali, 2009, p. 322). Prior to 2002, sponsors were expected to support their spouse for 10 years, which meant covering all of their basic food, shelter, and health costs.

The period of time where a sponsor cannot rely on government assistance (i.e., cannot collect benefits) has been referred by researchers as sponsorship debt, where the sponsors constantly reminds their spouses that they are owed for sponsoring them to Canada and having to pay their expenses while here. This obligation is then used as an excuse of sorts to justify acts of mistreatment. Research indicating sponsorship policies were putting women at risk resulted in changes to the term of sponsorship from ten to three years, more thorough background checks on the potential sponsor with those with a criminal record or history of wife abuse being barred from being able to sponsor a bride from abroad, and more detailed directions and information on the sponsorship application so women could gain some basic understanding of their rights. When a report of abuse is made, there is a sponsorship breakdown and the woman becomes eligible for government assistance. While many positive changes have been made in the past decade, there is evidence that sponsored women are still unaware of their rights.²¹

Some South Asian men may go to South Asia to look for a bride with the expectation that she holds patriarchal gender role values and beliefs and may be more submissive than South Asian women in the West. They may have the opportunity to choose from among several potential brides; the woman selected may feel considerable pressure to marry once the groom has consented. Her family may be more concerned with how their family status may improve so little or no effort is spent investigating the groom and/or his family. The man may soon find discrepancies in his expectation of how his wife should behave towards him and his family and what happens in reality.²²

Some South Asian women in the West who go to South Asia to marry may have been brought up in patriarchal homes, where the expectation was a husband would be selected for them. Unlike the male, they may have little input into the arrangement. The groom's family also wields considerable influence and control. A woman who comes from a family that believes in the tradition of arranged marriage may be ostracized by her family if she chooses to enter

²¹ Kang, 2006; Merali, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Raj & Silverman, 2002

²² Abraham, 2005; Hague, Gangoli, Joseph, & Alphonse, 2010; Merali, 2009; Sheel, 2008

into a love marriage; or she may hesitate to disclose abuse if it occurs out of a fear that she may in part be blamed or not supported for having gone against family tradition.²³

Arranged marriages are done with the consent of both individuals to be wed. If pressure or duress is a factor, then the marriage would more appropriately be called a forced marriage. Izzidien (2008) notes all major world religions – Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh and Muslim – condemn forced marriages and there are no religious grounds to justify forced marriages. The author suggests some common justifications for forced marriages are controlling a woman’s sexuality and independent behaviour, pressure by one’s family to have their daughter or son marry someone, and preventing the son or daughter from having a relationship with someone deemed unsuitable. A great degree of patriarchal control is involved, and those who force their daughters or sons into marrying “justify their actions in terms of their duty of welfare towards their children and therefore may be supported by others within and outside the family” (p. 68).

Considerable attention has been paid in recent years to the issue of runaway grooms. These are men who live in North America, travel to South Asia to marry, collect a dowry, return to North America, and then fail to sponsor their wives or extort more money by threatening not to sponsor the woman if their demands are not met. In addition to collecting dowry, men may take the woman’s virginity; when the women are not sponsored, their reputation as well as their family’s reputation is ruined.²⁴

3. *Izzat* and *sharam* in South Asian communities

Ahmad and Reid (2008) advise a cultural ideal of marriage is the desire “to function well together for the good of the family and to be seen to be doing so” (p. 132). In 2001, 61% of South Asian in Canada aged 15 and over were married, compared to 50% of all Canadian adults; 2% reporting living common-law, compared to 10% of all Canadians. In the USA, Asian Indians have the lowest divorce rate among any group.²⁵ In their study of African American, Hispanic and South Asian victims/survivors, Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel, and Baig-Amin (2003) found that amongst the three groups the South Asian women were in greater proportions still married to or had been married to their abuser.

²³ Abraham, 2005

²⁴ Dasgupta, 2007; Mooney, 2006

²⁵ Lindsay, 2001; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006

Rai (2006) suggests South Asian community members are heavily concerned by what others may say about them. He notes “The South Asian culture is a shared-shame based culture: that is, the shame of an individual often becomes the shame of the family or the extended family” (p. 12). An individual’s behaviour is often seen as a reflection of the family. In particular, the honour of a family depends heavily on the actions of the females within that home and their activities are both heavily monitored and scrutinized by community members.²⁶

Many scholars and researchers, especially those who focus on the experiences of South Asian victims of violence, note that concepts such as honour and shame were the means by which patriarchal customs were maintained. Izzidien (2008) indicates

Two very pertinent social and cultural patriarchal constructs used to control and silence women are Izzat (honour) and Sharam (shame). Both men and women are supposed to uphold family and community honour, but the responsibility tends to fall mostly on women; they retain their honour through conforming to prescribed roles and practices and may attain dishonour through their transgressions (p. 21).

And it is not only through her ‘transgressions’ that a woman can be dishonoured. She can even experience dishonour if her husband violates gender expectations, i.e., he does not work or does not earn enough to provide for the family.²⁷ Furthermore, if she is the victim of intimate violence, she may opt to place family over self, being more concerned with the impact an instance of battering may have on her extended family than on the emotional impact it has on her.²⁸ Thus, *izzat* and *sharam* are the mechanisms that help keep patriarchal customs in place.

4. Extended families in South Asian communities

The South Asian family unit typically extends beyond the Western concept of a nuclear family to include grandparents, siblings and their families and interdependence is highly valued. Familism, the placing of greater emphasis on the relationships within the nuclear and extended family, is highly valued. The needs of extended families will often factor into an

²⁶ Abraham, 1999, 2000, 2005; Assanand et al., 2005; Dasgupta, 2005, 2007; Nayar, 2004; Pillay, 2004; Samuel, 2010; Sheel, 2008

²⁷ George, 2006

²⁸ Almeida, 2009; Ayyub, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Sharma, 1998; Singh, 2009; Singh & Hays, 2008

individual’s decision-making process. Many consider it their obligation to help extended family members, including but not limited to financial support. Given family interconnectedness, the emotional health or psychological difficulties an individual faces also affect that person’s extended family.²⁹

Given the interdependent nature of South Asian families, they can generally be considered to hold a collectivist worldview. It is important to note that collectivist and individualistic concepts are not mutually exclusive, i.e., a traditionally collectivist family that lives in an individualistic society may use elements of individualism in order to function in that society.³⁰

Ahmad et al. (2009) note that it is not familism and collectivism values themselves, but rather “the exploitation of these values through dynamics of unequal power in the trusted relationship” (p. 620) which can delay help-seeking for a South Asian woman experiencing intimate partner violence. In fact, having an extended family in the home or nearby can be a protective factor. For example, when abuse is taking place, South Asian women and children often rely on extended family for support or help in dealing with conflicts or violence. And there are plenty of families that will condemn the actions of the violent man and offer sympathy and support to the victim/survivor. At the same time, however, if and when the violence is addressed within the community, the emphasis is often on the couple reconciling rather than on changing the abusive behaviour. Women who disclose the abuse to their male relatives are frequently advised to remain in the relationship.³¹ The underlying issues may be less of a priority than having the couple reconcile, so those issues may go unresolved.

Extended family relationships are often particularly difficult between each member of the married couple and their in-laws. The custom is for the daughter-in-law to live in the home of her husband and his family: “mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are traditionally expected to compete for the attention of the son/husband, a phenomenon that reinforces patriarchy” (Choudry, 2001, p. 386). The present-day economic circumstances of families create a situation where both spouses need to work, although the woman is often still expected to

²⁹ Ahmad et al., 2009; Assanand et al., 2005; ; Bhatt, 2008; ; Choudhry, 2001; Dosanjh, Deo & Sidhu, 1994; Maiter, 2003; Rastogi, 2009; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Singh, Nath, & Nichols, 2005; Sonpar, 2005

³⁰ Abraham, 2005; Assanand et al., 2005; Choudhry, 2001; Maiter, 2003; Maiter, Alaggia & Trocme, 2004; ; Maiter & George, 2003; Shariff, 2009; Singh & Hays, 2008;

³¹ Abraham, 2005; Assanand et al., 2005; Gill, 2004; Izzidien, 2008, Yoshioka et al., 2003

tend to the household and childcare duties in addition to working outside the home. There is an expectation that women serve both their husbands and their in-laws. In traditional homes where the daughter-in-law works and does not assume a large share of household duties, the mother-in-law, who expected to be relieved of these responsibilities once her son married, will be expected to continue with these duties. Such a circumstance can lead to considerable conflict between daughters-in-laws and mothers-in-laws; in the meantime, the men in the household can continue to enjoy the benefits of the patriarchal arrangement.³²

In many instances the violence, while sanctioned by male in-laws, may be perpetrated by female in-laws.³³ Raj et al. (2006) indicate that while a joint family system may facilitate abuse by in-laws, it is not the joint family system that leads to higher rates of intimate partner violence, but rather whether the residents within that household hold patriarchal beliefs where abuse is accepted. The authors advise that if in-laws hold such beliefs, abuse may be occurring even when the woman does not live with them.

The Singh Family

Both Jaswinder and Charnjit come from traditional families. As Charnjit was sponsored and brought few savings to Canada, he initially lived with Jaswinder and her family. If they were in South Asia, the expectation would have been for Jaswinder to move into Charnjit's home. Charnjit may have had difficulty with this transition, and this may have factored into the conflicts he had with in-laws.

Charnjit and Jaswinder also adhere to clear gender role expectations. For example, the expectation is for Jaswinder to rear the children as well as take care of household duties such as preparing meals, and this is in addition to her working full time. Jaswinder's in-laws also have clear expectations around gender roles.

The desire to project an image of a well-functioning marriage may inhibit both Charnjit and Jaswinder from addressing the issues that are seriously affecting their marriage. Jaswinder may not have called the police after being assaulted out of concern with how she and her family may be perceived by others. Some of these concerns have

³² Abraham, 2000; Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999; Assanand et al., 2005; Choudhry, 2001; Pillay, 2004; Raj et al., 2006; Singh, 2009; Singh & Hays, 2008; Tyyska & Dinshaw, 2009

³³ Abraham, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007; Papp, 2010

been borne out, as after the incident several people she knows are holding her responsible for ‘taking the charges back’ despite it not being in her control to do so.

Arranged marriages are common and many are highly successful, yet the one between Jaswinder and Charnjit may have been based more on familial obligations than on compatibility. Jaswinder’s sister was sponsored by her husband, and years later Charnjit was married to and sponsored by Jaswinder. If the primary motivator is to sponsor someone to Canada (and compatibility is less of a concern) then is the marriage already going to have problems from the start?

Charnjit feels great obligation to support his parents in India: this support also includes eventually sponsoring them and having them come live with him. His sending money to India creates conflict in his relationship. While his dedication to his family is admirable, it has created many problems between him and his spouse.

Jaswinder also has obligations to both her husband’s family and her own. Because of family interconnectedness, the conflict arising out of her brother’s refusal to enter into an arranged marriage also affects her. Additional stress comes from Charnjit’s expectations that Jaswinder should be more concerned about his family and less (or not at all) about hers.

When Charnjit’s parents do arrive, the household dynamics would change significantly; furthermore, the levels of acculturation within the household would become more pronounced. Depending on Charnjit’s parents’ belief systems, there may be conflicts between them and their daughter-in-law. Conversely, if they hold values that do not condone violence, their presence in the home may be a protective factor preventing future instances of violence.

5. Immigration in South Asian communities

Immigration is not a simple process of moving from one area to another; it involves the transportation of cultural values and contexts:

Regardless of their reasons for migrating, [immigrants and refugees] bring with them deeply embedded cultural and familial values, religious beliefs, and they are influenced by societal expectations regarding sexual and gender roles acquired in their country of origin. All of these factors serve to shape beliefs and attitudes

regarding familial relations, including marital arrangements, assigned gender roles, child-rearing practices, and the role of extended family. When abuse or violence is a reality in the family life of immigrants, how it is understood and addressed is influenced by all of these factors. Seeking help and making use of Canadian social services becomes yet another stress and is fraught with additional dilemmas (Alaggia & Maiter, 2006, p. 100).

