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Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence and Access to Services

by

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DEDICATION

Written not only for academics and service providers to hear the narratives of the few South Asian immigrant women who have come forward, this thesis is dedicated to the many women who are silently suffering from abuse behind closed doors and the families who have lost their loved ones to violence.

I also dedicate this thesis in loving memory to Dulce Sabino who had a profound influence on my life. Her spirit served as a source of inspiration and determination in my academic abilities as she encouraged me to believe in myself. I miss you more than words and wish you could have shared the completion of this project with me. I hope I have made you proud.

ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is often framed solely as a cultural and marginal problem within our society, despite its far-reaching impact on women from all racial backgrounds. Developing awareness for those affected necessitates reaching common ground on our thinking about abuse in ethno-cultural communities and how society can respond to this problem. Domestic violence exists in the South Asian community but continues to remain largely unaddressed due to it being underreported. This thesis focuses specifically on interviews conducted with South Asian immigrant women in Edmonton, Alberta, from December 2010 to April 2011. The seven participants disclose not only how abuse was experienced, but also their challenges in reporting and gaining access to services. The overarching power imbalance theory provides insight into the participants' perceptions. Recommendations about the resources/services are offered to reduce the imbalances of power that exist.

Keywords: South Asian immigrant women, domestic violence, challenges in reporting, access to services

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supervisor; I was always able to share my feelings about the project during our meetings, since she was always willing to listen. Thank you for reminding me not to forget about myself when conducting research in this sensitive area.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"*I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary. The evil it does is permanent.*" - Mahatma Gandhi

Framing the Issue

On July 10th, 2010 a day after my thesis proposal defence, I woke up to Canadian national news coverage emphasizing another murder which reinforced the significance of domestic violence in the South Asian community.[1] Rajpinder Kaur Sehmbi, a Sikh mother of two young boys in Edmonton, Alberta was found dead in her home. Media reports indicated that her husband, a former Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer, Tirith Sehmbi was off-duty when he shot her multiple times in the early morning hours. Rajpinder a 29-year-old mother, a daughter, and sister with no immediate family in Canada was isolated and suffered in a ten-year "violent marriage" that was arranged back home in India (CBC News, July 12, 2010; Edmonton Sun, July 12, 2010).

Friends from her workplace (Starbucks) described her as a friendly person, always willing to reach out to help others; however, somewhere along her life path she herself did not reach out to share what was happening in her marriage. Shortly after her death friends and family members of Rajpinder, who arrived from abroad, as well as the few service providers in Edmonton spoke out against violence against women (CBC News, July 21, 2010). Shocking to many is how silent the South Asian community in Edmonton, Alberta was during this time. For example, cultural events carried on in the community as though nothing

[1] According to Papp (2010) "[w]hen a man murders his wife or daughter [or daughter-in-law] in Canada, law enforcement representatives – the police and prosecutors – often describe it as domestic violence or a domestic homicide" (p. 12).

happened. Venkataramani-Kothari (2007) states how she finds "[i]n the South Asian community, the existence of this smouldering problem receives little or no public acknowledgment" (p. 11).

Violence does not have to be physical like it was in the case of Rajpinder Kaur Sehmbi; it can take various forms which I present later in this chapter. Regardless, we as a society need to question why such injustices are happening in the South Asian community and what can be done to prevent these types of tragic events. Rajpinder's name is added to a long list of Canadian domestic violence homicide cases seen in the past few years. I provide the years of these incidents in chronological order with brief details to contextualize their abuse "*kahani*" (story).

Behind each of these names there is almost certainly a deeper story that led to the violent acts and it is one that remains unknown. Sadly, Rajpinder and the many women gone before her each had their lives taken away from them at a young age. These are just a few reported cases, but certainly there may be others that have not become public. I have not included all of the cases from the 1980's onwards due to a limitation of space in this thesis. Instead I focus on the more recent stories after 2006 that received vast amounts of media coverage.[2] However, I emphasize the 1996 case as it was the first to be highly publicized.

[2] The rest of these stories can be found in Shamita Das Dasgupta's chapter one titled "Broken promises: Domestic violence murders and attempted murders in the U.S. and Canadian South Asian Communities" in Sandhya Nankani's (2000) edited book "Breaking the silence: Domestic violence in the South Asian-American community." Other women killed after 2000 include Jaswinder (Jassi) Kaur Sidhu, a 25-year-old woman from British Columbia who fell in love and married a man in India in 1999. During her visit to India in June, 2000 she was kidnapped and killed because her family disapproved of the marriage. Her Mother and Uncle in Canada were arrested a decade later for planning the murder. Hasan (Fatima) Anwar, a 25-year-old Muslim mother of two in Toronto, Ontario who was stabbed to death by her spouse in February, 2001.

April, 1996—*Rajwar Kaur Gakhal,* a 25–year-old, along with eight other immediate family members, was killed by her spouse as they prepared for her sister's wedding. Her husband Vijay (Mark) Chahal, an educated Accountant, had later turned the gun on himself in Vernon, British Columbia. This particular case has been referred to as the Vernon Massacre Murder Suicide (Kelowna Daily Courier, April 5, 2011).

April, 2006—*Meherun "Mita" Nessa*, a 35-year-old mother from Bangladesh was stabbed to death by her spouse in front of her 13-year-old daughter at their Etobicoke, Ontario home. Meherun also leaves behind two young boys. Friends stated how she was unhappy in her marriage and wanted to return home. Her spouse Shabbir Mahmud was charged with second-degree murder and assault on their daughter who tried to intervene (CTV News, May 1, 2006).

May, 2006—*Seema Badhan,* a 19-year-old in the Greater Toronto region had recently separated from her husband. She was thrown, by her estranged husband, off the tenth-floor balcony of the building where she lived. Her husband Zohaib Shukat was charged with first-degree murder (National Post, May 27, 2006).

October, 2006—*Manjit Pangwali,* a 30-year-old teacher, and her unborn second child were murdered (strangled to death) by her spouse Mukhtiar Panghali a former school teacher in Surrey, British Columbia. At first she was reported as missing after her Pre-Natal Yoga class by her husband. It was not until several days later that her burned body was found. Manjit leaves behind a young daughter. Her husband has since been charged with second-degree murder (Surrey Now Newspaper, March 17, 2011).

October, 2006—*Navreet Waraich,* a 27-year-old Indo-Canadian immigrant woman and a mother of a young boy, was stabbed to death in her Surrey, British Columbia basement suite by her spouse. Waraich's landlord was the one to make the 9-1-1 call and is reaching out to other women in need today by stressing the importance of involving the police in domestic disputes. Navreet's husband Jatinder Waraich, a former taxi driver was charged with second-degree murder (Vancouver Sun, November 13, 2006).

November, 2006—*Thayalini Subramaniam,* a 31-year-old woman and mother was found dead in the garage of her Markham, Ontario home by her seven-year-old daughter. Thayalini leaves behind two young sons (National Post, n.d), and her husband Sugirthanraj Kailayapillai, was initially charged with second-degree murder (Toronto Star, November 6, 2006). Several years later he was sentenced to life in prison (Toronto Star, February 26, 2009).

Almost a year later in January, 2002 Wadha Albudri, a 29-year-old mother of three in Ottawa, Ontario was also killed in a similar manner. In both cases the spouses are being charged with first-degree murder. These stories can be found online: http://sisters-in-solidarity.com/blog/memorial/

November, 2006—*Malini Thayakumar,* a 36-year-old immigrant from the Sri Lankan Tamil community was found dead in her North York, Toronto home. She was found dead with her eldest 14-year-old daughter ***Neruuya Thayakumar*** and leaves behind two young girls. Her husband, according to media reports, was previously charged in 2002 for violent acts towards his wife. Kathiravelu "Kumar" Thayakumar was unemployed during the time of the incident and mentally ill. He later committed suicide (Toronto Star, November 7, 2006).

February, 2007—*Amanpreet Kaur Bahia,* a 33-year-old Indo-Canadian immigrant mother of three daughters was found dead by relatives in her Surrey, British Columbia basement suite. Media reports indicate that her throat was slashed and her cousin stated how she was "unhappy in her marriage", but helped run the family's farm business. Four years later her husband Baljinder Singh Bahia and two others were accused of first-degree murder (CBC News, February 7, 2008; January 24, 2011).

January, 2009—*Amandeep Kaur Dhillion,* a 22-year-old immigrant mother of a young boy, arrived in Canada in 2003 and she was stabbed to death at the family's grocery store on Airport Road (New Year's Day) in Toronto, Ontario. Family friends informed the public of how isolated and controlled she was during her short time in Canada. Her father-in-law Kamikar Singh Dhillon in Mississauga, Ontario has been charged with first-degree murder (Toronto Star, January 7, 2009).

January, 2010—*Tejinder Dhanoa,* a 32-year-old mother of two young children, was initially reported as missing. She was later found dead in her Surrey, British Columbia home. Her husband Kamaljit Singh Dhanoa was charged with second-degree murder (CBC News, January 7, 2010).

June, 2011—*Rumana Monzur,* a 33-year-old mother of a young girl, studied at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as a graduate student and was a Assistant Professor at Dhaka University in Bangladesh. She was horrifically attacked by her husband, Syeed Hasan Sumon, during her visit back home to Bangladesh which left her blind. Her husband who was yet to be charged was later found dead in his home in December 2011 (Vancouver Sun, December 5, 2011; December 6, 2011).

July, 2011—*Ravinder Bhangu,* a 24-year-old Indo-Canadian immigrant woman was killed in front of her co-workers at an ethnic newspaper office in Surrey, British Columbia. Her estranged husband struck her twice with an axe and then stabbed her to death multiple times with a meat cleaver. A male co-worker attempted to intervene to save her, but was also injured. Her husband Manmeet Singh was charged with first-degree murder, aggravated assault and assault with a weapon (The Province, July 29, 2011; July 31, 2011; August 1, 2011).

May, 2012—*Lakhvir Dhaliwal,* a 37-year-old mother of two young children from Punjab, India, was found dead in her home after police responded to a 9-1-1 call made by one of the boys. Both children aged 8 and 9 were home at the time of the incident. Neighbours mentioned how police had been involved with previous domestic disputes. Her husband Jatinder Dhaliwal of South Asian descent from Brampton, Ontario was later arrested for a single-car collision in a nearby intersection and charged with second-degree murder (Toronto Sun, May 28, 2012; May 29, 2012).

Despite the extensive media coverage of these extreme cases, violence in the South Asian community is still an underreported issue.[3] However, I continue to come across major headlines highlighting abuse in the South Asian community and realize these stories cannot be brushed aside. I question whether these deaths could have been preventable. Had any of these women accessed services or called 9-1-1 in past incidents? In their stories depicted by the media there will always remain a missing piece, as we will never know what happened during the short time period before they were killed. What was the reality each woman lived prior to death? Did any attempt to escape the marriage prior to the incident? What were their thoughts on their experiences of abuse? Were family members, friends or neighbours aware of what was going on? Did they try to intervene? Did these women have access to formal support such as resources or services? These are some of the questions that would often come to my mind, making me want to explore this issue further in attempts to find answers. Thus, this study derives from the above stories I kept and continue hearing and reading about in Canadian newspapers that led me to develop a strong interest in this topic and a desire to make a difference.

[3] Shirwadkar (2004) finds it difficult to gain access or information on this sensitive issue, particularly since the community may be reluctant to report problems because they feel ashamed.

This Study

In this thesis, I hope to demonstrate how some South Asian immigrant women have escaped their abuse experiences in Canada. I do this through interviews with seven South Asian immigrant women asking them about their experiences of abuse and disclosure. Throughout the analysis section I attempt to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the services available to the women when reaching out for help. Coming forward to share their story also illustrates their strength and willingness to help other women understand that resources are available. Listening to the voices of a small number of women in Edmonton, Alberta is valuable and may improve how existing services operate, but also how to better serve the needs of this vulnerable group. The interviews mainly focused on how the abuse was experienced, whether it was reported, and the women's views on the services that are offered. The goal is to assist existing service providers and government agencies by sharing knowledge with them about what works, what does not, and where improvements or changes can be made with resources to address this social problem. The work in this sensitive area is unfortunately never complete; it must be constantly monitored and revamped to provide a way out for those who decide to access formal support and to encourage others in similar situations to do so.

Research Questions

In order to determine the different types of abuse experiences, as well as the kinds of support participants were hoping to find, three main research questions frame this study: 1) What are some of the challenges for South Asian

immigrant women in reporting domestic violence?; 2) What kinds of support would South Asian immigrant women like to have available that might facilitate reporting of domestic violence?; and, finally 3) What types of services are required for South Asian immigrant women who experience domestic violence?

The emphasis is to determine what barriers exist in how this group accesses resources of support, and what considerations should be understood. For example, it is not easy for women from this community to access services when friends or neighbours might recognize them while they access the services. Also there is intense pressure from the South Asian community to keep families together rather than encourage them to reach out for support. As a result, women fear violating the family "*izzat*" (honour) and refrain from disclosing abuse to avoid bringing about shame or dishonour. Also they might not know that what they are experiencing under the Canadian law is in fact abuse. Other women might remain silent and accept the behaviour inflicted upon them as normal because that is how they have understood it. I turn now to a discussion of how some of these issues relate to South Asian immigrants in Canada.

South Asian Immigrants in Canada

Firstly, the term *South Asians* is often used interchangeably with *East Indians* or *Indo-Canadians* in the existing discourse and media reports. I prefer to use the common label *South Asian*, which is usually used to identify a diverse group of individuals mainly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, according to more recent Canadian publications from the Indo-Canadian Women's Association in Edmonton, Alberta (Das, 2005) and a report titled

"Culturally driven violence against women: A growing problem in Canada's immigrant communities" (Papp, 2010).

For the purposes of this current study, South Asians are those people who immigrated to Canada, but have origins in the following regions: India, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka. The inclusion of South Asians has been narrowed to these three areas because according to Canadian Immigration Canada (CIC), immigrants from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are among the top countries of origin in Canada (Chokshi, Desai and Adamali, 2010; Merali, 2009; Simmons, 2010). Statistics Canada reports that the majority of the South Asian community in Canada is foreign-born. In 2006, the high percentage of foreign-born South Asians (70.7%) was mainly from India (48.8%), Pakistan (14.6%), Sri Lanka (11.7%), Bangladesh (3.6%) compared to the few (29.3%) born in Canada. According to the Statistics Canada census in 2006, the overall South Asian population reported in Canada was as many as 1,262,900—a number that has increased significantly since the 1980's (Statistics Canada, 2008). Thus, in 2006 the largest visible minority group to be reported in Canada was South Asians (Statistics Canada, 2010a). According to Statistics Canada (2010b), by 2031, South Asians will still be the largest visible minority group.

Although I focus on domestic violence in the South Asian community, primarily among immigrants,[4] it is important to understand that violence occurs in

[4] The term immigrant refers to those who are born outside of the country, and have migrated to Canada, but may or may not have legal status. Countries such as Canada welcome immigrants and in fact, recent statistics collected in 2006 indicate that immigrants represent 19.8% of Canada's population (Alaggia, Regehr and Rishchynski, 2009). Additionally, Papp (2010) argues that "[i]mmigrant women are not a homogenous group. Within the South Asian community there is great ethnic, [linguistic] and cultural diversity" (p. 6). It is important to note that diverse religions,

all communities despite gender, race, class, and ethnicity. As Payne and Gainey (2009) succinctly state:

> [d]omestic violence is not limited to certain groups or classes. It affects everyone—the rich, the poor—the famous, the ordinary—blacks, whites—our heroes, our villains. All too often, individuals assume that violence involves only specific types of individuals (p. 1).

Additionally, existing literature reveals that it was not until recently in Canada that violence against immigrant women was discussed (Migliardi et al., 2004).[5]

Defining Domestic Violence

In order to explain South Asian immigrant women's experiences it is important to clarify the terminology used around domestic violence in this thesis. I mainly use the term *domestic violence* as it is the most prevalent in the existing discourse. Naming and defining abusive situations is a complex task, but the term *domestic violence* is generally used to refer to unacceptable behaviour individuals experience in relationships with partners or other close family members. According to Butterfield, Rocha and Butterfield (2010),

> domestic violence usually means that abuse occurs among those who are intimate or share some form of family relationship in common living quarters. In a broader sense, however, domestic violence includes abuse by other individuals in the household and other family members, including adult children (p. 323).

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for example, Sikhism, Hinduism, Muslim and others, also play an important role in the South Asian culture.

[5] There are few statistical reports (1993 Violence Against Women Survey – VAWS, General Social Surveys – GSS, 1999; 2004) on the rates of violence perpetuated against women in Canada. For more information about the findings from these reports see Doob (2002), Johnson (2002), and Statistics Canada (1993; 2005a). Additionally, these reports do not differentiate rates of domestic violence by immigrant and non-immigrant women, although existing research (Agnew, 1998b; Jiwani 2002a; Shirwadkar, 2004) shows that South Asian immigrant women may experience greater challenges reporting abuse. The above mentioned surveys as evidence are unreliable because telephone interviews were conducted in English and French, therefore excluding those immigrants that may not have spoken these languages (Alaggia et al., 2009; Jiwani, 2002b).

I use this definition as a point of departure, but highlight some of the definitional issues involved in studying abusive relationships.

In ethnic communities we must recognize how other family members may influence the abuser, or in some cases the incident may involve two abusers, a spouse and another member of the family. I argue that the term *domestic violence* also speaks best to abusive behaviour that occurs between two or more people sharing a relationship within a family. This definition I apply in this thesis is altered slightly to include those family members who do not live in the same household, but still contribute to the marital disputes. The definition of domestic violence I use recognizes how violence can also include all members of society regardless of age; children, youth, adults, and seniors can be involved.[6] All members of society are subject to the same forms of abuse, which I outline next.

I also use the term *domestic violence* as opposed to others such as "wife abuse" and "violence against women" because these terms denote a gendered nature of domestic violence (men against women).[7] Furthermore, terms such as "intimate partner violence" I believe are misleading or often suggest that the abuse is one sided or only between the couple. I highlight how the perpetrator in the South Asian family is not always the spouse, but sometimes in-laws or other extended family members and can be of the same gender (e.g. mother-in-law and

[6] I use the term domestic violence, but recognize that elders are subject to the same forms of abuse which may be perpetrated by children.

[7] Although gender inequalities exist, men are also victims of violence; however, rates of violence tend to be higher among women even in ethnic communities. This is not to say that men from the South Asian community do not need resources and are not abused, but rather the focus in this thesis is women due to the high number of incidents covered by media reporting.

daughter-in-law). For example, in the above mentioned case of Amandeep Kaur Dhillion her father-in-law had stabbed her to death.

Describing the Various Forms of Abuse

In addition to explaining the terms used in this thesis it is important to describe the several different types of abuse. The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCV, 2008) and The Department of Justice Canada (DOJC, 2009) currently define the different forms of abuse in a similar manner as physical, sexual, psychological, economic and spiritual. However, before we can understand the various forms of abuse we must understand how no universal definition for violence against women exists, as the type of violence varies in each culture (Guruge, 2010; Johnson, 2005; Shirwadkar, 2004). I use the Western categories of abuse as a starting point, but also consider the different ways South Asian women are mistreated. However, when interviewing the women I allowed them to use their own words/expressions to define and provide their own explanation or experience of abuse.[8] The questions used during the interviews allowed me to get at the various types of abuse because often women may or may not understand that there is more than one kind.

For instance, according to the Department of Justice Canada (2009), the most recognized and understood is physical abuse, which involves forceful behaviour that may cause injury or harm. This type of behaviour includes beating,

[8] Papp (2010) argues how abuse experiences depend on the women's "country of origin, length of stay in Canada, education, socio-economic status, language expertise and knowledge of the host country. When immigrant women become victims of domestic violence, all the above-mentioned variables have an impact" (p. 6). These unique experiences are explained later in this thesis, but abuse in the South Asian community based on the participant's stories includes the same western categories.

slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, or assaulting a person. Extreme cases may involve stabbing, shooting, or killing the individual with the use of a weapon. It is important to recognize that physical is one aspect, but abuse does not have to always involve this. Other forms such as sexual abuse are defined in a similar manner, and include sexual assault, harassment or exploitation by using power to force someone to engage in unwanted sexual activity without consent (CRCV, 2008; DOJC, 2009).

The CRCV (2008) and DOJC (2009) also acknowledge psychological, verbal or emotional mistreatment of another person as abuse. This type of abuse is the result of verbal insults, threats and isolation that may reduce an individual's self-esteem level. The abuser may act verbally violent, be jealous, manipulative or prevent the person from communicating with others. Furthermore, this type of abuse may cause the victim to become socially isolated from an informal social network of friends and family.

Another form of abuse is economic or financial which often includes the abuser illegally using another person's property or finances without consent or sometimes where consent is obtained fraudulently. However, it may also involve the abuser withholding money or denying access to finances, for example, not allowing the woman to deposit her own paycheques or disallowing her from working (CRCV, 2008; DOJC, 2009). This type of abuse may also involve depriving or neglecting someone who is more dependent on others, for example, spouses, children or seniors. Spiritual or cultural abuse is widely defined, but mainly includes preventing a person to follow or practice his or her own religious

or cultural beliefs (DOJC, 2009). For example, a Muslim woman's offender may force her to eat pork or drink alcohol which is a form of abuse tied to her religious beliefs.

Organization of the Thesis

I introduced this thesis with media reports of domestic disputes to reflect the importance of this research and to break the silence of abuse in ethnic communities. Throughout this thesis, I consult a number of different sources including peer reviewed journals, popular press books, newspaper articles and government documents to situate my work in the broader literature and to discuss why it is a relevant and timely topic of inquiry.

In chapter two I introduce the relevant literature on the South Asian culture that applies to this study. I then demonstrate how my study builds upon the existing literature that focuses on South Asian immigrant women and domestic violence.

Next, in chapter three, I outline the methodological choices I made in this study. An overview is provided of the qualitative methods applied under ethical considerations to collect the data. This involves a description of the sample, how it was derived, and the potential limitations associated with it. I also reflect on my position as a researcher. Additionally, I explain how the grounded theory method is applied to offer an inductive approach that emphasizes the main research questions around which this project centres.

Then, in chapter four, the results are described by highlighting the participants' abuse experiences and the key themes that emerged from the data. I

share the women's stories throughout this chapter to illustrate how violence for South Asians is not always between partners, but involves other family members. Furthermore, in the narratives it will become apparent how abuse can take a variety of forms ranging from physical, sexual, psychological, economic and spiritual abuse.

In chapter five, I describe some of the challenges women experienced with reporting abuse and seeking help. Chapter six focuses on the women's perceptions of domestic violence services. Additionally, this chapter discusses practical implications of this study to those serving this marginalized population as a method of connecting the women with services in the community.

Finally, in chapter seven, I summarize the findings. I also highlight the recommendations offered from my participants' narratives to improve services and resources. I then propose directions for future research to expand on this study to develop a deeper understanding of domestic violence in the South Asian community. My goal is to bridge the gap between researchers and activists in practice by sharing the findings in order to respond to this social issue in a collaborative manner.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In order to understand the nature of domestic violence for South Asian immigrant women it is imperative to provide an overview of the South Asian culture. Culture can be defined in various ways, but one definition is that culture is the shared attitudes, values, beliefs, norms or traditions and language of a group of people that is passed on from generations (Das, 2008; Raj and Silverman, 2002). I begin with an introduction to the South Asian culture and the traditional structure of the South Asian family, with an emphasis on patriarchy, cultural norms and marital expectations. I highlight some of the dominant cultural factors that may contribute to situations of domestic violence or encourage women to keep silent about the abuse. However according to Sokoloff and Dupont (2005), "[a]lthough culture may be used to justify violence against women, there is a danger of presenting the role of culture in domestic violence as a purely negative force" (p. 46). Thus, I argue that domestic violence occurs not because of cultural traditions themselves but through an imbalance of power and control protected by some of those traditions. In the remainder of the literature review, I shift the focus to the existing studies conducted around domestic violence and South Asian immigrants. Lastly, I discuss the gaps in the research and where this study fits in.

The South Asian Culture and Family Dynamics

The South Asian culture is traditionally very patriarchal and this explains to some extent why women are abused (Abraham, 2000b; Agnew, 1998a; Papp, 2010). "Patriarchal structure within the South Asian community is noted as one of the most crucial factors in assessing the risk of domestic violence within the

family" (Chokshi et al., 2010, p. 154). The family for the South Asian community is an agent that guides the members' socialization in the formative years of their lives by teaching culture, values, gender, and class ideologies that are distinct, but still accepted practices transported among the South Asian immigrant population into Canada (Merali, 2008; Papp, 2010). One outcome of patriarchy is the hierarchal system that creates dominance and dehumanization of women experiencing abuse (Abraham, 2000b; Chokshi et al., 2010; Papp, 2010). South Asian men who abuse women typically do so in order to maintain power within the family. Family members have prescribed roles; for example, men are the breadwinners or head of finances, and women are submissive in their traditional role within the household (Chokshi et al., 2004; Choudhry, 2001; Raj and Silverman, 2002). Thus, I would argue that violence is not accidental and that women, because of their powerlessness based on gender, are mistreated. It is because this unequal power balance is institutionalized within the structure of the patriarchal family that women are marginalized.

The South Asian culture also emphasizes collectivism over the western notions of individualism. An example of this is how some South Asian immigrants typically reside in joint family households, and extended family members are expected to cooperate to serve the best interests of the family since familistic and patriarchal values are promoted (Choudhry, 2001). A joint family system is an extended family arrangement where several generations or at least two live together in the same household. This type of an arrangement is very common in South Asian families and usually the eldest male or elders (in-laws)

exercise authority (Choudhry, 2001; Das, 2005). “A new bride who comes to Canada has to live with the husband’s joint family members and fulfill most of the expectations of her in-laws. She has to adhere to the conventions and customs of the old country” (Das, 2005, p. 21). However, this particular family structure might cause additional problems because extended family members may encourage abuse, or even take part in it (Abraham, 2000b; Agnew, 1998a; b; Chokshi et al., 2010; Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007). Thus, specific cultural contextual factors such as living with extended family members may explain particular abuse experiences for South Asian families.

When an extended family lives in one dwelling with hierarchical structures it is highly likely that elders have control within the family domain. Thus, it is important to recognize how patriarchy tends to operate differently in the South Asian culture. For example, the hierarchal structure of relationships is based on how power and control is situated in the family from the eldest male to his sons, to the mother-in-law and unmarried daughters and then to the daughter-in-law (Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007). Consequently, Dasgupta (2000b) asserts that women in the South Asian community continue to experience abuse from mothers-in-law or other family members as they are positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Abraham (2000b) also points towards how “[it] is within the institution of marriage that patriarchal control is exercised over a woman on the basis of her multiple subordinate statuses as wife, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, and mother” (p. 22).

Once a woman is married off, her position in her husband's family is in accordance to others especially her mother-in-law who asserts her authority or "position as the husband's mother in a patriarchal society" (Abraham, 2000b, p. 109). As a new member within that family the daughter-in-law is expected to remain obedient, passively accepting the rules set out by her husband and in most cases, mothers-in-law. For example, Abraham (2000b) and Choudhry (2001) state that a mother-in-law may execute her power in controlling the daughter-in-law by assigning duties to be performed within the household. Unfortunately, mothers-in-law tend to practice traditional ways of dominating their daughters-in-law and may do this because they feel their relationships with their son(s) are often jeopardized or affected once daughters-in-law are present in the family: "After her son's marriage, a mother may no longer feel like she is all important in her son's life. Seeing her source of power slip away, she tightens her grip on power by controlling the bride and the new couple's relationship" (Rastogi and Therly, 2006, p. 72).

This illustrates how not only men control and dominate the women in South Asian families, but women also reinforce their authority over young brides. "The role of women in perpetrating violence against other women is explained by gender and power issues, family dynamics, and possibly past abuse of the mother-in-law herself" (Rastogi and Therly, 2006: 67). Shankar and Northcott (2009) additionally argue that a young woman is now expected to take on traditional roles as this "will end later in life when she finally obtains authority and control over her own daughter-in-law" (p. 425). According to Das (2005) daughters-in-

law realize that mothers-in-law maintain the most power in the family because over the years they have gained this position by appropriately fulfilling their duties as wives and mothers. Therefore, some women quietly accept such patriarchal norms, especially since "[some] mothers-in-law argue that it is part of the life cycle. An abused young woman will one day be a mother-in-law and will have the responsibility of ensuring the subordination of other women of the family, even if that involves violence" (Agnew, 1998b, p. 171). Such cultural dynamics may discourage women from speaking out as they believe it is their fate to accept the violence (Dasgupta, 2000b; Kang, 2006).

The hierarchal structure of relationships in South Asian families contributes to the life cycle of abuse, and this idea is reinforced by Kandiyoti's (1988) theory of "patriarchal bargaining" which explains how the powerlessness of a "young bride is eventually superseded by the control and authority she will have over her own subservient daughters-in-law" (p. 279). Women anticipate the time to come when they can inherit authority simply because it allows them to experience being on the other side. Women's status changes dramatically over the life-course. As young girls they are subservient and submissive. Later when they are married they experience hurdles in their new family, but are expected to still remain submissive and subordinate by fulfilling their role in the marriage. Once a woman becomes a mother-in-law she gains status and power after being subordinate her whole life by her husband, mother-in-law or other extended family members. However, this never ending control cycle, which often leads to abuse, can be prevented if daughters-in-law resist this cycle by not assuming

authority over their own daughters-in-law. Furthermore, as stated by Ahmed-Ghosh (2004), "the life cycles of both men and women have to be determined through equal relationships not structural hierarchies" (p. 116). Dasgupta and Warrier (1996) support this point by stating how abuse occurs more often in relationships where gender inequalities exist instead of egalitarianism.

Cultural Norms and Marital Expectations

Furthermore in the South Asian culture there are pressures for a woman to be married by a certain age; otherwise, she will be stigmatized for remaining unmarried. Arranged marriages are common for South Asians, regardless of religious traditions, and these cultural practices continue to persist in North America (Abraham, 2000b; Das, 2005; Merali, 2009). This practice involves parents selecting potential suitable matches from their community for their child based on their own values.[9] "Parents seek to play a prominent role in the process of mate selection because they feel that they have more life experience and are therefore more competent to help their children in making the right choices" (Das, 2005, p. 25; also see Merali, 2008). Arranged marriages thus are not just between the two partners, but become a union of the two families where women are responsible for the honour or reputation of both his and her family. As Abraham (2000b) in her work on domestic violence among South Asian immigrants in America emphasizes, "there is considerable pressure to maintain harmony and

[9] See Abraham (2000b) and Das (2005) for more information on how marriage ceremonies and practices (e.g. dowry system) differ among various religious groups, for example, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. Muslims are usually allowed to marry their own cousins, while other religious groups steer clear of this.

minimize any actions that would potentially jeopardize the family and community" (p. 19).

A general marriage custom for South Asians is the exchange of dowry which is practiced quite differently based on one's religion. For example, Muslims provide a fixed payment called "*mahr*" to the wife during the wedding ceremony. This token provides an economic safety net for a woman in case her husband later decides to leave her (Abraham, 2000b). In contrast, in India dowry is viewed as a system where parents of the bride offer a form of wealth to the groom to increase their daughter's social status in the marriage. Traditional dowry practices originally generated because daughters do not inherit their father's property, and as a result the dowry becomes the daughter's inheritance when she marries. Although dowry was outlawed in India since the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, it still continues to serve as a condition for marriages (Abraham, 2000b; see also Abrejo et al., 2009; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Rastogi and Therly, 2006). Unfortunately, in Canada the giving of dowry continues in arranged marriages, and represents the "unequal status of women and men in a marriage" (Rastogi and Therly, 2006, p. 68).