The act of migration can be traumatic, with immigrants being separated from relied upon sources of support such as family and community. Immigrants may face cultural, linguistic, informational and systemic barriers related to settling. Immigrants from South Asian countries have high expectations of what life in Canada will be like, and when these expectations fall short of reality considerable stress, disappointment and/or psychological distress may result.³⁴

Furthermore, stress can arise from adjusting to new cultural norms and from the changes in family structure, socioeconomic and social status. These can be compounded for persons of colour, given their visible minority status. All of these stressors are in addition to the everyday stressors faced by all individuals such as concerns over finances, decisions about the future, parenting, parent-child relationships, and problems related to school or work. The different levels of acculturation within the home can also affect how these issues are viewed. For example, there may be different views on gender roles between immigrant parents and their children born and socialized in the West, and differences in parenting styles between a recently arrived immigrant, such as a grandparent, and a parent who has lived in the West for several years.³⁵

Some South Asian families maintain rigid cultural boundaries as a response to oppression experienced at the hands of the host society.³⁶ Social exclusion experienced by migrant groups, in particular those who are first generation, may actually increase the degree to which they hold on to more traditional customs, helping them maintain a sense of identity. This identity, however, may then make their alienation even more rigid: “Such customs would not only define who they are, but set them in opposition to the dominant culture – not

³⁴ Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Ahmad, Riaz et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2009; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Maiter, 2003; Samuel, 2009; Sharma, 2001

³⁵ Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2009; Khanna et al., 2009; Maiter, 2003; Maiter et al., 2004, Sharma, 1998

³⁶ Almeida, 2005; Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999; Walton-Roberts & Pratt, 2005

only are their identities created within, but they are also formed in relation to the ‘other’” (Samuel, 2010, p. 108).

During the early years of mass immigration, many within immigrant communities in North America went to great lengths to project a model image to the host society. Scholars have coined the phrase “model minority” to describe this phenomenon, where community members want to promote their achievements, particularly economic successes, while denying the existence of social problems such as substance misuse, intimate partner violence, and child sexual abuse. While the “model minority” perception can create great pride at both an individual and community level, it can create great pressure to adhere to that image so that “any incident that comes to light regarding members of the community is ignored, denied or explained away as merely a case of particular violent individuals or relationships rather than as a social problem” (Abraham, 2000, p. 15). Those who do not fit into the model minority image then are ostracized within their community and experience considerable shame and guilt. While these issues are considerably less hidden and less denied as a result of the hard work of activists within immigrant communities, this desire to adhere to the image of a model minority can still inhibit immigrant communities from addressing social issues affecting them.³⁷

Conversely, immigrants may have experienced pressures to conform to a model minority image by the host society. There are certain expectations placed upon these ‘preferred immigrants/conditional Canadians’: they can succeed if they try hard enough, they do not bring issues over from their country of origin, they are grateful to Canada for letting them in, they are law-abiding, they will assimilate, and they only practice elements of their culture that are deemed by the host society as not being problematic.³⁸

Maintaining “model minority” status can be particularly difficult for professionals who may find themselves unemployed or underemployed as their credentials are not recognized in Canada, or they are unable to find work in their desired profession because of a requirement to have prior Canadian work experience. Skilled immigrants may need to undergo recertification, although recertification placements may be limited, as well as lengthy and costly. Low-wage earning immigrants may feel they are failing their families. They may feel

³⁷ Abraham, 1995, 2006; Dasgupta, 2007; Kang, 2006; Kanukollu, 2010; Walton-Robert & Pratt, 2005

³⁸ Jiwani, 2006

great disappointment that they were not given information on employment prospects prior to immigrating.³⁹

For South Asian men, changes in career and community standing that may occur as a result of immigration can affect how they perceive their masculine self-identities.⁴⁰ The South Asian male may find his status in his host country lower, going from the major and often sole breadwinner to potentially making less than his spouse. Such changes in breadwinner roles “have the potential to create conflicts, unless family members are able to adjust to the new order” (Gill & Matthews, 1995, p. 257). South Asian men who have immigrated to the West may find their power significantly decreased in the workplace and may express their frustrations and anger over this loss through violence in the home.⁴¹ Indeed, in their research on Punjabi and Tamil families in Toronto and family violence, Tyyskä and Dinshaw (2009) considered the situational/structural model, which analyzes violence in immigrant families as a reaction to multiple challenges. According to this model, families undergo significant shifts in their internal roles and power relations upon immigration. For example, the comparatively easier entry of women and teen children than men in the labour market may cause shifts in pre-existing gender and age hierarchies, leading to family violence and conflict (p. 2).

The Singh Family

Jaswinder and Charnjit are at two different levels of acculturation: Jaswinder has been in Canada (arriving at age 12 and completing her high school education here) longer than her husband (who arrived in his early 20’s), and she is fluent in both English and Punjabi while he is fluent only in Punjabi. Charnjit may have expected to be the chief decision-maker upon arrival, but given his spouse is more acculturated there may be a considerable role-reversal from what he is used to or what he expected.

The different levels of acculturation are also present in Jawinder’s family: her younger brother was almost entirely educated and socialized in Canada, and his views on matters such as arranged marriage may be considerably different than those of the rest of his family.

³⁹ Khan & Watson, 2005; Light, 2007; Merali, 2008b; Maiter, 2003; Mooney, 2006; Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005

⁴⁰ Oliffe, Grewal, Bottorff, Luke, & Toor, 2007

⁴¹ Merali, 2008b; Pillay, 2004; Singh, 2009

Jaswinder’s father is an educated gentleman who was unable to find work in his desired profession. The intergenerational effect of this (i.e. the effect it had on Jaswinder) is worth considering; so too may be Charnjit’s relationship with his in-laws. For example, is it a source of frustration/embarrassment that his father-in-law is educated and he is not? Is this another factor in why he did not get along with them?

6. Marginalization: Problematizing South Asian culture

According to 2001 Census data, a majority of South Asians feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada and actively participate in Canadian society. At the same time, over one third identified that they had been subject to discrimination based on their religion, ethnicity, skin colour, or accent. Over half of this number advised the discrimination had occurred at work or while applying for a job.⁴²

Often incidents of violence by a Caucasian person are considered deviance on the part of that individual and never cultural, whereas when violence occurs in immigrant communities, that violence is attributed to that whole community. Only in the latter do murdered women suffer, as Narayan (1997) describes it, “death by culture” (cited in Volpp, 2005, p. 42. See also Jiwani, 2001).

Those within a culture will often explain behaviours as stemming from their cultural beliefs as well. Several examples of this have occurred in BC and throughout Canada in criminal court cases. For example, the media “happily picks up the defendant’s claim (or proffers its own claim) that this problematic behaviour is a product of a certain community’s culture because the idea that nonwhite others engage in primitive and misogynistic cultural practices fits preexisting conceptions” (p. 43). However, no white male would ever be able to use such a defence: “This impossibility speaks directly to the differing levels of safety our institutions afford White women versus women of color” (Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999, p. 655).

Dasgupta (2005) indicates she has been asked about bride burning and dowry murders so often she cannot keep count; when she tries to explain that these are extreme acts and compares them to extreme cases committed in the West, the person she is talking to remains unconvinced and sometimes even becomes upset. “How dare I compare and suggest similarities between an ‘other’ culture and the normative one!” (p. 61).

⁴² Lindsay, 2001

Such instances of marginalization as these can quickly lead to oppression, as the greater the distance that exists between a person and access to power and privilege, the greater the potential for that person to exert power and privilege at home.⁴³ And the belief that “West is Best” only creates defensive reactions by communities that are feeling attacked, which “plays into the hands of those who choose to defend sex-subordinating behavior” (Volpp, 2005, p. 46).

The Singh Family

Charnjit may feel that as an immigrant male he is not welcomed by the host society, and while no excuse, this may help fuel some of his frustrations – which he ultimately takes out on his wife.

As for Jaswinder, in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier (i.e., honour, shame), she may not seek help out of fear of how she will be perceived by criminal justice and social service system personnel. Furthermore, she may fear that Charnjit will be considered a highly sexist and abusive South Asian man who has no potential to change – a socially constructed stereotype – and treated accordingly if he went through the criminal justice system. Charnjit seems to fit that stereotype – at least at the time of the offence – as he uses his knowledge of the murders of South Asian women to maintain power and control over Jaswinder and to scare her so she does not call the police.

7. Substance abuse in South Asian communities

Studies on substance use by South Asian in the West are limited. Of the ones that exist, many are based on data that is about twenty years old (i.e., Cochrane & Bal, 1990; Kunz & Geisbrecht, 1999). Research studies not specific to any ethnic group found more than 50% of men going through batterer programs were also substance abusers and more than 50% of men in substance abuse treatment had committed intimate partner violence in the year prior to their treatment.⁴⁴ Qualitative research undertaken in South Asia found men who

⁴³ Purkayastha, 2000

⁴⁴ Bennett, 1995, 2008; Bennett & Williams, 2003

consume alcohol have more conflicts in their relationships and are more likely to resort to violence than non-drinkers to resolve conflict with their spouse.⁴⁵

The relationship between substance abuse and intimate partner violence is complex. Abusive men who consume alcohol may blame the alcohol for their actions and not consider other factors:

[An] obstacle to changing patterns of violence lies in viewing alcohol or drug abuse as the primary problem and in valuing sobriety over all other issues. From this perspective, men can privately continue patterns that are destructive to partnership and family life as long as they are staying ‘clean’ or ‘sober’ (Almeida and Durkin, 1999, p. 321).

A person may use substances as a reason to become disinhibited, and anticipates acting in a certain way when using a particular substance.⁴⁶ Therefore men may use substances “with the expectation of being aggressive while they do so” (Bennett & Williams, 2003, p. 562). Another expectation may be an anticipation of being endowed with power or some other desired outcome; “if someone is motivated to feel more powerful, more social, more talkative, more attractive, more sexy, or more aggressive, and if they expect their substance of choice will facilitate this transformation, more often than not, the substance complies” (p. 563). Further, when violence occurs, the person can blame the substances.

When substance abuse and intimate partner violence co-occur, it is a belief system that justifies abuse towards an intimate partner that, along with substance abuse, leads to violence. Therefore, it “is this belief system about violence which differentiates those who will be violent and those who will not” (Humphreys et al., 2005, p. 1310).

Immigrant South Asian men may view alcohol as a way to relax, reduce stress, deal with problems at home, and reduce loneliness.⁴⁷ Alcohol use and overuse amongst men may also be socially accepted. Citing the frequency with which alcohol is referenced in popular folk tales and music, Sandhu (2009) indicates “to some extent, the culture endorses the use of alcohol as part of Punjabi masculinity” (p. 26). South Asian men may drink more frequently in the host country as they believe it is symbolic of their modernity and see it as a

⁴⁵ Krishnan, 2005

⁴⁶ Bennett & Williams, 2003; Humphreys et al., 2005

⁴⁷ Agic, 2004

means of being social; the serving of alcohol to guests is also frequently viewed as a sign of respect.⁴⁸

Studies have noted that Punjabi Sikh men, in particular, are at higher risk of alcohol abuse than any other South Asian group.⁴⁹ Singh and Tatla (2006) indicate alcohol misuse has “always been very high among Sikhs, with the per capita rate among Sikhs of Punjab among the highest in the world” (p. 177). Sandhu (2009) suggests some overuse among immigrant Punjabi men may be as a result of acculturative stress, specifically but not limited to the transition arising from “a collective-traditional society to an individualistic-modern [one]” (p. 27).

While women are not expected to drink at all, they “are vulnerable to depression because of their social isolation, loss of extended family support, racism, alienation, and domestic violence. This means they are at risk of being overprescribed anti-depressants” (Vittala & Poole, 2004, p. 32). A counsellor in Abbotsford noted that an overwhelming majority of female South Asian women she saw for counselling were taking medications such as anti-depressants, pain killers and muscle relaxants.⁵⁰ Women who are second-generation members of South Asian communities may use alcohol and/or drugs to cope with the stress of having to contend with norms and traditions of their family that may be different than those outside the family, though they may do it secretly.⁵¹

In a discussion of South Asian youth in Metro Vancouver with substance abuse issues, it was observed that youth, and their families, were hesitant to access formal treatment services out of concern that others in their community may find out. Some parents were more apt to send their child to the home of extended family living far away (and make up an excuse to tell others as to why their child was away) than to send him/her to a treatment centre.⁵² While these parents did so with the hope that their child could overcome their addiction, “sending a child and his/her problems away ensures that the family name does not become blighted, but it does little to address the serious issue their child is facing” (Rai, 2006, p. 12).

⁴⁸ Agic, 2004

⁴⁹ Agic, 2004; Cochrane & Bal, 1990; Morjaria-Keval, 2006

⁵⁰ Kalsey, 2010

⁵¹ Sandhu, 2009

⁵² Rai, 2006

In addition to hesitating to seek out counselling services out of concerns of being stigmatized, to keep what is perceived as a family matter private, and to maintain the image of a model minority member, South Asians may be unfamiliar with the concept of therapy as they have no prior experience of it back in South Asia. South Asian women in particular may seek out family, read religious texts or seek out religious figures before considering counselling as an option. And in South Asia, they may have only sought help from outside the family when there was a life-threatening emergency and therefore assume their situation does not require any type of external help.⁵³

The Singh Family

Charnjit’s use of alcohol has been increasing steadily since he came to Canada. He may be using it as a means to cope with acculturation, marginalization, family and/or employment-related stressors. When he drinks, he makes it clear to his wife that he is unhappy with his job and that his life was easier in India. Charnjit may also use and justify the overuse of alcohol as his right and as an expression of his masculinity. While his alcohol use is increasing, he still has some control over it, i.e., he manages to maintain long work hours and does not drink alcohol while driving (although he is starting to miss days of work as result of being hung over).

Amongst her family and social network within her community, it is unacceptable for Jaswinder to drink alcohol. While Charnjit has been using alcohol to cope with some of his stress and sees it as a right, Jaswinder may also be using maladaptive coping strategies (i.e. she internalizes much of it) to cope with her husband’s alcohol use, his abuse and the conflict occurring in her family between her father and younger brother over the issue of an arranged marriage. Perhaps she is suffering from depression – for that matter, perhaps Charnjit is too. Yet neither has been interested in counselling or support services.

⁵³ Abraham, 2000; Ahmad & Reid, 2008; Kanukollu, 2010; Khanna et al., 2009; Oliffe et al., 2007; Shariff, 2009; Singh & Hays, 2008

THE SINGH FAMILY

Out of fear of what a criminal record may do to his employment, Charnjit obtained a lawyer. After several months and several court dates (where he continued to live away from home), Charnjit agreed to enter into a peace bond and thereby avoid a criminal record. He was required to report to a probation officer, to attend domestic violence counselling, and to have no contact with Jaswinder. While Jaswinder had indicated in court that she wanted contact, the Judge wanted Charnjit to attend counselling before considering such a request. The social worker attached to Jaswinder's case also warned that if they reconciled prior to the counselling being completed, she would consider removing the children from the home. Charnjit's probation officer referred him to an assaultive men's program for South Asian men, which was facilitated in his first language, Punjabi. The next program was not slated to begin for at least 4 months, so he continued to report bi-weekly to his probation officer in the meantime.

Jaswinder, while hesitant initially to speak to the police officer, appreciated the police intervention. She could access counselling services both in English and Punjabi (unlike Charnjit, who could only access the limited services offered in Punjabi). While several family members on both sides – but not her parents, who remained supportive throughout – told Jaswinder she should not go to counselling because “counsellors will break up your family,” she decided to anyway. She chose to attend both English and Punjabi counselling services.

Jaswinder was also very frustrated. While she wanted her husband to stop being abusive, she ultimately wanted to reconcile – and felt doubly victimized because of long court delays and a lack of services that could address her husband's behaviour much sooner (and the longer the wait, the more family members on both sides blamed her for his predicament and gave the impression that he was in fact the victim). As the days and months dragged on, Jaswinder began to wonder whether, if she were to reconcile with Charnjit and if the violence happened again, she would bother calling the police because of all the headaches and heartaches caused by the delays.

B CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE COUNSELLING

Intersectionality has been used in the case study to better understand the situation of the couple. We can use the same theoretical framework to look at the counseling process. In particular, this can be used to determine how we can best support the frontline practitioners.

This section will describe what intimate partner violence is, its frequency within Canadian society, the reasons why South Asian families may hesitate to seek out help from outside the family, and end with a discussion on culturally appropriate services for South Asian communities. As part of this latter discussion, complementary and/or alternative approaches to current criminal justice/social service systems will be described. While there is obviously no ‘one size fits all’ approach in working with South Asian communities, this discussion on culturally appropriate prevention and intervention strategies and systems can be an effective starting point for those frontline practitioners who work with South Asian victims, children who witness abuse, and male perpetrators of intimate partner violence.

The violence being addressed in this particular project is intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence, for this project, is defined as direct or indirect physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological or economic threats, power, or control perpetrated on a woman by her male spouse or extended kin⁵⁴ that is “buttressed by familial, institutional, social and cultural practices” (Jaaber, 2001 cited in Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p.1).

This is not to say that men are not victims of abuse or that abuse does not take place in same-sex relationships. In the case of the latter, most service agencies and researchers have to date failed to collect sexual orientation data from batterers and/or victims/survivors.⁵⁵ In the former case, data from Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom suggests women are much more likely to be victims than men. In 2004, out of approximately 28,000 instances of domestic violence reported to the police in Canada, 84% of victims were female. Over a term of 10 years, police statistics indicate 94% of repeat abusers and 97% of chronic abusers were men.⁵⁶ Furthermore men report being significantly less frightened and fearful than women in instances where they experienced

⁵⁴ Abraham, 1999; 2000; Ahmad, Hogg-Johnson, Stewart & Levinson, 2007; Gill, 2004; Izzidien, 2008; Uppal, 2005

⁵⁵ Aldarondo & Fernandez, 2008

⁵⁶ Johnson, 2005; Neighbours, Friends and Families, n.d.

violence – an important distinction as fear is an indicator of power imbalance within a relationship. While there are always exceptions, (and this is not a justification for violence, given the damage it does not matter who perpetrates it) generally women who have used violence still do not typically possess power and control. In instances where a male is violent towards a female intimate partner, the chance of injury can be greater and the violence more severe.⁵⁷ According to a 2005 Canadian report, women were three times more likely to fear for their lives, twice as likely to be targets of more than 10 violent incidents, women may also be sexually assaulted by their intimate partners while men were not, and women reported the violence often increased in frequency and/or severity after they separated from their partner.⁵⁸

Intimate partner violence not only results in physical harm, but it “also undermines the social, economic, psychological, spiritual and emotional well-being of the victim, the perpetrator and the society as a whole” (Kaur & Garg, 2008, p. 74). Compared to women who are not battered, victims/survivors of intimate partner violence are at greater risk for suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, low self-esteem, substance abuse, and poor physical health.⁵⁹

Intimate partner violence cuts across all ethnic, racial and economic groups and is considered a major health issue for all women.⁶⁰ According to a 2000 report from Statistics Canada women accounted for 88% of all reported intimate partner violence victims.⁶¹ Approximately 25% of Canadian women may experience physical or sexual abuse in an intimate relationship over their lifetime.⁶²

Immigrant women in Canada “continue to experience patriarchal structures in the same way as Canadian-born women but may be further marginalized due to race discrimination, language barriers, class oppression, prejudicial attitudes, and their precarious position in the legal system as they try to secure Canadian citizenship” (Alaggia & Maiter, 2006, p. 104). Many academics, practitioners, and advocates believe immigrant and refugee women

⁵⁷ Ahmad et al., 2007; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Bennett, 1995; Bograd, 2005; Kaur & Garg, 2008; Light, Ruebsaat, Turner, Novakowski, & Walsh, 2008; Neighbours, Friends and Families, nd; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010, World Health Organization, 2010a

⁵⁸ Neighbours, Friends and Families, nd

⁵⁹ Eckhardt, Murphy, Black, & Suhr, 2006; Johnson, 2005

⁶⁰ Aldarondo & Fernandez, 2008; Gill, 2004

⁶¹ Shirwadkar, 2004

⁶² Ahmad et al., 2009

are especially vulnerable to, and may take longer to seek out help for, wife abuse due to: the fear of social stigma and gossip within their community; fear that leaving will bring shame to her family; concerns about the children (cultural/religious beliefs that children are better off being raised in a two-parent home); the belief that it is her responsibility to keep the marriage together at nearly all costs; the belief that abuse is just a part of the marriage (perhaps reinforced by her having been exposed to it between her own parents); fear that she will be found by the abuser, and that she and her children will be harmed or killed; being so overwhelmed with immigration and acculturation-related stressors that the violence is deemed less pressing an issue; the belief that being abused is her karma and therefore nothing can be done about it; lack of awareness of services available; inability to access services because of a lack of mobility; a misperception of what the service agencies do; social isolation that makes accessing help difficult; barriers created as a result of language unfamiliarity; concerns about finances, i.e., how she will support herself and her children if she were to leave; lack of awareness of her rights; a distrust of police and government agencies based on experiences from back home; fear of potentially experiencing racism if she accesses mainstream services; and dependence on her partner because of possible concerns over implications on sponsorship and immigration status.⁶³

Understanding the above reasons is necessary for any frontline worker who comes into contact with South Asian victims of violence and their families. Such awareness is one element of culturally appropriate services for South Asian immigrant families.

1. Culturally appropriate services for South Asian immigrant families

Culturally competent practitioners must have a working knowledge of the client’s heritage, cultural beliefs, traditions and values; will take the time to understand the client’s current circumstances; are able to ask questions in a respectful, non-judgmental manner; and consider and use interventions that respect that client’s worldview and customs. They do not rely on preconceived notions or stereotypes and are sufficiently self-aware of their own values and beliefs and how they affect the counseling relationship. Whenever possible, they will connect with colleagues who have considerable experience working with a particular community for consultation. They use certified interpreters when needed, not relying on the

⁶³ Abraham, 2000; Ahmad et al., 2004; Dasgupta, 2007; Izzidien, 2008; Kallivayalil, 2007; Kalsey, 2010; Light, 2007; Light et al., 2008; Purkayastha, 2000; Sharma, 2001; Shirwadkar, 2004; Singh & Hays, 2008

client's family to translate. Finally, even if it is not their role, they will take the time and effort to educate newcomer clients on local social service/health/criminal justice/educational systems.⁶⁴

Culturally competent practitioners working with South Asian immigrant families will explain their role as clients may be unfamiliar with such a role (there may not be an equivalent back home, or it may be markedly different, i.e., role of police); recognize self-disclosure within a session may go against their values of modesty; and are aware that South Asians place great value on non-verbal cues so non-verbal body cues and verbal cues should match. They do not apply Eurocentric notions to intervention (i.e., notions of autonomy and independence, especially when the client believes in family interdependency) and will ask about extended family relationships and roles (and may use a genogram to further explore these roles). They will not rely on preconceived notions or stereotypes, such as assuming a woman living with in-laws is a victim or is oppressed. Furthermore, culturally competent practitioners will discuss with their client any immigration/acclimation struggles and will refer to settlement-type services if needed and/or assist clients in finding new supports to help replace the ones they left behind. They are also able to ask clients respectfully about their cultural and religious practices and will assist clients in accessing the healing resources that can be found within these practices.⁶⁵

Culturally competent practitioners can use elements of existing therapeutic approaches in their work with South Asian families including:

- Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (introducing problem-solving techniques and other skills).
- Psycho-education (given this approach is not confrontational, and given the need to provide education and information prior to therapy, especially when the client is unfamiliar with counseling).
- Solution-focused/brief (clients expect immediate results).

⁶⁴ Beharry & Crozier, 2008; Khanna et al., 2009; Maiter, 2003; Russell & White, 2001, 2002; Shariff, 2009; Tyyskä & Dinshaw, 2009; Williams, 2008

⁶⁵ Ahmad Riaz et al., 2004; Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999; Dugsin, 2001; Kallivayalil, 2007; Kanukollu, 2010; Khanna et al., 2009; Light, 2007; Maiter, 2003; Nath & Craig, 1999; Morjaria-Keval, 2006; Pillay, 2004; Rastogi, 2009; Russell & White, 2001, 2002; Sandhu, 2005; Shariff, 2009; Sharma, 1998; Singh & Hays, 2008

- Contextual therapy and Bowen’s approaches: a focus on family, intergenerational dynamics and the interconnection between past events, present circumstances and the future.
- Systems therapy: given the South Asian collectivist worldview and emphasis on interconnectedness.
- Structural therapy: reviews hierarchies and restructures negative familial interaction patterns) and
- Narrative therapy (i.e. client can create a story of certain experiences in a manner that does not create discomfort, one that allows them to share with others in a safe manner) are some approaches that can be used.⁶⁶

South Asian clients in counselling may respond well to interventions that are both guiding and nurturing. They may see counsellors as hierarchical figures and expect some direction to deal with immediate stress as well as guidance in reaching goals. In fact, South Asian clients may drop out of counseling if the counsellor is perceived as being completely non-directive. Clients also want to learn skills early on that they can use in their day-to-day lives. Additionally, part of building a strong therapeutic alliance may entail appropriate self-disclosure on the part of the counsellor. Normalizing a client’s experiences, where appropriate, is also an important part of a motivating clients to change, by seeing they are not alone in their struggle.⁶⁷

Practitioners can work with South Asian communities to increase awareness of the impact of intimate partner violence on not just the victim/survivor but on the whole family. Particular emphasis should be placed on the trans-generational harm of wife abuse.⁶⁸ Discussing social issues through public lectures/forums may be an effective prevention strategy in working with South Asian families as it may be deemed less threatening than therapy. Outreach via ethnic media is considered a viable method of providing education and promoting health. While it is important to be clear about the harm done by wife abuse, the language used should be sensitive so as to not deter someone from seeking help.