Das (2008) notes how the current dowry practice is changing based on a woman's economic status. However, the dowry system is still viewed as a form of wealth that women are expected to bring with them to their in-laws' home, "tak[ing] the form of cash, jewellery, household goods, and so on" (Rastogi and Therly, 2006, p. 67). Many South Asian families express the burden of having to give a dowry as an expensive cost attached to having a daughter (Abrejo et al.,

2009; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004). Abrejo et al. (2009) similar to Kandiyoti (1988) find that marriages are burdens when such practices as these take place, resulting in women being without status and having few rights. On the contrary, dowry payments are seen to be the women's limited rights to resources and power before entering into marriage (Abraham, 2000b).

Agnew (1998b) states how "giving or receiving a dowry constitutes participating in women's oppression," and for women as brides, violence often manifests out of this practice (p. 174). Consequently, some scholars argue that the dowry practice is associated with domestic violence; therefore, it is necessary to analyze the phenomenon and how the two are linked (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Chokshi et al., 2010; Rastogi and Therly, 2006; Shirwadkar, 2004).[10] Existing literature states that after marriage, if the husband and in-laws are dissatisfied with the amount of dowry, the wife is abused and usually told to bring more from her family (Abraham, 2000b; Agnew, 1998a; Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996; Ratogi and Therly, 2006; Papp, 2010). Therefore, the in-laws and husbands-to-be expect dowry promises to be fulfilled, and if not, this usually constitutes reason for abuse to begin even in Canada (Das, 2005; Gill and Mitra-Kahn, 2009). Furthermore, this explains why some women avoid leaving marriages where domestic violence continues because often they will not receive their dowry payments back (Das, 2005). Kandiyoti (1988) argues that it is important to break down this patriarchal system where traditional practices of giving a dowry occur.

[10] It is through this particular social practice of dowry exchange that women are subordinated and often killed. Severe abuse often leads to dowry deaths otherwise known as bride burning (see Abraham, 2000b; Agnew, 1998a; b; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Das, 2005; Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996; Rastogi and Therly, 2006).

Next, I explain how South Asian women continue to suffer abuse in silence because of strong cultural practices to keep the marriage intact (Abraham, 2000b; Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996; Dasgupta, 2000b; Papp 2010; Shirwadkar, 2004). Once a woman is married she is expected to adhere to her duties and obligations of a "good" daughter, daughter-in-law, wife and mother (Choudhry, 2001; Guruge, 2010). In other words, as a married woman she has more obligations now and has to take into consideration her own family, the husband's family and most of all the community's honour. Nevertheless, some studies from India, the United States and specifically Canada take into account how family obligations to maintain "*izzat*" (honour) and avoid "*sharam*" (shame) even abroad can keep women trapped in violent relationships (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996; Kang, 2006). Due to cultural pressures to preserve marriage, South Asian women are expected to remain silent about violent acts and to accept marital problems (Abraham, 2000b; Dasgupta, 2000b; 2007; Rastogi and Therly, 2006; Shirwadkar, 2004; Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007). While in western society divorce is socially accepted, in the South Asian culture it is a social stigma:

> Marriage brings with it another set of rules for the woman to follow. From early childhood, South Asian parents teach their girl-child that she would bring dire shame to them if her marriage were to fail and she were to prove a bad wife (Ayuub, 2000, as cited in Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007, p. 15).

Women are expected to obey family traditions and cultural norms by sacrificing their own individual identities for the reputation of their family of origin, husband's parents, extended family members and community (Abraham, 2000b; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004). Thus, a South Asian woman's identity is constantly

changing, but is always attached to protecting her immediate family and husband's family from shame. Prior to marriage her identity is defined by her parents but after her marriage by her husband and extended family.

Thus, women continue to experience challenges in negotiating power within their natal family, as well as with husbands, mothers-in-law and other extended family members. These negotiations for more status are usually established around issues such as how much dowry a woman brings to the marriage, but also her ability to produce male offspring (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Kandiyoti, 1988). Ahmed-Ghosh (2004), Das (2005; 2008) and Puri, Adams, Ivey, and Nachtigall, (2011) argue that women gain more power within their husband's family by giving birth to a male child, and that couples often abort female children or treat them as less valuable in the family.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the value placed on sons is still evident today around the globe and in Canada. As Abraham (2000b) points out,

> [a] woman's fertility is central in defining her status and identity, as the birth of sons is essential in continuing the patrilineage. Lack of children, especially male children, is defined as a failure on the part of the woman to fulfill her primary role as reproducer (p. 22).

In the South Asian culture gendered treatment exists where sons are often desired or preferred to a daughter and sex-selective abortions are carried out as females continue to be devalued (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Das, 2008; Gill and Mitra-Kahn, 2009; Kang, 2006; Papp, 2010; Puri et al., 2011). Sex selection often occurs because of gendered financial practices such as male inheritance of family wealth or expectations for females to take dowry funds away from the family's wealth. Furthermore, Ahmed-Ghosh (2004) and Gill and Mitra-Kahn (2009) explain how

a dowry payment is saved if a daughter is not born. In this sense, males are financially beneficial to parents because, "in South Asia, [and abroad] sons carry the family name, inherit the family property, become the bread-winners, are considered responsible for providing a sense of security to the family and therefore are preferred" (Abrejo et al., 2009, p. 10). Women continue to struggle for power while trying to avoid the loss of a daughter, but cultural practices continue to intervene "in order to discourage female births and survival" (Gill and Mitra Kahn, 2009, p. 687).

This reinforces how expectations can be placed on a woman to reproduce male offspring in order to be accepted in her husband's household (Kandiyoti, 1988; Papp, 2010; Puri et al., 2011). Thus, women may be abused for failing to produce a male child and giving birth to daughters can make women more vulnerable to abuse.

The role of culture is important as values and traditions influence how some South Asian immigrant women endure abuse and come to a decision to reach out for help. Cultural factors shape the immigrant settlement experience and how women negotiate with the cultural traditions or specific challenges of marital expectations in a different country (Chokshi et al., 2010). However, family dynamics may be altered by migration, and each family member may deal differently with the subtle effects of patriarchy (see Chokshi et al., 2010; Kandiyoti, 1988). As one study in the United States with South Asian women indicates, immigration does not allow them to gain more status within the family because of "added pressure to uphold the standards of 'cultural family values' in a

foreign land" (Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996, p. 254). Thus, immigration does not always provide women with more opportunities because patriarchal power and control still uphold the structure of the South Asian family even abroad. The South Asian culture needs to be understood to identify how it impacts reporting abuse and access to services especially when women feel obligated to maintain cultural norms. Research (Raj and Silverman, 2002; Papp, 2010) indicates that understanding the experiences of abused South Asian immigrant women requires a knowledge and discussion of cultural factors (e.g. arranged marriages, dowries and preference for sons).

Domestic Violence in the South Asian Immigrant Community

Now that the cultural issues have been outlined, the literature surrounding domestic violence for this population is discussed.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence

Qualitative research and anecdotal evidence have reported that domestic violence is a significant problem within the South Asian community (Ahmad, Riaza, Barata and Stewart, 2004; Chokshi et al., 2010; Dasgupta, 2000b). There is limited empirical data on the prevalence of domestic violence. "[M]edia coverage of abuse-related deaths are the only sources available as insight into the empirical rate of incidence within this community" since no large scale studies have been conducted in Canada within the South Asian community (Chokshi et al., p. 150-151). In their study with 47 South Asian immigrant women in Toronto, Ahmad et al. (2004) found that these women were accepting their traditional roles as wife and daughter-in-law. Additionally, women who held strong patriarchal beliefs did

not recognize abuse and were less likely to seek formal help. This study is the first quantitative data collected on the prevalence of domestic violence among South Asians in Canada. Another empirical research study by Raj and Silverman (2003) with 160 South Asian women in Boston reveals that immigrant women were physically and sexually abused by their partners at a high rate (40.8%). A more recent study on help seeking behaviours among 44 South Asian immigrant women in Boston found that 52% did not seek formal help; instead, they sought help from informal networks of family and friends (Raj and Silverman, 2007).

Immigration

Nonetheless, despite the limited data on rates of violence perpetuated against South Asian immigrant women, research has shown that the intersection of patriarchy, culture, gender, race, and class shape South Asian immigrant women's experience of domestic violence (Abraham, 2000a; Ahmad et al., 2004; Guruge, 2010; Shirwadkar, 2004) and immigration plays a role. Some scholars state that immigration and Canadian immigration laws/policies increase a woman's vulnerability to domestic violence (Alaggia et al, 2009; Chokshi et al., 2010; Merali, 2009; Shirwadkar, 2004).

The few available studies on domestic violence within the South Asian immigrant community suggest that immigrants face a number of different challenges and acculturation stress which may increase conflict in the home (Abraham, 2000b; Ahmad, Driver, McNally and Stewart, 2009; Ahmad et al., 2004; Merali, 2009; Raj and Silverman, 2002). For instance, South Asians may struggle to assimilate to the new country while trying to maintain cultural values

(Abraham, 2000b; Choudhry, 2001; Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996). South Asians may also fail to acknowledge or deny any problems that exist because of the silence of violence within the community (Dasgupta and Warrier, 1996). They may also feel that if they report the issue they will lose their community's support, and as a result they continue to endure the abuse in order to remain loyal (Shirwadkar, 2004). Community members, in turn, may encourage women to remain silent to prevent bringing shame to the community and the families involved (Abraham, 2000a; Raj and Silverman, 2002). As a result, immigrant women remain reluctant to report the abuse to anyone outside of the family as they fear it will bring shame and alienation from their own ethnic community (Guruge, 2010; Raj and Silverman, 2007; Shirwadkar, 2004). Furthermore, the research also suggests that there is not much community or family support for the South Asian women who do want to leave the abuse, and this increases their vulnerability (Abraham, 2000a; Agnew, 1998b).

Challenges and Barriers in Seeking Help and Utilizing Services

Research also documents a number of different challenges that inhibit South Asian women immigrants from discussing their problems with anyone outside of the family because of other issues related to reporting and accessing services. South Asian women experience unique barriers and vulnerabilities when disclosing abuse. Some of these barriers include isolation (e.g. limited contact with family or others and no support in foreign country), immigration status (e.g. fear of deportation threats or having immigration documents taken away), language issues (e.g. lack of English skills or services in their own language and

denied opportunity to learn English), financial dependency on spouse (e.g. being refused the right to paid labour or access to money), and fear of losing children (each of these barriers are addressed in detail in this thesis and elsewhere – see Agnew, 1998a; Abraham 2000a; b; Dasgupta, 2000b; Guruge, 2010; Kang, 2006; Merali, 2009; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004).

The literature also suggests that the inability to speak English reduces immigrant women's access to services and information about domestic violence (Merali, 2009; Shirwadkar, 2004; Smith, 2004). In addition, other challenges include stereotypes, patriarchy, cultural factors or differences, lack of information about rights and services in Canada (e.g. lack of awareness or misunderstanding about laws or available services) and lack of support from their own community, all of which increase the vulnerability of South Asian immigrant women (Alaggia et al., 2009; Chokshi et al., 2010; Guruge, 2010; Merali, 2008; 2009; Raj and Silverman, 2002; 2007; Shirwadkar, 2004; Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007). At the same time non-English speaking South Asian immigrant women still lack knowledge of their rights and Canadian sponsorship policies, which further prevents them from seeking help (Kang, 2006; Merali, 2009). Sponsored immigrant women are rarely educated on their rights in a host country (Merali, 2009; Shirwadkar, 2004). There are currently no programs in place to educate women about their rights, and there is a need for information to be provided in foreign embassies (Merali, 2008; 2009). For example, immigrant women "need to be informed of their rights as sponsored persons (e.g., permanent residence in

Canada, participation in the work force, linguistic and social integration)" (Merali, 2008, p. 215).

Most of the above mentioned barriers were revealed in a study on women's help seeking actions among Punjabi, Bengali, South Asian and Spanish/Latin American immigrant women and service providers in Toronto. In their study, Alaggia et al. (2009) found the following factors impacted whether abuse was disclosed: cultural practices (e.g. stigma separation/divorce), reluctance of police intervention, isolation, having children, economic barriers (e.g. dependency on spouse), language barriers and immigration status. A similar study with 22 South Asian immigrant women (from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) in Toronto revealed individual factors such as social stigma/shame, gender roles (marriage obligations and silence), children's well-being, loss of support, and limited knowledge about resources as primary reasons for delaying seeking help from professionals. In addition, individual factors were discussed in relation to the socio-cultural (patriarchy and collectivism) and immigration context. The study concluded with a need to educate the South Asian community about gender inequality causing domestic violence, but also highlighted how women were fearful of jeopardizing family honour (Ahmad et al., 2009).

Based on a review of the current literature there is a growing body of work that considers the barriers South Asian immigrant women experience. Yet it is unclear to what extent each of these above mentioned barriers influences one another. One scholar, Dasgupta (2000b), classifies some of the above mentioned barriers into three types: personal (e.g. shaming family, failure to commit to

marriage, isolation, financial dependency, and lack of community support), institutional (e.g. immigration policies, child custody issues, legal procedures and costs, and language barriers) and cultural (e.g. socialization patterns and ideologies around marriage, divorce, family, motherhood and relationships in general). Although Dasgupta (2000b) uses such a framework to articulate the different challenges, she does not provide details or demonstrate how South Asian women perceive or address these barriers in relation to one another. Instead she argues that the "combination of all these barriers interacting in complex ways may make South Asian women feel helpless to change their situations and accept abuse as inevitable" (Dasgupta, 2000b, p. 182). While the guiding framework emphasizes some of the barriers, how and whether each of these influences each other cannot be easily understood unless we focus on the perspectives of the women affected.

Furthermore, the research that focuses on the available services indicates that immigrants are less likely to access services such as the criminal justice system (CJS) or legal system because they have their own stereotypes about authorities (e.g. police and immigration officers blaming them) or simply fear them (Abraham, 2000a; Dasgupta, 2000b; Raj and Silverman, 2002; 2007; Smith, 2004). Many scholars also suggest that South Asian immigrant women experience systemic discrimination when accessing services (Dasgupta, 2000b; Shirwadkar, 2004; Smith, 2004). This points to why some women avoid accessing services because of fear of discrimination and racism from police or other service

providers[11] (e.g. shelters) (see Dasgupta, 2000b; Guruge, 2010; Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans and Cohen, 2006; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004; Smith, 2004).

South Asian immigrant women are very hesitant in calling on formal sources of help (e.g. police), which likely stems from their negative perceptions of the police based on how the system is seen in their country of origin (Abraham, 2000b; Alaggia et al., 2009). A study by Hyman et al. (2006) recognizes how recent immigrants (0-9 years) were less likely than nonrecent immigrant women (10 plus years) in Canada to reveal abuse to the police. Thus, help-seeking rates and access to services varies with length of stay in Canada. Minaker (2001) found in her study that immigrant women in particular experienced more harm when they navigated the CJS; for example, "some women found that the police held stereotypes about abuse." Others did not speak English which made it difficult to communicate, while some described "being revictimized in their own communities" and being ostracized for disclosing the abuse to authorities (p. 99). However, there remains reluctance to report, and even non-immigrant woman still fear reporting the problem to police or other officials providing services.

Services specific to South Asians Needs

A review of the literature also indicates that South Asian immigrant women require services that are specific to meeting their needs and that the current mainstream services are insufficient (Ahmad et al., 2004; Chokshi et al., 2010). *Nowhere to Go,* a study by the Canadian Council on Social Development

[11] I use the term service providers to refer to non-profits and government agencies that provide front-line services to women experiencing domestic violence.

(CCSD), reports that immigrant and visible minority women need services that meet their specific needs and calls for more culturally appropriate services (Smith, 2004). Raj and Silverman (2002) support this idea as they discover immigrant women are aware of the services in place but do not view them as accessible or culturally appropriate. Studies by Guruge (2010), Hyman et al. (2006), as well as Shirwadkar (2004) suggest that more support programs are required to address the inadequacies of the current situation as this may encourage women to report abuse. Hyman et al. (2006) found in their study that immigrant women in Canada are generally less likely to utilize formal help services such as medical and legal assistance, shelters and crisis lines when compared to their Canadian non-immigrant counterparts. Additionally, Shirwadkar (2004) argues that current Canadian policies fail to recognize the importance that gender roles and cultural barriers play in the acquisition of available services.

Abraham (2000b), Dasgupta (2000a; b) and Merchant (2000), among others, provide a historical background into how South Asian women's organizations (SAWOs) started as grassroots/volunteer driven movements in the United States. Raj and Silverman (2002; 2007) state a need for SAWOs and collaboration between mainstream service providers. Other studies in the Canadian context have shown how SAWOs emerged to provide services in which a South Asian woman's culture is understood (Agnew, 1998a; b; Kang 2006). The unique needs of South Asian immigrant women are being met by service providers who know the ethnic and cultural background of their clients (Dasgupta, 2000a; b; Merchant, 2000). Kang (2006) in her study with activists states that

"these organizations catered specifically to the needs of immigrants, including Indian women" (p. 150).

In one study, a questionnaire administered to 12 South Asian organizations in the United States asked: "Does the South Asian community have specific needs?" (Merchant, 2000, p. 253). Merchant's (2000) work reveals that when SAWOs have provided meaningful services to the South Asian population (e.g. cultural values, traditions and norms are understood by staff hired from that ethnic community), there is an increase in the number of clients served. SAWOs "encourage others, within and outside the community, to address the intersection of ethnicity and gender when dealing with the issue of domestic violence" (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005, p. 50). Some of the services offered by SAWOs are counselling, domestic violence hotlines, settlement programs (e.g. English as a second language classes), education, employment training and legal protection, but outreach workers may also accompany women to access other services (Agnew 1998b; Dasgupta 2000b; Kang, 2006; Merchant 2000). Agnew (1998a) and Kang (2006) examine how referrals to these organizations are through word-of-mouth or other services (e.g. police and hospitals).

Similar to previous studies, Agnew's (1998b) study with service providers (e.g. counsellors) in Toronto on the emergence of ethno-cultural services also indicates that few social resources or supports are available to South Asian women, and most often these are short-term solutions for women. This may further restrict women from specific immigrant communities in reporting abuse. In her work, Agnew (1998a; b) found that programs where the South Asian

culture was understood are necessary to support South Asian women especially with the cultural and language barriers that may be present. Additionally, this is supported by a more recent study by Chokshi et al. (2010) which explores how culturally appropriate solutions are becoming more popular, for example, the Toronto Punjabi community health centre's (PCHC) approach to programming which focuses on the needs of the South Asian community. This model can be replicated in other communities where immigrants have unique needs (Chokshi et al., 2010).

Research on ethno-cultural services, particularly SAWOs remains relatively scarce (Abraham, 2000a; b; Agnew, 1998a; b; Dasgupta, 2000b; Chokshi et al., 2010; Grewal, 2007; Kang, 2006; Merchant, 2000). However, researchers are beginning to discuss the importance of ethno-cultural organizations to serve the South Asian population (Abraham, 2000b; Agnew, 1998b; Chokshi et al, 2010; Merchant, 2000).

Building on the Literature

There is very little research on the perspectives of South Asian immigrant women and domestic violence in the Canadian context. Instead many research studies concerning this population have acquired information without interviewing the women affected by the problem and their perceptions of domestic violence services.[12] While there are countless studies from the service

[12] A limitation though, is that many of these studies are from the service provider's perspective stating that ethno-cultural services are necessary; thus there still remains a gap in the literature on how abused South Asian immigrant women feel about these organizations. However, Abraham (2000b) interviewed abused South Asian immigrant women on their perspectives of domestic violence and SAWOs. Additionally Grewal (2007) in his study found that the 25 South Asian women in the United States he spoke to prefer a SAWO over a mainstream organization. The

providers' point of view on the issue (e.g. challenges in reporting), there are only a few dedicated to hearing the voices of South Asian immigrant women (Abraham, 2000b; Ahmad et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2009; Alaggia et al., 2004; Guruge, 2010; Shirwadkar, 2004). As Chokshi et al. (2010) state "[c]urrent research and literature on South Asian Canadian immigrant women and their experiences of domestic violence is largely invisible, especially within Canada" (p. 155). This is a critical gap in the literature which is why my research focuses on hearing from the women themselves. Their opinions and suggestions for how to better facilitate reporting of abuse and access to services is important to consider.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed cultural norms and marriage expectations in South Asian families that may force women to silence abuse and accept or normalize the violence. Additionally, we cannot blame cultural issues or use them to justify why abuse occurs, but rather we need to focus on the South Asian cultural context to explain how it may wrongfully be used to incite the mistreatment of women (see Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005). As Chokshi et al. (2010) argue, "cultural practices may lead to perpetuation of violence within the community, but this does not mean that culture is the reason for the occurrence of domestic violence" (p. 153-154). Thus, I outlined some cultural practices in an attempt to show how they may pessimistically influence abuse and prevent disclosure. Lastly, this chapter sets the stage for understanding South Asian cultural dynamics and underlying power

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current study attempts to fill this gap in the existing literature as it analyzes the perspectives of South Asian immigrant women who may have accessed SAWOs in Edmonton.

structures between the sexes that may contribute to abuse. How South Asian immigrant women experience domestic violence, reporting and access to services comprised the second body of literature reviewed in this chapter. By utilizing a qualitative approach the following chapters will give voice to the personal experiences of women to help us understand why some immigrant women are reluctant to report abuse or seek help.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to explore the problem of domestic violence by giving voice to a sample of South Asian immigrant women who are not only often ignored by their own community or society, but also fearful to reveal what challenges they experience in a new foreign residence when reaching out for help. I draw from grounded theory methodology (GTM) to describe and conceptualize women's experiences.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an inductive[13] or bottom-up theoretical and qualitative approach that is used in various disciplines. This method was appropriate for the research questions and used to interpret the results from the interviews[14] (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008). This was done by giving meaning to the empirical phenomena of domestic violence and access to services through South Asian immigrant women's narratives. Grounded theory is an appropriate method for a study like this because participants construct meaning out of their experiences.

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[13] Induction refers to reasoning from the specific to more general (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).

[14] Sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss both developed the grounded theory methodology in 1967; however, soon after their ideas differed (Bryant and Charmaz 2007a, b; Glaser, 1992). Glaser (1992) argues that grounded theory can also be applied to quantitative methods and qualitative data alone or combined, while other scholars (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, b; Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) focus primarily on its use in qualitative methods. In this thesis, I highlight some areas of variation in Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work, but do not touch on the debate between the two researchers. This is discussed extensively elsewhere (see Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, b; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; and Melia, 1996). The debate mainly circles around Glaser (1992) arguing how Strauss has written a completely new method, "full conceptual description" which is not grounded theory (Melia, 1996, p. 370). My work draws from multiple sources/guidelines on using GTM. The earlier works of Glaser (1992) allowed me to become familiar with grounded theory, while the later material by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008) allowed me to understand the different viewpoints and "complexities of grounded theory"(Meila, 1996, p. 275).

From a sociological perspective, a method like grounded theory is important as it allows researchers to discover and generate theory that is grounded in the everyday realities of abused women. Once theoretical saturation was reached I stopped collecting data (interviewing) as new information was not arising. According to GTM, theoretical saturation occurs when no new changes or themes are produced in the data analysis and the developed theory is confirmed (Glaser, 1992, p. 18). In other words, theoretical saturation occurs when new information being collected does not tend to change the existing data.

GTM suggests that theories should develop directly from the collected data "without the use of the literature" in guiding analysis and interpretation (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p. 29; Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 222). This method allows new or unanticipated ideas and theories to emerge. As some authors argue (Charmaz, 2006; 2007; Gibson and Brown, 2009; Glaser, 1992; Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008), grounded theory is more focused on theory building rather than testing or confirming existing ones.

In this thesis I considered both the strengths and weaknesses of GTM. GTM is appealing since it allows the researcher to become well immersed in the data in the early stages of analysis. As previously mentioned, it also allows researchers to "develop their own theories rather than merely fine-tuning existing ones" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, p. 17). This is fundamental because the goal of grounded theory is not to have an established theoretical lens where data is being forced to fit. For example, Glaser (1992) states that the goal of GTM is to generate theories whereas Strauss and Corbin (1990) tend to stress the importance

of verifying or validating existing ones. Instead of simply applying existing theoretical frameworks to understand the data, I focused on adding new insights to existing theories. This does not imply that existing theories are not important. In fact they are necessary to guide the research process. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, "you are not limiting yourself to testing only those relationships that are already suggested in the literature but instead are building on them to suggest your own theory" (p. 236).

One particular disadvantage of GTM is that it is a time consuming process where researchers can become overwhelmed with labour intensive coding. Another limitation is that "it requires an enormous amount of coding, much of which you will never use" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 222), but it assists to inform how you use the rest of the data. Another weakness is that codes are expected to emerge from the data without any use of existing literature (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a; Gibson and Brown, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008). The relevant literature review is conducted after data is analyzed independently.

GTM was slightly adapted for this particular study as theories were not always new since some come from existing literature in the area. At times I felt that I was coding with preconceived themes in mind, based on literature I was reading in the area of domestic violence or things I was hearing from service providers. It became challenging to put aside the literature and developments in Edmonton that were occurring around domestic violence in the South Asian community until after the data analysis. Bailey (2007) notes that insights do not

arise strictly from data; rather qualitative researchers must guide this process rather than waiting for their data to come into sight. It was difficult and sometimes impossible to conduct the research without preconceived notions. As a researcher I was most likely constructing themes based on what I was interpreting in the transcripts, but also from perspectives I was reading and hearing outside of analyzing the data. As a result, I did not use grounded theory in its purest form; however, every effort was made to ensure that I did not impose concepts on the data I was working with.

This was primarily done by refraining from extensively engaging with existing literature in the early stages of my work. Scholars have (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992) stressed how researchers should not generate concepts ahead of time.[15] This is important to consider because sometimes there is a lot of substantive literature relevant to the research topic and this might limit coding with preconceived themes in mind. Preconceived notions from the literature might compel the researcher to find those exact concepts in their own data. Other times there may not be a lot of research in the area, which allows opportunity for new "directions and leads for future research" (Glaser, 1992, p. 32). Given the limited number of studies in this area, it was important for the ideas to emerge from this study. I regarded my participants as most knowledgeable about this topic. Thus, literature was reviewed according to the

[15] However, this is one area in which Strauss and Corbin (2008) differ from Glaser's (1992) viewpoint. Strauss and Corbin (2008) state that it is appropriate for a researcher to consult literature beforehand to form a research question. Similarly, I argue that the research proposal, ethics application and interview guide I prepared before data collection required me to consult existing literature to contextualize the study. Furthermore, the workshops and conferences I attended also influenced my perceptions about abuse among South Asian immigrant women.

principles of grounded theory subsequent to data analysis (Gibson and Brown, 2009; Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 2008). This was beneficial in the sense that it allowed me to narrow down the appropriate literature I should focus on when relating my findings to existing studies. This also allowed me to discover relevant subject areas in the data that could be related to existing literature. Each of the strengths and weaknesses of GTM were given careful consideration before applying the principal guidelines of the method to this study.

GTM and the steps involved in the research design seemed most appropriate for this study as this method allowed me to discover the meanings in these women's narratives. "Qualitative methods can be used to uncover the nature of people's actions and experiences and perspectives which are as yet little known in the world of research products" (Glaser, 1992, p. 12). GTM did allow me to reach a new conceptualization of a phenomenon that has not really been looked at from South Asian immigrant women's perspectives. I was able to focus on understanding the women's experiences without formulating assumptions or hypotheses in advance. Furthermore, qualitative interviews gave me the opportunity to ask these women to describe their abuse experiences, and also identify how they accessed services. I relied on in-depth qualitative interviews to facilitate exploration of an area that is sensitive in nature and also to capture participants' experiences, which is difficult to do with quantitative research. In addition, this particular approach opens doors for a community needs assessment response. There is a need to understand community attitudes towards violence and

act in response to the women's voices by evaluating existing services and providing insights to professionals working in the field.

Recruitment Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Approval from the University of Alberta Ethics Review Board to conduct this study was received in November 2010. However, prior to the first submission of the ethics application in the spring of 2010, I began to explore what resources and services were already in place in Edmonton, Alberta. Part of this process involved collecting existing materials around domestic violence and familiarizing myself with where resources are and are not placed, for example, organizations, libraries, police stations and hospitals. This was immensely valuable because it assisted me with the interview questions and allowed better understanding of the women's experiences with the resources or services. I then began to network in the field in order to determine whether organizations expressed an interest in the project. Several organizations articulated a strong interest in the research and were willing to provide support along the way with recruiting women to the best of their ability.

As the issue of domestic violence is quite sensitive in the South Asian community, I decided that it would be more effective for me to recruit participants through organizations and word-of-mouth referrals rather than advertising with flyers, posters and ads in newspapers. As an initial point of contact, a cover letter (see Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the study and research questions was e-

mailed to approximately 30 organizations.[16] This letter was sent to mainstream and South Asian women's organizations (SAWOs) offering support to victims of domestic violence in Edmonton. These organizations provide a wide range of programs and services for immigrants from settlement assistance, language and educational counselling, employment assistance and outreach support for abused women. Follow-up telephone conversations and in-person meetings were arranged with the few organizations that requested more details about the study, and this helped build rapport. I extended an effort to meet as many of the contacts working in mainstream and SAWOs to provide them with information regarding this study, but also to answer any ethical questions around confidentiality. Additionally, I supplied these service providers with the consent form (see Appendix C), the interview guide (see Appendix D) and my contact information. My hope was that by networking with a number of sources I was not limiting my study to a few organizations, but rather reaching out to various sources which would help increase the number of potential respondents for the study.

At first this approach seemed promising; unfortunately, over time it became challenging to network. A few of the organizations were difficult to connect with as they failed to respond to my e-mails and telephone requests. I was constantly negotiating times to meet and repeating the purpose of my project to different staff members at the same organization, often the same person I had spoken to earlier. Nevertheless, some organizations were more supportive than

[16] Letters were slightly tailored to highlight the goals of each organization and to demonstrate that I was aware of their involvement in supporting abused women. In some cases follow-up letters were sent to those organizations that stated they never received my request.

others, were ethically responsible and took the initiative to connect me with their clients.[17] Perhaps some organizations hesitated to provide me with access to their clients because they were too busy to be involved in this study. It also became common for me to hear from service providers that "these women are scared to talk about abuse and will not meet you, but I will try." Other times I found outreach workers behaving unethically by violating confidentiality issues. For example, before asking the client to participate they would be exposing the woman's story to me to some extent and disclose her home address before interview arrangements were made. In these particular cases I felt confidentiality was breached and I never followed-up with the organization to interview the clients. As a researcher, I questioned the code of ethics used by some outreach workers at these organizations, especially after thoroughly completing an ethics application for this study.[18]

Shelter executive directors were also approached, but felt that it would not be appropriate to ask women in crisis to participate, and I agreed. They recommended that the appropriate women would be those seeking out continuous

[17] In some cases the outreach worker had to explain the project to her supervisor first before assisting to ensure that she received approval in respect to the organizations protocols. Some conditions were to be followed, for example, presenting findings to the organization after the research is completed. I accepted this condition because I would like to share the findings so they can be put into practice as there is always a need to address existing gaps in the area of domestic violence and South Asian immigrant women's access to services.

[18] Prior to the interviews I was expected to submit my research plan before the research ethics board (REB) at the University of Alberta through the HERO (Human ethics research online) system. The ethics application I submitted seemed to pose more than minimal risk; thus it was approved after a full board review occurred after several revisions from May, 2010 to November, 2010. The review board also requested certain written materials, for example, recruitment materials, letter of initial contact, informed consent form, questionnaire guide and confidentiality agreements. I demonstrated how I would protect the interviewees and be able to meet the Tri-Council and University of Alberta ethics review board policies when involving human participants. However, even though I had gone through the formal ethical procedures, I was constantly dealing with ethical concerns/dilemmas.

support as they have had some distance from the immediate crisis. Other organizations were willing to assist with interpreting or discussing the issue in general from a service provider's perspective, but indicated that they did not want to help recruit women for the study. Their type of involvement was not to be questioned simply because as a researcher, I also began to understand how difficult it is for non-profit organizations to deal with research study requests, especially when they are overworked, understaffed, undergoing funding challenges and trying to deal with their clients' needs under such constraints.