⁶⁶ Khanna et al., 2009; Pillay, 2004; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Shariff, 2009; Sharma, 1998

⁶⁷ Kanukollu, 2010; Khanna et al., 2009; Pillay, 2004; Shariff, 2009; Sharma, 1998

⁶⁸ Ahmad et al., 2009; Dosanjh et al., 1994; Gill, 2004; Izzidien, 2008; Pillay, 2004; Sharma, 1998

Information that builds upon community values and norms is important; messages such as how the information will build the strength of families will likely be well received. Strategies that are not culturally responsive may result in a backlash. Resistance can also be reduced by explaining that wife abuse occurs across all ethno-groups and all socio-economic levels. While it is important to use language that will not be deemed offensive, advocates must also be cognizant that too 'soft' an approach could undermine the messages about the harms of intimate partner violence.⁶⁹

Outreach via religious institutions can also be a viable prevention method. Temples, for example, could maintain and distribute literature on women's rights as well as on ways to address wife abuse.⁷⁰ South Asian women's organizations in the USA have successfully engaged leaders from temples, mosques, and churches by educating them about wife abuse, and these leaders then allowed them to connect to their congregations.⁷¹ Simbandumwe et al. (2008) also describe an approach which combined elements of Islamic religion and matched them to Canadian legal/social policy to develop prevention and intervention strategies that "are more likely to encounter greater community acceptance" (p. 903). And qualitative research on Sikh men and substance abuse found the men used their religion to assist them in their alcohol abuse recovery through methods such as taking a religious pledge, committing to lifestyle changes and/or greater involvement in temple activities.⁷² As Izzidien (2008) argues:

It is important for the message to be conveyed by influential people in the community: the religious leaders, community leaders, local councilors, and influential business people. They are key players who have a duty to start up the debate: talking about domestic abuse, acknowledging that it is taking place in the community, and supporting abused women who need help. Faith leaders also have an important role in reinforcing the message that domestic abuse is not acceptable in the name of religion (p. 79)

While religious organizations have a role to play, the exact role must be considered carefully. Some religious leaders may frown upon divorce and the emphasis therefore may be on

⁶⁹ Dasgupta, 2007; Sharma, 2001; Sharma, 1998; Shirwadkar, 2004; Simbandumwe et al., 2008

⁷⁰ Ahmad et al., 2009; Izzidien, 2008; Pillay, 2004; Uppal, 2005

⁷¹ Abraham, 1995

⁷² Morjaria-Keval, 2006

reconciliation⁷³ even when the victim/survivor does not want this, or the level or degree of violence is such that it is not safe for her to reconcile. Obviously it is important to consider carefully what roles religious institutions should play in prevention and intervention, but as noted in the examples above it is certainly an option worth considering.

A specific program focused on community involvement to address intimate partner violence, and which has the potential to be adapted for South Asian communities, can be found in Ontario. The “Neighbours, Friends and Families” campaign intends to “raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so people who are close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help” (n.d.):

The Neighbours, Friends and Family campaign is based on principles of community organization which recognizes that communities have the assets, strengths, natural leaders and untapped talent to greatly impact change, growth and restoration in their communities Those who are closest to abused women and abusive men are in a unique position to provide support. Community members often report that they knew about or suspected a family member or friend was experiencing abuse, but didn’t know how to best assist her, or how to help him make changes in his abusive behavior (p. 3).

The “Community Action Kit to Prevent Woman Abuse” (Neighbours, Friends and Families, n.d.) advises of the need to bring together people who are motivated to learn about the dynamics and signs of woman abuse and who are interested in working collaboratively to prevent it. In addition to learning about abuse, these volunteers will help other volunteers by providing information and support, as well as talking to the abusive men. The aim ultimately is “to improve the safety for women and children while holding abusers accountable” (p. 6).

The Kit includes resources and strategies on working with a family: talking to abused women or those at risk of abuse (i.e., providing her with written material, supporting her, telling her you believe her and reassuring her that the abuse is not her fault, telling her the importance of staying safe, providing her shelter if you are able, accompanying her to support and counselling services, if she is not ready to talk letting her know you are available if she decides to, understanding why she may not be ready to leave, understanding why she may return to the abuser, etc.); talking to men who are abusive (before speaking to him ensuring your safety, approach him when he is calm, be direct but not argumentative, do not try to

⁷³ Dasgupta & Jain, 2007

change him or force him to get help, call police if woman's safety is jeopardized, etc.); recognizing children who may have witnessed abuse (talking to parent about allowing children to safely express their feelings, using non-judgmental terms, etc.).

2. Culturally appropriate practice with South Asian women

In working with victims of intimate partner violence, the culturally competent practitioner is aware of current sponsorship laws and can explain these to clients; reduces clients' isolation through outreach and follow up; and can assist a client in immediate needs, such as (if necessary) locating transition home for her and her children – but also understands that clients may express a desire to leave home, but most prefer finding a resolution that keeps the family intact while addressing the conflict.⁷⁴

Worldview can influence the manner in which one will respond to violence. A woman from a collectivist culture may emphasize harmony and collaboration to address the violence and her collectivist value influences her decision regarding who she will disclose the abuse to, while a woman from an individualistic culture may choose an approach that is considerably more confrontational.⁷⁵ Whether a couple can reconcile after violence is problematic. Many victims' advocates would argue against reconciliation yet, as noted in the literature (and indicated by research participants), most South Asian couples will reconcile. And in many instances, this reconciliation takes place even when a court order prohibits it. Therefore, there may be a need to look at alternative frameworks for women who have a collectivist worldview, one that may allow them the often preferred option of staying in the relationship while being safe by eliminating the violence.⁷⁶ At the same time, the counsellor must ensure that the woman is fully aware of her rights, is not being unduly pressured to reconcile, and not relying on the man simply being in a domestic violence program as a reason to no longer prioritize her safety and the safety of her children. As Williams (2008) notes, part of the intervention needs to “defend against women believing that a batterer's participation in any change effort will guarantee change; we know better” (p. 104).

Culturally competent practitioners engage the victim in therapeutic conversations about patriarchy: “on the therapeutic level, the frank consideration of patriarchal and structural issues in the community enables women to examine the external forces that contributed to

⁷⁴ Abraham, 2000; Nath & Craig, 1999

⁷⁵ Yoshioka and Choi, 2005

⁷⁶ Yoshioka and Choi, 2005

their situation, rather than blame themselves for the abuse” (Kallivayalil, 2007, p. 125). South Asian women who adhere to patriarchal norms would benefit from increased awareness of what abuse is for two reasons; one, so that they can seek out assistance, and two, so that they will not discount a victim/survivor’s experiences by telling her she did not experience abuse.⁷⁷ It is necessary for them to gain an “understanding of patriarchy as an almost universal social norm that expresses itself differently across cultures [in a way that it] may help distinguish between the aspects of their culture that they want to practice and those that they find oppressive. Women need to understand that they do not have to reject their culture or their identity as South Asian to resist patriarchy and wife abuse” (Ahmad, Riaz et al., 2004, p. 278). Culturally competent practitioners can also engage the victim in therapeutic conversations about *izzat* and *sharam*:

Although each woman’s experience varies, discussing the notions of honour and shame and how these impact on the way women operate and function are important parts of the recovery process. Equally important is that they do not hold themselves responsible for shouldering family honour in this manner, and that the shame applies to the perpetrator for inflicting the abuse, not to the woman who tells of it (Izzidien, 2008, p. 53).

Culturally competent practitioners consider, where possible, group therapy, as it can help the victim both reduce isolation and enable her to see that she is not alone in her struggles. Group work can be particularly effective given a South Asian woman’s collectivist orientation.⁷⁸ A feminist group counseling approach can empower participants through the development of skills such as boundary-setting and assertive communication as well as helping them in understanding the sociopolitical context of the abuse they have endured while receiving support from other victims/survivors.⁷⁹ In describing one such group, Singh and Hays (2008) noted the differences between it and traditional Western group counseling approaches. The South Asian group allowed for greater interaction after the end of a session between participants and between participants and facilitators; greater socialization prior to group start; greater flexibility to accommodate participants who arrived late (a recognition of the different view of time the South Asian participants had, as well as recognizing their multiple family responsibilities and transportation issues); it was less confrontational; placed

⁷⁷ Ahmad et al., 2004

⁷⁸ Ahmad et al., 2009; Izzidien, 2008; Light, 2007; Raj et al., 2006; Samuel, 2009; Singh & Hays, 2008; Tutty, 2006

⁷⁹ Singh & Hays, 2008

less emphasis on verbal communication of participants while considering alternative ways the women could express themselves; and did not promote independence over other values. Furthermore, differences in language, religion, marital status, skin colour, class, and place/region of origin were respected and accommodated.

Given victims/survivors may not access community services, information to raise awareness of intimate partner violence can be left in places such doctors' offices. It can also be an important initial point of intervention for women who are being abused. Family physicians are well positioned "to inquire about wife abuse because of their focus on comprehensive care, health promotion, and early detection, and the ongoing nature of physician-patient relationships. These factors make family practice an appropriate setting for inquiring about and addressing wife abuse" (Ahmad et al., 2007, p. 462). Furthermore, South Asian victims/survivors often are first to seek assistance from their GP and evidence suggests disclosure will often occur if questions about wife abuse are asked.⁸⁰ Such an initiative requires that health care workers understand the reasons why South Asian women may not speak out about abuse they are experiencing and be willing to ask about stress and abuse in their relationship in an empathic and compassionate manner.⁸¹

Advocates suggest initiatives can take place prior to landing in Canada. Women could be provided with an orientation of their rights in Canada, including but not limited to their rights as sponsored spouses, while still in their country of origin. Such orientation should be done in their primary language; furthermore, sponsorship forms and instructions should be translated.⁸² It has also been suggested that sponsored women be connected to immigrant settlement agencies for at least one visit, where they can learn about their rights and also be made aware of at least one resource where they can access help in the future if needed.⁸³

Finally, culturally competent practitioners need to work with victims/survivors to effect greater change. The counsellor recognizes the value these women can bring to the anti-violence movement; these women are clients but can also be potential participants in a large grassroots movement that can challenge societal structures and norms.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ahmad et al., 2007; Izzidien, 2008

⁸¹ Ahmad et al., 2009

⁸² Dosanjh et al., 1994; Merali, 2009; Papp, 2010

⁸³ Merali, 2009

⁸⁴ Smith, A. 2005

The Singh Family

While Jaswinder found both the English and Punjabi counseling sessions and groups helpful, she noticed considerable differences between her current circumstances and theirs. For example, many of the women weren’t married, several had no interest in reconciling with their partners, they had been in previous relationships, some abusive and some not, and many did not have children. Intersecting factors of immigration, culture, extended family influences, arranged marriage expectations, etc. were also not present. Yet regardless of the ethnicity and first language of participants, she also found plenty she had in common with other victims of violence.

Through counselling, Jaswinder learned that without the police intervention, the abuse was likely to continue and most likely escalate. She also learned about some of the power and control tactics Charnjit had used, such as trying to separate her from her family (by claiming they were interfering in his relationship with her) or threatening to take the kids to India. Jaswinder also was able to explore some of her own feelings of shame and guilt around her ‘not being able to keep her family together.’ She also was appreciative that she could share her experiences with other women who had gone through some of the same experiences as she no longer felt that she had to suffer in silence. Over time, and as she became more self-confident, she was able to help other women who were going through similar experiences that she had been through.

3. Culturally appropriate practice with South Asian children who witness abuse

Culturally competent practitioners understand that a part of childhood/adolescence is the development of one’s identity. For South Asian and other second-generation youth, this entails developing awareness of their parent’s cultural values as well as an awareness of Canadian cultural values. Competent practitioners working with South Asian youth should engage in discussions around elements of their heritage culture and Canadian culture with which they identify, are ambivalent towards, or do not identify with at all.⁸⁵ This can allow the clients to “gain increased clarity about their own cultural stance and views on which aspects of each culture are consistent with their overall sense of self and future directions in life” (Shariff, 2009, p. 39). Part of this process may involve some work with parents (including the abusive father when this can be done in safety). Immigrant parents may have been

⁸⁵ Shariff, 2009

raised to defer to their parents even when they reach adulthood.⁸⁶ Given children will often question traditional belief systems, parents may need help to understand that such questioning is a normal part of their children's maturation and does not mean they are rejecting those values.⁸⁷ Conflict between a child and his/her parents around childrearing may be reduced if such dialogue takes place.

Izzidien (2008) describes a counseling support program in England for South Asian children and youth who have witnessed abuse:

Work done with the Family Support projects provided children with an environment that was similar to their home surroundings, which helped them to relax and be comfortable. To accommodate specific cultural and religious needs, support for South Asian children and young people also took into account factors that included how children were brought up, the pressures they faced, incidents of racism and discrimination, their parents' background, and their parents' own experiences of racism and discrimination. In some cases, especially with older children, practitioners needed to explore issues around identity, community pressure and notions of shame and honour. These were examined by exploring themes such as identity, roles and responsibilities (p. 60).

The Singh Family

Ever since the assault, Jaswinder noticed her son's personality had begun to change. He was increasingly becoming withdrawn at school, and at home, had started lashing out at his mom. Many of the words he used were familiar to Jaswinder – they were the same derogatory comments Charnjit used to hurl at her. Jaswinder's younger daughter Seema, age seven, would cry and cower in the corner whenever Harmeet would lash out verbally at her mom.