Despite the challenges I encountered throughout, I still attempted to use a snowball sample[19] where women working at these organizations informed other professionals to refer their clients. At the same time I invited those women interviewed to refer others who may be interested in this study. Some of these organizations used listservs to forward my e-mail request (see Appendix B) to other professionals working to strengthen and increase the knowledge around domestic violence. Unfortunately, as mentioned previously this method of recruitment was difficult because some women were not ready to come forward with their story, and maintaining contact with professionals in the area was challenging. In the summer and fall of 2010 I attended several workshops and conferences specific to family violence/risk/suicide, Muslim families and domestic abuse, community connections, debriefing in stressful situations, and dealing with a distressed client, which allowed me to become familiar with safety planning services in the area and their intake procedures. Additionally this

[19] A snowball sample is often used when it is difficult to gain access to the participants; thus, this method relies on referrals from those with access to clients. Additionally, those who are already involved in the study are asked to mention the study to other suitable participants.

became a unique opportunity for me to continue to introduce myself and the project, but also to focus on how questions might be asked in the interviews in order to fully understand the participant's perspective. I was also always being invited to events these organizations had put together to create awareness around domestic violence. Despite the ongoing challenges of recruiting women I continued to network and actively attend these events.

A few supportive social workers and coordinators in the field invited me in the spring of 2011 to ongoing committee meetings that were taking place. One particular group "Ethnocultural Family Violence Committee" (EFVC) has been in existence for approximately nine years, and other new initiatives were beginning, such as a group "PARIVAAR" (meaning family: Peaceful Alliance Rejecting Injustice & Violence and Advocating Respect), responding to the needs of South Asian families. The first group EFVC provides education, consultation and advocacy to mainstream and immigrant-serving organizations concerning family violence to build/enhance their capacity to provide appropriate services to families in ethno-cultural communities. The second group is trying to focus on collaboration with service providers to impact the way South Asian families and the community respond to and think about family violence. Here I was asked to make a small presentation to both groups about my project by outlining voluntary participation and confidentiality procedures.[20] This was encouraging with sometimes 15 to 60 individuals (executive directors of organizations, social

[20] At these meetings, I explained how the consent form would be used to ensure the women's identities were kept confidential. I further outlined how participation was voluntary; thus, if the referred women did agree to be a part of the study, they could withdraw at any time before publication of materials resulting from the study.

workers, police officers, religious leaders, etc.) in attendance. This recruitment method worked to some extent as I distributed my contact information, but most importantly it gave me the opportunity as a researcher to establish rapport with those individuals who have been in this helping profession for many years.

This allowed me to become more comfortable as a researcher as I was now a member of both groups. This involvement allowed me as a researcher to contribute to these groups' ongoing discussions and to become actively involved in the community surrounding domestic violence in South Asian families. I believe my research will be a valuable tool that aims to improve existing strategies, practices and knowledge surrounding domestic violence in the South Asian community. At the same time being involved in these discussions allows me to share my expertise and resources, and also learn from other members about what social action, prevention and intervention strategies are currently in place for this community.

Referrals and Screening Process

Initial contact was primarily made to the target population through gatekeepers[21] from the organizations as this helped facilitate gaining entry in this field of work. All effort was made for a relationship of trust to be established beforehand with the gatekeepers so that they were able to tell potential

[21] Gatekeepers are individuals or members of an organization who have access to participants. "[N]ot all settings are open to everyone; some require that you gain permission before entering. The individuals who play a key role in granting or denying access are referred to in field research literature as gatekeepers" (Bailey, 2007, p. 66). I was grateful for the cooperation of the few gatekeepers who assisted in shaping who was coming my way and how they were feeling about the study. It is important to note that the advantage of involving a gatekeeper is gaining access to potential participants. However, a limitation is the control they might have in terms of forwarding certain clients who may have had a successful experience with the organization's services which might impact the research findings for this study.

participants of their own role in contacting them for this study. This step was taken so that the potential participant did not feel coerced to share or withhold information when deciding whether to participate. Thus, gatekeepers were asked to ensure that the women were not pressured, coerced or deceived in any way so that their participation was voluntary. I also requested that the gatekeepers use their own judgment when screening their clients to participate. For example, if they themselves were experiencing a difficult time establishing rapport/trust with the client then they should not be asking that client to participate. As well, risk assessment protocols were in place at many of the organizations. These involve working with the women and ensuring a danger assessment is completed before a file is taken on, a screening process which normally involves two or three phone calls or visits.[22]

The danger assessment tool is usually used to assess risk and to help the woman understand the situation she and her children (if any) may be in.[23] Thus, if the woman was still in the high risk abusive relationship or denial/blaming stage then she was not ready to be asked to participate. In order to manageably minimize risks and discomforts I worked closely with the gatekeepers to try to maximize the time since the participants had dealt with the abuse. The longer the time between her abuse experience and contact with service providers, the more likely that she would feel comfortable disclosing her story. The gatekeepers were

[22] The few organizations I consulted with for this study described how this process works.
[23] The danger assessment instrument was developed by Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell in 1986 and continues to be used by professionals in the field of domestic violence. This tool is comprised of two sections. In the first women are asked to identify the abuse history and frequency. In the second part risk factors are assessed for and documented to determine the level of danger. More information about the danger assessment tool can be found on the following website: http://www.dangerassessment.org

informed of the study earlier on; thus, they were able to slowly mention it to their clients, and this allowed the women time to decide whether they would like to participate.

Semi-structured, in-depth, open-ended, face-to-face interviews took place with South Asian immigrant women from Edmonton, Alberta. Participants were recruited from gatekeepers in mainstream and SAWOs, but also Edmonton Police Services (EPS) and word-of-mouth referrals. Referrals accounted for seven women, three from mainstream organizations, one from a SAWOs, and two from EPS. Another woman responded to a word-of-mouth recommendation. A few times a potential participant would be referred to me by two different sources, thus limiting the number of referrals I received.

Selection Criteria

The participants were selected based on a specific criteria requiring that each woman be over the age of 18, immigrated to Canada from either India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka and is a part of the South Asian community in Edmonton, and is a victim or survivor of domestic violence.[24] Once a potential participant agreed to be a part of the study, arrangements were made for an interview during the walk-in counselling clinic hours at the Support Network.[25] The women were also asked to identify which language they prefer to speak for the interview.[26]

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[24] A victim refers to someone who is still experiencing the abuse in a relationship, whereas a survivor has been able to escape.

[25] This is a walk-in counselling service provided by qualified and trained professionals in Edmonton, Alberta.

[26] Many different languages are spoken in India, in Pakistan and Sri Lanka alone. The official language of India is Hindi, in Pakistan it is Urdu and English, and in Sri Lanka both Sinhala and Tamil are mostly spoken. Other languages spoken in these regions are Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and many more. In India alone there are at least 18 different languages and each consists of many different dialects.

Arrangements were made for an interpreter who spoke the same language to be present for three of the seven interviews. The remaining four women preferred to speak in English.

I was able to meet with and make arrangements with an interpreter from a mainstream organization to assist with interviewing those women who did not speak English. However, I realized how difficult it might be to have a third party interpreter present.[27] Women may not be comfortable with this procedure and could refuse to participate if they are being expected to share their story with an interpreter and researcher they do not know. I did not end up using third party interpreters from this particular mainstream organization for these reasons. Thus, I asked those referring the potential participants to be present to help establish rapport and interpret throughout the interview. However, some critics might see this as an issue of bias. Having the gatekeepers act as interpreters may have impacted the women's responses to the interview questions asked about challenges with services and as a result might have infringed upon the data collected. For instance, the women might have felt that they had to provide appropriate responses in order to continue to receive the services.

Furthermore, the interpreters were not accredited or certified, but explained how the number of years of experience they have should be a strong indication of their qualifications to be involved in the study for linguistic interpretation. Confidentiality and agreement forms (see Appendix E and F) were signed with an executive director of a SAWO and outreach worker from a

[27] A follow-up letter was sent to acknowledge the strong response received from this organization to provide interpretation during the interviews.

mainstream agency who were willing to be present for interpreting the interviews they arranged with their clients.

Interpretation

A few (three) of the interviews were conducted in languages other than English with a bilingual interpreter. Some sections of the interviews that were conducted in Punjabi or Urdu were still transcribed in English, but some of the original sentences were also kept in the language the woman spoke. These few sections are indicated in the transcripts and are left in the original language to provide the context in which the word was used as it has more meaning without being fully translated into English.

I felt that even though I might consider myself fluent enough to speak these languages, I might not know the meaning of some words associated with domestic violence. Also depending on the context in which the word is being used, it could be translated into English as "[killing]," "hitting," "striking," "punching," or "slapping" (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000, as cited in Grewal 2007, p. 176). Furthermore, some of the words the women used might not have been translated so easily into English. For example, some English words like "abuse" or "domestic violence" cannot be translated in Punjabi, Hindi or Urdu easily, whereas other words in Punjabi, for instance, referring to certain religious events such as "Nagar Kirtan"[28] may not be easily translated. However, the meaning or significance behind these words may be explained to some extent in English. In other words, some may interpret or give details of "Nagar Kirtan" as a Sikh religious custom to involve the processional singing of holy hymns throughout the

[28] Nagar Kirtan is a Sikh religious parade celebrating the birth of the faith.

community in the form of a parade. The explanation of the event is provided, but the exact word cannot be easily translated in another language such as English. In spite of this, all of the seven interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in English as the data was collected and later coded for emerging themes. It was expected that the interviews in translation would take a bit longer and thus the research setting was given careful thought.

The Research Setting

The next step in the process was to make arrangements for a time and place to conduct the interview. The interviews lasted approximately two to three hours in a safe environment that was suitable and convenient for the women. I met with two women at the University of Alberta site, one woman was interviewed at the SAWO that referred her and the remaining four women were interviewed in their homes. Every effort was made to consider privacy and safety of the participant and myself as a researcher.

In two cases the outreach worker accompanied me to her client's home, and in one case the woman stressed the importance of doing the interview at her home as her husband worked near the University of Alberta site. Participants that did meet me outside of their homes were reimbursed for transportation costs to the University of Alberta site. For the few interviews that were conducted in the participant's home I made sure that I informed someone as to where the interview location was, whether I would be accompanied by an interpreter, the time of the interview and expected end time. A phone call was made prior to and after I was

out of the interview site.[29] Before and during the interview, the woman was allowed to reschedule or relocate the interview time and place if necessary. A few participants stressed the importance of having the interview conducted in their homes as they felt it was safer, but also convenient for them. Some of the interviews were rescheduled, and in one particular case it was conducted in two parts on separate days.

The Interviews

Prior to the interview, time was taken to inform the women of informed and voluntary consent, and the purpose of the study (see Appendix C). This step assisted in establishing rapport with participants, to provide a brief introduction about the researcher, goals of the study and procedures involved in the interview process. For those women who expressed difficulties with the English language, the consent form was verbally explained by the interpreter. Participants were asked to repeat what they believed the research project addressed to ensure they were well informed about written and verbal consent and were willing to partake in the study. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to not participate, to opt out of answering questions or to withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. It was explained to participants that it was the researcher's responsibility to take necessary steps to prevent a suicide or homicide, but also as obligated by the law (Child Youth, Family Enhancement Act) to report any suspicion or knowledge of child abuse to the authorities.

[29] The research protocols involved writing down the name(s) of the participant/interpreter I was scheduled to meet and the location for the interview. This information was then placed in a sealed envelope and left in a secure location known only to a trusted person involved. This person would only open the envelope if no contact was made after leaving the interview site around the expected time. After returning I would destroy the envelope to protect the participant's privacy.

Interviews were recorded as permission was granted by each of the participants. Participants were informed that interview recordings and transcriptions would be kept in a secure location and that original interview recordings would be destroyed after each interview was transcribed.[30] For the interviews that required interpretation in a language other than English the participant was made aware of the confidentiality agreement form (see Appendix E). Participants were notified of how the interpreters involved were provided documents prior to the interview (see Appendix E and F) that must be followed to keep the information strictly confidential to ensure anonymity. Once the role of the interpreters and conditions of confidentiality were explained, the participant was offered the opportunity to ask questions. Furthermore, participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect their involvement in the study and to prevent the general public from identifying them or their organizations, along with any additional identifying information. Permission to use excerpts from research interviews in written work or presentations was requested from each participant.

Interviews were conducted during December 2010 to April 2011. Prior to this, the interview guide (see Appendix D) was tested with two gatekeepers who were able to comment on the questions that would be asked by offering suggestions, and also providing their knowledge and expertise. Both gatekeepers felt the questionnaire was appropriate, but still took the effort to clarify their

[30] The tape recordings and printed data from this study were kept in separate locked cabinets so that the two (consent forms and data) could not be linked. Some of the data from this study was kept on my personal computer in a secure password accessible file. The program OneNote by Microsoft office was used for the transcribing/coding process, but with a login code and secure password key.

organizations' protocols around informed consent, asking questions and voicing any other concerns. Additionally, the word violence was downplayed throughout the interviews in order not to re-traumatize the women or provoke them emotionally.[31]

During the course of an interview I continuously monitored the participant's non-verbal language and behaviour for signs of distress. This step was taken because speaking about abuse might be difficult and emotionally painful for some of the participants. If the interviewee seemed distressed I reacted by offering to take a break. Thus, I did not try to counsel the women if any of them became emotionally upset during the interview; I was prepared to offer to end the interview if it seemed warranted to do so and refer the participant to the counselling service. Additionally, during the interviews I made sure that available counselling resources such as pamphlets for services/resources in Edmonton were present so that the participants could contact and access these if needed, as I was aware that they might experience some distress during or after the interviews. During the interviews, I followed Bailey's (2007) suggestion of keeping a list of a few resources (see Appendix G) in case I needed to refer the women participating in the study to services. Each of the organizations listed on this resource sheet provided a range of services, and were legitimate and appropriate. I had taken the time to speak with the potential service provider to become aware of what they offered, but also to explain my study and the possibility of offering referrals. For example, the distress line is a great confidential information/referral line available

[31] However, due to the sensitive nature of this study I was aware of how the risk was greater than minimal and that the interviews could bring back memories for the participants or re-traumatize them, but at the same time I felt the interviews could be therapeutic for the women.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Furthermore, if a woman was unaware of services I would let her know of these resources to contact if she was ready for them or knew of others who may need them. This measure helped increase the level of trust and confidence the interviewees felt during the interview.

Building Rapport with Participants

I spent some time establishing rapport by responding to the women's queries about the research study and opening the interview with questions that allowed them to help guide the conversation. As a researcher my multiple statuses, particularly as a female of South Asian descent and affiliation with the South Asian community were valuable. I felt like an insider being able to maintain rapport with the women during the interviews. The ability to speak Punjabi and Hindi and comprehend Urdu helped build trust with the few women who did not speak English. Even though I am not capable of reading or writing in these languages I can understand and direct conversations with my speaking abilities.

Aside from my language skills I shared a similar cultural and sometimes religious background with the women interviewed. Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out how the level of trust tends to increase with those participants with whom the researcher shares a common background in terms of race/ethnicity and gender. My own cultural background seems to have influenced my relationship with the interviewees. I established different types of relationships with each of the women I interviewed. These relationships, in turn, influenced the kind of information that was shared with me during the interviews as some of the women felt I could relate

to their ethnic origins. I often understood the cultural practices the interviewees would refer to. Some of the women would ask me if I, for example, watched Bollywood movies and would make comparisons to their own lives based on what they viewed. Others would ask me my age and marital status usually after the interview which allowed them to connect with me, especially the younger women. Sometimes as Rubin and Rubin (2005) mention, "[r]esearchers almost always have characteristics that set them apart from those being studied" (p. 87). I was different from the participants in the sense that I have not been married. Some of the women would joke with me about marriage and warn me not to rush into the process, but to focus on my career. Although I was a South Asian woman interviewing South Asian women, socio-demographic characteristics such as my age, marital status, class, income and education at times were unrelated to the interviewees. As a second generation immigrant, I was an outsider, as I could not relate to the women's immigration experiences. However, as a woman of color, a feminist, and member of a community that silences domestic violence, I had entered into a whole new territory other researchers may not have.

Some of the women felt confident about sharing their story with me before the interview started. These women prepared for the interview by bringing in materials they produced to guide the conversation such as recommendations to improve services. They would start the conversation by sharing their stories in a chronological order, but also take the time to refer to changes they would like to see occur with the support system that is currently available. Others would point to and comment on the resources I made available during the interview, for

example, the brochure Edmonton Police Services (EPS) gives when responding to a domestic violence call. In fact one of the interviewees asked if she could keep this brochure. I allowed her to because I felt that she needed that to comfort her at times, but also to remind her of how she escaped the ongoing abuse she experienced. At times I did find myself responding to a participant who would be blaming herself and I would take this time to highlight her strengths. I would explain the importance of the narrative she provided with specific examples from the interview, and how that information was valuable to share with me to help others. I also reminded the women that they were strong and their coping strategies reflected their courage to move forward with their lives.

As a researcher I was well prepared to actively listen to their stories, and ensured that I began and ended the interview in a positive way which helped maintain trust with some of the women even after the interviews. Interviews with some of the women, however, frequently ended with questions regarding why I was interested in researching this topic. I explained how I felt I would not be viewed as a cultural stranger when researching this area. I thought being a young Sikh woman from Edmonton might possibly limit some of the barriers to communicate with these women.[32] I further explained how I wanted to be able to

[32] Although I self identify with the Sikh religion, I was well prepared to also interview the women from other faiths. Growing up in a family environment with strong religious ties in both Hinduism and Sikhism proved to be valuable when interviewing the women. Additionally, some scholars may also argue that Sikhism branches out of Hinduism so there are a number of similarities between the two religions and their cultural practices. For example, I respected the women by greeting them with a hello in their own language which involved placing both hands together to say *Sasrikal* (Punjabi) or *Namaste* (Hindi). As for the Muslim women the workshop I had attended on Muslim families and domestic abuse assisted greatly in informing my knowledge around Islamic religious beliefs and cultural practices. During this workshop the well known guest speaker Shahina Siddiqui from Winnipeg, Manitoba addressed how a Muslim woman's dress code can be seen as a physical barrier for her interaction with service providers or others she may be

provide more information to "our" community that has a large number of immigrant women suffering from domestic violence.

All of the women who participated spoke openly about their experiences because they believed I would use their stories to help others. I felt as if the women perceived me to be an honest person who would share their stories with the right people who could make a difference. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005),

> [l]istening intensely to details of someone else's life is an involving and nearly addictive experience. The excitement of discovery and the need to be continually alert to puzzles is thoroughly involving and becomes central to the researcher's identity. Further, over time, interviewees may become closer and be more real to researchers than their own families so that ending the project can be painful. When the research is done, there is not only a loss of intimacy, but also an end to the excitement of discovery. At the conclusion of the research, the temporariness of the conversational partnerships may make interviewees feel abandoned or even deceived, as when a close friend or intimate suddenly breaks off a relationship (p. 83)

As Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out, a research relationship can affect both the researcher and interviewee. I enjoyed listening to the stories the women shared and felt a part of their lives at times. For example, when the women would walk me through the abuse and help-seeking strategies I felt like commenting or

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speaking to. This workshop provided me with a better understanding of how the Quran (Holy book) has standards of personal modesty to be reflected by the various types of clothing worn. The workshop also focused on how some Muslim women who do not choose to obey the dress code still interact in similar ways; for example, they may prefer not to shake hands or like to have the office door open during meetings. This information was important to consider when conducting the interviews so that personal space was not violated. At the same time other information such as Muslims being able to marry their cousins, dowry being given by the husband to the woman etc, were necessary to know before interviewing the women because such cultural practices differ from other religions and are associated with abuse experiences. Marriage practices in the Sikh and Hindu religion were acknowledged; for example, the dowry exchange system still exists, but differs compared to what is traditionally seen in Muslim families. In Sikh and Hindu marriages dowry practices require the bride's family to pass on wealth to the groom's family. This difference was absolutely essential to note in order to understand and contextualize the abuse experiences around dowry rights.

suggesting ways out, but had to remind myself that they were really out and reflecting back on their experience.

I still felt connected to the women even after the interviews were completed as I found myself in a position where I was running into my participants in public spaces, for example, coffee shops and the Sikh temple (Gurdwara). Although it was expected to some extent that I would be encountering my participants after the interview, I did not sense that they would be running up to me and introducing me to others as a friend. Other times a woman would be calling me to share an update on her personal life with a challenge she experienced, asking for advice or resources, or telling me about her successes such as finding a job or receiving an award. I believe the women felt comfortable with me as a researcher because their level of trust increased throughout the interviews and after. Perhaps I was that one person who really listened to what they were experiencing even after escaping the abuse.

A few of the women cried when sharing their stories. At times I felt it challenging for me to hold back my own emotions during and after the interviews. I would then reflect back on the interviews while transcribing and coding which sometimes became painful; it was difficult to listen/read through the recordings and transcripts. I found myself taking many breaks throughout as I would stop to think "why is this research so important", "who will listen to these voices" and questioning myself "are these interviews good enough?" As Rubin and Rubin (2005) state, researchers might "be affected on a personal, political, or social level by what they are learning" (p. 32). I did find myself wanting to be more active

while other times I felt extremely good about what I was doing. I believed that these voices would help service providers in some way and tried to be cautious of how I handled the information that was presented to me. Journaling my own feelings allowed me to better understand the experiences I heard and limited the effects of secondary trauma. Sometimes after an interview I would go to the temple (Gurdwara) to pray for the women I had a privilege of speaking to. A few times I shared my thoughts with my supervisor and others who understood the need for this research study, but also my need for care during this process. Writing in a journal, meditating and having a strong support group allowed me to manage my own emotional reactions more easily. Questioning myself as a researcher along the way, listening to the women's stories and coding the transcripts allowed me to more freely appreciate what was being disclosed in the interviews.

Interview Questions

Once the women had the opportunity to open up and a level of comfort was established, I asked them the questions I prepared for the interviews (see Appendix D). The semi-structured interviews were all informal, but guided by a number of broad research questions to profile the participant's sociodemographic characteristics such as age, marital status, number of children, immigration status, education, employment, their income, abuse history and help seeking-strategies. The questions mainly focused on how the abuse was experienced, whether it was reported and the women's perspectives on accessing services. I grouped the questions into categories: background information/introductory questions, living

situation, abuse, seeking help, reaching out to others in similar situations, and suggested changes to the currently available services/resources. I wanted to be able to explore each woman's experience and in doing so I kept in mind that every participant is unique in her own way. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasize, "in qualitative interviews each conversation is unique, as researchers match their questions to what each interviewee knows and is willing to share" (p. 4).

Thus, the flow of the interviews determined which questions would be asked when, rather than asking in a specific order (Bailey, 2007). Sometimes questions were slightly adjusted or thought of on the spot to carry on the conversation and link topics rather than simply asking questions based on the interview guide. Thus, qualitative interviews require the researcher to guide questions which often take a conversational approach to allow for in-depth exploration of a particular topic (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This process involves main questions to be asked to guide the conversation with a few probes and follow-ups that allow for clarity, depth and detail. I used the main questions under each category to allow the conversation to take its course, but a few probes and follow-ups were used to expand on ideas or particular incidents (see Appendix D). There were also a few instances where I would rephrase the question for clarification and to gain a response. Sometimes a response allowed me to decide what questions to further pursue or not ask (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). In some interviews where an interpreter was present the participant would ask for an explanation of the question; thus, I often found myself discussing questions with the interpreter. These particular interviews allowed me to easily establish a

relationship with the participant as the service provider/interpreter accompanied me, but also to expand on the questions.

Transcription

Following the completion of the first few interviews I transcribed and coded immediately after so I could fill in missing material, physical gestures and other things I remembered. This also allowed me to exercise Rubin and Rubin's (2005) idea of breaking in between interviews to evaluate or overlook research questions and focus on central themes that applied to the core research questions. The first two narratives were coded before moving on with the remaining five interviews. During this time I was able to "[c]losely examine the transcript to see how the interviewee responded to the overall topic" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 126). The questions seemed appropriate and were allowing me to gather the information I was hoping for. The interviews where an interpreter was present took a bit longer to transcribe and code, although that was expected. I made every effort to include interruptions that occurred in the interviews and other details such as physical gestures that might further influence the reading of the interview. This approach of transcribing along the way made certain that I did not have the transcriptions piling up all at once.

Coding and Data Analysis of Interviews

Glaser (1992) states that "[q]ualitative analysis means any kind of analysis that produces findings or concepts and hypotheses, as in grounded theory, that are not arrived at by statistical methods" (p. 11). Qualitative methods and techniques mainly in grounded theory guided the data collection and analysis which was not

a separate stage, but ongoing. This process involved two parts that allowed the researcher to move from raw data to evidence. The first includes preparing transcripts as outlined above, and the second entails coding the interviews to expand on "concepts, themes, and events" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 201). The first stage of the analysis process was primarily driven by the field notes and memos that allowed me to read the transcriptions. Bailey (2007) defines the coding process as a way of organizing and reducing tremendous amounts of raw data into smaller pieces. During this second stage the interviews were compared and contrasted through a process also known as the constant comparative method in order to build theoretical findings (Gibson and Brown, 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This process is best explained by Bailey (2007) in the following passage,

> Once you have coded and recoded the first case, you proceed to the second case. As much as possible, code this case as if it were the first one. Once you have coded it, following the procedures for the first case, compare it with the first case. Note similarities and differences between the two cases. Revise and add codes as a result of the comparison. Comparing the two cases usually requires focused recoding of each. At this point, proceed to the third case, code it, and compare it with the first two. Follow this same procedure with each subsequent case (p. 155).

This type of an analysis involved focusing on single interviews and looking across the other interviews to bring together concepts that were either similar or different.

Thus, data is collected, coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method. This is a key element of GTM (Glaser, 1992). This step was valuable as it did not require me to ask participants to confirm my interpretation of the data. Instead, the constant comparative analysis allowed me to use the other cases from within the data to determine the quality of the research findings.

GTM is a complex process in which Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe three coding stages: open, axial and selective. Initial, or in other words open, coding is when transcripts are read line-by-line to identify key concepts, themes or events that are connected to the research problem. In my study, codes were assigned to initial key concepts, themes or events (Glaser, 1992; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Sociodemographic information for each participant, which included her age, marital status, marriage details, socio-economic status (education, occupation and income), ethnicity, religious affiliation and immigration status, was documented during open coding. Data was also, as mentioned above, compared and contrasted for similarities, but also differences. Similar incidents, for instance, were grouped together to form a category.

The second stage of GTM, also termed axial coding requires more focused coding (Glaser, 1992). It is during this process that a coding structure is developed to combine or group categories, particularly larger ones, into simpler ones with subthemes (Bailey, 2007). The final stage, selective coding, is completed when understandings of the categories are made at a higher conceptual level (Bailey, 2007). Selective coding integrates several previous codes to speak to a higher level concept.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue, that "[g]rounded theorists code each passage of every interview as they go along rather than develop a separate list of concepts and themes that are then applied to the interviews" (p. 222). Thus, each interview was manually coded which required reading and rereading all the transcripts so a code could be placed in the margins of the text where a particular

concept, theme or event appeared. I did not use a coding software package such as NVivo, since I wanted to be able to immerse myself in the data for ongoing analysis, and software can limit this task as it requires a lot of time, especially with the number of interviews conducted for this project. Bryant and Charmaz (2007a) likewise mention how Glaser (1992) was opposed to the use of software essentially because he found "it [was] undermining [the] researcher's creativity" (p. 24) and was a time consuming process. Sometimes software is accidently used to quantify how many times a concept or theme comes into sight rather than focusing on drawing associations (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). I was, however, able to identify recurring themes with the aid of a software program OneNote by Microsoft office for organizing qualitative data analysis. Each interview was transcribed in this program so that I was able to search for certain passages when I needed to relocate them. Thus, this particular software was used for organizing the data rather than analyzing it, and codes were kept in an electronic file as well. This was done in case it was necessary to locate a code, passage or entire interview in the original context rather than flipping through pages of data.

A coding sheet which is an outline was created after the first few transcripts were read through to organize the codes and separate themes. This coding sheet changed slightly as I ended up recoding or reorganizing codes. It was used for each interview to record the page number of the codes to be able to immediately locate excerpts later on. The transcripts were not color-coded; instead, key passages were highlighted as they might serve as useful excerpts to include in this thesis. While reviewing the transcripts I kept in mind that not all

the data needed to be coded, as only those items that allowed me to understand the research question should be considered important to code (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Furthermore, several transcriptions shared similar codes that became repetitive, while others had themes that were unrelated to the existing cases. In such cases new codes were created alongside existing ones to recognize the uniqueness of these important themes or concepts emerging from the data. Other times one passage in a transcript received multiple codes.

Field Notes and Memos

In addition to the coding procedures outlined above, grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008) suggest keeping field notes and memos to assist with data analysis. Field notes were also anonymous, but taken prior to, during and subsequent to each interview. Notes were kept on detailed telephone conversations or meetings with gatekeepers and participants. During the interviews I would jot down parts of the interview where the participant was crying or when a break was taken. Other times notes were taken on key ideas that allowed me to think of other possible questions to ask the interviewee. Note taking during the interviews was messy, but allowed me to keep track of important things that were said that later allowed me to think of pseudonyms for the interviewees. These notes were about initial contact with the participant, the interview itself, my impressions and thoughts regarding what was disclosed and any other observations in the research setting. After each transcription I went back to my field notes to include a summary of each interview. I valued these summaries because they assisted in directing a thorough

analysis across the interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The field notes were supplementary to the interviews, but allowed me to capture my position as a researcher by reflecting on my thoughts and experiences with those in the field. Immediately after each interview, I would review my notes and expand on ideas across the interviews by reflecting on what was revealed by the participant.

I also kept follow-up notes when the interviewees sometimes contacted me at a later date to share updates about their lives. This allowed me to keep following up with the participant's story, but also to gather more detail where it was needed. Connecting with the participants at a later date after transcribing the interviews allowed me to capture missing pieces of the puzzle, for example, when she separated from her spouse. On occasion my interviewees would use second discussions to enquire about the Canadian legal system. One such example was where a participant asked questions about legal students, who may wish to work voluntarily on her case, as in her opinion her Legal Aid counsel was not doing enough. Other women interviewed would question me about possible job opportunities for them as they were struggling for employment. These discussions at a later date pointed towards ongoing challenges they were still experiencing even after I had interviewed them. These conversations were all noted and I informed the few women that did contact me that I would be using the later details provided by them in the study as I felt it was important.

Memos written usually after the interviews are normally longer in length and more detailed in comparison to field notes (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). "Memoing, like most of the procedures used during analysis, requires asking

questions posing hypotheses, and seeking answers grounding in the data. In addition, memos are data for subsequent analysis" (Bailey, 2007, p. 134). A memo is an idea or reflection that allows a researcher to theorize and comment about the coding process. Memos (notes) were kept in a journal separate from the data which reflected my personal thoughts questioning the quality of emerging information or raising questions about the transcriptions and codes I was using. At times these memos were used to assist with generating new codes or rethinking about existing codes that might be modified slightly.[33] These field notes and memos relate to some of the themes presented in the following chapters, but also guided the selection of pseudonyms for the participants.

Pseudonyms

All identifying information was removed when the interviews were transcribed. Pseudonyms chosen for the participants reflected key narratives provided to me and were also chosen with respect to their regional background and religious affiliations (see Table 3-1).[34] A brief explanation is provided as to how the names were selected for each of the women.