After a few sessions of individual counselling for herself, Jaswinder decided, once again against the wishes of some family members, to involve her children in counselling programs for children who witness abuse.

⁸⁶ Farver, Narang, Bakhtawar, & Bhadha, 2002

⁸⁷ Shariff, 2009

While Harmeet at first did not want to go, holding tightly onto his mom’s legs, he eventually began to feel more comfortable with his counsellor. With the help of his counsellor – combined with supportive family – he was able to let go some of the guilt he felt over having called the police. Both Harmeet and his sister Seema learned ways to handle their emotions more constructively.

4. Culturally appropriate practice with South Asian male perpetrators

Culturally competent practitioners respect the South Asian male’s reserved nature and his hesitancy to discuss matters involving family members,⁸⁸ and do not necessarily interpret this as resistance. In working with assaultive men of any ethnicity, practitioners recognize resistance as a normal reaction to being involved in a treatment plan they did not ask for nor have any say in. Therefore, practitioners must be able to address the reluctance in a way that does not create further barriers to change, i.e., approaches that are overly confrontational have been criticized for only further isolating the assaultive man leading to his becoming even more resistant:⁸⁹

The word ‘resistance’ is often used to describe people who are not willing to embrace an attitude, concept or behaviour that someone else feels it is important for them to embrace Responses prompted by perceived resistance can often lead to increased conflict. Viewing the behaviour as reluctance, on the other hand, invites the facilitator/leader to recognize the anxiety behind the behaviour and to find ways to be encouraging. A great deal of posturing and negativity is grounded in anxiety. It is often the case that when concerns are addressed in a way which reduces anxiety, this negative posturing disappears” (Katz, 2000, p.7).

Hasyim (n.d.) suggests creating a “non-threatening” environment, which “means regarding men not only as perpetrators who should be blamed, but also as victims of patriarchy. This space helps men change their mind frame and behavior, thereby making them potential allies in eradicating domestic violence” (p. 6). Culturally competent practitioners can then help the man gain insight into how his relationship with his parents influences his current relationship with the members of his family. Those working with male perpetrators should also consider the use of historical and cultural stories, songs and metaphors that challenge

⁸⁸ Pillay, 2004; Sharma, 1998

⁸⁹ Adams, 2007; Guru, 2006

gender role stereotypes and highlight appropriate male role models. Wherever possible, male South Asian professionals should be involved in interventions, so that the men can see other men talking about gender equality.⁹⁰

Group work is also an effective therapeutic approach given the degree to which a South Asian society emphasizes community over individuality. Sharma (1998) describes the first mandated group counselling program developed in Greater Vancouver for assaultive South Asian men. At the time, in the early 1990s, program developers could find no culturally-specific treatment model so they developed their own using elements of the Duluth model and consulting with a professional who worked with mainstream assaultive men. An Advisory Committee was also formed, consisting of community leaders, funders, and women's rights advocates. In his interviews with South Asian men who attended that assaultive South Asian men's program, Sharma notes the men placed considerable value in being able to communicate in their first language, hearing participants speak of issues with which they were also dealing, and being able to hear these other men's stories as well as providing feedback regarding those stories. Key themes from the group included: conflict in the extended family; how the extended family could both be part of the problem and possibly part of the solution; the changing roles of women in society and in the family; intergenerational changes; stress; immigration; experiences of racism; and alcohol abuse. Those interviewed reported high levels of group closeness and attributed this in part to all of the participants having similar ethnic backgrounds. These men found the treatment to be beneficial, as it provided them with tangible skills (e.g., coping with anger, communication skills) they could use in their lives. Sharma also interviewed the South Asian program facilitators who emphasized the importance of being open, receptive, and being able to both support the men and challenge them. The facilitators noticed that the group went quickly from being resistant to becoming close and familiar with each other and with the facilitators. Sharma finds narrative work to be of particular benefit, noting that "it appears that the therapeutic value of hearing other clients' stories was high" (p. 64).

As noted in the interviews with practitioners, alcohol abuse co-occurs frequently with intimate partner violence. The World Health Organization (2010b) suggests batterer intervention programs should also address substance abuse, given the high co-occurrence of both:

⁹⁰ Guru, 2006; Hasyim, n.d.; Khanna et al., 2009; Pillay, 2004; Shariff, 2009; Sharma, 1998

Strong evidence of an association between alcohol consumption and violent behaviour means that cultural and social norms around alcohol use and its expected effects can also encourage and justify violent acts Interventions that tackle the cultural and social norms underlying risky drinking behaviour and social expectations surrounding alcohol can help in preventing violence (p. 98).

There is a growing belief that prevention programs and initiatives need to include men who can be allies, advocates, and role models.⁹¹ More male practitioners are needed as role models and to work with boys affected by violence.⁹² Therefore schools, both in the public school system and the post-secondary system, need to find ways to attract and direct male students, especially South Asian males, into careers in the helping professions of psychology, counseling, and social work.

Age-appropriate discussion on gendered violence can take place as early as primary school with South Asian boys. Creative methods to attract young males may be necessary, such as offering some valued activity that can only be accessed if they first participate in a discussion group.⁹³ Another approach may be to offer a school-based program, which may provide greater access to youth and also eliminate concerns of labeling a specific ethno-cultural group.⁹⁴ Izzidien (2008) indicates “delivering workshops and lessons to young people will help them to learn about healthy and respectful relationships, to recognize domestic abuse, to reduce the stigma associated with talking about domestic abuse and to learn about support services” (p. 65). For adults, education on intimate partner violence can be provided to members of immigrant communities who attend for ESL classes.⁹⁵

Prevention initiatives can also be undertaken prior to immigrants arriving in Canada. Immigrant and refugee men who were participants in a focus group believed they should be given greater information on intimate partner violence prevention and be provided with a better understanding of laws either before arrival or shortly thereafter.⁹⁶ It has also been suggested that men who sponsor should have to attend mandatory orientation sessions

⁹¹ Ahmad et al., 2009; Aldarondo & Fernandez, 2008; Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Simbandumwe et al., 2008)

⁹² Izzidien, 2008

⁹³ Balzani, 2010

⁹⁴ Simbandumwe et al., 2008

⁹⁵ Simbandumwe et al., 2008

⁹⁶ Simbandumwe et al., 2008

focused on their responsibilities of sponsorship and that such sessions can also address important matters such as gender equality and the laws around gender equality.⁹⁷

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It would be nearly a year after the date of the offence that Charnjit would complete his court-mandated counselling for both substance abuse and intimate partner violence. Charnjit was hesitant to speak up in the group programs initially. Most of what he said in early session of the relationship violence group involved his minimizing what he did, blaming his in-laws for causing problems in his marriage, and making comments such as “women in Canada have all the rights.” The considerable delay due first to court and then to being accepted into a program had hardened his belief that he had done nothing wrong. In fact, with each day that went by, he seemed to garner more sympathy from community members and family members – some on his side, some on Jaswinder’s – who accepted his version that it was a ‘minor’ event.

Over time, however, and as a result of culturally responsive probation interventions and counselling, Charnjit was able to come to accept a great degree of responsibility for his behaviour. He also had an opportunity to consider how some of his attitudes, beliefs and experiences around his unmet gender role expectations, his immigration and acculturation experiences, views on marriage/relationships, experiences of marginalization, and his alcohol use were affecting not only his family but his own health and quality of life. He had much better insight into the harm his actions had caused his children, his wife and himself. While he had a long way to go to address these issues, the fact he was aware of them – and the fact that he saw others in his group program who also struggled with similar issues (several of whom, like him, acknowledged and accepted responsibility for their violence in varying degrees, while others did not) – took a great weight off his shoulders.

Charnjit was eventually allowed to return home. In those first few days, he seemed to be different: he was no longer physically abusive towards his wife nor was he drinking. While Jaswinder suspected that her husband was not drinking and not being physically abusive towards her because he was still on a probation order (with one condition being he not consume alcohol) and feared further police and court involvement, she did notice his behaviour towards her and their children had changed for the better. He

⁹⁷ Papp, 2010

was much more communicative, and handled his anger much better. He was able to talk about issues that bothered him without resorting to threats, intimidation or violence – which again she attributed to not just his learning new skills but also because he was afraid of further police involvement. She was hopeful the changes would remain for the long term.

Through counselling, Jaswinder knew it was not her responsibility or fault if Charnjit returned to his former ways. She also knew how to better protect herself and her children if any safety concerns arose. She was cautiously optimistic, but knew she always had to put her and her children’s safety first and foremost. Through counselling and support, Jaswinder also learned how to manage her stressors better.

Both Jaswinder and Charnjit realized the importance of having a healthy relationship not only for their sake, but also for the sake of their children.

5. The Cultural Context Model of programming and practice

Much of what has been described above in terms of working with South Asian women, children and families can happen in a more coordinated, interrelated way:

While many of the goals of the domestic violence movement have been realized, the methods of intervention that have evolved (that is, shelters and batterers programs) have not connected with other institutions that share the same goal. In becoming institutionalized, they have lost their original grassroots mission, thereby becoming more isolated (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 311).

The Cultural Context Model, developed by Rhea Almeida and her colleagues,⁹⁸ is one therapeutic method that enables individual, family, community and structural level changes. The CCM is a transformative “social justice based family therapy paradigm offering solutions to families through the creation of a supportive community that encourages raising consciousness and accountability” (Hernandez et al., 2009, p. 97). It suggests a different way to work with families affected by issues such as intimate partner violence as it addresses gender, immigrant status, skin color, ethnicity, spiritual practice, sexual

⁹⁸ Almeida, 2009; Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Almeida et al., 2008; Almeida & Durkin, 1999; Almeida & Lockard, 2005; Hernandez, 2008; Hernandez, Almeida, & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 20005; Hernandez, Siegal, & Almeida, 2009

orientation, age, and socioeconomic class “and in a manner that places these issues at the core of family intervention” (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 302). The different, though interrelated, stages of CCM practice are described below.

Through the process, the development of critical consciousness, empowerment, and accountability is emphasized. Critical consciousness was first introduced by Paulo Freire and involves developing awareness of how individual problems develop within a larger socio-political context. The opportunity for accountability, whereby clients not only accept responsibility for their actions and the impact of their actions upon others, but also engage in actions in attempts to repair that harm, develops once the process of critical consciousness has begun. Accountability for abusive men also includes breaking behaviour and thinking based on power and control and replacing them with new definitions of what masculinity entails. For victims, accountability means breaking free of the subservient female role that has been thrust upon them. Empowerment, operating simultaneously with accountability, occurs when clients have a better understanding of themselves and the impact of intersecting constructs on their identity and when they are able to re-conceptualize and re-story their lives.

The intake process, whether a family is referred or comes on their own volition, begins with the family being introduced to two therapists. One therapist remains with the family, while the other observes behind a one-way mirror. One-way mirror observations and video recording of sessions are done with the intent of providing feedback both to clients and to the therapists. Families are first seen together and then individually. In this intake session, families are provided with an orientation that describes how problems perceived at the individual level are created and maintained by societal structures. Assessments for intimate partner violence, given its prevalence, are conducted even if that is not the issue for which families are attending therapy. Given safety concerns, this is done individually.

Family genograms are used at intake and throughout the therapeutic process “to explore multigenerational legacies within the families, gendered and racial norms, and immigration patterns (Hernandez et al., 2009, p. 98). The genogram at the intake stage is relatively basic and over time more detailed ones will be constructed.

Sponsors may also be present at intake. Sponsors are men or women who are interested in helping others and have received the necessary training to undertake such a role. They may be former clients who can provide both support and advice based on their experiences. Sponsors can help clients feel they are not alone in what they have done and been through,

as many of those sponsors likely had similar experiences. They will participate along with the clients in the processes that follow. They commit to being sponsors for one year and then will help train new sponsors. Sponsors “have a heightened consciousness of the interplay between gender, race, class and culture. They play a critical role in separating culture from violence and in launching culturally specific dialogues with a different moral stance” (Almeida & Durkin, 1999, p. 316).

If the client is referred by court, an individual intake session takes place. If the client does not show or drops out, written notification is submitted to the court. A similar orientation takes place as described above, but also includes introducing concepts such as the power and control wheel. The client’s partner and others from his community are contacted. Court-mandated clients are expected to attend for a minimum number of sessions of the treatment phase and close contact with probation and court services is maintained throughout.

After intake, the small group phase begins. In the small group phase, family members enter into social education groups facilitated by therapists and sponsors. These groups are arranged by age and gender: there are groups for male and female adults, and adolescents and children are connected with others their age. CCM therapists organize culture circles by gender because in their experience critical consciousness, empowerment, and accountability occur at different paces for women and men, and this “reorganization of gender creates a context for investigating the different ways dominant patriarchal discourses affect women and men and allow for members sharing a common identity to hold each other accountable and to empower each other with the support of a community” (Hernandez, Siegel & Almeida, 2009, p. 98). Therapists may suggest homework, such as journaling or discussing issues with sponsors. Because groups may consist of individuals from various cultural and religious groups, a cultural consultant may also be brought in, e.g., an imam who supports gender equality “might be called upon when a Muslim client is persistent about the idea that the Koran says that women must obey men” (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 309).