Asha disclosed to me how she had a *desire* for things to change in her life and was *hopeful* that her husband would take her back. Harjot was named g*od's light* primarily because she experienced spiritual abuse as her holy books were kept away from her. Zaara's husband demanded that she wear a Burqa[35] before immigrating to Canada. At the time of the interview although she was separated

[33] In this process the researcher uses memos to track these changes or thoughts surrounding coding (Strauss and Corbin, 2008).
[34] The meanings of the names were found on the internet using Google search engine.
[35] Burqa pronounced as Burka is a garment that some Muslim women wear in public to cover their bodies. It is usually supposed to be placed on top of the woman's loose body covering.

from her husband she continued to wear a Hijab[36] to protect her beauty from others; thus, her fictional name means *beautiful flower*. Jaseena on the other hand continuously throughout the interview pointed to her heart to indicate how she kept her abuse and advice from others inside here. She also stressed how she feels if women are nice and have a good heart then god looks out for them. Clearly she has a *nice heart* and god protected her from the abuse, and today she considers herself a survivor.

Emann shared with me during the interview how she continues to hold *belief* and *faith* in the Canadian justice and immigration system, as her husband and in-laws withdrew her sponsorship application for her parents after she escaped the abuse. Throughout the interview she revealed how her life in Canada would be easier if her parents were present to physically support her. Neha's abuse story was unique as she was separated from her children on many occasions. She shared with me how after being reunited with her son in Canada he told her how he hates her as a mother. Despite the harsh words of her son she continues to make every effort to show her *love* and affection for her children even though she is still escaping the *rainy* days. Lastly, Preet still expresses *love* towards her own children even though they contributed to her abuse experience by neglecting her. The fictional names I selected reveal a part of the participant's story. The demographic information collected further profiles the women who participated in the study.

[36] A Hijab (Arabic word) describes a head scarf worn by Muslim women to cover everything except the face.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

The sociodemographic information for these participants is presented in Table 3-1. All of the women self identified as being South Asian. Of the seven South Asian immigrant women interviewed, four were from India, three from Pakistan but unfortunately no one was recruited from Sri-Lanka.[37] The age of the participants ranged from 26 to 58 years, with a mean age of 36.6 years and a median age of 32 years. The first three participants interviewed (Asha, Harjot and Zaara) were in Canada for a short period of time, while the remaining four women (Jaseena, Emann, Neha and Preet) had been here for sometime ranging from 6 ½ to 19 years. Four of the seven women were permanent residents in Canada, while three—Jaseena, Emann and Neha—had attained Canadian citizenship after leaving the abusive relationship.

When asked about the type of marriage these women entered into, the majority (six) responded that it was arranged, with the exception of one (Jaseena) who said it was a love marriage. At the time of the interview the women were asked about their marital status and current living situation. The women were in various stages of separation except for Jaseena who was undergoing divorce procedures and Preet who was still married. Asha was living alone in Canada, Zaara was living in a woman's shelter and Preet had just moved back in with her husband. The other remaining women—Harjot, Jaseena, Emann and Neha—were currently living with their children.

[37] Recruitment efforts were made to obtain participants from the Sri Lankan community. Messages were left at several Sri Lanka associations to determine what services they offered and whether they could refer clients, but unfortunately no connection was made. The other organizations that I was working with did not have any Sri Lankan clients to refer to the study.

Additionally, participants were asked if they had any children from the marriage. All of the participants except Asha and Zaara had one or more children. Harjot and Jaseena both had one child, Emann had two children, and Neha had four, but her situation was unique in the sense that she had entered her second marriage with a child from her previous marriage. Lastly, Preet had three children, but one passed away a few years ago. Each of the women interviewed except one had experienced domestic violence in their marriage from either their spouse or extended family members. The one exception was Preet who reported that her violence was mainly from her children and daughter-in-laws, but authorities misunderstood it as being from her husband. As a result of this misunderstanding she was separated from her husband for several months and finally reunited with him a few months prior to the interview taking place.

When the participants were asked to identify their religious affiliations, one reported that she was Hindu, two were Sikh, and four were Muslim. Participants were also asked about their occupation, which varied from being a program assistant to working in the food industry, working in a daycare and doing office or janitorial work. However, two of the participants reported that they were unemployed, but for different reasons. Zaara had just regained entry into the country and was waiting to have her degree certificates recertified. At the same time she was awaiting other paperwork such as her social insurance number (SIN) card. Emann, on the other hand, had two children and was experiencing difficulty leaving them in childcare facilities.

In terms of educational attainment each of the women had received instruction to some extent. All of the women had attended higher level postsecondary education except two (Neha and Preet) who had only completed high school. One woman Emann pursued an undergraduate degree, but did not have the opportunity to complete it because she left it for marriage. Each of the participant's education was completed in her home country. Two of the women (Harjot and Emann) had made an effort to continue their education in Canada, but one (Emann) had to discontinue for personal reasons, and others were struggling to have their previous degree certificates recognized. Furthermore, participants were asked about their income per year if they felt comfortable disclosing this information. Each of the women reported an annual income under $40,000 and two of the previously mentioned women Zaara and Emann stated no income because they were on social assistance at the time of the interview. The above background information about the participants will assist in contextualizing the findings presented in the following chapter.

Table 3-1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Domestic Violence Participants

Pseudonym and Meaning	Country of Origin	Years in Canada	Status in Canada	Age	Marital Status	Type of Marriage	Children	Religion	Occupation Status	Education Status	Annual Income
Asha *Desire, Hope, Aspiration and Wish*	India	1 year and 4 months	Permanent Resident	32	Separated	Arranged	0	Hindu	Program Assistant	M.B.A	$38,000 – $40,000
Harjot *God's Light*	India	3 ½ years	Permanent Resident	28	Separated	Arranged	1	Sikh	Food Industry	B.SC	$15,600
Zaara *Beautiful Flower*	India	Less than 1 year	Permanent Resident	27	Separated	Arranged	0	Muslim	Unemployed	B.ED	$0
Jaseena *Nice Heart*	Pakistan	10 years	Canadian Citizen	44	Separated	Love	1	Muslim	Daycare Worker	B.ED	$32,000
Emann *Belief, Faith*	Pakistan	6 ½ years	Canadian Citizen	26	Separated	Arranged	2	Muslim	Unemployed	B.SC	$0
Neha *Love, Rain*	Pakistan	19 years	Canadian Citizen	41	Divorced	Arranged	4	Muslim	Office Work	High School	$22,000
Preet *Love*	India	11 years	Permanent Resident	58	Married	Arranged	3	Sikh	Janitorial Work	High School	$12,000

Chapter Four: Narratives of Abused South Asian Immigrant Women

"*We can spend hours talking about statistics, about theories, and about politics, but it is important for us to understand that beyond all the theories and statistics, there are actual faces and actual people. There are women who have suffered through the abuse and the violence*" – (Sujata Warrier, 2000, p. 96).

Surviving Abusive Situations

A brief overview of each participant's "*kahani*" (story) and immigration experience to Canada adds to the previous chapter where the sociodemographic characteristics were discussed. Selective experiences are shared throughout so as not to reveal the women's identity, but to recognize how each participant identified and described the abuse. The types of abuse to some extent influenced whether the South Asian immigrant women were capable of reporting to informal (family, friends and neighbours) and formal supports (accessing services in Canada). Thus it is important to understand how each woman struggled alone before eventually leaving the situation and branching out for assistance.

Asha (Desire, Hope, Aspiration and Wish)

Asha met her husband through a marriage bureau, had no intentions of marrying a "Non-resident Indian" (NRI) and settling abroad. Asha described her abuse experience as an immediate struggle that began the day after her marriage ceremony in India. She stated "[a]fter I got married is when this guy started retaliating, overreacting and misbehaving with me." Soon after, she observed her husband's insecurities and the in-laws behaviour towards her changing; however, she thought the situation would improve once her husband would sponsor her to come to Canada. "I thought when we start living together, out of my care and affection and love he might improve." There was a possibility of less interference

from her in-laws; however, that was not the case as her husband was still under their influence via regular telephone conversations. Asha explained how the most unpleasant part of the abuse for her was how her husband's family was equally involved. According to her "[t]hey were actually the people pumping him up all the time. So, I was like still hoping for the best and never told anything to my parents. That's what I regret now. I mean I should have honestly given them the feedback there and then" in India.

Regrettably, Asha had no family in Canada to support her and she experienced tremendous strain disclosing the abuse to her parents back in India. Her husband persistently repeated verbal threats to suggest if she ever told anyone back home that he would make it difficult for her parents to show their faces in public. He was vehemently disrespectful and not only did he verbally abuse her, on several occasions he also physically abused her (e.g. hitting/slapping her). Asha explained how "[h]e used to spill everything in the house, spill things on the floor, make a mess out of the house and then start yelling, shouting and make a fuss about everything." Her husband's expectations were that she would clean up the mess. She endured the violence silently; however, that made little difference in that she experienced similar situations daily.

It was difficult for her not to compare her husband to her own father figure, but in doing so she went through a realization process which allowed her to recognize that her husband's behaviour was unacceptable. Her own father treated her like a "princess," something Asha wished her husband would do. She described her father as a "soft hearted person" who is "affectionate" and "caring,"

the complete opposite of her spouse. Asha went on to tell me how she "never needed a prince charming who is truly a very rich man. I never dreamt of such a person; I needed an average person basically." Instead the man she married financially abused her family over complaints of inadequate amounts of dowry which was provided. He later coerced her into signing some fraudulent documents regarding a property purchased in India for which her parents provided funds.

Asha's husband also subjected her to emotional abuse (e.g. name calling) and used threats (e.g. to call the police or to deport her back to India) to instill fear in her. He controlled with whom she spoke or visited and refused to let her use the internet or phone to communicate with others. Along with this control, he isolated her from family, friends, and neighbours. Furthermore, financial control extended further where he kept her away from working, thus making it difficult for her to leave. In India Asha had a respectable paying job that he forced her to leave after the marriage; once she arrived in Canada he continued to prohibit her from working. Asha "knew this was not healthy; this is not the way it should be."

Asha eventually left her husband after his excessive drinking contributed to an incident in which he was out of control and began throwing their possessions. Asha picked up the phone to make a 9-1-1 call, but did not really think the police would come. The police did intervene, but she still remained hopeful that the marriage would still work. She reflected back on her experience by stating how she "[d]idn't even utter a single word" to the police because she feared how her marriage would fall apart. Asha also described how in the past she tried to save her marriage by requesting her in-laws to assist her; however, they

continued to blame her for the problems. She also tried to encourage her husband to seek professional help through marital counselling for his anger issues and to change his behaviour. In her own words: “I was never against him. I was against his behaviour. I was against the abuse, not him, and I was asking for the help. I was asking for the marital counselling for both of us because the behaviour was the issue.” When she suggested the idea of marriage counselling he refused and thought she was accusing him of being crazy or insane as he would say in hindi “tu mujshe pagal bol rai hai” [are you calling me crazy?].

Although Asha finally left the abusive relationship when she separated from her spouse three months after living with him in Canada, she still feels oppressed and is having a difficult time moving forward. Her husband is now accusing her of a fraudulent marriage of convenience in which he contends that she married him as a way of entry into Canada. Asha has provided documentation to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to clarify that this was not true and that he is using this as a tactic against her because she escaped the abuse. Asha feels hopeless and says, “I am the victim, I have gone through so much. I mean I can take anything, but not something which is not true” (participant shakes her head). She believes this is a way for him to justify his own behaviour and actions against her. Asha misses her family even though they call her daily, but feels that she has an opportunity in Canada to advance her career. Furthermore, she does not want to be a burden on her parents by returning home.

Harjot (God's Light)

Harjot entered Canada on a temporary work visa and a couple months later was introduced to her husband by a close family friend. Harjot felt all the signs of a not-so-perfect marriage were evident especially on the day of her wedding ceremony. Her parents were not present in Canada and could not attend simply because the groom's family hurried the wedding. For this reason only his immediate relatives along with several friends attended the wedding. For Harjot, this was an out of the ordinary experience to see only a small wedding entourage (20-30 people) and not to have a celebratory welcome to the family as is standard within Indian tradition. As she reflected back on her wedding day throughout the interview, she was questioning why it did not seem nor feel like a normal Sikh ceremony. Sikh weddings are usually enormously large and typically stretch out with many festivities prior to the big day and after. Harjot indicated that she immediately began to feel quite isolated and shocked by her new family's behaviour.

Harjot began living in a joint family system with her husband, in-laws and a sister-in law. She compared her Canadian living situation to her experience of growing up in a joint family in India and felt it was not the same. Harjot's abuse was primarily from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law whom she described as "controlling" women who made all the decisions in the household, demanding that she perform certain roles. She stated "once I got married, I didn't work because they didn't want me to go out of the house." The mother-in-law and sister-in-law did not work and Harjot was expected to stay confined at home with

them, except for the few Sundays when the whole family would go to the "*Gurdwara*" (temple) without her, which she defined as spiritual abuse. Harjot recalled experiences of abuse if her mother-in-law caught her reading the Sikh holy books. Her role in the home was to cook/clean throughout the day and she indicated that she often felt as if she was the family's maid or servant. The tasks ranged from doing the laundry, cooking to completing the yard work, such as raking the leaves twice a day or in the winter shovelling snow.

Harjot reported a confrontation that occurred a few months into her marriage after she became pregnant. She described how both her husband and in-laws refused to take her to the doctor. The mother-in-law was quite distraught at the fact that she even became pregnant. Harjot then noticed the controlling behaviour escalated during her pregnancy. For example, she was restricted access to food (economic abuse) because she was not working or paying for it. The husband's family made it clear that she could not use the computer or the phone at all or receive mail from the mailman. On the day Harjot was ready to deliver her baby, her sister-in-law insisted to the physician this was likely "false labour" pains. Harjot felt the emotional abuse experienced during her pregnancy caused her to deliver a pre-mature baby. For Harjot, the husband and family's behaviour did not change even after the birth of her child. The abuse went as far as the mother not being allowed to breast feed her own child and her mother-in-law suggesting to her that she did not trust her with the preparation of the baby's formula or food.

One day Harjot tried to access help when her mother-in-law physically attacked her for wanting to visit the family friend who had arranged her marriage. Harjot recalled the event and stated that she asked her mother-in-law for permission to go to Aunty's (endearing term used for close female friends) house as she had been personally invited. The mother-in-law started questioning her and suggested that there was too much to be completed around the home. Harjot indicated in her interview that she questioned this and eventually made her way out of the house with her child. As she was leaving her mother-in-law grabbed her and left scratches on her face. Harjot became very emotional, shed tears and made her way to a mainstream support service nearby; however, the director of the organization refused to speak to her because her child was present. The woman informed her of policies where only two people (Harjot and the director) could be present in the room for her to receive support from the organization. The director requested that Harjot come back for support and that she come alone. Harjot articulated her thoughts and expressed "I was thinking this is the only chance and I told the director that I don't know if I can come again."Along with the rejection of the director of the support service, Harjot had not realized that she was being followed by her mother-in-law/sister-in-law which made her situation worse. She never was able to return for the support.

Being so restricted and isolated with no relatives nearby made it difficult for her to report the abuse. When her parents would call from India, or when she made the once a month phone call, her mother-in-law would pick up the other receiver to listen to the conversation. The lack of privacy within the home made it

difficult for her to report the abuse to her own family. She found herself making excuses on occasion to call her parents in India; however, she would have to speak using discretion. Additionally, the family kept her personal documents (e.g. passport), but eventually agreed that she could return to India for a visit on the condition that she not take her child. Harjot was placed in a difficult position; however, she travelled to India alone. Upon her return to Canada her in-laws refused to let her in the house and her husband had filed for custody of their child. At this moment Harjot realized things were completely out of her control.

Additionally, Harjot felt that even though her father-in-law and husband "knew everything," they never really supported her because she believes "they were themselves scared." However, to some extent her father-in-law passively participated in the abuse by not actively preventing his children or wife from abusing his daughter-in-law. Her husband too participated as he was under the mother and sister's influence and would tell her "[t]hey are very hard to please, but you have to" try. Both women provided no privacy to the couple and this affected Harjot's ability to express herself in the marriage. As time went on it became impossible to disclose anything without the family interfering in their relationship. As a result of the meddling she never really got a chance to get to know her husband and believes that if they were living alone it would have been a "happy married life." Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law instead never categorically accepted her from day one as they kept telling her how they expected her husband to marry a "Canadian" or any "*gori*" [white girl]. Finally she escaped the abuse approximately a year after her marriage with the help of

Edmonton Police Services (EPS). Harjot plans to stay in Canada as she is now working and has returned to school; however, she is still fighting for full custody of her child.

Zaara (Beautiful Flower)

Zaara was engaged for two years before her "*shaadi*" (marriage) to a man she only met three times in person. A year after the engagement her husband immigrated to Canada. After her marriage in India she lived with her in-laws until her husband several years later sponsored her after having delayed the process. During this time her in-laws respected her and treated her well, but Zaara mentioned how she did not marry this man to live with his parents. Zaara was married for three years; however, after arriving in Canada she separated from her spouse a month later. She immediately noticed her husband's behaviour was different from the four months they spent together in India. He accused her of mistreating his family back home and threatened to punish her for this.

When asked what changes she noticed she went on to say the following: "Firstly, my husband when I arrived here, he never let me call back home to my family nor his." The few times her family would call he would make excuses or tell lies about her being at work so that she could not speak to them. Other times he would stand nearby to listen to the telephone conversation and warned her about disclosing the abuse. He convinced her no one would believe her story, but when he left the apartment he restricted her access to a telephone or the internet. He also forbade her to leave the apartment to go outside.

Aside from the isolation he was quite controlling, as she was expected to wash his clothes by hand although a washing machine was available. He would tell her, "I am going to come from work later tonight and all these clothes must be washed. [Also] you are not allowed to go outside to place them on the clothesline to dry. When I come from the office, I will place them outside on the clothesline." One day he accused her of not wringing the clothes out properly and thus he began to wash the garments on his own in their bathroom; in his anger at her he threw the garments into the toilet. This was one of many incidents where she described his behaviour as being out of the ordinary.

Zaara acquiesced to his everyday demands of cooking and cleaning. However, he was never satisfied with the way she would do things and sometimes put her down emotionally for not making a dish of food taste as good as his mother's. A few times he physically hit her for this and she recalls in Urdu how he did so: "'mujshe ek lappar mari' [he slapped/hit me once] and locked me in the second room that night. He began to shout, get angry and pushed me in there."

Although he constantly threatened to send her away, she never really thought he would because of how cheap he would act by telling her how his expenses increased once she arrived to Canada. He did try to purchase a plane ticket to send her back during "*diwali*" [a festival of lights]. He then claimed it was too expensive, but still encouraged her to pack her belongings. Then the day he arrived home with her one way plane ticket, she was severely beaten for saying that she would not go. At the same time, he said, "if you don't go I am going to give you "*talaq*" [divorce] right here, right now." Zaara had no choice, but to go

since her husband never let her work; instead, she was financially dependent on him. He tortured her daily and did not let her leave the apartment; thus, she was not aware of existing services or where to go for help.

One day Zaara approached a Pakistani woman who lived in the same apartment building. Zaara expressed desire to make a phone call home to explain how her husband might send her back, but the woman did not allow her to. Instead she said "he is just threatening you." She also suggested, "[t]ry and win him over with love, right now I won't let you call India, but tomorrow I will let you." She confided in this woman and told her "please do not ever tell my husband [I spoke with you] or else my "*zindagiî*" [life] will be ruined." The woman responded by telling her to have trust and faith in *"Allah"* [God], but also to recognize that she was a Muslim person promising to never tell anyone. "She even said to live without fear because until you get your PR card your husband cannot send you back under any condition." Thus, Zaara felt reassured and believed she could not travel without having her permanent residence (PR) card, but this was not the situation.

Additionally, having no family or support network in Canada made her situation worse and her husband had already made arrangements for her to leave the next day. When he dropped her off at the airport he took away the Indian currency she had by telling her how foreigners will look at her for having it and have her arrested. He sent her without any money and gave her strict instructions to follow such as where to get off when the plane lands, but also not to talk to strangers.

Although her short stay in Canada was a horrifying experience, she did hope that things would change for the better after returning to India. She thought her in-laws would listen to the "unacceptable things [that were] happening" in the marriage, but suddenly she realized things were not even normal in their behaviour towards her. Her in-laws sided with their son's behaviour by recommending to her how she should follow his orders. The whole family became very difficult to deal with and took away her personal documents. For example, her passport, landing papers, social insurance card (SIN card) and degree certificates were taken from her purse. Eventually she retrieved all these required documents with the help of elders in the village.[38] Zaara then made her way back into Canada without one important document—the landing paper, which her husband's family kept. The immigration officers at the airport asked for a justification as to why she did not have this document. Zaara had to eventually explain her complex situation.

Zaara had great difficulty explaining herself not only to her in-laws, but also her own family, especially her maternal Uncle, who could not understand how an "educated woman" like herself did not try to speak to "immigration or the police." Her family was somewhat aware of the problems she encountered in Canada, but had a hard time believing her and always encouraged her to stay in the relationship. Zaara believed that no one would understand her because her husband once told her so. She tried to provide an explanation for everything that

[38] In the South Asian community a self governing village system called *"Panchayats"* exists in villages where five (*panch*) well respected elders are chosen or selected to resolve disputes and determine punishments.

had occurred throughout her married life and eventually her family started to show support.

After arriving back in Canada, with the help of Edmonton Police Services (EPS) Zaara recovered her personal possessions from her husband's residence and went to stay at a women's shelter (WIN House 3). Today Zaara is making an effort to learn the Canadian culture, has a desire to become independent (for instance, she is learning to take public transportation), and is strengthening her ability to speak English. She has no intentions of leaving this country again and believes Canadian society is more accepting of her situation.

Jaseena (Nice Heart)

Jaseena fell in love with her cousin in Pakistan and was married to him for twenty years, but struggled through abuse for at least eighteen of their twenty years together. The couple and their child moved to a small island a few years after being married. They stayed there until deciding two years later to immigrate to Canada on a work permit. Jaseena noted that her problems really started once the couple left Pakistan; there were constant arguments and Jaseena felt that her marriage was in trouble.

Once they arrived in Canada, the relationship got worse, and she indicated, "Then still my husband [was] abusing me, hitting me, [and] verbally abusing [me]." He would threaten to send her to Pakistan and isolate her, for example, not allowing her to work outside of the home even though she did have a job back home. He also did not allow her to go back to school to further her education. Instead she was expected to do household chores which involved cleaning and

cooking. Her husband limited her access to funds and would provide her only $10-15 dollars cash. Thus, she was financially dependent on him as she did not have a bank account or even know how to go to the bank or seek employment. She described how isolated she was before finally getting a job. She spoke broken English and walked to places, as she did not know how to commute with public transportation or drive a car. Once Jaseena managed to get a job near her house, her husband refused to drive her there, so she would walk everywhere, even during the cold winter days. This is when Jaseena came to the realization that her husband was trying to control her.

Jaseena explained how she was forced to try alcoholic beverages, but she refused based on religious beliefs and principles. She said, "I don't want to because we are Muslim. He started forcing me, and I said no. You drink, this is your problem don't force me, I [will] not. My God says no, and no is no. I listen to my God before you." Then sometimes he would say to her "why are you living with me?! I abuse you, I hit you and you are still here, someday just leave. [She] said to him because of my [child] I won't." He would always complain about her cooking and question why he was still living with her since he knew how to complete his own household chores and do his own laundry. However, even after recognizing the verbal and physical signs of an unhappy marriage she never wanted to leave her husband, mainly due to their one child. Jaseena says, "I wanted to save my marriage because of my [child] and also we are married within the family. So I don't want to talk to my family and expose everything." Jaseena never disclosed anything to her parents; instead, her husband ended up doing so

during one of his episodes. Eventually her family did find out about the abuse, but were supportive. She chooses not to share a lot of what is happening with her family because being in Pakistan she feels they would not understand the Canadian culture and society she is living in. As she stated "it is much better we hide those things" since they do not understand and "cannot come here to help."

Jaseena described a time her husband physically hit her a few days before forcing her to go to Pakistan. Then she explained another occasion in which he hit her on the nose and she was bleeding. The scar led one of her friends to inquire as to what happened—Jaseena concealed it by indicating that she slipped and hit the coffee table. She feared telling anyone, even the couple's friends, because of her husband's work-related status. Jaseena was scared of the physical beatings, but was even more worried after a particular incident when he pressured her to sign over the house the couple purchased together. At the same time, he also began to intimidate family members in Pakistan. She "wanted to go out [of the house], but he closed every door and he hit [her] against the wall. He picked up the phone and talked to [her] family. He said I am going to put her on the streets and she is going to be begging." As a result of the physical abuse, Jaseena had to see a doctor for her injuries because she was in a great deal of pain. She was left with bruises on her face and the doctor advised that the abuse needed to be reported to the authorities. However, Jaseena never informed the police despite the physical beatings. Instead, Jaseena decided that she would give him another chance. If his behaviour did not improve then she would go to the police.

Jaseena instead gained support from the couple's friends as her husband disclosed the abuse to them, and in turn they later approached her and directed her to a mainstream organization. One day she managed to take public transportation for the first time to the organization and received some advice. After speaking to the South Asian worker at the organization she became aware of her options. Jaseena explained how she kept it all in her heart as it helped her understand what to do next in her situation. Jaseena's two close friends helped her a lot, but when asked if her in-laws were supportive she responded, "No they did not support. They are really bad! So God [will] never forgive them because they ruin[ed] my life; they are a part of the abuse." Even though her husband's family was in Pakistan, she felt they still contributed to the abuse and blamed her for not treating him well.

Unfortunately, Jaseena's father-in-law passed away before her marriage, but she described her mother-in-law as "not a nice person as she never accept[ed] me as a daughter-in-law." Jaseena explained how marriages take place in Islam with a "*nikah*" where certain conditions are fulfilled before the man and woman are pronounced husband and wife. For example, in her case she gave consent for the marriage through someone and then received a dowry. Her husband's family provided her with money and gold jewellery, all of which they took back later. Jaseena explained how this happened in her own words: "One day he hit me because his mom was talking; she said she sold my jewellery. I said why did you sell my jewellery? I had kept it back home there for security and you sell. She said I don't have money so I sell it. I was really upset." Her mother-in-law not only

mistreated her, but also supported her son's behaviour. Jaseena's sister-in-law also acted in a jealous manner towards her being able to move to Canada. Jaseena believes the family never wanted to see her live a happy married life.

The couple separated two years ago when Jaseena's husband decided to leave on his own, but he still continued to abuse her. She recently filed for a divorce and is waiting for the final paperwork to be completed. Jaseena feels that her future is much brighter, especially since she won a long legal battle with her husband. Jaseena is independent, still employed and plans to start her own business someday. She has no plans to return to Pakistan and is happy that she can still live with her child in the same house. Jaseena continues to receive a lot of emotional support from her family back home and from close friends in Canada. Furthermore, Jaseena enjoys her work and feels that the legal experience she went through helped improve her English, which makes it easier today for her to navigate in Canadian society.

Emann (Belief, Faith)

Emann was nineteen years old when she married a man she is distantly related to. The couple met for the first time at a family wedding. Her husband proposed to her when Emann was fourteen years old, but at the time her mother felt she was too young to be engaged and did not agree with the marriage as her daughter was still in school. Emann did not finish her post secondary degree and decided instead to get married. Emann reported that the day of her wedding in Pakistan is when she first noticed her husband's controlling behaviour and anger issues. After their marriage, Emann's husband decided to immigrate and sponsor

her to come to Canada. All promises that her husband had made to her while in their native country were broken when the couple arrived in Canada. Emann was forbidden by her husband to gain employment or even return to school.

Emann's husband would physically assault her and she recalled how he once poured bleach over her long hair because of comments his drunken "Indian friends" would make about her physical appearance. She described him as having no morals as he had many addictions, including drugs, alcohol, and extra marital affairs. He would fight with her about his desire to keep other women in the house and then begin to hit her for not agreeing with his inappropriate behaviour. Emann was not only verbally and physically abused by her spouse, but also by her in-laws (including her sister-in-law) whom she lived with.

Her husband's family supported his actions and started to financially control and socially isolate her. She was expected to work at the family business and was never paid for the 8-10 hour long shifts. Instead her husband and father-in-law provided false information to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) indicating that her income was approximately forty or fifty thousand dollars a year. At the same time she was pressured by her in-laws to request that her father come to Canada and bring funds to help extend their family business. Emann did request on occasion for money from her father-in-law; however, he responded by saying things like "I am feeding you, I am buying you this, your kids are getting milk and stuff like that." The pressure on Emann did not end after her work in the family business. She was to work in the business and then return home to cook elaborate meals for the entire family. The family limited her access to funds and contact

with friends and family, as she was told "just go to work and come home to cook food." Her mother-in-law or sister-in-law would accompany her the few times she went grocery shopping, met friends or travelled to Pakistan to visit her family.

Emann's in-laws verbally abused her and placed pressure on her to have a grandson, or to have an abortion. She explained how when she got pregnant the first time, she refused to abort the child because of her strong religious beliefs to keep a child alive. Years later her in-laws still demanded a grandson and would attempt to scare her about never being able to become pregnant again due to her health complications. Emann felt her in-laws "are very dominating people; they don't respect girls. Boys are everything for them." Other times the in-laws threatened to deport her and would not give her personal documents (IDs and permanent resident card) or allow her to apply for Canadian Citizenship.

At first Emann was "really shocked, but I thought maybe that's how things work here and I am going to understand" the system. Emann did not tell her parents about the abuse because she initially normalized the behaviour of her husband and in-laws. Then she began to understand how the family dynamics were not usual when she compared it to her own upbringing. She described how her family life in Pakistan was different, especially since her father was "broad minded" and would allow her to "go out there and have total freedom." Emann called her parents once and kept crying on the phone and they did attempt to enquire what was wrong, but the call got disconnected. Unfortunately, the few times she did speak to them she had to remain silent about the abuse, especially since her mother-in-law would stand by to monitor her conversations. Then there

was another instance Emann considered telling her parents, but her close friend stopped her. “She said if you are going to tell to your mom, what is she going to do? So don’t get your mom involved because she has heart problems too.” The friend convinced Emann not to disclose anything; however, her parents did find out about the situation over time. Eventually her in-laws began to threaten her family by saying that they would kill her brother back in Pakistan.

Emann then decided to approach a close family friend who she learned was a social worker for a South Asian Women’s Organization (SAWO), but she felt manipulated and misguided by her. The social worker did not provide support to Emann, but also advised her that she should be thankful that the family is providing her with food and told her how she is a “very thankless person” and “not a good daughter-in-law.” Along with the harsh words of this “professional” who represented a SAWO, this woman made matters worse for Emann by approaching the mother-in-law with the personal information she had been provided. After this incident, the physical abuse for Emann became worse. Finally Emann sought the assistance of her neighbour because her husband was forcing her to sign some documents and when she refused to, he hit her. The neighbour intervened by allowing her to take shelter in his house while he called the police, a phone call she likely would not have made as her father-in-law had instilled fear in her in regards to law enforcement. Her father-in-law misled her by falsely educating her, suggesting that the police system and services such as women’s shelters in Canada were as corrupt as those in Pakistan. Emann’s fear prohibited her from providing any information to the authorities.

She eventually did escape the abuse with the help of Edmonton Police Services (EPS), but initially had told police that this was a personal family matter and stated, “No, no he didn’t hit me.” The police officers doubted her story, noted her bruises and scars, and charged her husband. Emann had the hope that her husband would be sorry for what had occurred and things would change; however, this did not occur. After the authorities had become involved the social worker from SAWO weighed into Emann’s situation and suggested to the husband’s family to withdraw the sponsorship application for her parents. Emann explained that her father-in-law kicked her out of the family home, which meant that she had no home, no employment and most of all no income. This situation made it so that she was financially ineligible to sponsor her family to join her in Canada.

Emann has since escaped the abuse; however, she does not wish to return to Pakistan. Additionally her husband has refused to provide her full custody of their children, thus making it impossible for her to live anywhere but Canada. Emann continues to work towards a sponsorship of her parents and hopes for its approval so she is a step closer to having her family assist her in raising her children. Their physical support would allow her to continue her education or work towards a “better future for [her] kids.” Emann’s main sources of emotional and financial support are her close friends and family. Her parents have sent her money for essentials such as food and shelter which will assist her in settling down and planning for her future. She explains how grateful she is for her helpful parents who are financially secure back home in Pakistan. Her mother and close

friends in Canada call frequently to check up on her and the children. She is a bit stronger today as she is currently volunteering a few hours a week to gain some work experience.

Neha (Love, Rain)

Neha was married at a very young age, had a child, but the marriage ended in a divorce. She now finds herself attempting to leave a second marriage of eighteen years. She had never wanted to be married for a second time especially at the age of twenty to a cousin with whom she only spoke on the phone. Nonetheless, she entered into the marriage, and six months later she and her child were sponsored by her spouse to come to Canada. Neha left to live abroad in a joint family with her husband, three brother-in-laws, two sister-in-laws and her husband's parents.

Neha described her family members as "not good" as she was never allowed to work or given any money (financial abuse). She was completely isolated and was only allowed to pick up or drop her children at school or purchase groceries. Neha also experienced her husband's controlling behaviour and extramarital affairs which his own family supported and condoned. When she confronted him about his actions, he verbally abused her and said "you already married and have [a child] from first marriage. What's wrong if I have a girlfriend?" Neha opposed her husband's wish to have other women in his life and pointed out that he was aware of her previous divorce and still married her. Neha attempted to approach her husband's family about the marital issues; however,

they did not understand or chose not to understand her concerns, but instead sided with his actions.

No action was taken by her husband's extended family and the emotional abuse eventually deteriorated to physical beatings. Neha suffered in silence and accepted the abuse brought upon her by her husband. She provides details about the physical abuse and the in-laws refusing to help:

> 2-3 times he beat me and then I don't feel good. Then he said bad words to my parents and my family. Then I talk to my mother-in-law and father-in-law; "they said, I don't know what's wrong," but they knew everything. Everybody they don't give me support or anything.

Sometimes her mother-in-law would enter the room while her daughter-in-law was being physically beaten by her son. The mother-in-law often accused Neha of arguing with her son and told her she deserved the abuse. Other times the in-laws would verbally abuse her or give her the silent treatment. When she approached her brothers-in-law for help, they would blame her by saying "This is your second marriage; that's why he is mistreating you."

In addition, Neha's own parents did not really understand the abuse she endured until they came to visit her in Canada. Immediately they noticed how things were not "normal" and on occasion heard the abuse. Neha described the disrespect she received in front of her own family. The slapping and punching continued during her parents' stay, and the next morning she would usually apply makeup to cover up her bruises. Once her mother asked, "he beat you last night or something? He is yelling something"; however, Neha denied everything out of fear. Although Neha's parents were aware of the husband's behaviour, they asked her to work on the relationship as she had already been divorced once. In her own

words she says: “They said, you have already one divorce, and in my culture they have big problem with this.” Neha was concerned about what her family and the community would have to say if she left her second husband.

She decided not to tell her parents earlier on because she wanted to try to “fix everything”, but later realized she could not change things. Neha realized the peril she was in and also noted that her husband’s behaviour was not improving. The issues continued to become significant and the physical beatings became more frequent. Neha makes this clear by stating “Then he started to beat me and everyday this is for my routine. He slap first, punching, kicking, everything.” The verbal abuse consisted of threats to send her to Pakistan, transfer communal property to his name, and force her to abort her unborn child.

Furthermore, he did not allow her to communicate with her parents, but she managed to contact them. When she went to drop her children off at school she approached a woman from her community. “I said I want to talk to my parents could you give me permission [to make] one phone call? She said ok, she give me permission, but after permission she tell me about money, I had no money to give her.” The woman from the South Asian community expected to receive money in return and threatened to tell Neha’s family. Neha did not have money, but responded to the woman’s demand: “I have one gold chain on my neck; I take out my chain and said her you take this to pay your phone bill.” When Neha informed her parents about her husband’s insistence on the abortion, they said “no don’t do that, this is not good for you. It’s ok may be after baby he will feel better or

something." Subsequently, she was encouraged to stay with her husband by family members.

After her first child with her second husband, she soon became pregnant again and in total had three children with him. Neha felt coerced into unwanted sexual activity and was under a great deal of pressure even after having the children. Neha felt that her husband hated their children because he never expressed his love towards them; instead, he neglected them, refusing to touch or hold them. As well he started to physically abuse her first born from her first marriage.

A school teacher confronted Neha about her first child's quietness and expressed how she thought the child was lonely. Neha did tell the teacher about the problems and said, "what I do and where I am going? I need help; I don't have money or anything." The teacher supported her by assisting her with the process of receiving her Canadian Citizenship and referred her to a South Asian social worker whom Neha unfortunately found unhelpful. Neha's husband later forced her to return to Pakistan with her children, except she was not allowed to take her child from her first marriage. Her husband made the decision to keep the child while she and the other children moved to Pakistan to live with his family. Neha's husband then asked her to return to Canada twice to connect with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) so he could continue to collect child tax benefits.

The few times she returned he would physically beat her and tell her to leave again. Then in Pakistan, she was physically abused by her brother-in-law who twisted her arm, kicked her in the stomach, slapped her and locked her in a

room for days. Regardless of which country she resided in, Neha experienced abuse by some member of her husband's family. Along with the ill treatment she received her husband continued to make threats towards her family of origin and attempted to control them.

Neha managed to return to Canada, but was forced to leave behind her three children in Pakistan, although she was able to reconnect with the child she left behind in Canada. Unaware of where to go and who to approach she thought of contacting the South Asian social worker she spoke to earlier on. Again she felt like she never really received any advice or help from this social worker. However, Neha did manage to find a job and new home on her own before seeking the assistance of Edmonton Police Services (EPS) and several other social workers.

Neha is continuously in a situation where she is fighting for her children. She is unable to return to Pakistan for her other children because her husband holds more power than she does in that country. Nonetheless she is struggling to get them back into Canada, but not having their passports or birth certificates complicates the process. At times she wishes that she could go back to Pakistan and look for her children, as she fears her second oldest child is of marriageable age, reminiscent of her own situation when she was younger. Neha prays every night to have her children in Canada as she misses them and fears for their safety. Currently Neha is working on providing information to the Canadian government in the hopes that she will be reunited with her three youngest children.

Preet (Love)

Preet's situation is different in comparison to the other women interviewed. She arrived in Canada eleven years ago when she, her husband and two sons were sponsored by her daughter. When they first arrived they all had an amicable relationship and lived together in a joint family system with the daughter. Initially Preet enjoyed living in Canada, which changed after she experienced problems with her immediate family. She described how her mind and heart did not feel at ease or at home. During this time she felt like returning to India as she states in Punjabi, "[o]dho hunda si ve bapas chaliyi jeha" [during that time I felt like going back home]. Preet felt depressed, sad and stressed out which led her to be hospitalized for five days. The doctor suggested that her hospitalization was stress induced and encouraged her to seek a job so she could be mentally occupied. Eventually, she was able to secure a job, became busy and felt like her spirit belonged in Canada. The family eventually settled down and a few years later returned to India to marry off her two sons. Her abuse story circles around her eldest son's arranged marriage and youngest son's love marriage.

Preet explained how once they returned from India the family all lived together in one home for approximately a year which pleased her greatly. Preet described how she noticed differences in the eldest son's behaviour once his wife arrived in Canada. There would be constant arguing and fighting mainly over the youngest son's marriage. Preet's eldest son was upset that the parents agreed to let the younger son be married and questioned why they could not wait until their lives in Canada were settled. The eldest son was concerned about finances, and

the situation in the home worsened. Due to the uncertainty and turmoil, Preet and her husband decided to live separately. They built a house of their own with the youngest son, and the family lived together for approximately two years.

However, things changed immediately for the entire family after Preet's eldest son was murdered at work only two years after he had been married. Preet experienced a difficult time with his death and was not offered counselling support. The South Asian community did pull together to raise funds to assist her daughter-in-law financially, but formal support was not offered, nor did she seek it. Preet was upset and hurting over what had occurred and also had a widowed daughter-in-law who had one child and was pregnant with her second. The son's death led to changes in Preet's relationship with the eldest daughter-in-law. Her daughter-in-law refused to speak to her with respect and made having a relationship with the grandchildren difficult for Preet. In the beginning Preet was denied access to her grandchildren altogether. It was not until recently that the daughter-in-law encouraged Preet to take the children for visits. Perhaps the daughter-in-law's coping method was to distance herself from the husband's family; however, Preet was not aware that this was happening. She only noted that she did not have much of a relationship with the people that mattered to her the most.

Preet also experienced a challenging time living with the youngest son and his wife. At first the youngest daughter-in-law was amicable with her in-laws and would argue and fight with her husband. This changed over time to a point where Preet and her husband became the targets. Preet described how her son would ask

his wife, “why are you bothering them?” citing the death of his older brother and what the parents had already gone through. The daughter-in-law never showed Preet and her husband respect as she would constantly nag at her spouse to get the parents out of the house. She did not want her in-laws to continue living with them and there would be constant arguing or fighting over this. Preet eventually moved out after an incident occurred and then encouraged her son to live peacefully with his wife. During this time Preet’s husband continued to live with his son, grandchild and daughter-in-law.

Preet describes an incident in which she was home alone with her daughter-in-law and grandchild. Both her husband and son were at work. Her daughter-in-law became verbally and physically abusive and attacked Preet with a kitchen blender, grabbed her hair and dragged her across the room until she fell to the ground. Preet tried to escape, but the daughter-in-law bit her on the knee and put her own thumb down Preet’s throat. The abuse lasted a few minutes and Preet said, “I am already dead so why are you trying to kill me more?” The daughter-in-law threatened Preet, suggesting that she would continue the abuse until there were physical injuries. Finally, she kicked Preet out of the house, but as she was leaving her foot got stuck in the door and she injured it.

Preet was quite flustered and scared and started running barefooted towards the neighbours’ across the street where a family from the South Asian community lived. It was from there that she first made a phone call to her son and then her daughter, but both children were busy at work. Preet then decided to ask the neighbours to help her get her purse and shoes from the house so she could

take the bus to work. Preet described how it was approximately a five to seven minute walk to the bus stop from her house. As she was walking she felt something was wrong with her leg and the pain got worse. Preet sat down on the bus, but felt uncomfortable pulling her clothing up to look at her leg. So once she arrived at work she went into the corner to look at her leg. She described how "[t]hen when [she] looked at my leg it was all bruised blue and I couldn't really move it much; it stayed in one position." A South Asian co-worker approached her and called her supervisor over who then asked what happened. The co-worker explained how Preet's daughter-in-law physically attacked her. The supervisor then asked the co-worker to take her home and help her out, but the woman refused because she feared getting involved in Preet's family matters.

Preet did not understand what to do and who to approach at work, but then she made a phone call to a close family friend who was sympathetic. Preet was assisted by the family friend, hospitalized for her injuries and had to report the severe abuse to the police. She felt let down by her husband and son who only visited her a few times in the hospital. Preet did not know that her husband and son were refused visitation rights until a recent conversation with her husband. Her husband told her how he witnessed the family friend approach the nurses at administration in order to come to this decision. The family friend deliberately separated Preet from her own family rather than trying to reconcile things.

Preet then stayed in a senior shelter for abused elders after her long hospital stay. During this time the family friend visited her and encouraged her to pray. The friend provided her with religious items such as "a picture of Guru

Gobind Singh Ji [Tenth Guru of God or Sikhism] to help her heal and put her mind at ease [so] not to think about the tension of the family and what happened." Eventually after some time the family friend who was initially supportive asked for all the religious items back. Preet then felt betrayed and helpless as she could not understand why a close friend would behave this way.

At the same time Preet felt "no one was really supportive, except for Waheguru" [God in the Sikh religion]. Although during all her hardships Preet would make a phone call back home to her sister's family or locally to her own daughter. When asked about her relationship with her daughter, Preet explained how it is good since she does talk to her frequently. However, because of everything that has happened she expressed a difference in her relationship with her son. She sometimes encounters him at the "*Gurdwara*" (temple) and will speak to him there as she does not make an effort to call him. Her son does not call her either, but will always greet her formally when they see each other at the temple.

Throughout the interview she expressed feelings of neglect, but stated how for a mother her kids will still be a part of her life even if they refuse to understand that. She makes this clear in Punjabi: "[m]aa nu ta rendha hai ke mera bacha hai, bacha pava samjhan ja na samjhan." In other words, she can just speak from a mother's heart and express love towards her children as she will always care for them regardless of their understanding. She is unsure about what her son thinks or feels. "He may think it's his mom's fault. First it was the wife who was fighting and now she's fine so it's probably the mom's fault." Unfortunately,

Preet never wanted to press charges against her daughter-in-law, but had no choice. She did hope that the daughter-in-law would change on her own; however, that never did happen. Preet feels horrible about all that has happened over the last few years but continues to have faith in God. She prays daily for her strength to carry on and since the incident she has reunited with her husband.

Summary of Abuse Stories

The above "*kahanis*" (stories) represent how violence can occur in any relationship and can take a variety of forms. All of the women expressed how they wanted the violence to stop and things to improve in their relationships. Nonetheless, the women's experiences were different because of factors such as their length of time in Canada, immigration status, religion, age, children, types of abuse, and who the abuser was.

Some of the women shared similar cultural pressures to make the marriage work rather than leave the abuser. Cultural explanations such as traditional values, beliefs and norms around marriage practices also lend an understanding as to why some women were reluctant at first to approach family and friends about the abuse. Additionally, only three of the women—Harjot, Jaseena, and Emann—accessed services while living with the abuser. The others continued to remain silent about the abuse until it got out of hand. The next section focuses on themes that apply to all abused women facing challenges in reporting abuse; however, some are unique for South Asian women. Other themes offered do not relate to the cultural context, but explore how abuse experiences are to some extent influenced by factors such as being an immigrant woman.

Chapter Five: Challenges in Reporting Abuse

I was like so much isolated and depressed too, because it takes time to for you to adjust to the new environment. On top of that when the situation is so pathetic, where you have no support or understanding forget that! It's [like] just treat someone as a human, right? What else am I asking for that's so painful? Then on top of that the person because of his own insecurities never wanted me to work or step outside of the house. I don't know what complexes or problems he had in his own mind. Just because he wanted some more gold or money is that the way to treat somebody? I mean I still cannot understand his mindset that is something that still puts me off because I still can't understand. Why do people forget the basic facts that the coffin does not have pockets, when you die are you going to take everything along? What's going to go with you? – Asha

After providing a glimpse or broad perspective of each woman's story, this chapter addresses the first research question specified in chapter one: what are some of the challenges for South Asian immigrant women in reporting domestic violence? This chapter explores in more detail the internal and external barriers the women voiced exist as they struggled to disclose the abuse. The data that emerged from the seven interviews with the women identified a number of different themes, all of which are interconnected yet fall into three unique categories: 1. Individual Barriers and Vulnerabilities, 2. Structural and Institutional, and 3. Societal and Cultural Pressures in the South Asian community. A visual representation was then created (see Figure 5-1) to aid understanding of the research findings in this section, and to demonstrate the relationship between the categories and factors that influence the core theme: power imbalance.

Theoretical Development

For the purpose of clarity, these three major themes from the interviews are explored with several subthemes or axial codes discussed under each section.

The coding process allowed me to start building relationships among these concepts to enable development of the theory.

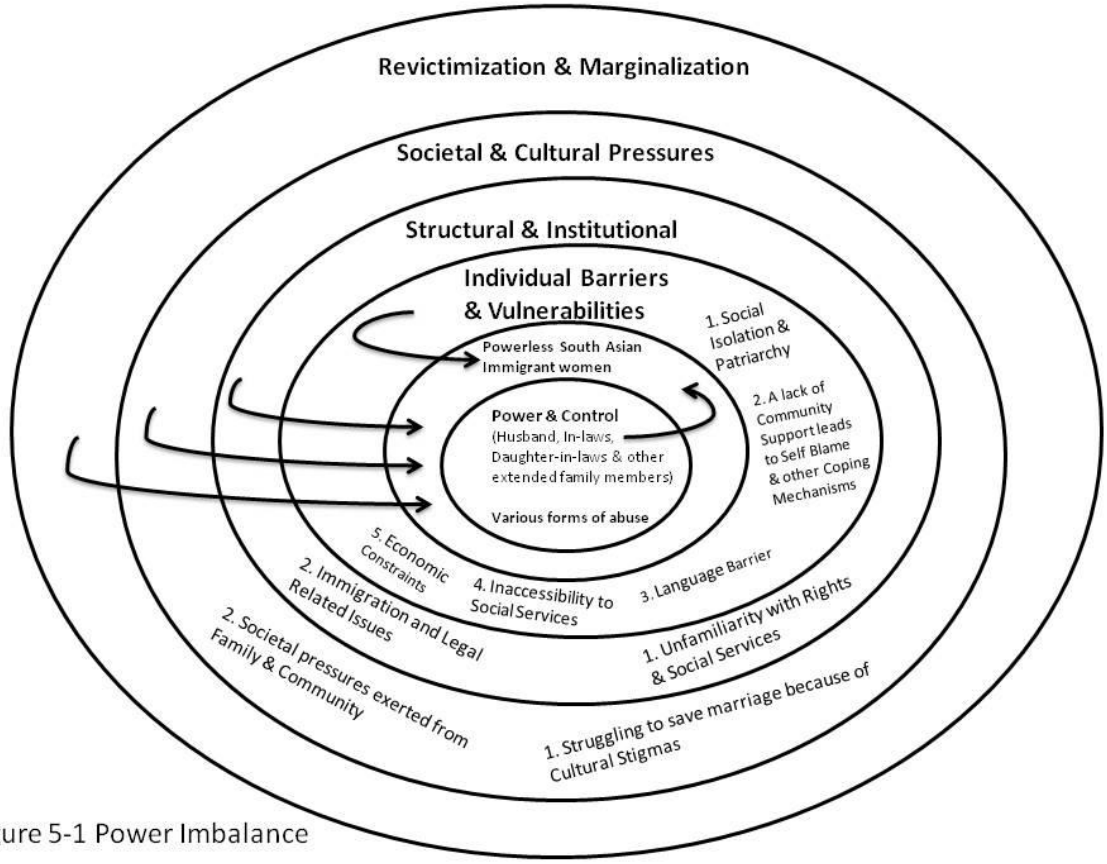

Figure 5-1 Power Imbalance

The figure above captures the women's experiences and how they are trapped in a cycle of power inequality. The centre circle ("Power and Control") represents family members using power and control tactics against the women who are represented in the second level ("Powerless South Asian Immigrant Women"). The various forms of abuse within the relationships were discussed in the previous chapter. The participants held little power or authority and some were struggling for equal opportunity. The concepts within the other three circles ("Individual Barriers and Vulnerabilities, Structural and Institutional, and Societal and Cultural Practices") are outlined below and may overlap as they are the

external forces or barriers preventing the women from reporting abuse. In the next chapter, I explain the remaining outer layer of this figure ("Recvictimization and Marginalization") to represent how power situated in this cycle continues even after the women reach out to service providers. The participants thus seem trapped in an endless power cycle that makes them vulnerable to becoming mistreated again. This figure should be explored further to make reliable conclusions about how to reduce vulnerabilities and empower immigrant women from the South Asian community to seek help. Furthermore, my own interpretation of this figure and themes is offered in conjunction with what the women revealed in their narratives. Each theme was developed within and across the narratives to answer the research question (what are some of the challenges for South Asian immigrant women in reporting domestic violence?), but is shared particularly with emphasis on the women's voices through direct quotes.

Individual Barriers and Vulnerabilities

The women identified a number of individual or personal challenges they felt make it difficult for South Asian immigrant women to report abuse. Of these five presenting issues, the women stressed social isolation and patriarchy, a lack of community support which leads to self blame or other coping mechanisms, language barrier, inaccessibility to social services and a number of economic constraints.

1. Social Isolation and Patriarchy

Each of the women interviewed in this study described how they felt isolated or lonely in Canada. Asha stated, "You come all the way to such a

different country and then you are left all alone. That is actually painful." This feeling of isolation occurs sometimes because in their home countries many women are familiar with the types of support available (e.g. immediate family living close by), but after immigrating they struggle with the settlement process of adjusting to a new environment.

The women also expressed in their interviews how their efforts/attempts to access information were controlled. Asha, Harjot and Zaara recall how they were not allowed to communicate with others over the phone, were denied access to the internet and could not leave the house, all of which limited their ability to reach out for help. The following quote illustrates Asha's view: "it's like a female who is into an abusive relationship would not even have access to internet, because my husband isolated me totally. I wasn't even allowed to even step out of the house." Harjot thinks she was not allowed to leave the house because her in-laws were afraid that she might tell somebody about the situation. Zaara's husband would firmly tell her not to touch the laptop, but he would also leave memos before heading off to work that said, "Do not touch the laptop." Zaara also described her seclusion, "I did not even open the [apartment] door to see what it is like out there. My husband kept me only inside the home." For women who are unable to access technology or even physically leave the house, reaching out to others becomes impossible especially in a new country.

Furthermore, some participants discussed how they expected to have more freedom in Canada. Emann mentioned how she had more freedom back home in Pakistan while living with her immediate family. She says during the interview,

"You know back home I came from very different family. When I come here it was the opposite *[sic.]*." After immigrating to Canada her in-laws and husband held power over what she could and could not do. In her own words she describes how she was kept under control, "I am not allowed to make any friends outside." Emann accepted the way her in-laws and husband treated her. "I have no friends, no family or circle. I just go to work and come home to cook food. Then everyone would eat all that, and then I would come and take care of the kids *[sic.]*."

Traditionally in the South Asian culture, as highlighted in the previous chapters, the norm is to respect elders and to live communally. Women are considered the homemakers and men the breadwinners for the family. Becoming accustomed to a western individualistic culture is a challenge for some South Asian families, and as a result they may continue to hold onto strong beliefs and values from their country of origin. Coming from a patriarchal cultural system with greater gender inequalities or where power rests with the male or eldest family member complicates the immigration experience (Kandiyoti, 1988). Thus, some women may view the abuse as acceptable behaviour as a result of traditional gender roles and power dynamics, but also because there is a strong value of collectivism.

i.) Lack of Social Network or Family Support

Participants also spoke about a more specific form of isolation. The women (with the exception of Jaseena and Preet) interviewed had no immediate family or friends in Canada and as a consequence lacked a strong social support system which made it difficult to disclose the abuse. For the women who had no

family in Canada, it was not easy for them to communicate with or visit their family members abroad. Some of the women explained how having their families in Canada would have allowed them to improve their situation, reveal the abuse, and turn to their families for assistance. Asha and Emann explained how they managed to survive the abuse and consider themselves lucky to have supportive parents. Emann said if her parents were in Canada they could have helped her more; however, this type of confidence in family support did not exist for the other women.

Other participants expressed how they were denied access to informal networks of friends and family. Asha was monitored by the neighbour when her husband would leave the home and Harjot was not allowed to the leave the home unaccompanied or call her parents in India. When Harjot would cry on the phone to her mother in India, "[the mother] would always say, It's ok, it just takes time; when you have your baby you will be so busy and you will have no time to call us. It's ok and you don't have to call us." Harjot could not tell them and instead her mother thought because she was away from home she was missing them. Her parents did not learn about the problems until her trip to India.

Emann was restricted to managing the family business and day to day dealings of the household which prevented her from interacting with others. However, Emann did meet a Pakistani woman after giving birth to her son in the hospital who she calls best friend[39], but the best friend was not allowed to visit the

[39] Emann took the time to explain why she considers this woman her best friend. In her own words: "[w]hy am I telling you she is my best friend? Because the person who help me when I need it, it's the best friend [she says this with confidence in her voice]. You know they care the most and when I call her that's the only person who I can trust and go [to] because I know they are

family's home. The in-laws never approved of the woman caring for Emann and helping her.

Neha, on the other hand, was only allowed out of the house alone to walk her children to school. Thus, as highlighted in the previous chapter she only had contact with a teacher who provided opportunities for her to seek help.

In her own words Neha states,

> I don't have any permission to go anywhere. I am living nineteen years here and nobody knows about me. When I go somewhere people ask me you have came in Canada first time because they don't know about anything. I have just one permission: I drop my kids at school and pick up, that's it or sometimes after two weeks I am going to Superstore for grocery. Just that's it. Not too much money for grocery and nothing else. No cable, no TV, no nothing and I stayed in Canada. We don't have anything. My parents came here; they don't believe that I am living in Canada. They said I don't feel good if I see you because you have lots of problems here, but they don't give me anything like you take divorce or leave it or separation. They always told me it's ok it's your home, your husband, your kids so it's ok that's fine *[sic.]*.

In Neha's situation, it is evident that her parents and in-laws were aware of what was occurring in her marriage; however, she was advised by family to accept the abusive situation. In South Asian communities the family is a key source of support, as many turn to immediate members to intervene in marital problems. However, some South Asian families may be supportive while others pressure women to tolerate the abuse and stay in the relationship. The women felt isolated not only from the potential support of their immediate family members, but also from the community.

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not going to throw me out. I was too scared to go anywhere else so I stayed with her for two weeks."

2. A Lack of Community Support leads to Self Blame and relying on other Coping Mechanisms

Furthermore, according to the women, the community treats marital problems as a personal matter not to be discussed outside of the family parameters. As a result women felt powerless to act, tried to hide the abuse, and were fearful of their community finding out. Additionally, self blame is often an under-recognized barrier that can result from being isolated or controlled. Some of the South Asian women internalized and blamed themselves for the abuse. The women mentioned how the community denies the existence of domestic violence but also blames the victim rather than recognizing that this is an issue within South Asian families. The women felt they were at fault and accepted the control tactics used against them. For example, Neha blamed herself for her second marriage not working and struggled to leave. During the interview she said to the interpreter/social worker, "You know, social worker, everyone tells me I am good, but you know I am not good woman because I am not good wife or mother. I have this problem *[sic.]*."

Jaseena and Neha both mentioned in their narratives how they avoided people from their community when thinking about reporting the abuse, feeling that people in the community are more likely to spread rumours, gossip, or share similar attitudes to those of their husbands. Jaseena never wanted her husband's close friends from the Muslim community to realize how terrible things were in their relationship. "I didn't want to tell anyone the reason either because he is in a good position (e.g. his career as a physician). Everyone respects him." Jaseena

also felt that there is no point going to people from her own cultural background, "we talk, they are the same. Still they are the same because they are brought up this way." Later in her interview, she restates how she did not feel comfortable approaching her community. "I didn't tell anybody; I didn't want the community to know."

When I asked Neha if she went to her community for support. She became very upset and angry, saying,

> I hate my community. I hate my community; I don't like my community and my community people. I don't want to see anybody face. Yeah, I need help and I want to take help from anybody, but I don't take help on my Muslim people. They are not helpful people. They just make fun [of you] and that's it. They are interested in [making] fun and then they hurt your feeling, that's it. They don't give you any kind of help *[sic.]*.

Neha was 100% certain that the community does not help a woman in a domestic dispute because of her own experience. According to Neha and Preet there are a lot of problems within the culture, and the community is aware of these things, especially the abuse that occurs in families. Despite the awareness, as mentioned previously, the community does not want to get involved in personal matters and denies the issue. Neha argues: "We will change; they will not change as a community" around the issue of abuse. When Neha was ready to report the abuse she identified her first problem "that I don't want to take any help on my community. That means I want to find out from any good person, any Canadian person, any other person, but not my community." This comment shows a need to remove the ideas of us vs. them mentality and focus on working with the community to build stronger relationships that will benefit the women, but also making access to "Canadian community" resources more accessible too.

When women were alone and isolated from their own communities they often relied on religion as a coping strategy to forget the violent behaviour. For example, Asha, Harjot, Zaara, Jaseena, Emann and Preet at times attributed to God their survival and strength to carry on.[40] Asha shared with me how she was counting her blessings and to this day thanks God for supporting her. "Each day was a blessing for me that time because I was actually dying, but still surviving." Later in the interview, Asha says "I mean I don't know, I still believe that God is there and I am a blessed child because I am surviving. God bless this creeper who did this to me." As the participant is crying she continues on: "I don't know it's by God's grace that I have come so far, I don't even know how. Honestly speaking I don't know. I have struggled through so much."

Harjot also is a spiritual person like Asha who prayed a lot despite being denied the right to visit the "*Gurdwara*" (temple) with the rest of the family and having her Sikh religious texts taken away from her (e.g. spiritual abuse). Another participant, Zaara placed faith in "*Allah*" [God], for things to change as she voices, "What has happened with me God knows." She also expressed how her husband "thinks that it is all written in the Quran that you can treat someone this way." Jaseena added how she prayed a lot which made her stronger, but was frustrated as her husband too would twist Islamic teachings to make her feel worthless. The women believed in the Muslim faith, but disagreed with religion being misused to justify hurtful actions.

Jaseena attributed her strength to God,

[40] Throughout the interviews many of the women thanked God for their survival through the abuse.

> I always pray and one thing I always pray to my God my rights, make it easy so I can get. When I got married I asked you God for your permission, he left me I didn't do bad things. He abused me, I didn't do bad things. I cook, I clean, I love, I respect everything, but he went. It's your responsibility to make me happy, so praying has made me stronger *[sic.]*.

She continued to believe in the Muslim faith and kept praying which gave her a sense of comfort and security to carry on. Furthermore, she tried to shift her outlook on the situation by reminding herself that she is not responsible especially since she followed her duties as a wife in the Muslim culture. Another participant, Preet, explained how she was quite upset after the death of her eldest son because immediately after this tragedy her daughters-in-law mistreated her. She felt like she did not belong and her mind was not at ease as she tolerated the abuse. Preet struggled to fully engage herself spiritually (mind, heart, and soul) because her "mind would be hurting and [she] use to think that a human being like this should just be lifted up somehow" by God. Preet then commented on how "God was the only supportive person for [her] during that time." Thus, strong religious views were held by six out of the seven participants as they would pray or meditate daily.

3. Language Barrier

Language is another factor that hinders a significant number of immigrant women from revealing their stories. South Asian immigrant women may not be fluent in speaking English, though women in this particular study (Asha, Harjot, Jaseena, Emann and Neha) were more fluent in English than many. Some of these women spoke broken English, but still struggled to communicate with others. Zaara explained how she felt powerless and limited with poor language skills, but

initially reached out to a Pakistani woman in her apartment building who could speak Urdu. Other times she was frightened to speak to anyone because it was forbidden: "When I was about to go to India, my husband had even said to me that you are not allowed to talk to anyone. If on this journey some Indian comes along your way do not speak to them."

Jaseena, another respondent, did not "know how to go to the bank and talk to the people there." When she went for her first job interview she explains "my English is very broken down" (Jaseena gives hand actions to represent this and shakes her head at how her English is not great). Nonetheless she managed to secure the job without the language skills and at times cried in front of Punjabi and Arabic speaking co-workers since they could somewhat understand. In another example, Jaseena talked about inquiring about applying for Canadian Citizenship when her permanent residence (PR) card was about to expire. She contacted Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC): "I said you know my English is really broken and maybe you cannot understand, but I tried to explain *[sic.]*." In her narrative, Emann also admitted having a language problem and how the inability to learn to speak, read or write English made it impossible for her to apply for Citizenship on her own. The issue of language is best captured in Preet's experience of fleeing from the abuse. Once she arrived at her workplace she struggled to tell her supervisor what happened and had to use a South Asian co-worker who spoke Punjabi as an interpreter.

4. Inaccessibility to Social Services

The need to commute also causes a problem for reporting, especially if one is unaware of where to go or of how to reach out to social services. This is especially true for the women in this study who struggled to communicate with limited English skills. For instance, Emann explained how she had a driver's license, but did not know her way around the city and had a tough time learning a new system of streets and avenues. She states, "Now I know the ways because I have a navigation system. That time I only know where I am going because my mother-in-law [who always accompanied her when her father-in-law would send her out to purchase groceries for the family business] told me to go there, turn from here and how to go to Costco and stuff." The latter point suggests that despite availability of transportation, not knowing how to read signs and patriarchal control also contributes to the likelihood of individuals having no escape.