Groups meet once per week, for eight weeks. A focus of these groups is around consciousness-raising and therapists use film clips, music lyrics, books, and articles as methods to facilitate therapeutic discussions (e.g., conversations on race, class, gender). Such resources (as well as sponsors) can challenge patriarchal norms held by both female and male group participants (i.e., a video clip or writing by a well-respected or well-known figure who challenges that norm as being culturally normative). As Hernandez et al. (2009)

note, “the conversations between the members of the group and the therapists in response to the didactic material create a framework for identifying and dismantling oppressive norms of family life across cultures” (p. 98).

After the eight-week small group social education sessions, families are invited to participate in larger same gender group circle treatment. These larger circles consist of therapists, sponsors, and families who have been involved with the model for some time as well as new families who have just completed the eight-session group. Therapists observing behind the one-way mirror ensure that the therapists with the group are maintaining a sufficient balance between accountability and empowerment. On occasion, family and couple’s sessions may take place that involve both men’s and women’s culture circles. Couple’s sessions will only occur after the perpetrator takes responsibility for his actions and if the victim/survivor initiates a request. One example of where a couple’s session would be appropriate (given the aforementioned criteria are met) is when couples are coached on ways to address in-law interference.

Within both small and large cultural circles, therapists work on issues such as intimate partner violence, parenting or substance abuse (the CCM is designed to address any issue that imperils the health and safety of a family and community) while also identifying the link between these concerns and larger societal norms around intersecting constructs such as immigration, gender, class, and ethnicity.

Unlike other therapeutic groups, cultural circles are not comprised of members around a particular issue or category. Almeida and Lockard (2005) advise that “segregation around presenting problems, while intended to create community through shared experiences, in fact further compartmentalizes the client’s sense of being. Further, it builds the identity of a family/individual around ‘pathology’ and punctuates time around the problem, rather than around alternate life stories and themes of liberation” (p. 305). Thus, men who have been violent towards their partners will sit with men who have not been violent, but may be attending for other reasons. They will all address the same questions around (for example) how those who have power over others will abuse such power so men who have not been violent in their relationships can look at how they have power through male privilege. Women in the meantime are encouraged to move beyond the patriarchal family norms to which they may adhere. In such a process, the issue of intimate partner violence is taken out of the individual realm and placed in a larger context. They also learn about and are able to access resources and supports that can both assist them in their day-to-day living and help to empower them. The victim/survivor’s feelings of power and safety in her circle are

further enhanced as the men (including the sponsors) in her partner’s group will challenge the man’s use of male privilege while simultaneously serving as an example of how to act in nonviolent ways. The man, while accountable to his group, also has his definition of masculinity greatly expanded. He can begin to challenge some of the views around masculinity and other patriarchal values he has learned and adopted. A participant at some point may write a letter detailing his abuse as part of his being accountable “since power over others is maintained through a refusal to remember specific acts of abuse, the power of remembering claimed by the community of culture circles balances the power necessary to create change (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 317).

In traditional family therapy, the therapeutic circle is most often the family itself in various permutations of the system. While feminist family theory has embraced the notion of the family as an open system, the physical closure of this system within the therapeutic encounter preserves, certainly in heterosexual families, the very fabric of male hierarchy and privacy. Dismantling this structure, or healing this system, depends on opening up the system as much as possible. This creates an experience of the family as an open system. Interventions with mothers, fathers, uncles, brothers, sister, grandparents, partners and children are all done as subsystem work, thereby defining the family system not as autonomous but as open and connected (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 311).

The Cultural Context Model intervention, while recognizing the necessity of the criminal justice system in protecting the victim/survivor, offers her a range of options:

the possibility of returning to their now nonviolent partners, the possibility of children rebuilding relationships with their abusive partner, the possibility of having a civil and safe divorce, and last, the possibility of maintaining safety through community rather than criminal justice intervention (Almeida & Lockard, 2005, p. 317).

6. Systemic support for culturally appropriate practice

BC’s Representative for Children and Youth Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (2009) notes the lack of coordination amongst the many systems that respond to intimate partner violence in British Columbia. While service providers have in recent years worked on strengthening partnerships⁹⁹ more work needs to be done to address gaps.

⁹⁹ Baldwin, Edinger, Leavitt, Porteous, & Ruebsaat, 2005

Some current identified concerns/needs as indicated by the literature include: more culturally-specific treatment; greater need for translated resources and materials in all major languages; reducing court wait times; providing treatment space for voluntary men and clients on probation who are assessed as “low risk” as there are no funded services for these groups; the lack of training and formal policies on intimate partner violence for those agency staff whose primary focus is not IPV; increased collaboration between sectors (police, criminal justice system, batterer intervention programs, victim services, shelters, health services, children and family ministry/services, etc.); better training on dynamics of intimate partner violence for settlement and English Language Services for Adults programs (ELSA); lack of interpreter training, as some interpreters may not have the clinical language necessary to translate for victims, or may in some instances act unprofessionally and pass judgment on victims of violence; and funding research and initiatives that address IPV and that are undertaken by immigrant and marginalized communities. Such research should then inform government policies.¹⁰⁰

While much of the literature reviewed insists on the need for a strong criminal justice system response to intimate partner violence, researchers, scholars and advocates also suggest both complementary and alternative approaches to addressing such violence. For example, Turpel-Lafond (2009) recommends the use of Domestic Violence Courts in BC. DV courts involve the use of specialized prosecutors who, using risk assessments consistent among service agencies and prepared by other specialized personnel (i.e., police, bail/probation supervisors, child protection and family justice workers), are able to make fully informed decision regarding bail and disposition recommendations. One option the author suggests for bail release that is considered in other jurisdictions but not in BC is placing high-risk alleged offenders on electronic monitoring. In a Domestic Violence court, judges and justices of the peace with specialized training are able make fully-informed decisions regarding release or disposition.

One example of a DV court is the Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court in the Yukon. If a man accepts responsibility, he can apply to participate in the DVTO court, where the matter is adjourned for two weeks to allow spousal assault program counsellors to conduct an assessment. If accepted into the treatment programs (these may also include

¹⁰⁰ Almeida & Lockard, 2005; Aldarondo & Fernandez, 2008; Baldwin et al., 2005; BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs, 2007; Bennett, 1995; Bennett & Williams, 2003; Community Coordination for Women's Safety, 2005; Ending Violence Association of BC, 2007; Han, 2009; Humphreys et al., 2005; Light, 2007; Light et al., 2008, Rothman, Butchart, & Cerda, 2003; Shirwadkar, 2004; Turpel-Lafond, 2009; ; Williams, 2008

programs for alcohol and drug misuse), he enters a guilty plea; while in treatment, he attends court on a monthly basis so the judge can review his progress. Information from the victim/survivor, who also receives assistance such as in filling out victim impact statements, creating safety plans, counseling referrals for them and their children, and court accompaniment, is also included not only in the review but throughout the process. The approach of DVTO is multidisciplinary: it involves court officials (a judge, crown and defense counsel); criminal justice system, support and treatment personnel (probation officers, victim service workers, counsellors); and offenders, victims/survivors, their children and their family members.¹⁰¹ Once the man completes the program, the counsellor submits a final report to the judge, who then imposes a sentence “which reflects the offender’s progress and addresses future counseling, relapse prevention and safety issues” (The BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs, 2007, p. 15). DV courts can also ensure offenders who use violence and abuse substances are engaged in well-coordinated and integrated services that address both concerns.¹⁰²

Turpel-Lafond (2009) also suggests the province look at models being used elsewhere to address high-risk cases. For example, she cites the high-risk protocols used in Nova Scotia and the use of a woman abuse coordinator in child welfare matters in Peel, Ontario. In Nova Scotia, the Department of Justice, the Public Prosecution, and the Department of Community Services all have clearly identified responsibilities, expected outcomes, and expectations around collaboration and information-sharing when it comes to high-risk cases. In Peel, the woman abuse coordinator provides coordination and assistance to child welfare supervisors and workers who respond to intimate partner violence cases and the children exposed to it. She advises that:

A coordinated inter-sectoral approach requires that one agency lead the planning, not only to work directly with the mother and children but also to advise and update other social service providers, to identify the role of each agency, and to inform individuals of developments in the case and adjustments to the plan as circumstances change or the risk level shifts (p. 52).

Restorative justice may be another complementary initiative to the criminal justice system. Ptacek and Frederick (2009) advise that restorative justice:

¹⁰¹ The BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs, 2007

¹⁰² Bennett, 2008

Includes a broad range of informal practices designed to meet the needs of victims, offenders, and communities in the wake of crime. In these informal processes, repairing harm is the central goal, and victims are given an opportunity to address how the crime affected them. Emphasizing collaborative dialogue, restorative justice seeks to decrease the role of the state and increase the involvement of families and communities in response to crime (np).

Criticisms of restorative justice in intimate partner violence cases include: concerns that programs may be poorly run and funded, and may be lacking in transparency and accountability; the offender may manipulate the process; the victim/survivor's safety and needs may be undermined in the overall process and therefore may serve to further victimize her; communities may not be ready to hold offenders accountable and community norms may instead reinforce his actions; community members may be more concerned with keeping the perpetrator out of jail than in supporting the victim/survivor; the process may be viewed as being too lenient, thereby implying the violence was not wrong and potentially decriminalizing the act; and the process may have little effect in changing behaviour. There are also benefits to the restorative justice model in intimate partner violence cases: victims/survivors not only have opportunities to speak, but their experiences are validated and they also have greater say in what the offender's consequences should be, all of which can result in having some closure; the offender is required to take responsibility for his actions; the approach is less confrontational and more flexible, so can be adapted to the needs of the victims/survivors and their children; family and community involvement can lessen the opportunity for future violence; and, if desired, there is an opportunity to repair the relationship.¹⁰³

Safety conferencing is another proposed approach in working with intimate partner violence cases.¹⁰⁴ Safety conferencing takes some elements of the family group conferencing model used in child welfare cases, where a family group, consisting of immediate family plus friends and others deemed close supports, is brought together by a neutral coordinator in order to make decisions regarding the child's welfare. The group decides whether it is safe to involve the child and the coordinator develops safety measures to ensure all participants' safety. When the planning stage is about to commence, the coordinator and other service providers leave the room so participants have privacy. The plans are intended to be made by consensus, and must be approved by the referring social worker and "is envisioned not as

¹⁰³ Cameron, 2006; Daly & Stubbs, 2006; Smith, A. 2005; Smith, B., 2005

¹⁰⁴ Pennell & Francis, 2005

family therapy, couple’s mediation, professional case conferencing, or diversion from the court but instead as an opportunity to ‘widen the circle’ of those committed to safeguarding children and other family members (Pennell & Francis. 2005, p. 672). While violence is minimal at such conferences, problems can arise in carrying out plans because there may not be enough supports in place. While the focus of family group conferencing would be around child protection, the focus of safety conferencing would be around safety of the victim/survivor and her children.

Safety conferencing is a means to reduce victim/survivor isolation, to involve these women and their support networks in a coordinated response to intimate partner violence, and to educate the women and their families about intimate partner violence and to involve them in safety planning. It acknowledges that connections between the abuser and victim/survivor often remain after the authorities or social service agencies become involved (and even if they are no longer together, the couple may have children so an ongoing connection remains). Safety conferencing, if it is something a victim/survivor wants and if is safe for her and her children, could involve the batterer. It could be especially useful in situations “when women were leaving shelter, men were in a batterer program, and abusers saw their children at a visitation center” (p. 677). In safety conferencing, “victims and survivors and their informal networks are at the center of planning, and formal services – shelters, batter intervention groups, law enforcement, and others – support their efforts, while continuing to safeguard women and children” (p. 688).

Given the identified gaps in service, the current criminal justice model is failing to adequately meet the needs of not only South Asian families but all families in British Columbia affected by intimate partner violence. The Cultural Context Model, specialized domestic violence courts, restorative justice and safety conferencing approaches offer up viable alternatives or complementary models to our current, adversarial criminal justice system.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The research confirms there is no “one-size fits all approach” to intervention and prevention, both between cultural communities and within. At the same time, as evidenced in the individual and focus group interviews and in the literature, there may several commonalities within South Asian communities and these commonalities need to be considered within any prevention and intervention initiatives. This research on male perpetrators of intimate partner violence in South Asian Canadian communities suggests intervention and prevention strategies must address the men’s lived experiences – in a culturally relevant manner that ultimately will still hold the men accountable for their actions.