Those women isolated within their homes (e.g. Asha and Zaara) or accompanied outside of the house (e.g. Harjot and Emann) were still likely to be unfamiliar with their surroundings. Jaseena also explained how at the time of the abuse she did not know how to take the bus or drive a car to reach out for services. Another woman, Preet was only familiar with taking public transportation to her workplace and did not know where else to go when she escaped. At the same time she felt humiliated going anywhere else and feared for her own safety. Some women reported how their lack of transportation knowledge and financial stress made it difficult to reach out to services.

5. Economic Constraints

In the interviews it also appears that isolation attaches itself to other constraints such as no access to funds, and this may permit the men or extended family members to exert economic control. For some of the participants' economic factors such as financial dependency, not being allowed to work, and fear of losing support prevent reporting of abuse, but also prevent them from leaving the relationship easily. Thus, due to a number of different controlling tactics, not only did the women remain in the abusive relationship, but they continued to be financially dependent on others (spouse or in-laws).

i.) Financially dependent on Spouse or In-Laws

Some of the women, like Emann, felt that if she reported the abuse or left the home that her husband and in-laws might threaten to withhold the support or funds she was receiving at the time. Other women also stressed how they were financially insecure or economically deprived. However, Jaseena decided to immediately seek employment to improve her situation. Finding employment while living with her abuser allowed her to break down some of the barriers of social isolation and financial dependency. She explained how "he didn't even open my account. I didn't even know how to go to the bank. He used to give me $10-15 dollars cash just like this you know" (uses hand gestures to indicate this giving of money). This particular example demonstrates how women strategically deal with the abuse and try to gain some power in the relationship. Unfortunately, immigrant women experience financial mistreatment and difficulties entering the labour market, so financial constraints continue to be a barrier.

ii.) Not allowed to Work

In traditional South Asian families women are expected to accept the submissive and subordinate role of a wife, daughter-in-law, and mother in the marriage. As a result, men from this community may still have a difficult time accepting that women have rights in Canada and a chance for equal opportunity in a number of areas such as the workforce. For example, Asha held a prestigious job in India, but her husband forced her to leave the company after their marriage. Similarly, Harjot was working in Canada before she got married, but after she moved in with her new family they did not let her work because they did not want her to go out of the house. In her interview, Zaara described how her husband would blatantly state the traditional housekeeping roles that women are expected to perform and how she should stay within the prescribed role.

Sometimes women after immigrating become very stressed because they wish to contribute to the family household income, but are forbidden employment or the ability to further their education. Instead, women are expected to take care of the household duties, children and in some cases, in-laws.

Other women like Jaseena and Emann are given pocket money and denied the ability to open a bank account unless they struggle to on their own. Emann's money was controlled by family members. She was provided with $300 pocket money from her husband and another $200 cash from her father-in-law for managing their family business. In total she received $500 dollars of which she used towards her car loan payments. She described how extreme the financial abuse was as she had little control over the money for personal use and later

learned that her income was being misreported to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Emann was denied access to the actual amount of earnings reported to CRA which meant having little power over how much she earned and her personal income details. Instead, Emann was expected to assist in operating the family run business:

> I am not allowed to continue my education and after work and in the middle of the work (suppose it's 8 to 10 hour shifts) I have to go home and cook for all of the people. Three dishes for day and I was really shocked. I start working and I thought maybe they don't want to pay for my education, so if I am going to work I am going to pay for. Since then because it's a family business they never paid me *[sic.]*.

Having her operate the business allowed the in-laws to cut costs. Emann was promised an opportunity to study further once she arrived in Canada and then later denied the right to an education. She feared reporting the abuse because her financial situation would worsen as she was dependent on her in-laws, and without an education she would struggle finding a job to raise her two young children. If Emann had access to her own money and the ability to work elsewhere she could have supported herself and children.

iii.) Fear of losing Children

The participants also described how South Asian immigrant women like other women may also stay in an abusive relationship because of their dependent children. They fear that their children will suffer or experience some sort of emotional turmoil if they leave or report the abuse. Harjot, Jaseena, Emann and Neha's biggest fear of leaving was losing their children or hurting them. As Harjot explains, "Once you have the kid or kids it's like you are stuck. You are like oh my god what will I do with my daughter now, where will I go?" In the end

for Harjot it is better to live a healthy life then to put the child(ren) in an unhealthy environment.

Additionally, some respondents feared that their husbands would threaten to withhold child support or threaten their family members back home if they left the relationship. Jaseena and Emann wanted to make their own decisions, but worried about the consequences of their actions affecting others. Both women were terrified at the thought of returning to Pakistan, especially when threatened with the loss of their children by their husbands. Jaseena wanted to stay with her son and knew if she left for Pakistan then her husband would never allow her to talk to him. She also stated, "I am thinking always, if I tell anybody maybe my husband take away my kids." In a similar way Emann described her fear

> that they [husband and his family] are going to keep my baby, send me back home and they are going to deport so I can never come back or bring or get my daughter. My weakness is my kids. So they always torture me by saying I am going to send you back, keep your baby here and then you are not going to come because the baby's Canadian because of the dad so you can't take her back.

The participants with children worried about being separated from them.

The above discussion highlights how some women struggled with reporting the abuse when their own individual choices or vulnerabilities were taken into account. Throughout the themes there are a number of different forms of isolation and patriarchy, for example, not being able to leave the home or visit family/friends without consent and being forbidden employment, as well as blaming the victims for the disintegration of the family.

Structural and Institutional Barriers

This section explores the concept of "nowhere to go" and how the laws in Canada around abuse seem useless unless immigrant women are familiar with the services offered. The women identified how they were unfamiliar with their rights and social services. They also stressed how immigration and legal issues were major structural and institutional barriers in reporting domestic violence. Structural barriers in this context refer to the broader systems, structures and policies that shape how South Asian immigrant women have access to services. Structural barriers are how women misunderstood immigration and legal policies, lacked an understanding of their rights and available social services, were unfamiliar with how social services can assist, but also had their own misperceptions of law enforcement (e.g. police) and the legal system.

Additionally, when a South Asian woman's immigration status is being used as a threat by her abusive partner, she faces institutional barriers. Institutional barriers refer to how women were apprehensive about interacting with Canadian institutions (e.g. law or judicial system enforcers, immigration authorities and other social services) that respond to abuse, sometimes because of their experiences in their home countries, for instance, with the police. Interactions within some of these institutions are further discussed in the next chapter as they can sometimes make women more vulnerable to revictimization and marginalization. Women in this study were subjected to insensitive or abusive treatment by law enforcement and other social service providers. Service providers may lack an understanding of South Asian cultural norms, may not be

able to provide an interpreter, and most of all may not understand how women are threatened by the abuser.

1. Unfamiliarity with Rights and Social Services

At first the women interviewed accepted the abuse because they were unaware of their rights and lacked knowledge of not only social services but also the legal system (laws and policies) surrounding domestic violence in Canada. Thus, the women described how their first challenge was confronting their marital problems in a new country. However, for some women the abuse started in their country of origin because of cultural issues (e.g. dowry exchange), while for others different issues (patriarchal control, son preference and infidelity) became more apparent in the host country (Canada). The women experienced difficulty adjusting to not only the cultural expectations in the traditional South Asian family (outlined later), but also the migration experience.

i.) Knowledge of Support System in Home Country vs. Canada

As immigrant women they are more secluded than in their home countries where they might have had a support network or way to cope with the abuse in familiar environments. Some of the abused immigrant women have no knowledge about the services and support systems in Canada as few exist in their country of origin. Preet had no knowledge about which services are available, who to ask for help and, similar to Asha, she mentioned how she never knew about the shelter services. After the police were involved, Asha struggled, going from one organization to the next, finally discovering what a shelter was. In her own words Asha recalls,

> I was dead scared of shelters, honestly speaking. Because in India there is no concept of shelters at all and my notion or understanding of a shelter was that it is about exploitation and that it is not a safe place to be in. If you go in a shelter it means there would be somebody, you never know? They might abuse you and then you might land into another problem. So, I was so scared and that is the mistake I made which I realize today. When I left home rather than struggling on the streets and just being lost, I should have taken the right step and gone to the shelter right away. But, I was actually scared.

Jaseena also noted how back home they do not have this concept of shelters, and how "you are finished if you go to shelter. So it's much better not to." She did not explain what these shelters are like; however, I did get the impression that they are operated by unscrupulous private owners who force women into prostitution. Emann echoed this response and added how her in-laws instilled this fear in her about the idea of a woman's shelter. She states,

> Ok the thing was because my in-laws scared me because you know this is the second time the social worker is involving. So they scared me about shelters. I don't know, that's a lie what they told me (participant raises voice), but now I know. They told me that they abuse kids, women, men can rape you or something and even though it's a woman's shelter they force you to prostitute or something. So I believed it because I don't know because in Pakistan it's the same. Sometime like ahh no shelters, but the same fear parents put in our minds so we don't go out by ourselves so when we go out something is going to happen. Like they are going to take your daughter or sexually abuse her or something and the main thing is they give you drugs or something. Also no halal food [permitted or lawful food that is allowed in the Islamic diet] so I was so scared about going to a shelter *[sic.]*.

Thus, her perception of a shelter or other services available in Canada was reinforced by the view from her in-laws. These findings are consistent with the existing literature that notes how there are tendencies for women to be unaware of the resources in an unfamiliar country (Chokshi et al., 2010; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Shiwadkar, 2004; Smith, 2004).

Furthermore, these findings indicate that women import certain notions or perceptions about services, in particular shelters or the police response. However, in some cases like Emann's, women are mislead or misinformed in Canada about the types of support available. Her in-laws said, "police are the most worse thing in Canada. They take you to some place and leave you there. Some police man abuse you and do such things, but that is not true *[sic.]*." The inaccurate perceptions diminished the individual's power to report and made the women more vulnerable to abuse.

Alternatively, Harjot raises an excellent point: "If the person can't touch the phone how will they call 9-1-1?" This comment is important, as Zaara elaborates: "If that girl knows nothing like what the police number 9-1-1 is how can she call? Even I didn't know the police number during that time and then she [another woman] may not know it either." In fact some immigrant women may have never heard of 9-1-1 before arriving in Canada and there is a need to inform them beforehand, or at least as soon as the woman enters Canada. Zaara explains this need:

> In India we know one number and here it is 9-1-1. I want that every woman knows that number. The women should also be told that the number is free to call. If I had even known that number then at the airport I would have called it and told them what was happening. However, at that time I did not know that this was the number for the police.

Furthermore, not knowing their rights or what is available in the host country has a strong impact on how South Asian immigrant women report domestic violence to service providers and reach out to social services. Often times the police become involved regardless of the women's wishes as others

might have become concerned, suspected abuse and reported to authorities. When the police were involved with previous domestic dispute situations at Emann's house because noise complaints were filed by a Canadian neighbour, she denied the abuse out of fear. She would say "it was ahh TV volume because we are watching Hindi movies like action movie maybe that's the reason. I don't know." Emann was afraid to give a statement to the officers because:

> In front of police man when police come my [house]. Mother-in-law in my language she says if you say anything you better like, I am going to send you back to Pakistan. "Tumarah bacha le jiyaga kabar dar Sid ko koi charge key eh" [you better not say anything to the police or get Sid (fictional name) your husband charged or else I will send you back to Pakistan and they will take your kids away]. I tell police no, no it's a personal family matter. I kept lying like no, no he didn't hit me.

Emann was cautious because she feared revenge from her in-laws and worried about her husband being accused and charged.

However, Preet interacted in a different manner with the police compared to other women who became frightened when they encountered a police officer. The police from the beginning told her to tell them exactly what happened, "[l]ike how did all this happen. They said tell us the truth and there is no need to lie. I told them exactly how everything happened with me and I did not lie about anything." This was the first time Preet felt like somebody was listening especially when the police asked to hear the truth. However, later in the interview, Preet expressed how she was apprehensive about police intervention.

> At first, I was very scared. At first I used to be because at first the police came to our house 1-2 times because of our daughter-in-law. [T]hey took my son's interview, mine too and my [husband's]. [D]uring that time we were scared. If we had known before that this is how she is going to keep treating us then we would have told everything then. [The daughter-in-law called the police to the home a few times over a number of incidents. No

> charges were laid at the time, but when Preet involved the police this was the first time charges were laid]. We [Preet and her husband] would just keep quiet because we didn't know what the police here was like.

This passage indicates how Preet refused to involve the police until the violence became extremely severe. When asked by the interpreter if she thought the police here was like India's, Preet said, "Yes, that's exactly it. We didn't know what the rules or laws here were like and what to do or not to do." Preet was unaware of the laws or rules, but figured it was best to keep quiet when the police were called to past incidents at the home.

ii.) Shame or fear of reporting abuse to Authorities in Criminal Justice System

As noted previously the women were not always the ones to involve the police or criminal justice system (CJS). When the police did intervene, women like Asha and Emann hesitated to provide a statement because of fear. Asha recalls feeling like, "meri shaadi tut jiyah gee and kar bar bath ho jiya ga and sab katham ho jiya ga kar ka police agi" [my marriage will end, people outside of the house will find out and everything will end because the police are involved]. Other women were reluctant in their decision to involve the police despite how bad the physical beatings became. Jaseena was opposed to involving the police especially in front of her son and provides an example:

> I don't know when police come, (pause) our kids they love us and they love dad too. Equal they love. When they see police involved then they are scared. They will think ah my mom she called. I you know because of my son I never thought about this in my mind because he love dad, same thing like I love my dad so it's the same relation. Something you know bad happens then what they think about. You know my son he respects me a lot and he love me. I know when [husband] hit and we think we are in Canada so it is easy for us to call police. We have rights and that thing, but I think we should not use that right, the reason behind is our kids. This is it. Ok, fine if he hit then its pain here, I understand it's really bad. But

> when we call then our kids it's very hard for them so I don't think so. Keep the kids close and don't say bad things about the dad. Keep it finally clear and like normal for the kids *[sic.]*.

As highlighted above, Jaseena held onto her negative views of the police not being helpful throughout the interview. In her own words she continued to state, "I don't think so police is help. I don't think so. They come its big issue and then it's nothing. Then you settle and you know my believe is that we do by self and it's better than from other *[sic.]*." Preet expressed how "[w]ell even I knew that I could call the police, but out of humiliation I didn't because I thought what will people say." However, when Preet found out her daughter-in-law had been arrested at work for injuring her, she felt

> like how humiliating is this. I didn't even know that this would happen this way or that way. I didn't know that they would take her away this way. My mind would get upset and I was upset. I would think why did we have to be humiliated this way in public?

In her narrative there is a sense of her feeling guilty for causing humiliation and she feared the family's reputation would not be good after involving the police.

In fact, some of the other women interviewed feared how the police operated because they compared it to how the police intervene in their home countries. Asha explained the terms, "court and police?! They are such horrifying words in India. It's like police and court is for criminals. That's how people back home view it to be. You don't expect you know respectful and respectable people to be in the court and with the police." Asha then explains how her husband would constantly threaten to call the police to come and arrest her. She states:

> Then he would threaten me that I am going to call the cops and get you arrested. I used to get so stunned and shocked with this behaviour and as you understand that in our culture back home. You haven't been to India

> (shakes head), but there the scenario is like if police is arriving at your home, it's a big taboo. It's like police coming to someone's house is a matter of shame. Now that's the last thing people would do in life. [But] now after staying here I realize that this is the big line of difference. Calling cops at home in India means something else, because there it's like more of societal pressure. People are going to gossip and make issues out of it. That is what people are scared of...actually and here the cops are basically there to help and they are for the safety concerns. They help to organize peace in the house too.

Because Harjot also had no clue about the true nature of the police system in Canada, she avoided them, but she then discovered she was wrong. She explains "when the word police comes in mind and you compare it to Indian police that's a very bad picture you get, but when I went there I was astonished to see the way that they help you. They are so courteous, even in the Victim Services Unit, the downtown one." Zaara as well "had this much of an idea in [her] head that the police here and the police in India are different. In India there is corruption. People can win the police over." These women appreciated how Canadian police continue to show support. Immigrant women initially fear the Canadian police response system which could potentially help them learn about their rights or offer safety and protection.

2. Immigration and Legal Related Issues

The interviews also revealed how immigration related factors may further complicate abuse situations or increase a woman's vulnerability to domestic violence. Some of the women also identified how their legal status in Canadian society plays a role in whether they decide to report the abuse. South Asian immigrant women fear legal authorities, leaving the abuser and reporting marital problems because they believe myths such as the risk of potentially losing their

Canadian status or being deported. Being a permanent resident became grounds for a threat at times for the women interviewed, especially when their abuser would state that they could be deported. In such cases, an abusive husband would use his wife's legal status as a blackmail tactic, and the wife would be reluctant to report the abuse or seek help because her own legal status lay on the line. Thus, the fear of losing status or being deported or sent back to the country of origin becomes a terror, but also portrays how power is exercised. Emann states her uncertainties of deportation:

> The thing is like first thing I don't know it's...ah now I know, but when we come here the first thing in our mind is that they [refers to sponsor] have rights to send us back anytime. Legally they can keep the babies, that's the one worse umm...I don't know now it's I don't know I can now say it's misunderstanding. That time it's a fear for me because I don't know the rights and I don't know anything.

These observations are also consistent with the literature, that mentions how there is a tendency for women to fear reporting because they fear deportation or an affect to their immigration status (Abraham, 2000a; Agnew, 1998b; Hyman et al., 2005; Jiwani, 2002a; Raj and Silverman, 2002).

Unfortunately, though, two participants Zaara and Neha were sent back to their home countries (India and Pakistan) because they were unaware of the Canadian rules or laws. Neha said "when I came from Pakistan to Canada, I don't know about Canadian rules." Others like Emann's husband and in-laws would constantly threaten to deport her without her children or cancel her sponsorship application for extended family members (her parents). At the time Emann only had permanent residence or legal status and she believed the threats of deportation or revocation of her parent's sponsorship application. Emann seemed more

concerned about gaining legal status (Canadian Citizenship) and having her parents' support in Canada rather than trying to report her husband and in-laws' abusive behaviour. It was not until after being separated that she was able to apply for Citizenship. Emann expresses, "I applied after I get separated because they [in-laws] don't let me get my Citizenship. The first thing the social worker did was work on with me with a Citizenship *[sic.]*."

Other women like Asha, Harjot, Zaara and Jaseena struggled to gain possession of their own passports and other immigration documents which were kept away from them. On numerous occasions Zaara had asked her in-laws for her passport, "but they said we will not give that because our son has called us and said that under any condition do not give that passport. He said do not give my wife her passport under any circumstances." When Zaara contacted a travel agency in India she explained her situation and how she was stuck without her landing papers, but desired to return to Canada. The woman working at the agency said:

> You cannot tell the embassy that you are having a marital dispute with your husband because then the embassy will never give you a visa. You are just going to tell them that because of a family problem [you returned] to India because if you do that then maybe they will give you a visa.

The woman Zaara approached at the agency in India continued to guide her and say:

> You went to a country like Canada and came back? There women have a lot of rights. She began to explain all this and said what kind of a person does not want to stay there? Then she said although you went through all of this from him you were ready to come back home to India too. You thought if he sends me back that's fine. She kept going on that there are a lot of women's rights there and so forth. She then said I will give you an address for an office; it's a visa office. She said go to the visa office and

> ask about the Canada office. Go there with your passport and they may ask you why you came back. Just tell them because of family reasons.

After receiving the kind advice Zaara proceeded to the visa office. She spoke to them and like the woman from the travel agency they recommended she use the family emergency excuse to waive off any suspicions about her returning. However, they did ask "do you have a PR card?" Zaara responded by saying no it is currently being processed.

> I had come back so fast that my PR card did not get made because I came quickly for this reason. I said what do I have to do in order to go back? They said no worries just fill out the travel documents and the visa fee is $3000.00 rupees so just give that.

Zaara had to provide her husband's information on the forms, for example, his occupation for the past five years. However, since she knew all of the information it was easy for her to complete the forms and the person at the visa office approved everything, but realized that Zaara did not have a landing paper. "Then she started to say you don't have a landing paper? I said no I don't have it. I said I am sorry I don't know where it is, it's been misplaced haha (laughs now as she re-tells the story)." Nonetheless, Zaara's struggles with this immigration piece continued and are touched on in the next chapter.

Jaseena echoed a similar fear about her immigration status, rights and how she needed to contact CIC to inquire about applying for Canadian Citizenship. She was fearful of CIC finding out about her marriage problems, and her dilemma was that she was without her passport which her husband kept away because he did not want her to apply for Citizenship. Furthermore, aside from hiding away

immigration documents and a passport, some men or sponsors use the thought of marriage fraud as a tool of control to threaten the immigrant women's legal status.

i.) Marriage Fraud or a Marriage of Convenience

Some women fear reporting the abuse because their spouse may threaten to frame the marriage as a fraudulent marriage or marriage of convenience. Asha was not concerned about being deported, but instead was concerned about how Canadian sponsorship policies do not take into account or recognize how an abuser would use the system against her. Asha's husband contacted CIC to open a file against her stating that she was having an affair with someone and used him for immigration purposes only. She defended herself in her narrative:

> I never needed a jerk to get into Canada. I never needed to ruin my life this way to get into Canada. I mean the kind of background and education I have, I could have taken an internal transfer from [my job] or maybe the point system. I never needed a jerk in life and I never needed to ruin my life to get into Canada.

Asha remains angry at CIC for listening to his side of the story and does not even know how to approach them herself. She mentioned how she tried to write a letter and received no response. "I am kind of stuck there and I really want to get after this because this is a big part of my character. I just can't take it, because this is not true. I really want to fight back with this, but I really have no clue as to how I should get on to this." Asha had contacted her lawyer about this. She explains her lawyer's response,

> It's not important! It's like it just happens. He says it happens this is a normal thing. All the men they do this and they just go to immigration and they say ahh...you know she is having an affair. She just came here for the money, just to marry me and just to get into Canada. He says that this is a normal thing, but I just can't digest it. I really want to act on this because I just can't take it because this is something which is unacceptable to me.

Perpetrators like Asha's husband attempt to shift the focus away from their abusive behaviour by portraying the victim as committing a marriage fraud. Marriage fraud is extremely difficult to prove especially when perpetrators threaten to falsely expose immigrant women like Asha or use power strategies to protect themselves. The false accusation of marriage fraud hinders women from reporting to authorities because they fear that upon investigation deportation or other consequences will occur. The problem of marriage fraud is quite serious in Canada and is addressed within the existing immigration policies. However, I argue that proposed rules or changes in policy that are in the works by CIC to deter marriage frauds should be careful not to position immigrant women in domestic violence cases at higher risk or reduce access to services.

Societal and Cultural Pressures

When I asked the interviewees about other challenges, they tended to touch on the South Asian cultural context and the barriers due to cultural issues. In the narratives the women were not suggesting that we should hold the culture responsible or blame the cultural practices for the abuse, but recognize how cultural norms and marriage expectations force women in some cultures, such as the South Asian, to silence the abuse. Asha speaks about the silence in the South Asian culture and how "[i]n our culture it's like females die. They would prefer dying rather than raising a voice and getting out of the abuse." The most common themes that emerged were struggling to save the marriage because of cultural stigmas and societal pressures exerted from both family and community.

1. Struggling to Save the Marriage because of Cultural Stigmas

South Asian immigrant women are reluctant to share their problems and are more likely to accept the abuse to avoid cultural stigmatization. Cultural factors or practices become barriers that determine whether women will report abuse. Some immigrant women are aware of the signs of an unhappy marriage, but feel that it is their responsibility to make an effort to improve the relationship. As Asha says:

> Honestly, I never wanted to break my marriage. I never had thought that this is going to come this far or that this is going to happen or that this would lead to this. I never knew! It's like I was just trying to be safe at that point in time. Whatever was happening, I was just trying to save my life that's all. I really loved this person and I was serious about him. That's the reason why I never ever laid any charges. I never did anything against him because I wanted to save my marriage, but now I realize we girls we never live for ourselves, we live for the society, for the people. What people are going to talk about? Today I feel that whatever I did, I did it correct.

The reason why some women think like Asha is because leaving a marriage in the South Asian community is culturally unacceptable, forbidden, or the women who leave are shamed. Therefore, two important social as well as patriarchal cultural constructs are used regularly to control women and to silence the abuse. The level of "*izzat*" (honour/respect) should be maintained and the notion of "*sharam*" (shame) should be avoided. Both are significant cultural factors revealed in the narratives and existing literature (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Dasupta and Warrier, 1996; Kang, 2006).

i.) Dowry Practices

Asha began to notice signs of an unhappy marriage before immigrating to Canada because of culturally related pressures of increased dowry demands. At first she said the in-laws

> really didn't show that much of greed and craziness while the marriage was happening. They were a little subdue that time, but when the marriage occurred that is when they started putting pressure on me and torturing me mentally in one way or another. They started showing that they weren't happy about something, but when the marriage was happening they really were actually subdued. If I had a notion that time and if we had a clue that they are greedy people we would have you know retired it then and there. I wouldn't even have minded rejecting for the marriage or whatsoever, because I know that greed has no end. But, it was kind of a fraud thing because they never showed an inclination or their craziness initially. After I got married is when this guy started retaliating, overreacting and misbehaving with me.

Asha's husband and in-laws "had this craving for and lust for large money" and after she left for Canada her husband's family in India demanded a larger dowry payment from her family. She explained how dowry acts as an economic condition and form of financial abuse because "[i]t's all about getting dowry honestly. NRI's (non-resident Indians) they literally think that dowry is the only minting thing for them, that's what attracts them to go back to India and get married." From Asha's example, it seems likely that men from abroad return to India with different expectations around marriage, and women become easy targets of dowry practices.

Asha also took the time to explain how the traditional practice of dowry has significantly changed. She explained the original purpose of dowry customs and the shift in modern times. Asha believes

> [i]n India too, if people are sensible it's not that much. Honestly speaking, it's still there again because of the society and the mindset of people. Initially this was being done, "shagan jisko kethi ha," [what was originally refered to as shagan] "*shagan*" is like a token a representation [shagan refers to a formal offering of gifts]. That could be just even a 1 rupee note. One dollar is also, "shagan hota hai" [small amounts of money like one dollar are still considered shagan]. It's not that it has to be in bulk or loads of money whatsoever. That was the original tradition, but these days it's like people are manipulating things and they really want to mint money in the name of traditions, which is not fair. You know sensible people who are actually decent, it's like the guy's family would also put in so much of money because they would give a lot of things to their daughter-in-law as in jewellery or things. People who are decent would not do that and people who are greedy would. So it's like you cannot really know that until the time that you are tied into a relationship. When you are sitting on the stage when the "*faras*" [part of the wedding ritual] are going on and when the entire ceremony is going on that is when you come to know that you know, how is the family on the other end. What have they given to the daughter-in-law and what's happening. Before that you really can't make out what is going to happen because again it's a problem even if you sit and discuss about these materialistic things. Again it's a point of ego *[sic.]*.

While this ancestral custom in some South Asian families has shifted from the earlier practice, the prevalence of this system still exists as dowries continue to be paid and received in marriages.

Asha's parents provided so much of their money in cash to help the couple (e.g. purchased a home in India), and she dreaded losing all of this if she reported the abuse because she wanted to uphold the family "*izzat*" [honour and respect]. "My dilemma was that if I talk to my parents too it's like they would be totally shattered, because my dad kept me like a princess you know you ask for one thing and you get ten. I was such a pampered child." Thus despite the harsh cultural practices around dowry that Asha and other women like Jaseena and Emann endured, they accepted the conditions in the marriage to avoid the thought of a loss of dowry if a separation or a divorce was to occur.

ii.) Divorce is a Stigma

Furthermore, Asha, like Jaseena, felt it was her duty to save the marriage because divorce is seen as a stigma that is forbidden simply because it brings shame or dishonour on the family. Women are expected to uphold the family and community honour. For example, Asha states:

> My dad invested so much of his money in this marriage and I never wanted everything to go to waste. It's not even just about money; it's about getting the feelings hurt. That is what I wanted to avoid and then it is a stigma to for a girl if you get a divorce or get separated and go back to India. It's like "abi ta shaadi kar ka gayi si, abi yeh kya hoga?, larki kharab hai." [She just got married and left, what happened? The girl is in the wrong]. It's insane actually.

Harjot also touched on how "divorce is a big, big thing! It's a shame thing, but not anymore maybe." Nevertheless, separation or divorces are not everyday practices that are accepted in the South Asian culture. Emann explains, "I was ahh (pause) like I didn't feel or want a divorce because in our culture if a woman is feeling a divorce it's bad for a woman. So I didn't want blame." Emann hints at how women experience the stigmatization of a divorce more than their partners in the South Asian community.

Neha, another participant, shared how her family came to visit Canada and became aware of her abuse situation, but she denied it because she really felt isolated, lonely and separated from her family in her second marriage. She explains the reason for her denial is because culturally it is not acceptable to be a divorced woman. She explained herself, "My parents don't give me permission about me taking any step. That's it...because they said you already have one divorce. My culture they have big problem with this *[sic.]*."

Zaara points out that in the Muslim religion, divorce can take place on the spot if the husband says the word "*talaq*" (divorce) three times. It is also fine for the man to say I divorce you, but woe to any woman who is divorced this way. As a result each of the four Muslim women interviewed (see Table 3-1) raised this point of practice as a line of difference when compared to women who identify with other religions, for example, Hinduism or Sikhism. Nonetheless, Zaara in particular feared divorce despite it being acceptable in the Islamic religion. She described how her husband would hit her and if she refused to go back home to India then he would threaten to say "*talaq*" and divorce her in Canada. Then she explained how he would say, "what "*izzat*" [honour/respect] will you have in my city and your own?" In other words, he was implying that even though giving a divorce is a religious thing, it has cultural implications if she returns to India as the society there will not respect her if he gives a "*talaq*" because a woman's honour is dependent on a successful marriage. Zaara then elaborates on her husband's words:

> He said what honour or respect will you have left? He said if you listen to me and do as I say by returning back to India, I will even come to the airport to drop you off. However, if I say "*talaq*" [divorce] right here right now then what "*halat*" [state or condition] will you be in? You think about it. Then I won't be able to come and drop you off I would be "*haram*" [unlawful or forbidden] for you so my friend will drop you off.

Thus, despite the fact that divorce can be granted so easily in the Islamic religion it continues to be largely frowned upon by the Muslim community. Furthermore, men from this community like Zaara's husband tend to use this to their advantage when controlling their wives actions. Her husband would tell her how he is a Muslim man with more rights and that as a woman she cannot do anything. Strong

statements like this may also hinder a Muslim woman's ability to report the abuse because she fears her husband initiating an action like a divorce against her which would lead to rejection from the community.

However, Jaseena reminds other women that divorce is not worth stressing over, and makes the assertion that especially once a man leaves the home it should occur. She says, "[some think] we are a Muslim woman and that we are scared from divorce. Marriage is over the day the man leaves. That is the day that the marriage is over, you put it here (points to head) and think that way *[sic.]*." Neha's husband told her that if she divorces him or if he leaves then people will use her for sex and give $20.00 which was how he prevented her from leaving. Preet's family in India after hearing her problems would raise questions about why her son was still with the daughter-in-law. Preet never asked her son to separate from the daughter-in-law because the family would be exposed to shame if that happened.

Some women struggled through the abuse because they did not wish to upset their own families or be responsible for bringing humiliation/shame on the family. Parents or other family members will become involved and try to mediate matters because a divorce is looked down upon in the culture. Therefore, a marriage is not just a union or vow held between the couples, but also the families. This is best depicted in Asha's narrative when she explains what she said to her husband. "I said see this is a very serious thing it is not a joke that you get married today and get divorced tomorrow. It's a matter of our families and our life." For some women like Harjot an arranged marriage can be challenging to

save because the "*vachola*" (close family friend who introduced the couple) did not want to be involved after hearing about the marital problems. During the interview she described how upset and disappointed she was with the close family friend when she approached him to intervene. "I was like you guys are not concerned at all! You just introduced me to him and your job was done." She then later said "ok [my in-laws] can kill me, put me in the basement and you will never know"!

2. Societal Pressures exerted from Family and Community

The participants mentioned how they face pressures from family, but also the community around strong cultural beliefs and practices that are to be followed. Asha, Harjot, Zaara and Jaseena stressed how they did not want to return back home to their country of origin, because they would encounter both family and societal pressures around separation or divorce from a spouse. Asha said:

> I did not tell my parents and on top of that it's like ahh...it's such a disaster you know. Getting your divorce tag is again such a shameful thing and in India it's like still no matter how educated people are they are still always going to put that pressure. Ok, girl must be having some problem, she is not the [better] person that is why she left her husband and came back. Something is wrong with the girl. So people just gossip and then it's really bad.

The women mentioned in their interviews how divorce and the cultural stigma of what others would say or spread (rumours) was one reason they feared disclosing the abuse to even their parents. Another example from Asha's interview is when she asked for help and approached her in-laws:

> If I go to his parents, I am always accused. It's like "yeh asi hai" [she is like this]. For them it's like their son is always right; there is no doubt about it and the daughter-in-law is always wrong. It's a simple set rule and they don't want to hear anything else.

In the South Asian culture some women often go to their in-laws for marital support before approaching their own parents, but approaching family members can be difficult (Gill, 2004). This is depicted in Asha's narrative as she "kind of lost faith" and "could not go to his parents" because nothing changed. Her in-laws continued to blame her and influence the husband's actions. Similarly, when I asked Neha whether she told her family members especially her in-laws with whom she was living about the abuse, she stated the following:

> I tell my family first. My mother-in-law, my father-in-law, my brother-in-law and sister-in-law. Almost eighteen years and I tried best for I am explain for everything, but it continued. Nobody give me help. Then sometime I inform my parents almost it's 3-4 year after living here. Then I talk to my parents, I have lots of problems here, but my religion they don't give me permission about or to take any step because I have already one divorce *[sic.]*.

Neha also began to feel secluded from her in-laws whom she claims were aware of what was happening, but refused to intervene because they were supporting her husband.

There is a risk of being ostracized by immediate family members, but also the larger community. When I asked Harjot why she feared reporting the abuse she said:

> Shame is the most important reason. We don't want to hurt our parents, family, and friends. Another thing is if you are the first case in the family like that then you would not approach anyone. You can die there really because I am like the first one in my family to get divorced, so I used to always think my parents would think oh nobody's daughter got divorced what happened with our daughter? Like people shouldn't say I wasn't flexible or I couldn't adjust with someone or something. So that's the feeling that comes into my mind. Another thing is that sometimes when, especially the girls who have some financial problems back home they will not even think about going back home. They won't think about going back home, but they also won't want to be a stress or burden for their

> parents. [My parents] (long pause)...they are supportive, but I had to make them understand why all of this is happening.

Another participant, Zaara mentioned how her brother was encouraging her "to make the most of it, of the marriage." She also received advice from a maternal uncle that stated to her:

> If you fight here in India nothing will happen. Your life will be pretty much done if [your husband] says "*talaq*" [divorce] here to you. Then what will you do? So it's important for you to go from here back there [to Canada]. Even if he leaves you there don't be sad about it just think about standing on your own feet. In other words become self-dependent.

Zaara was pressured by male family members to go back to her abusive husband and was willing to return to Canada to make her marriage work. Her grandmother also intervened and contacted Zaara's sister-in-law in India to say "I have come here to tell you that you can help keep this "*rishta*" [marriage] together. You should try to keep your brother's marriage alive and if it breaks that is not good. I have come here because I hope for this marriage to work." However, the sister-in-law reacted by telling her the grandmother to "stop dreaming" and that Zaara is only after her brother's money. Zaara thought her "mother-in-law and father-in-law would try to explain to their son that this is not right." Instead Zaara and another participant Jaseena recall how their in-laws would blame them and side with their husband's behaviour rather than holding the men accountable for the marriage potentially falling apart.

Emann elaborated on this idea of blame and how often the societies back in these countries like Pakistan or the community in Canada (for example, members of the local Mosque) tend to target or hold the women responsible for marital problems. Emann shares,

> I didn't get support from Muslim community though because I didn't ask or go there. I was too scared. I went two or three times to the Mosque and I talked to some ladies, but they kept blaming everything on me. They are thinking that I am supposed to go back and not raise my voice. So what husband is doing I have to support him. Some ladies they said "*haram*" [unlawful or forbidden] whatever your husband says why are you sharing with other women or involving others. Why are you telling others? You want the kids, if he wants to take the kids you get free and do whatever.

Community members may compel women to not speak about the abuse.

Similarly, Harjot mentioned how she avoided attending the local temple (Gurdwara) in Edmonton because she did not want to be shunned from members in the small knit community. She said:

> "*Gurdwara*" [temple], I think we can go there, but actually what happens there is another point I have is that we feel more ashamed from our own community, rather than Canadian or other people. We will feel more ashamed in front of them and I don't know why this feeling comes, but it comes. It happens with me too. I think ah umm...(pause) the Canadian people, divorce, separation, the exchange of kids is normal for them. There is nothing wrong with it right, but if Indian people are doing that it is something different. *Kuriyi jhandi ya ondi hai* ["the girl is going and coming." Harjot is referring to the exchange of the child because of custody and visitation rights]. So that kind of stuff and then when there is an Indian guy in the police station I don't know I feel kind of hesitant, but I don't know why. Like I think he is looking at me like I am guilty. I have that feeling actually and I don't know why. Like the very first time when I saw him [police officer from South Asian community] he was sitting at the back and he looked at me and the way he looked it was...(pause) it was I don't know uncomfortable. His looks made me feel I am wrong; I am guilty, like something like that.

Harjot believed her own community may alienate her and she worried about how she would be viewed in society. However, soon afterwards, Harjot realized she should not feel this way about her community members and confronted this fear:

> Shortly after everything happened you know what I like I didn't go to Gurdwara [temple] for two months. I didn't feel like it. Ya the day I went out, I got up and I just ironed my suit [refers to traditional clothing], got ready, put on all the makeup I was like I am happy haha (laughs), I should go out *[sic.]*.

In Emann and Harjot's discussion it is apparent that societal pressures are not just from the community back home, but also the South Asian community in Canada.

Despite this some women expressed how the societal pressures in Canada are different compared to back home and how it would be easier to live as a separated or divorced woman in Canada. For example, Zaara expressed the painful advice she received from a distant uncle in America: "'Your marriage will never work, you are better off asking for a divorce.' He also said in that country it is easier to get a divorce, but in India it is not that easy. Society and people look at it different." Jaseena echoed the same reaction as she did not regret being separated in Canada because the society in Pakistan would never support her. A leading example of this is when Neha's parents told her "one thing don't come back here because there are lots of problems here so you just face your husband there, but if you come in Pakistan lots of problems *[sic.]*." Strong societal values prevent separated or divorced women from returning to their home countries.

Conclusion

Reporting abuse in ethno-cultural communities like the South Asian does not occur easily; rather, it is shaped and compounded by the intersections of individual, societal and cultural barriers. Additionally, for immigrants the migration experience to Canada and being in an unfamiliar environment contribute to this complex problem. The narratives indicated that due to the above mentioned challenges, particularly isolation, status or other immigration—related barriers, and cultural pressures, South Asian immigrant women face greater difficulties reporting. After listening to the women it became apparent that power

used against them restricts women from reaching out for help. One prominent theme running through the narratives was how males or extended family members have more privilege than women. Power relations and the values or beliefs in the South Asian culture around power influence how decisions are being made for and by the women.

In the next chapter I asked each participant what type of support they would like to have available and the services or resources that are required to facilitate reporting of domestic violence. I discuss participant experiences in terms of how the system responds. Challenges continued to exist for women even after they reported the abuse. Thus, the core theme around power imbalance also underlines the relationships the participants had with others. The women described how when trying to escape the abuse they were further marginalized by institutions and those operating or working within them. Suggestions are offered to reduce the obstacles facing South Asian immigrant women affected by domestic violence.

Chapter Six: Perceptions of Domestic Violence Services and Implications for Service Providers

You know what, these brochures they really don't mean that much though. Because sometimes you need somebody to talk in person. I mean they always say take the brochures, take the brochures. I will put these in my purse now and then they will go home, be on the table for a couple of days and then in the garbage right away. I might see them, I might not see them. – Harjot

After listening to the experiences of the women interviewed, it became apparent that while they received formal support, some of the women have found the responses to be lacking. For example, the quote from Harjot's interview opening this chapter demonstrates the ineffectiveness of brochures and how she preferred having someone accompany her to receive help. Women like Harjot perceived they would face multiple issues and barriers when seeking services. Thus, the women's experiences tend to suggest how their encounters with the different levels of response have produced few benefits for them.

A common thread through the interviews that became apparent during interview analysis focused on revictimization and marginalization (see Figure 5-1) while using services. A failure of service delivery to understand the varied and specific needs of South Asian immigrant women in domestic violence situations can further reinforce the victimization of women. Instead of empowering women there continues to be a power imbalance present when women access formal support. These findings are not suggesting that the women were not appreciative of the services, but instead explain the relationship of power which further marginalized them.

Participants discussed their experiences of social services which included mainstream and South Asian women's organizations (SAWOs), community involvement (e.g. neighbours), the shelter system, criminal justice system (CJS) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). This chapter is organized by how women evaluated the available social services and community response alongside their involvement with other key agencies. The findings that emerged around the following two questions are grounded in the experiences and insights the participants shared during the interviews: 1) what kinds of support would South Asian immigrant women like to have available that might facilitate reporting of domestic violence?; 2) what types of services and resources are required for South Asian immigrant women who experience domestic violence?

Rather than answering these research questions directly, some of the women focused their responses on strengthening the on-the-ground community level response. During each interview, the women expressed a strong need for culturally/linguistically appropriate services (e.g. availability of interpreters, have resources in various languages) which echoed the perspectives of service providers in the existing literature (Agnew, 1998a, b; Smith, 2004). A number of key recommendations emerged, but before describing them, it is important to contextualize the findings by drawing attention to the women's experiences with various services in Edmonton, Alberta.

Mainstream and South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs)

The women shared their thoughts on the services provided by mainstream organizations in relation to South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs).

Mainstream services aim to be inclusive of all abused women rather than categorizing or grouping women to a specific community or culture. In the past these mainstream services have been criticized for dismissing other cultures (Agnew, 1998b). However, in recent years an effort has been made for mainstream organizations to become more accessible to immigrants and people from diverse backgrounds. In contrast, ethno-cultural services such as SAWOs are operated for and by a particular community to meet their clients' language or other culturally specific needs (Agnew, 1998b). Over the last decade there is also a growing number of SAWOs in the United States (Abraham, 2000a; Dasgupta, 2000b; Merchant 2000) and it is likely that these organizations will continue to expand across Canada as well.

Some women stated a preference for a SAWO over a mainstream organization, some preferred the opposite (e.g. a mainstream organization over a SAWO), while others had no preference. Asha states "I think it really doesn't matter if it's South Asian or whatsoever; I think everybody is doing a really good job." Again the findings are also not suggesting that a South Asian worker is ideal, but that some immigrants may have a preference or easier time reporting to service providers when the culture is understood. When I asked Asha about her experience in disclosing the abuse to a mainstream organization and SAWO she said the following:

> For me it really didn't matter so much, but umm...honestly the difference was...there was a line of difference as in the Indian organizations know the background. They know as to what dowry means, what men think like, and they know what the expectations of NRI's [non-resident Indians] are. They know as to how the mind frame works of Indians, where in the English people I had to explain everything to them. I have to let them

> know that this is what my culture is. That's how things work there. So it's like tedious to make them understand as to what's going on.

Sometimes women feel the need to inform or educate staff on their culture and workers may not understand easily. There are several benefits and potential drawbacks with both types of organizations, but again this depends on each person accessing the services.

Cultural Competency and Collaboration

In the literature the terms cultural sensitivity, culturally appropriate and cultural competency are used interchangeably, but not clearly defined (Ahmad, Diver, McNally and Stewart, 2009; Kang, 2006; Papp, 2010). I use the term cultural competency to refer to how individuals and systems respectfully respond to individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds in a manner where it is evident their culture is being understood (Agnew, 1998a, b; Chokshi et al., 2010; Papp, 2010; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004). Compared to mainstream organizations, SAWOs are perceived to have a greater understanding of the cultural piece (e.g. South Asian traditions and how violence occurs across a woman's life span). Raj and Silverman (2002) argue that staff members from mainstream and immigrant serving agencies need to collaborate. This perception is echoed by the narratives of the women, who stressed how it is necessary to bridge the gap between various agencies/services and that South Asian workers or SAWOs can assist in cultural competency training for those who are working within mainstream organizations.

Some women found that there is a lack of cultural understanding from some service providers due to ignorance. Some agency workers do not understand

South Asian marriage practices. Emann was taken to a mainstream organization where she met a South Asian social worker who was nice and helpful. She explained how the staff member understood certain things because "she speaks the same language and knows my culture stuff." However, sometimes staff at mainstream organizations thought she was a fool or lying to them. They would say to her "how can your jewellery be with her [mother-in-law]? It's a tradition and why your mom give you too much jewellery, but they supposed to give us. Like when my daughter is going to get married I have to give her because that is tradition and some cultural values *[sic.]*." Emann was not suggesting the staff at the mainstream organization did not help her, but instead they struggled to understand the cultural practices and could not speak her language. She appreciated how when she approached a SAWO they knew the cultural background and language so when she explained her problems they could relate.

Other participants I spoke to identified how helpful it was to speak to someone who shares the same culture and language skills. Jaseena said,

> [i]t's really good for you, you know sometime you don't have nothing, so if someone talk to you its help. You get so many things from there [for example, she learned that she should not leave Canada for Pakistan]. This is another good thing or point, the first time when I talked to the organization I cannot speak very well so I said I want to talk to someone who speak in Urdu. So I explain my feeling and then they get my number, after awhile the lady she called me. Her name was Shazia (fictional name) she was speaking Urdu, my language. Then she talked to me and I said to her I want to talk tell her the story. She spent three hours with me and two-three times I went to there, I get so many things like other people's experiences how they are weak, strong, and how they did. ...Everybody was nice, Shazia was not there, but other ones they help me a lot so I was comfortable. I am woman so I went to this mission and speak little bit that time. So that organization is really good to help and sometimes we cannot express ourselves. In our language we express everything and then that

> helps. So I think from everywhere and every country and every language at least one or two people they work in one organization, it helps *[sic.]*.

Some participants like Jaseena continued to stress the need to hire more South Asian workers especially at mainstream organizations. Emann also disclosed in her narrative how there is a need for more South Asian workers because as far as culture and domestic violence go they understand the community especially since they are a part of it. Emann pointed out how there are still a small number of South Asian workers in Edmonton, which is problematic because when a South Asian social worker at a mainstream organization, for example, is away on holidays, who are you to contact? In her own words, "I think like I am seeing less people in our community who are Asian in this social worker field so they should hire more. Hire more Pakistani ladies and stuff like even at the mainstream organizations."

Additionally, there are linguistic benefits to hiring more South Asian staff because they speak a number of different languages and have a better understanding of the cultural context around the abuse. As Jaseena said "[i]t was all helpful. I cannot speak so they gave me an interpreter at the organization and I was fine with this. First it was hard because I didn't know the [English] language, but I never give up." Unfortunately, women who cannot speak fluent English are also unable to access written information about services, and often interpreters are not available. Later in her interview, Jaseena spoke about a woman at this organization being from her community and how she appreciated that she also knows her cultural way of life, particularly how marriages work. Other participants also welcomed staff who spoke their language and shared the same

ethnic/racial background. Another participant Neha felt comfortable talking to someone at a mainstream organization once an interpreter was brought in from a different mainstream organization. This demonstrates how some organizations are attempting to collaborate to support women with their language barrier needs.

The women emphasized a growing need for culturally competent services or support where there is a representation of diversity in staff who are familiar with the clients' cultural background. However, not all the participants felt staff should share the same culture or language skills as the client, but rather should have some training or basic knowledge of the South Asian culture. For example, Jaseena said it is better to reach out to a mainstream organization, but since she could not speak English it was helpful to have "people from other countries [working] there." She does not believe that the women need to be served by people from the same ethnic or cultural backgrounds. As Agnew (1998b) explains there is "a feeling of commonality" if women can relate to the person providing support because they are "female, immigrant, and non-White" (p. 166).

Professionalism

There were a few concerns expressed by some women when it came to boundaries between a client and self. Much to my surprise some participants reported how a few South Asian service providers walked over the fine line of professionalism. Some of the participants in this study were treated inappropriately by the professionals of South Asian descent they turned to for support. This finding implies that there is a need to emphasize professionalism (e.g. a code of ethics) in both training of staff and ongoing accountability. A

professional code of ethics focuses on the individual service provider and his or her personal conduct when working with a client.

Furthermore, part of professionalism is the importance of confidentiality when working with a South Asian client. Sometimes a South Asian worker may know the family members of the person approaching them for help. For example, Emann felt betrayed by a SAWO staff member because the worker had known her mother-in-law. “I talked to her like a lady and personally I opened up to her and what she did was talk to my mother-in-law”! Word travels fast in the South Asian community, and this can cause more harm or put the women at greater risk. Thus, the safety, privacy and anonymity of the client should be protected at all times.

Others, like Neha, expressed similar problems when approaching SAWOs and speaking to their South Asian workers. Neha talked about how a South Asian worker refused to support her once she shared her story, saying “I know your husband.” The woman who is well known to the Muslim community declined to help her because she could foresee a conflict of interest. When Neha made several attempts to seek help through this SAWO in finding a shelter and employment, she was let down: “What kind of help did she give me? Never help! I am disappointed, I grab my bag and then I cry and go away.” I could sense Neha’s disappointment in her tone of voice as she talked about inappropriate treatment which deterred her from further seeking help from SAWOs. Therefore, women may seek out mainstream services to avoid interacting with members of their own ethnic community.

Some women reached out for help, but were revictimized by service providers (see Figure 5-1). Three out of the seven women (Asha, Emann and Neha) I spoke to shared similar views about a consistent problem of South Asian social workers at SAWOs mistreating them. Mainstream organizations seemed less likely to do this and seemed to follow stricter rules, but again it is difficult to fully know this because in three of the interviews conducted a South Asian worker from a mainstream organization was present. Nonetheless, one participant, Asha described an experience she had with a male South Asian worker from a SAWOs when she was taken into his own home over a shelter. "This guy said in Hindi "acha tum to bethi jasi ho" [you are like my own daughter] and I have two daughters so you can come and stay with us. Whatever money you have you can give it to us." Asha accepted the offer even though she recognized how this was illegal. The social worker said to her,

> I am going out of my way to help you because you are like my daughter so just come and stay with us. We would be happy to keep you just like our own daughter and whatever money you have we are ok with, like just pay us a decent amount. Ya, so I said ok. Now these guys were in Beaumount [a community outside of Edmonton]. Which is like, I never knew where Beaumont is. I didn't know anything that time so I just went along with them and then there were no buses there, no commuting, I was stuck! These guys used to go for their jobs at six in the morning and used to come back around six in the evening. So I used to go out everyday. I used to ensure that I went to every organization possible here, no matter what. Although I never got help from most of them, but still I went just to seek information from them. I used to visit every place I could.

Asha highlighted how she sought refuge at this male social worker's home, but was expected to pay rent and complete household tasks.

However, Asha continued to seek help and gather as much information as possible during this time to improve her situation. She explained how,

> That's a habit of mine, I believe in engaging and seeking out as much information as I can. Which helped me a lot! So that is what I used to do, but these guys they treated me badly. I mean again I got a hit there because it was like sugar coated words initially, but when you get inside the house Indians are used to maids and maid servants. Ah, it was bad. So these guys took money from me, monthly rent and everything. No rent receipt, nothing, no rental agreement. So that's again another recommendation that I want you to note. Whenever you get into somebody's house, no matter "uncle hai, aunty hai, bura hai or kitna be sheriff dektha hai" [no matter if they are an uncle, aunt, or old person who looks nice or seems nice], whatever they are please find/sign a rental agreement and then get into any place. Otherwise it's going to be a mess, a big mess!

Asha had no way of proving that she lived with this family and regrets her decision to stay with them. "Yes, that's the biggest mistake I did. I just trusted their words and that they are committing" to help. I was surprised when Asha shared this experience with me and asked if she went back to the SAWO to report what had happened. She said "no, because I actually thought this guy helped me in some way and I never wanted to put his job into trouble because he is not actually supposed to do that." It is evident in this passage that Asha knows that the male social worker acted unethically.

Unfortunately, Asha was treated like a servant and was required to adhere to traditional South Asian gender roles. Asha continued to share the negative experience and how angry she was because the social worker's wife used to verbally abuse her. "Literally she used to "hindi meh galiyah na galithi si mujh ko, abi barthan da, abi yeh kam kar woh kam kar or literally mujshe bolthi si veh bar kuw jathi, kar meh rakha humara kar ka kam kar" [she used to swear at me in Hindi and ask me to work in her home and ask me why I go out and to stay

indoors to complete chores in her home]. Asha at this point in the interview raises her voice to recap how she

> used to help her out. I am paying the rent come on! I am paying for the food too, why the hell do you want me to do every nasty thing in your house. Am I here to clean your toilets and everything? What do you expect of me? But still I was like I didn't have that strength to argue with somebody at that point in time and this lady already I had gone through so much and she used to do the same what my husband used to do [participant is referring to how the woman treated her and verbally abused her]. I was like so much depressed and it was like "depression ke upar ek hor depression" [on top of one sickness another, depression]. Somebody is trying to pressurize you and control. I used to sit in a corner, never used to sleep and used to keep on crying. I used to think "meri galthi kya hai, mena kya keyah? Meh jo tume boltha hai karthi ha jasa har chej to karthi." [I used to think what's wrong with me, what have I done? Whatever you have asked I do]. Then she was like "jo tum pasa dethi kamra meh hor pasa deh, hor pasa deh. Meh kaha seh lakah owha?" [She used to ask for more money for the room and I am thinking where I can get more money from]. Look at my situation first!

Asha's aggravation is apparent in the above passage and shows how not only mainstream organizations but also SAWOs that claim to offer culturally competent services can be insensitive in supporting women.

Community Involvement

In addition to their mistreatment from organization workers, other women mentioned being neglected by the general public. These comments are important, as the problem is not just gaining access to mainstream or SAWO services, but having support from the community. Asha, Emann, Neha and others I spoke to were very angry and upset at how members of the South Asian community treated them:

> You know honestly speaking that's the mistake I did probably; I thought that ok I am an Indian and I have my own community people they must be good. Ok, but "koi karab nikla to zarori to nahee hai" every time, everybody is not the same [that even though one person might have been

> bad it does not mean that has to be the case every time]. So might as well it's like my own culture, they would understand my problem better than someone else. Another thing, another recommendation is never talk about your personal details to others because the moment people know that you are all alone in this country, you have nobody here, and they will try to exploit you. Especially Indians for that matter of fact, they know how to take undue advantage of you.

Later in her interview Asha mentions how she went to stay with another Indian family, a South Indian family:

> Again I had no contract it was like this you know it's silly, but you still get trapped with their sugar coated words when they are like ok, you are like a daughter to us. You know we have our kids, but you are like a kid to us. Then again you get trapped. Again I made the same mistake no lease agreement or anything. I went with these guys, this lady again used to be at work and I used to be at home. Though I used to go for my own search every day, but still she was like ok, "kana banado, yeh banado, tora tora shuru kartha kartha" [she used to say make food] it's like you start with a bit and it's like they dump everything on your head slowly and gradually. Even if on a single day or some point of time you say no to it, like my health doesn't afford to do all of that crazy stuff, all the day every time so it's like the clash begins. If you say no, there you go you face the consequences. Then finally this lady too, "[g]et out of my house." It's like either, "[y]ou do what I say" or just mind your way. So where do I go at the nick of the hour at least give me some time to find my own place, but it's like no get out. It's like where to go? Shelter is a final resort, I have no choice now.

Preet shared a comparable experience after she spent some time in a senior shelter for abused women and then went to stay with a South Asian co-worker's daughter's family. She describes how she was neglected and treated like a maid, but also became a babysitter for their six month old child. This was difficult for her because she said, "I would work and then they had a kid, a baby that I would look after. I would look after the kid first and then go to work. I would also do all their housework too." Preet spoke up to the couple and said it was unfair that they were charging her $300 for rent. "I look after your child, also

I give you rent and do your housework." Preet refused to pay rent and eventually left. Immediately after this negative experience she found another place through an ad posted at the "*Gurdwara*" (temple). She discovered that the new landlords were from the same village in India as her mother. Preet became really close to this family after living with them for a year. The family took care of her, gave her a room of her own and even bought her personal items to make her feel welcomed. Her experience was great and the family still continues to assist her. Preet reflected on how the two living situations were different because the first landlords did not treat her with respect and verbally abused her. They basically took advantage of her situation and gave her a hard time. She says "[j]ust like how I was treated at my own home and fleeing. They had done the same thing to me by mistreating me."

Women like Preet shared their experiences, but also expressed how people from their own community need to feel responsible to help women in abusive relationships. However, some women had more positive experiences with people from their own communities. Jaseena's main sources of support were close friends and a lawyer from the South Asian community who were supportive and guided her through the difficult times. She states in her interview, "[y]ou know I am a lucky woman—all my friends they are really good to me and they helped me a lot. I think my circle of friends is good."

Stereotypes held by the other Subcultures and Dominant Society

In some of the narratives, women expressed how their Canadian neighbours ignored the violence and sometimes held negative racial and ethnic

stereotypes as to why women of colour from certain countries are abused. For example, Asha asked the Chinese lady next door to help her out, "I told her could you please in order to save my life, I need your help, could you just help me out? She said no, I don't want to get involved. She said no straightaway. So that was painful again." Zaara shared a similar experience when her neighbour in the apartment building started knocking on the door. "He began saying, 'What is going on? What are you doing? You are Indian! What is happening? This is Canada and you cannot do this." The Canadian neighbour had heard Zaara's husband hitting her and left once her husband opened the door to apologize.

Unlike the other women, Emann found her Canadian neighbour to be quite helpful as he called the police several times, and during one incident when she forgot her purse inside her home he offered to give her money. Emann also believed that even though there were many Pakistani neighbours and "one Sardar [Sikh family], they don't interfere because they have their own issues too. That's the worst thing in our community—nobody interferes." Much to her surprise the Canadian neighbour did take action to assist her with personal matters which saved her life. Unfortunately, we need to see more of this type of intervention to help protect women from violence, especially since stereotyping of minorities or immigrants by the dominant society is a strong disincentive for abused women to reach out for help.

Shelter System

Shelters are another area of service provision that women spoke about. Shelters are generally considered a safe haven for women who need to leave their

abusive situations immediately, but the women interviewed did not always feel this way. For some of the women (Asha, Harjot, Zaara and Preet) their perceptions of utilizing shelter services changed for the better after actually experiencing a stay in one. According to Asha, women "should have information and they should know that shelters are to help and that it's a safe place to be in." Asha regretted not going to a shelter sooner and Harjot thought "that sometimes we might think it is a bad experience going to a shelter, but I think sometimes you get valuable tools from there."

On the contrary, two women were opposed to shelters. Jaseena was uncertain of the conditions and did not know what to expect. She still feels that the concept of shelters is "not a good one" and that women should be given more rights to fight within their own home. Jaseena's perception of a shelter was based on what she heard at a workshop from a woman who said it was really difficult to go and stay in one, for example, because of the food, but Jaseena herself never went to one.

Emann, on the other hand, refused to stay in the shelter that was made available to her because it was outside of Edmonton as the other ones in the city were full. She was scared and concerned about her children, but also dietary needs (e.g. she said you should have the right to cook your own food). Instead of commuting so far she stayed in a hotel for two weeks. Another concern she had was with only being offered a two week stay in a shelter. She stressed how front-line workers need to be flexible with the length of shelter stay, especially because many immigrants are without immediate family in Canada which leaves them

with nowhere to go. “Two weeks you can’t do anything, you are emotionally stressed and of course you have just escaped from your own house. At the same time you are dealing with lots of stuff. Then after two weeks you have to leave the shelter, that’s not enough time.”

Furthermore, four out of the seven women (Asha, Harjot, Zaara and Preet) actually stayed in a shelter. One woman experienced a difficult time adjusting to the mainstream women shelter program (WIN House 1). Harjot spoke about how uncomfortable she was in the shelter environment:

> There were girls with the cigarettes and oh my god whole body pierced! Weird girls there! I was so scared there! Oh, but what I used to do was, I would go in the room and stay in the room with [my daughter] because I was so scared to come out. You won’t even believe I didn’t even eat much there, I was like never hungry. At night it was like nine o’clock and I told the director there because like only time I went downstairs from the room I talked to the director and the girls working there. I didn’t feel comfortable talking to any of those girls staying there. Oh my god, they were like...the clothes they were wearing and the ways they would behave. Ah I don’t know. They were very weird girls I had ever seen in my life *[sic.]*.

Harjot struggled with the shelter environment and another participant Emann shared similar views about the conditions. She said they are good, “except there should be some Asian shelter where we don’t see Canadian people who are smoking or you know drinking. Stuff like this we are scared from.” Harjot also described her experience with the “workers in the shelter [and how] they are indifferent. They also don’t really respect you or treat you with respect. They are rude actually.” In the shelter Harjot found most of the staff to be rude, except one and she thinks this is because “they are old ladies hired there and they are overly tired, burnt out.” She also said “there are no sources [resources]. You have to like

probe [the staff] for the sources [resources].” What Harjot would do is “at night when all the girls went into their rooms, I would bring my daughter and I would sit with the ladies who work there actually. I used to ask them like how can I do that, what can I do? How do these things work here?” Eventually she managed to get some assistance from the staff at the shelter.

Other women (Asha and Zaara) had more positive views about shelters as their cultural and linguistic needs were met at the new immigrant women’s shelter (WIN House 3). Although Emann never stayed at the new shelter she did have strong views after hearing about it. She said,

> one is not enough though. You should make another and hire more people especially more women social workers. I am not saying just social workers, but people who can stay and help in the shelter. Like who can understand the language and culture especially with cooking food or other needs.

Another participant, Asha said “I went to WIN House, WIN House 3, that’s again a different concept which just started off when I went there. I think I was amongst the first ones to be there.” When I asked Asha, about her stay in WIN 3 she started to tell me how positive it was:

> since WIN 3 is a little different concept than the other shelters. It’s like you have your own kitchen and you are supposed to cook for yourself. When I went there it was initially just two people, one family upstairs and I was downstairs. You had your own space. It was like your own basement suite where you had your kitchen, your bath, your lobby, tv, your room, and everything. It was pretty. For me, it was a positive experience because I was coming from hell. I was like falling in one ditch to the other to the third. That was happening to me. So I never got any piece of mind so for me this was like heaven because I was falling from one [situation] to the other, landing into some other problem.

Asha appreciated having her own living space and the opportunity to cook her own meals. When I asked her if she would recommend WIN House 3 to others she said,

> [y]es, absolutely! Especially the South Asian community. I think it's basically you know, you have people who understand Hindi too. Ladies who have language barriers can get help there and then it's like your own separate unit too, but now its like again a lot of people. Because I was the first one to go and then later on after sometime there are a lot of people who are in there. Lots of kids and everything, so again it was crowded, but it's really nice though. They take really good care of you and provide whatever food you want. They take care of your health too and everything. It's really nice and for me it was actually a home away from home. It was really a pleasant experience.

Zaara also was lucky to stay at WIN House 3 and found it to be a positive experience as she found the staff helpful. Zaara had some knowledge of women's shelters as her uncle in America had previously educated her, stating it "provides accommodation for women. Shelters have private rooms. Then I remembered that in my mind about what a shelter is." Overall, she said "shelter is a good place that helps women in need." She has also met other women from different communities who spoke various languages and enjoyed cooking her own meals.