These lived experiences may include: addressing the harms created by the man’s cultural male privilege, which may also extend to his alcohol use; understanding the stress created by his own gender role expectations; and exploring the patriarchal community values around the sanctity of marriage, the stigma of divorce and the importance of reputation and honour – that not only restrict women’s freedoms but men’s as well. Addressing his experience of immigration and acculturation, including obligations attached to his or someone else’s immigration, and the role and influence of extended family in his and his spouse’s day-to-day lives, may further provide insight into his lived experiences.

These experiences are considerably different than those in non-South Asian “mainstream” communities – and the differences are just as pronounced after police and criminal justice system interventions – as most South Asian couples, unlike Caucasian couples, desire to reconcile. While, as noted in this report, there are many reasons the South Asian victim may want to reconcile, all practitioners interviewed reported the need to acknowledge and respect this difference. And while they agree that police intervention is essential for the cycle to be broken, they expressed considerable concerns regarding the interventions that followed.

Practitioners argued that while pro-arrest policies are necessary, the long court delays and subsequent delays for counselling render the whole criminal justice system intervention much less effective. As it is now, the time delay may only harden a man’s beliefs and justifications for the use of violence, and the victim, facing community pressure, may feel doubly victimized. Furthermore, current interventions fail to consider adequately the needs of the victim, who will often reconcile with her spouse long before a court even allows it.

Few, if any, sustained prevention initiatives are aimed at reducing intimate partner violence or the attitudes that underpin it. Having intervention initiatives – and very limited ones at that – only after the violence occurs ignores the considerable prevention opportunities that could be initiated so that the man does not use violence in the first place.

Prevention efforts that engage South Asian men in particular are necessary, as ultimately, “this is a man’s problem.” Women in South Asian communities have supported their sisters, daughters, mothers, friends and neighbours for many years and in many different ways. They have done an incredible amount of work both to stop the violence before it begins and to help pick up the pieces after it has occurred. Now, the men in their communities, in their families and in their relationships must get involved – especially the elders. South Asian men, given the role they hold within their families and communities, need to take responsibility not only for their individual behaviour, but also must challenge the family, community and cultural patterns that support violent behaviour. Extended family members, both male and female, play an equally important role. Prevention initiatives such as pre-marital counselling and an increased awareness of the importance of compatibility require that extended family and other community members are giving new couples the opportunity to develop as individuals, couples and members of extended families.

This research should not be applied to instances of intimate partner homicide or attempted homicide. It focused instead on men who are mandated by the courts to participate in community-based programs offered in the Punjabi language. Most of the offenders, therefore, have not served time in jail. Most of them are also first generation in Canada.

There is a continued need for research concerning intimate partner violence grounded in the experience of Punjabi Sikh and other South Asian men who are first generation Canadian immigrants, both in British Columbia and in other regions. While this research focused on intimate partner violence in South Asian communities residing in the Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley regions of British Columbia, it is hoped that this report will help to create awareness for the need to investigate what is happening in other cultural communities –

and of course this includes the “mainstream” given it too has a culture – to ensure that intervention and prevention initiatives are meeting the needs of those communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a significant need for intervention and prevention initiatives that are both respectful and culturally appropriate for South Asian communities. Furthermore, such strategies must involve the expertise of frontline practitioners who work with South Asian communities as well as community members themselves. The following recommendations acknowledge the capacity of South Asian men who perpetrate intimate partner violence and are involved in the criminal justice system to change, as well the capacity of non-violent South Asian men to affect community-wide and societal change. These recommendations prioritize the need for safety of victims and their children while holding the men who perpetrate intimate partner violence accountable for their actions.

- 1. The development and delivery of culturally-informed and culturally appropriate education, training and professional development for frontline practitioners working with intimate partner violence and/ or substance abuse in South Asian communities.** This training should be developed and tested by experienced frontline practitioners and delivered to police officers, Crown Counsel, probation and corrections officers, health care professionals, Ministry of Children and Family Development social workers, and program managers, facilitators and counsellors working in violence, substance abuse, parenting and immigration services.
- 2. South Asian community initiatives that focus on pre-marital education not only for couples but also for extended family members.** For example, any family that approaches a temple, mandir or mosque regarding matrimony should be required to attend “information sessions” similar to pre-marital education or counselling. These sessions can be offered separately to the couple and their respective families. They should be facilitated by trained and experienced counsellors who can sensitively outline the expectations of marriage, the consequences of unsuitability, how to address conflict and to avoid the consequences of intimate partner violence. The fees for the facilitator will be collected by the institution as part of the wedding fee.

3. **The development of a domestic violence court similar to the drug court designed to meets the needs of families and communities.** This would address difficulties currently created by court and counselling delays as well as a complicated and adversarial system for couples where reconciliation is an agreed upon option. Such a court must give victims greater access to support, education and counselling than the current system provides.
4. **A provincial commitment to fund group counselling opportunities immediately accessible to men charged with intimate partner violence.** These programs should build on the immediate concerns of men regarding the legal as well as family, extended family and community consequences of their actions.
5. **A provincial commitment to fund sufficient mandated programs for those convicted of intimate partner violence as a way to avoid wait times that act against the principles of supporting appropriate family reconciliation and reducing the possibility of further violence.** These programs should be available not only to offenders considered medium and high risk, but also to those considered low risk and to those who wish to attend voluntarily. Currently, in some locations there is an extended wait time before a place in these programs becomes available.
6. **A provincial commitment to fund parallel programs for women whose partners have been convicted of intimate partner violence.** While these would include self-awareness and skill building, they would also focus on how to protect themselves and their children from further abuse and how to reach out to other community members. A component of this program would be an assessment of both members of the couple to indicate the realistic and safe possibility of reconciliation.
7. **The development of community-based programs that address the challenges of the immigration and acculturation process including underemployment and discrimination, issues of Canadian family law and laws concerning violence, cultural norms concerning relationships (including marriage and parenting).** These programs should focus on particular family constellations so that they appropriately address the stress of new marriages, extended family households, sponsorship expectations, parenting perspectives and community-based resources for dealing with stress.
8. **The development of community-based programs focused on the strengths of fathers and grandfathers that includes material on the consequences of substance abuse and its relationship to intimate partner violence and the destruction of families.** Men are more

likely to attend programs that build on their strengths and that include information that addresses how their happiness may be destroyed by their own actions. These men can then be engaged in larger violence prevention initiatives.

9. **South Asian community initiatives that focus on concrete suggestions for how extended family members, community members, friends, and colleagues can skillfully intervene to prevent violence from developing or escalating.** These initiatives can take place formally and informally in a wide variety of settings – including in community-based media, on the Internet, in posters and pamphlets as well as in small groups.

These recommendations, addressing both prevention and intervention, are by no means mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary, and recognize the need to act in both ways – before and after possible instances of intimate partner violence. As several participants argued, having intervention without prevention or prevention without intervention will render the former considerably less effective.

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APPENDIX 1: CENTRE FOR THE PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE

A MISSION STATEMENT AND MANDATE

Violence affects the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities – and no one understands this better than frontline practitioners. They are present in everyday situations and under extraordinary conditions to respond to those who witness and experience violence at many different levels: emotionally, psychologically, physically, spiritually, and environmentally.

The Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence (CPRV) supports an applied research program that builds on the experience of frontline practitioners. We focus on dynamic knowledge creation, translation and exchange – turning theory into practice and practice into theory. Our goal is to make a substantive contribution to the prevention and reduction of violence, supporting those who are called to respond to the suffering of those caught in the causes and consequences of violence.

Advocating violence prevention through social development, CPRV also participates in the Canadian Partnership for Social Equity with the Canadian Council for Social Development (CCSD).

B PROCESS OF DISCOVERY REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

A Project Reference Group was formed during the initial phases of the project that included experienced program practitioners from South Asian communities in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley regions of British Columbia, staff with relevant experience from the Justice Institute of British Columbia and faculty with relevant experience from Lower Mainland post-secondary institutions. Reference group members provided feedback throughout the various stages of the project.

Shashi Assanand, Executive Director, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services

Perry Deol, Corrections & Community Justice Division, JIBC

Susan Forest, Centre for Counselling & Community Safety, JIBC

Fran Grunberg, Faculty, Social Service Worker Program, Langara College

Surjeet Kalsey, Counsellor, Abbotsford Community Services

Ninu Kang, Director, Family Programs, MOSAIC

Rampee Lidder, Corrections and Community Justice Division, JIBC

Bethan Lloyd, Coordinator, Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence (CPRV), JIBC

Mary Russell, Professor, School of Social Work, University of British Columbia

Rajpal Singh, psychologist

Gary Thandi, Research Sessional, Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence (CPRV), JIBC

Caroline White, Centre for Counselling & Community Safety, JIBC

APPENDIX 2: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

A THE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Following the Research Ethics Committee approval, the process of participant recruitment began. Reference group members and the researcher, a member of the South Asian community who works in the social service sector, identified potential participants who were then contacted by the researcher. The population was defined as “a person who self-identifies as South Asian and who has worked for at least three years as a counselor or first responder dealing with issues of intimate partner violence in South Asian communities in the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley.” Preference was given to those who worked directly with men convicted of violence. Geographically, the sample represented the proportion of South Asian population in various communities based on Statistics Canada data. Representation was then based on sex, age, generation and field of professional education.

Participant Demographics:

Sex:

Male 7; Female 10

Generation*:

1st: 8; 1.5: 4; 2nd: 5

*1st generation: immigrated to Canada as adults; 1.5 generation: born in a South Asian nation and immigrated to Canada before 12 so most of their schooling is Canadian; 2nd generation: born and raised in Canada

Age:

25–34: 3; 35–44: 7; 45–54: 5; 55+

Workplace:

Surrey: 6

Abbotsford: 4

Vancouver: 3

Burnaby: 2

Delta: 2

Workplace Experience:

Counsellors of South Asian men 6

Counsellors of South Asian women or children
(including child protection worker) 5

Police or RCMP 2

Probation Officers 3

Community elder 1

Following telephone or e-mail contact, the researcher provided information concerning the project and reviewed the consent process, including conditions of confidentiality and anonymity. All interviews were conducted in English, though participants occasionally stated a term or phrase in a South Asian language if it otherwise did not translate particularly well into English.

The 17 participants, combined, have over 200 years' experience working with South Asian men who have been identified as perpetrators of intimate partner violence by police, the courts and/or social service agencies. The average work experience is 13 years. A few had 0 years of direct experience with men because they work with the women and/or children. The average number of men seen by each participant each year is 43, including this latter group.

Additionally, researcher Gary Thandi realized from the beginning the benefits of including in the research the experiences of South Asian men who had attended the court-mandated programs for men convicted of intimate partner assault. He obtained permission for the BC Corrections Branch to conduct focus groups with South Asian men who were on probation and enrolled in the Branch-funded Relationship Violence Prevention Program – Cultural Edition (RVPP-CE). While concern was raised initially over the researcher's employment status with a community agency that manages one of the RVPP-CE programs, after a thorough application process that addressed ethical consideration, the Branch's External Research Review Committee gave permission to recruit the men.

B INTERVIEW GUIDE

PLACE: _____ DATE: _____

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

1. Please tell me something about your involvement in issues concerning intimate partner violence in South Asian communities.

ABOUT THE MEN

2. How does your work (or your involvement) include men in the community who have been violent towards their partners?
3. Based on this work (involvement), what are some of the most important things you have learned about the men?
4. What differences have you identified between the men who are 1st generation in Canada and men who were born and raised in Canada?
5. What impact do you think their immigration experience has on the men?
6. How do men identify issues of racism or inequality/injustice in their lives, in relation to stress and/or violence?
7. What do you think is the relationship between the experience of immigration and racism and the emotions that lead to violence?
8. Based on your experience with men who are not South Asian as well as those who are, what differences do you see in their patterns of involvement in violence?

9. What about what happens after they are violent – are there cultural differences there?
10. Where do you think these differences come from?
11. How do you think alcohol use influences whether violence occurs?
12. How often do you think men's violence against their partners extends to violence against their children as well?
13. What do you think these men want to happen once they have been violent?
14. What percentage of men do you think want to reconcile with their partners and continue in the relationship?
15. What are the biggest factors in this?
16. Do you think this is different for South Asian men

SITUATIONS AND THOSE WHO GET INVOLVED

17. What can you tell me about the different situations in which violence occurs?
18. What do the men say about why they became violent?
19. How do you think these situations are particular to South Asian men/South Asian community/immigrant community?
20. When there is a violent incident who are among the first to know about it?
21. How do they come to know about it?
22. What are the different ways that they respond?
23. Why do you think they respond in this way?
24. How often would you say there are other adults living in the same household?
25. What happens among the members of the household following incidents of violence?

26. What impact does having extended family in the household have on the men?
27. Who else hears about it? (prompt re person who arranged marriage, community leaders/ elders. . . .)
28. How do they hear about it?
29. What are the different ways that they respond?
30. How often would you say the police become involved?
31. Do you think they know the consequences of calling the police?
32. Overall, what effect do you think the police response has?
33. In your experience, what effect does calling the police and starting that process have on stopping the violence in the future?
34. If the police aren't called, what chance do you think there is that the violence will continue?
35. What experience do you have with men who have come for counseling – perhaps with their partners – without being sent by the courts?
36. What brings them for counseling – we're interested in how the men get involved without it being mandated.

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION and PREVENTION

37. What interventions do you think are most effective when there is an initial incident of intimate partner violence?
38. What interventions are most effective when there are recurring/ escalating incidents of violence?
39. What could happen immediately after the police become involved that would be helpful for the man involved?

40. Is that currently available?
41. If no, what is required to make it available?
42. What do you know about the program “Respectful Relationships” and the “Relationship Violence Prevention Program”?
43. How effective do you think these programs are in preventing further violence?
44. What could make them more effective?
45. If the police do not become involved, what can realistically happen that involves the men?
46. Women in the South Asian family have been working for many years to address issues of family violence – what do you think has been most successful in their work?
47. What do you think the men in the South Asian community can do to address this issue – to intervene with the men as soon as others know about violence happening in the family?
48. What could be/should be the role of the man’s father or another elder in his family or community?
49. Research already done on intimate partner violence in different ethnocultural communities has identified having resources available in Punjabi as a key factor in prevention and intervention. How important do you think this is?
50. What materials do you think are most important?
51. What else do you think would be effective in working toward prevention?
52. Who do you think should be involved?
53. What do you think they should be doing?
54. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Demographic Information

Sex: __ Male __ Female

Age: __ <25 __ 25-34 __ 35-44 __ 45-54 __ 55>

Generation: __ 1st __ 2nd __ 3rd

Education: _____

(Note: Certificate; College/Institute; Some Postsecondary; Undergraduate Degree; Graduate Degree and field(s))

Ethnocultural background: _____

(Use Statistics Canada categories for Visible Minority Status and/or Ethnicity: White, Black, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Arab, Latino)

Current employer: _____

Current volunteer affiliation: _____

Community of residence: _____

Community of work: _____

Thank you very much for your participation.

C THEMATIC CODES FOR QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The audiotaped interviews were transcribed by an external professional transcriber and then “cleaned” by the research to remove names and any references that could identify participants as well as to segments obscured by an accent or using Punjabi terms. The researcher and research coordinator reviewed each transcript, identified key themes, developed a code book with definitions and then used NVIVO qualitative data analysis software to code each transcript. Additional themes were identified and added as analysis progressed. As the interviews progressed, the research coordinator reviewed tapes and transcripts and did coding checks. Reference Group meetings also included discussion of the codes and the code definitions. The thematic codes were then exported from the software and the researcher developed thematic analysis which, eventually, became the core of this document.

Only the code families and their definitions are included below although most code families had several sub-codes. A list of sub-codes is included for the first code.

CODE FAMILY	DEFINITION
Violence	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning the kinds of violence or abuse that occurs, the degree of violence and also comments concerning violence against children. Violence is understood throughout as physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, etc., and includes what might be called “abuse” as well as “violence”</p> <p>Sub-codes: Physical, Psychological, Children, Cultural Difference</p>
Men want	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning what men want to happen after the violence occurs. It does NOT refer to comments about what men in the community might want to happen in terms of prevention or intervention, etc.</p>
Reasons violence	<p>This family of codes refers to the reasons that men or the research participants give for why the violence has occurred. It is not used for substance abuse which would be coded within the SA family</p>
Substance Abuse	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning substance abuse generally, to addictions to alcohol or drugs.</p>
Mental health	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning mental health generally as well as specifically as an issue for intimate partner violence</p>
Immigration	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning immigration</p>
Culture	<p>This family of codes refers to comments made about “culture,” whether specific or general. Unless comments are referring to racism, it would also include references to “ethnicity” and, possibly, “community”</p>
Family	<p>This family of codes refers to comments about families in general. It is NOT used when talking about the role of the family in intervention or prevention and it is NOT used when talking about family relationships or interactions as a reason for violence (see the P, I and RV family of codes).</p>
Generation	<p>This family of codes refers to comments concerning a specific generation (e.g.</p>

	1 st or 2 nd) or to differences between or among generations.
Change over time	This family of codes refers to changes that have happened over time – e.g. it used to be older men who had been abusing partners for a long time before there was any intervention; it used to be that no one in the community would speak up about intimate partner violence; now the women will call the police more readily, etc.
Intervention	This family of codes refers to comments concerning interventions – and non-interventions – that occur during or following specific violent incidents. The comments might be in response to “who KNOWS” rather than “who INTERVENES” and thus, if someone knows but does NOT intervene it would still be included here. The interventions or non-interventions would be specific to a particular situation. This code does NOT refer to comments about prevention which, while it may be done to prevent a recurrence of violence, is NOT specific to a particular incident but to the issue as a whole.
Prevention	This family of codes refers to comments concerning prevention of violence either before or following a violent incident that will prevent either an initial or subsequent violent incident. It is used even if the comment includes the word “intervention” but by our definition the code is Prevention. The code is NOT used in relation to a specific incident or series of incidents – that would be an I-intervention, even if the comment includes the word “prevention.”

APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH INTO ACTION

A COMMUNITY FORUM

South Asian Community Champions Against Domestic Abuse

As community-based action research, the “Process of Discovery” project focused on change at the individual, community and societal level. From the beginning, Gary Thandi has taken opportunities to use initial and subsequent findings. He has made presentations to service providers and staff at the Justice Institute of British Columbia in New Westminster and to sociology students at a post-secondary institution in Surrey, participated in community forums organized by members of South Asian organizations and written articles for the South Asian print media. (See the bibliography below.) Interview participants emphasized the importance of public education and awareness. As one participant indicated “if somebody publically goes out there and claims something, that’s a public acknowledgement of the issue.” Twenty years ago, he said, “nobody was talking about anything.” Currently, community members have been speaking out in increasing numbers and they have started to come to agencies and counseling organizations for help. One participant said “I saw so many men coming to my office and they were crying that ‘my daughter is in an abusive relationship, I can’t do anything.’” He recognized the key element that has to be recognized: “It’s not only women’s issues, it’s also men’s issues.”

Gary recognized that South Asian communities needed a gathering that focused on men and women who felt concerned about intimate partner violence in their communities but did not feel they had the skills or confidence to act. Recognizing that those most directly affected by the violence – the husbands and wives – may not attend, he developed an event for family members, friends and community members – those who know something may be happening but aren’t sure what to do. Research participants had overwhelmingly indicated that family members are often the first to find out that something has to change within their extended family unit. How they respond can greatly influence whether the abuse continues and/or escalates.

Other community education forums have been held in the Lower Mainland. The South Asian Early Childhood Development Task Group is an organization based in Surrey, BC, that

consists of dedicated professionals and volunteers who are committed to providing information about the importance of a child's early development. They held a forum in January, 2011, for "community champions" who might spread their message. "We wanted to create a movement of knowledge in the community," said Daljit Gill-Badesha, the Task Group Coordinator. "We trained over 100 champions who have learned the key messages, taken resource material and have promised to hand it out through their personal and/or professional networks in the community."

Gary, a member of the Task Group, attended the gathering and realized a similar approach could be used to create a similar "movement of knowledge" concerning intimate partner violence. He applied for and received funding for the "South Asian Community Champions Against Domestic Abuse" forum through the Department of Justice Canada's National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Community members heard about the forum in the weeks prior as several of the Forum facilitators appeared on South Asian radio and television program and advertisements appeared in a South Asian newspaper and on two South Asian radio stations. A South Asian television news program covered the event as did three South Asian newspapers.

A similar model of prevention has been initiated in Ontario. "Neighbours, Friends and Families" raises awareness of the signs of woman abuse so people close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help. Tapping into community assets and talents, this organization believes those who are closest to abused women and abusive men are in a unique position to provide support. Participants in the Lower Mainland received information from the "Neighbours, Friends and Families" campaign kit, including resources and strategies on working with a family, and how to talk with women being abused, men who are abusive, and the children in the family. The website also has resources in several South Asian languages and may be used by other organizations (<http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>).

Gary wrote the following article about the forum published by a local newspaper for South Asian communities.

*'The South Asian Community Champions
Against Domestic Abuse' Forum on April 10, 2011*

About 150 people attended the “South Asian Community Champions Against Domestic Abuse Forum” on Sunday, April 10th at the Grand Taj Banquet Hall in Surrey, BC. The workshop's focus was on how to eliminate abuse in the South Asian community, by enlisting community members to help victims of domestic abuse as well learn ways to talk to men who are being abusive towards their spouse.

Psychologist Dr. Rajpal Singh talked about the myths that surround domestic violence in South Asian communities. He indicated that the majority of South Asian men are not abusive, and then talked about how, in his over 20 years of experience working with South Asian men who have been abusive, that the majority are able to learn and change. He also talked about how someone can talk to a man who they suspect is abusing his spouse. Counsellor Kashir K. Besla talked about why victims stay in relationships, and how community members can help and support these victims. And educator Daljit Gill-Badesha talked about how domestic violence harms children's development.

The main theme of the event was that community members have a role to play in ending domestic abuse, since in our community extended family members are often the first to find out if violence is happening between a couple. While they talked about the importance of calling the police if someone's life is in danger and if the violence is continuing, the facilitators also indicated that community members, especially extended family members, can talk to couples who may be having conflict before there is violence, or before the violence has escalated, and offer support.

Participants had an opportunity to view videos on initiatives taking place elsewhere (Bell Bajao – “Ring the Bell” initiatives in South Asia, which can be seen on Youtube, a video made in California on the harms of abuse to children, and “A Village of Men” videos made here in BC). They were also able to take translated information home with them, as well as visit booths of over a dozen local agencies that provide services to South Asian

communities. These participants were deemed the “Champions” who could go out and help their friends and families who were having difficulties in their relationship. Feedback forms (in English and Punjabi) were administered. The feedback was very positive: participants appreciated being treated respectfully, and appreciated how facilitators were able to talk about a ‘sensitive’ topic in a respectful manner, without losing the importance of what was being said.

The event was organized by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, which is also conducting research on domestic abuse in South Asian communities. Funding for the event was provided by the Department of Justice Canada, in recognition of the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which is being recognized from April 10 - 16th, 2011.

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**C THE SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AGAINST
DOMESTIC ABUSE FORUM POSTERS**

***Are you concerned about
domestic abuse in your community?***

**Whether it is happening within your family, or amongst
your friends, or if you just want to do something about it ...**

now is your chance.

**Join us for a FREE community information session
– in Punjabi – see what you can do to prevent domestic abuses.**

**The South Asian Community Champions
Against Domestic Abuse Forum**



**When: SUNDAY APRIL 10, 2011
1 PM TO 4 PM**

**Where: The Grand Taj Banquet Hall
8388 128th St, Surrey, BC**

Featuring presentations by:

**Dr. Rajpal Singh, PhD, RCC
Kashmir K. Besla, MA, RCC
Daljit Gill-Badesha, MA**

**Light refreshments will be served. Pre-registration is not required.
For further information please contact Gary Thandi at gthandi@jibc.ca**

ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਲੀ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਤੋਂ ਪਰੇਸ਼ਾਨ ਹੋ? ਭਾਵੇਂ ਇਹ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਦੋਸਤ/ਸਹੇਲੀ ਨਾਲ ਵਾਪਰ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੁਝ ਕਰਨ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ...ਤਾਂ ਫੇਰ ਹੁਣ ਮੌਕਾ ਹੈ ਕੁਝ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ।

ਆਪਣੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਮੁਫ਼ਤ ਸੈਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ - ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਇਸ ਸੈਸ਼ਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਕੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣੋ ਕਿ ਦੱਖਣੀ ਏਸ਼ੀਆਈ ਭਾਈਚਾਰਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਰੋਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

**ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਨੂੰ ਰੋਕਣ ਲਈ ਦੱਖਣੀ ਏਸ਼ੀਆਈ
ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਦੇ ਕਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ ਚੈਂਪੀਅਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਫੋਰਮ**
**(The South Asian Community Champions
Against Domestic Abuse Forum)**

ਕਦੇ: ਐਤਵਾਰ ਅਪਰੈਲ 10, 2011

ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1 ਵਜੇ ਤੋਂ ਸਾਮ 4 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ

ਕਿੱਥੇ: ਗਰੈਂਡ ਤਾਜ ਬੈਂਕੁਏਟ ਹਾਲ

8388 128 ਸਟਰੀਟ, ਸਰੀ , ਬੀਸੀ

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Office of Applied Research
Justice Institute of British Columbia
715 McBride Boulevard
New Westminster, B.C.
V3L 5T4

Tel: 604.525.5422
1.888.865.7764

Fax: 604.528.5518

Email: appliedresearch@jibc.ca

www.jibc.ca



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