Some shelter programs as described by the above women are sensitive to food and language, but not so much religious beliefs. For example, Preet had the opportunity to make her own food because the shelter adapted to suit her needs. The shelter workers would bring her everything she required to cook her ethnic dishes and sometimes she would bring her own items. "I would only make Indian food though and I told them that I don't like this other food. I said I would like to make my own food." She was allowed to cook her own meals while she stayed at the shelter specific to abused elderly women for three months. However, despite

this Preet still struggled with having her linguistic and religious needs met. She had access only a few times to a South Asian social worker/interpreter who spoke her language, and during her stay at the shelter she was the only South Asian woman staying there. Preet felt completely isolated in the shelter because of language barriers.

Preet relied on religious mechanisms to help her cope. She explains how she initially knew her

> mind would not be ok in the shelter because there was no Punjabi person there for me to speak with. I was just going to be expected to stay indoors and my mind/brain was puzzled. Then from the family friend/South Asian worker [who facilitated her going to the shelter]. I was given this radio and one tape of "*Gurbani*" [religious hymns]. I would put the "*Gurbani*" tape on and when the radio show would come on at that time I would listen to that. Then slowly I would get better also throughout the day I would do "*paat*" [pray]. I would listen to "*Gurbani*" and also do "*paat*" then the time would pass. Slowly my mind started focusing on that.

Religion as mentioned in the previous chapter became a strong point for Preet during her time of crisis and she would pray for her situation to improve. She said if she did not have the "*Gurbani*" during her time at the shelter it would have been difficult for her to stay there. After all it was the spiritual healing or guidance that helped her to not feel hopeless and gave her strength to carry on. Preet discussed the insensitivity to religious needs in shelters and how they should accommodate women's religious or spiritual needs by allowing them the opportunity to pray and meditate. Shelters should better support women like Preet to exercise religious and/or spiritual practices by asking whether religious texts are needed, but also supplying them. A woman fleeing her home most likely has not had the chance to

obtain her personal belongings or spiritual texts. Systemic changes in shelters can create a space for women to heal spiritually.

Criminal Justice System (CJS)

During the interviews, women also touched on offensive incidents that illustrated how and why they lacked trust in the police. They felt disrespected by authorities in the CJS and felt the legal system let them down. Almost all of the participants said they did not know Canadian laws around abuse and feared dealing with the unknown CJS and legal process. Thus, the legal system should be explained to new immigrants (Merali, 2008). There is a need to increase the understanding of legal rights and statutes; for example, a non-citizen immigrant cannot be deported if abuse is reported to authorities or service providers. Without awareness of such resources South Asian immigrant women will not act on the violence against them and will remain silent about the battering because they face threats of deportation or further abuse. Cases of discrimination from police officers and inappropriate legal representation were repeatedly brought into the discussion by the participants; thus, it seems imperative to share their concerns in this section.

Police Behaviour

Police officers' attitudes towards women in abusive situations needs to be responsive and woman-friendly. For example, Emann had a negative encounter with a police officer who started yelling at her for hesitating to provide a statement. Emann explained how the police officer reacted: "this guy, I must say he was rude. He was very strict and he said because of your kind of women men

get worse and worse. I was so scared." Later in her interview, she states that even though the police officer was rude he did encourage her to speak up and "according to the law he was doing the right thing." Emann also justified why the police officer was impolite and explained how he was trying to protect her from the abuse.

Asha also had a negative experience when the police were called to her home, and she stated how the officer spoke to her disrespectfully:

> He just said this to me, "Why don't you go back home in case if you miss your family and if things are not working out for you? You should get back home." That was again another kind of hurting thing, because it's like already I have lost everything. It was like what face do I take and get back home now.

She continued to explain how the police officer in a position of authority misunderstood her situation and simply advised her to return home which is never easy for a woman from the South Asian community. Asha says,

> [y]es, so it was like I already was falling through such a shattering situation and then somebody [police officer] tells me to go back home. I mean it's like dying! It's almost as if I already lost my life and it's like dying once all over again. I could not make him [police officer] understand anything, but it was such a painful thing to hear that thing at that point of time. Which was actually not fair, I realize that.

Asha believes the police officer lacked culturally competent training (e.g. stigma associated with being separated) and did not really understand what it means to tell an immigrant woman from the South Asian community to return to her home country. A recommendation she provided is to ensure that police officers are given some kind of briefing about the South Asian culture, society and how people think in their home countries. According to her, police officers do not understand the mental trauma and environment women will be returning to if they

were to leave Canada or break up a marriage. Asha also pointed out a need to educate police officers about the culture because a greater number of South Asian people are living in Canada today than before.

Additionally, Asha mentioned how abusers should be removed from the home rather than abused immigrant women who have nowhere to go. In fact she found it strange that the police officers were asking her if she had a place to stay. In the end she ended up in a hotel room alone until other living arrangements were made. She felt police orders or laws should support women and give them the freedom to stay in their own home safely while the abuser is ordered to leave.

Other women like Harjot touched on how to remove CJS barriers such as "fear of police." Harjot and Emann discussed how people are less likely to approach police officers, but there should be opportunities for police officers or volunteers from the South Asian community who can speak the language to be present in police stations and the "*Gurdwara*" [temple] every Sunday to answer any questions. Likewise Emann said there is a need to hire more South Asian people who understand the culture, but also "Punjabi, Hindi or Urdu, [because] these are the basic languages. I know elder abuse is common too, and these elders can't understand or speak English, but there is nobody available to help them." Emann was reluctant to speak to authorities, however, her daughter wanted to tell police officers everything when they intervened in her situation, but none of them spoke the same language as them. Thus, Emann argues that there is a strong need to "hire more people with the same language skills from the community." There tends to be few experienced and trained interpreters for Edmonton Police Services

(EPS) and other agencies (e.g. court, health care and community setting). Interpretation becomes problematic in situations of domestic violence when it is informally done or children are interpreting. Other times professional interpreters or those informally interpreting are inadequate because they do not specialize in the domestic violence context which results in miscommunication.

Other women talked about more positive interactions they had when police officers spoke their language. For example, Neha appreciated how her landlord, a Canadian constable, went out of his way to connect her with two Punjabi police officers who could speak her language. The one Punjabi officer said "tusi bolo" [go ahead and talk]. He would speak to her in Punjabi and say explain everything to me in your own language because I can still understand. This allowed Neha to feel comfortable sharing her story with the EPS members who seemed nice, trustworthy and supportive. Preet echoed a similar response when a Punjabi police officer from her community supported her. She said "the police officer was a Punjabi guy. He asked me questions in Punjabi and I was able to answer."

Some women expressed how police officers provided helpful resources; for example, Asha was given a resource called the "family violence card."[41] Asha read the information on the card provided by the officer and,

[41] Asha refers to the victim services pamphlet that has this card which is usually handed out by police officers in domestic disputes. This card was present at the time of the interview on the table. Asha asked me if she could keep this card because she really felt it saved her life. I allowed her to. Another participant, Harjot pointed at this pamphlet and many others. She said "I had all of these pamphlets." Emann also recognized this resource from EPS and said she received this card with all these numbers the first time she met with them and it was helpful. She also was familiar with many of the other resources and said they were provided in English, but not in her language. She said she was given "this kind of stuff and they [those providing the resources] ask me if I need a translator or interpreter, but I don't think they arrange it. They told me and I said I can understand

> found a number, called the emergency protection order (EPO) and all this stuff happened on a Friday. So everything was closed [another systemic problem]. All the officers and everything were on voicemail. I almost called everybody and shelters I wasn't really sure of. So that's the reason why I didn't really take a move. I never wanted to go there initially. Rest of the officers and everything were on voicemail, so I could just get across this EPO thing which is when I met a lady, she picked up the phone and I told her my situation. She said on the internet is this form EPO—fill that out and go to the court.

Luckily Asha managed to use the internet to download and complete the form. She then found her way to appear in court before a judge who understood her situation and granted an EPO for nine days. "[The judge] said you will have to request it further for the extension and you will have to go to the Queen's Bench court." Thus, after eighteen days she appeared before the Queen's Bench to have the EPO changed to one year.

At this point, it should be noted here that, unlike Asha, women may not have strong enough writing or reading skills to complete paperwork, for example, an EPO and a police report which require them to share their story. Thus, they remain silent because of language issues so there is a need to have professional interpreters available to hear their story (Smith, 2004) and assist them in completing the necessary forms or paperwork. A recent study by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) focuses on violence against immigrant and visible minority women, but primarily how the first report or response to violence at this level is to break the silence (Smith, 2004).

Often immigrant women fear the police and feel they are in trouble with the law. For example, Asha feared the police because her husband

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everything if you can talk I can understand everything, but you have to say one thing two times and then I will understand *[sic.]*." This pamphlet has recently been translated in Punjabi to work towards breaking language barriers for immigrant women in the South Asian community.

> even made up a story. He was telling the cops that she came here to get married to me. I mean she married me to get into Canada. I was like what's going on here and still I was like so much shattered with whatever was happening. I just kept crying, crying and crying and just zipped up. Didn't even utter a single word. He said "yeh tu shaadi mujshe Canada hona ke liyi keya" [she just got married to me to gain entry into Canada].

Often there is a significant difference between the police systems in Canada and other countries, but participants like Asha feel it is important for women to know

> [w]hat and how the Canadian police work here. Which is really a good thing, they believe in people's safety, in organizing peace and they help people out. On the contrary in India when you call cops they are going to be so rude to you and no one wants to see them. That's a last resort people go for.

This finding indicates how immigrant women have certain perceptions about the police in Canada especially since the CJS in their home countries can be deceiving.

Women expressed a need for police officers to focus on professional boundaries and to reduce social control. Barriers such as language and fear of authorities prevented some women from interacting with the police.

Legal Representation: Legal Aid

For some of the women, dealing with legal concerns was difficult, for example, encountering the court system for an EPO. However, three women (Asha, Harjot and Zaara) managed to obtain restraining orders against their partners, whereas Harjot was also able to file one against her mother-in-law. Even though EPO orders were successfully granted to protect women they were not always the best solution for these women. [42] For example, Asha's EPO order was

[42] An EPO order does not always protect children, but prohibits direct or indirect contact, for example, the abuser/respondent has to remain a certain distance away from the person/claimant

converted into a mutual restraining order which means she is equally responsible for the abuse. This occurred due to the legal representation that Asha had. However in Asha's case she leveraged her disappointment and complained to legal aid.

> I went back to the legal aid office and reported that lawyer. I said this is what is being done to me and this is not justified. So what they did was they gave me a new lawyer. A new lawyer who just started participating a few months ago. Can you believe it? He is totally fresh and a new lawyer. Both these lawyers till date, not even a single affidavit and not even a single document from my side has been filed. It's more than one year now, nothing has happened till date! I am so not impressed with the legal system. I used to think that the system is slow in India, but it is equally as a good as it is [in Canada] it's the same, no difference. It's like so slow! That I am totally fed up of it and I feel like withdrawing the case. I want to shut it off now.

Harjot's mother-in-law also made sure her lawyer changed the restraining order to a peace bond so the responsibility did not lie with her. Harjot's lawyer said,

> its ok that's fine she [mother-in-law] will not come near you and all this stuff, but the only thing I said to the lawyer is that peace bond is a very good idea. Like you can hurt anybody, you can do whatever then there is a peace bond (being sarcastic), that's a very nice idea though. She was like well that's what our judicial system is and all that. I was like ok, that's fine.

Harjot expected more from the justice system and felt that police protection orders are not fully set up to include orders against extended family members. Aside from EPO orders, approaching legal services or speaking to a lawyer was equally challenging, and the women interviewed stated that the legal system in general required improvements.

The women also described other problems they encountered with lawyers refusing to listen to what they were saying or not offering meaningful advice to

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who has been granted an EPO. Unfortunately, an EPO does not resolve the domestic dispute and often claimants have to seek other remedies.

improve their clients' situations. For example, Asha's lawyer through legal aid suggested she leave the house that belongs to her husband since he has been operating his business out of it. In court her husband emphasized how his income was being affected because he was unable to live and operate his business from his own home. Asha says:

> [t]hat being a man [the lawyer] he took the soft corner and thought that ok this might be the case as well so he gave him the benefit of doubt. So finally when he said all that crap in the court the judge still could not do anything, he simply said you will have to wait until the next hearing I can't do anything about it. That was that. Then finally my lawyer suggested to me that's his house, his business is getting hampered and as you saw that things might get into his favour and finally you might have to leave the house. You are the one that will have to leave the house and I was like ok. See it's like no matter whatever happened, I thought my lawyer was going to do the best possible thing in my interest. He is going to safe guard my interest and he is going to do everything for my benefit. So he suggested to me as it is the house belongs to him and it's going to go back to him. The sooner the better you leave it.

Some of the women interviewed did not have positive comments to make about their involvement with legal aid lawyers and instead disclosed similar frustrations like Asha's.

Four out of the seven women (Asha, Harjot, Emann and Neha) had negative experiences when trying to locate "good" legal representation. Women like Asha, Harjot and Emann were frustrated that their husbands had a lot of money to obtain good lawyers while they had no choice but to approach services under legal aid provisions. Legal aid provides legal services depending on whether the person is financially eligible based on income level. Even so, legal aid is not a free service and for the most part is used by people with low income. Furthermore, legal aid is a time-consuming process, and the women who used it

would like to see a faster approach or rather a legal system that recognizes their concerns. As Asha explained, the most common complaint she had is "legal aid takes a lot of time. Again that is very time consuming. It takes months together to get you in." Even though Asha had approached legal aid herself and filled out the application to begin the process she was put on a waiting list and told that it might take some time. Thus, she suggests reducing wait list times because the wait period does not help women receive assistance. Similarly, Harjot explained how she was not given a lawyer for a long time through legal aid. She said, "I had to call them every day, everyday asking what's happening."

Additionally, in Asha's narrative she touched on how the lawyers are too busy or preoccupied with other cases. When she used to contact her lawyer he would say he did not have time because he had 300 files lying in his office. He would respond

> "What do you think—I am just sitting here to work on your case alone?" So that's the way he used to talk to me and I was like so much hurt with the fact that all this when he turned my case upside down and not even once did he sit with me to talk to me. He didn't even know what all my case is about. He didn't even have time to go through my file or didn't even have time to speak to me. I met him whatsoever two times or three times and it appears to be that its fifteen minutes now tell me what do you have to say? Not even a single affidavit is filed to date, what does that mean? I mean I really feel like raising my voice against this. More than one plus year, it's like what is this a joke? I mean at least something and I understand the legal crises. I realize that and respect everything that is going on. I realize that everything is fair, but then again how fair? Somebody who is going through so much at least there should be somebody to make me understand or tell me how it works.

Harjot also described a somewhat similar experience when her lawyer did not call her back for sixteen or seventeen days. "I have been calling my lawyer and she doesn't even bother to call back. I don't know why." Harjot was irritated

especially since she was being billed for services she felt she was not receiving. She described how dissatisfied she was:

> Yes, like they don't provide the legal aid like let the people go on their own. Then we can figure out if we can afford a lawyer or not. I am stuck to her right now. I appealed to legal aid three times. I want my lawyer changed, I want my lawyer changed and they said no! Your appeal has been cancelled; your appeal has been dismissed. Either provide free service or don't even give it. That's fine, that's ok we don't pay for the legal aid, but we pay the lawyer. They assign the lawyer who sends the bill to legal aid who has our accounts so they keep billing us.

Similarly, Emann reinforces how legal aid is an unfair process and that there is still a fee associated with the services even though it is at a lower rate compared to private lawyers. She too wanted to change her lawyer because he really was not supporting the case, but she would have to pay a ridiculous fee. Emann explained when you are already spending $3000 it is not easy to think of switching lawyers through legal aid. The social worker Emann was working with at the time was encouraging her to fight for her rights. Emann said, "No, I don't have $3000 more because I am still paying and I don't know how long I have to pay a month."

Another participant Neha mentioned how legal aid retracted her case for the second time. As a result, she had to re-appeal the decision and believes the reason why the legal aid lawyer refuses to take her case on or act on her behalf is because there is a difficult piece. The critical piece of her situation that she is fighting for is to have her children with her in Canada as they were taken away from her in Pakistan. However, the lawyer from legal aid informed her of how difficult it would be to work on this because Pakistan is not a signatory country. Therefore, if an enforcement order was taken to the Pakistani government they do

not have to act on it. Neha is lacking crucial support from legal aid and waiting to hear about the appeal process is painful, but she hopes not to get rejected again. Meanwhile, with the support of a South Asian social worker from a mainstream organization, she has been proactively connecting with the Pakistani consulate in Vancouver, BC. She has learned that they could try to enforce an order once they receive it, but the problem has been obtaining an order.

Neha keeps arguing that the children are Canadian Citizens so they should be allowed to gain entry into the country even though their passports may have expired. Unfortunately, the immigration and identity piece further complicate the legal process and if legal aid refuses to help her then the next step is to contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). She must prove her situation to the Canadian government and CIC in hopes of rescuing her children. Another concern Neha had which was similar to some of the other participants is that legal aid lawyers are busy or not willing to return phone calls, yet they charge a significant amount for services. She also believes that legal aid should be making an effort to connect with CIC on her behalf instead of asking her to write to the embassy in Pakistan.

Unlike the others, Jaseena had a more positive experience when she resorted to consulting with a private lawyer outside of the legal aid office after feeling uncomfortable with the legal aid route. Jaseena switched from a legal aid lawyer to a private lawyer because “I believe this one [legal aid] not working that much. It’s wasting time, I realize.” Jaseena also knew that her husband was going to hire an expensive lawyer, so she thought “Why am I wasting time with legal

aid. I thought hire a good lawyer. My first lawyer she was not very experienced and I went with my friend." Jaseena did briefly mention how she had first hired a lawyer who was not effective, but she did not go into details. Instead she explained how when she first met the family lawyer, who is still acting on her behalf, she felt comfortable but could not understand legal terms and would ask him to write them down.

> He read it for me and then he explain me. It's a minute, minute and a minute. It takes a long time to explain to me. Then in my last meeting once we were done everything he asked me a question, he said to me Jaseena in two years what do you feel? I said to him I don't know what I lose and gain, but I gain my confidence a lot. I am more stronger than before. He said two years before Jaseena you cannot speak and now you can. I said to him it's because of you, you make my confidence go up. When I wanted to give up you said to me Jaseena no you don't do that you have that right here. Ya, of course his fees are a lot, he is working for me, but he is working for a client who doesn't know anything! He is taking the time to explain so many things. If you can afford then you go get your own lawyer. The lawyer fees sometimes they are really expensive *[sic.]*.

Jaseena was thankful not only for the outcome of the case (e.g. she got to keep her house, received spousal and child support), but also for the improvement in her English because of the legal process and procedures she was forced to explore.[43] The lawyer "even said my English improved. I said because I read your letters. First when I started reading all that I could not understand, but then when I read three, four, five, six times then I understand." Not only are some women like Jaseena unable to speak English, but they may not be able to read either, which limits their ability to understand the legal process. Jaseena did state how sometimes the legal process is lengthy, and she would advise women to be patient because two years is a long time, but in the end she gained a lot of knowledge.

[43] Emann also struggled with the technical words lawyers use and was accompanied by a staff member from a SAWO who assisted with interpretation.

Jaseena's husband refused to grant her a divorce, but after she obtained strong representation from a lawyer who was quite experienced she managed to receive a good outcome on the case.

Jaseena described how positive her experience was and how every woman should consult a lawyer outside of legal aid if they are struggling. However, for women like Emann who are dissatisfied with their legal aid lawyer they can only wish they had money to hire a good lawyer to obtain child, spousal support and her personal belongings. Emann said "I think not to go to legal aid or to go to some good lawyer. Like maybe go to legal aid, but they should hire good lawyers there *[sic.]*." Thus, the participants who encountered the legal system described how high-quality legal services are necessary rather than working with inexperienced lawyers. Participants felt there is a need to reduce legal expenses and the qualifications for legal aid services.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

Another challenge in service provision closely related to the legal system is that CIC tended to be insensitive towards domestic violence cases with immigrants. Some of the challenges participants encountered with CIC were highlighted in the previous two chapters; however, in this section I provide more detail about these interactions.

In the previous chapter I shared how Zaara did not have the appropriate documentation to arrive back in Canada after being sent to India by her husband. Zaara managed to get by at the visa office in India, but once she arrived at the international airport in Edmonton she was confronted by a citizenship and

immigration officer. She explained how racism exists even in subtle ways. The immigration officer could not understand why she did not have the landing paper and Zaara kept saying it should be in the database or system. Zaara at this point was assisted by a South Asian executive director from a SAWO in Edmonton with whom she connected via e-mail before departing from India. The woman from the SAWO advocated on her behalf and took three hours to fully explain Zaara's situation to an immigration officer who was ignorant of the facts.

Unfortunately, some CIC officers are unaware of how to deal with abuse situations, and in Zaara's case the official said, "Oh, you shouldn't be here." The immigration officer presented as rude, saying it is the tax payers' money that will be spent to keep Zaara in the country and to allow her access to services. The immigration officer kept Zaara's passport for three days to run a full inquiry. Zaara and the SAWO representative were both shocked by the pessimistic comments and actions. The immigration official would have most likely continued to act inappropriately if the SAWO representative was not present. Sadly, it appears that stereotyping by some CIC officers results in major obstacles for abused immigrant women trying to remain in the country.

Zaara is thankful for being able to stay even though she expected a lot more from the CIC system. She thinks her husband should be subjected to a removal order for his actions and not be allowed to sponsor his parents or anyone else, especially if he plans to remarry. This point is reinforced by Neha who disagrees with the immigration process and how her husband was able to return to Pakistan to remarry after leaving her. Furthermore, both women believe the

government of Canada should force the sponsor to provide funds to women fleeing abuse because they agree that it is not the tax payer's responsibility. These women had no desire to return to their own countries and wanted to be supported in Canada.

Like other women, Emann had struggles with CIC which continue to haunt her till this day. Her in-laws and husband wrote a letter to CIC to withdraw the sponsorship application they processed together for her parents. She cannot understand how the sponsorship request can be suspended by one applicant. Her parents in Pakistan received a letter stating how the medical processing would be stopped because the spouse has withdrawn the application procedure. Emann alone is not eligible to sponsor her family's immigration to Canada. She attempted to send a letter to CIC indicating how her parents are financially well off and able to provide for themselves even in Canada. Emann, by her tone of voice and facial expressions, conveyed feelings of frustration, saying

> I have no rights; now my parents are in the middle of nothing. Immigration is stopped. What is the immigration going to do for me (participant is really upset and angry which can be seen in her face expression/tone of voice). Like did they let my parents come here or establish myself to be a good citizen here?

Emann finds the sponsorship process and immigration system in general is unfair. She has appealed the decision even though CIC cannot seem to understand why she has very little income to report compared to when she was living with her in-laws who were misreporting her financial situation. She raised her voice to say, "I of course am the victim because I do not have income like that anymore," and she wants the government to give her some time to improve her financial situation.

Emann would like CIC to recognize her case and similar ones so women can still sponsor their parents after leaving a domestic dispute. Emann once thought that women had more rights in Canada, but now a bit angry and upset, she voices her concerns: “I don't know the laws here. They say that we have lots of rights, but when it comes to a woman's situation, no it’s not”! Immigration officials do not care to hear her story of why the application was cancelled by her ex-husband.

Participants suggested CIC staff remain non-judgmental and avoid personal biases when working with immigrants. Systemic barriers such as not having access to appropriate documentation for immigration status, but also a breakdown of sponsorship application affect the type of help women receive and influence the treatment women undergo from law enforcement and immigration officials.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some of the women’s own perceptions around formal support, but also what more is required from the current resources and services in meeting their needs. In this section, the focus was mainly on the participant’s experiences to improve the identified gaps in service provision to facilitate more reporting and to assist them with leaving the abuse. Some of the South Asian immigrant women recognized systemic barriers, expressed their dismay with the support services (e.g. shelters, police involvement, legal aid and immigration officers) and identified where social workers in both mainstream/SAWOs could make adjustments for better service delivery.

Each of these women struggled to first leave the abusive situation and after dealt with other concerns, for example, being referred from one organization to the next where they found themselves repeating their story, receiving a duplication of services, and being neglected by people from their own community which led them to mistrust others and doubt the help they were receiving. Therefore, there is a need for existing service providers to cooperate with each other. Asha describes how she

> used to go to each and every organization here [in Edmonton]. One to the other, to the third to the fourth. Wherever, I mean wherever you are going you find a piece of information. I always went everywhere just to find it out. It's like most organizations too; it's like they would give you the others or the number to some other place. So it's like continuous running on your toes, but the good thing is that I got a good piece of information that's what I did. ...I had all possible things, you name it. It's like I have been to women groups, every possible organization. I have such huge amounts of treasure with me as far as all the brochures and information. You name it, I have it.

This passage demonstrates how Asha was persistent about seeking help, but being referred from one place to the next can be pointless if you receive the same information. When I asked Asha to elaborate on the point she makes about discovering helpful pieces of information she said she received these from a lot of places and recalling this experience she started to cry.

Conversely, Harjot said organizations did "[n]ot really help; they referred, referred and all that stuff." Nonetheless, she still felt that "wherever you go you will get some help," even though organizations "do not willingly offer the resources." Neha also reinforces how she was referred to many different South Asian workers, but said they did not help her or give her good advice; instead, they would ask if she approached other services (e.g. legal aid).

Other participants mentioned how they also did not wish to tell their story over and over again to people at different organizations because it is frustrating and as a result they may avoid seeking help. Neha said "[w]hen I am you know repeat my story, I am not feeling good *[sic.]*." Furthermore, repeating their story causes them to relive or revisit the abuse experience.[44] Domestic violence has a very long lasting emotional impact on women, and retelling their stories in order to gain access to services is a form of revictimization. The services and resources that South Asian immigrant women require do not fit within the traditional framework service providers' use: one size does not fit all.

Women suggested how to make changes so that services are more accessible and appropriate. The need for services continues to exist, but South Asian women will only access them based on how they are being offered. In addition to presenting recommendations, participants also identified how the goal for service providers should be to provide adequate support regardless of whether a woman from this community decides to stay or leave the abuse. For example, Neha stated how "there are phone numbers everywhere, but it depends just like me on the person and whether they want help. I know everything; I am seeing for always 9-1-1 and advertisements on tv *[sic.]*." Each abuse story is unique and has many layers, but an individual effort has to be made by the women themselves to be willing to reach out for help too. Asha mentioned how Canada is

> a great place, a lot of opportunities, a lot of help, but one has to reach to the help too. Right, you have to. In order to grab help, you have to reach to

[44] A counter argument to this statement is that participants were retelling their story when I interviewed them. However, I positioned women at the centre of this research and supported them to recognize how far they have come. Each woman owned her own narrative and engaged in the process of healing as she retold her story to advocate for others.

> it too. Nobody is going to come to your house and provide help. How would they know that you need help? You need to at least reach out for help too.

The passage shows how women are responsible to make decisions. As Preet observed, "How much longer can a person continue to live in fear? You need to seek out for help for yourself a little bit. If the person [abuser] keeps giving the other person a hard time then eventually you're going to have to solve it somehow." Sometimes the resources and services or options to leave are known to women, but they are uncertain about using them, and even when they do use them there are numerous challenges. Nonetheless, compared to a few years ago, more women from the South Asian community are removing themselves from the abuse and acknowledging that there are services. This is best depicted in Asha's narrative and how she noticed that "[t]here is a lot of help, a lot of opportunities provided you know and that you want to take it." She has seen an increase in South Asian people speaking out about the issue, accessing services, and attending women's groups. Kang (2006) also points out how more women from this community are approaching services, for instance women's groups.

It is evident from this study that women have mixed perspectives on how they perceived services. As demonstrated by the above discussion, gaps remain in each of the service sectors (e.g. Shelters and CJS), and women expressed that it would be beneficial for service providers to be trained in domestic violence and cultural competency. The voices of service users are rarely included in policy, but the narratives of these women can have a direct impact on improving services or

making them more effective to address the unique needs of this population.[45] Thus, this chapter and the next in particular will help guide and facilitate dialogues in the field between various stakeholders to improve services to support abused South Asian immigrant women.

[45] Including marginalized voices could reduce the silencing or "othering" that exists (e.g. abuse is not "our" problem it is their community issue which illustrates how we further subjugate women).

Chapter Seven: Recommendations and Conclusion

"*There's an elephant in the room. It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it. Yet we squeeze by with 'How are you?' and 'I'm fine'...And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter. We talk about the weather. We talk about work. We talk about everything else, except the elephant in the room. There's an elephant in the room. We all know it's there. We are thinking about the elephant as we talk together. It is constantly on our minds. For, you see, it is a very large elephant. It has hurt us all but we do not talk about the elephant in the room...*"

– Terry Kettering

For too long we have tolerated gender inequalities, yet we all have the responsibility to speak out against them, for as Vallée (2007) argues, this elephant in the room is the root cause of domestic violence. This metaphorical idiom can be further used to explore how gender inequality is the elephant being ignored in the South Asian community. I hope that as readers you decide to participate in what will be a long journey of breaking the silence in the South Asian community, and I ask that you share with others the experiences revealed in this study.

The "*kahanis*" (stories) shared throughout this thesis are those of only a few of many thousands of South Asian immigrant women in Canada who are still silently suffering from violence perpetuated against them by family members. This thesis gives space for the voices of vulnerable immigrant women whose stories I heard and with whom I had the opportunity to speak. I hope the narratives will provide insight to the general public and professionals on how abuse is seen, underreported and currently handled within the South Asian community.

Summary of Findings

The findings generated from the interviews were analyzed utilizing grounded theory methods (GTM) which enabled new themes to emerge and

existing ones in the literature to be confirmed. In some ways, the results presented did echo the existing literature on the barriers in reporting domestic violence which further validates the present findings. Most challenges described in the literature (Abraham, 2000b; Dasgupta, 2000b; Kang, 2006; Merali, 2008; 2009; Minaker, 2001; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Shirwadkar, 2004) matched participant concerns around reporting abuse and many of the women elaborated on these difficulties immigrants experience. On the other hand, new insights emerged from a more in-depth perspective about how cultural practices, beliefs and values (e.g. cultural stigmas and pressures) may inhibit the reporting of abuse and accessing support.

Dasgupta's (2000b) research on South Asian women in the United States revealed three themes that classified help seeking barriers as personal, institutional and cultural, but she did not elaborate on these themes. However, elements of these themes align with the findings of this study; in particular isolation, financial dependency, and lack of a support system. Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Dasgupta's (2000b) study my analysis also pointed to three main categories in which barriers to disclosure for South Asian immigrant women exist: 1. Individual Barriers and Vulnerabilities, 2. Structural and Institutional, and 3. Societal and Cultural Pressures in the South Asian community. Understanding how each of these barriers interrelates is important. For example, women who may overcome individual barriers to disclosure may subsequently encounter more challenges in the structural and institutional domains or they may experience all three at once. As the participants' narratives

reveal, barriers to report abuse exist on numerous levels as women are first abused by a close family member, struggling to report abuse, and then experiencing further obstacles after disclosure that may cause revictimization. This concept of revictimization is not so apparent in the existing discourse and adds to the literature I presented in chapter two.

Additionally, there are benefits to fostering collaboration and more partnerships between mainstream organizations and SAWOs because, as the women articulated in their narratives, cultural barriers could be reduced, which may also diminish the number of referrals. It is also important to recognize that there are not only more SAWOs today, but also a greater number of South Asian workers in mainstream organizations which has been a key strength in moving forward in abuse reportage for this population.

Gaps in Existing Literature

The literature on domestic violence in the South Asian community is growing, but still very limited. There are few studies in the Canadian context (Ahmad et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2009; Alaggia et al., 2004; Guruge, 2010; Shirwadkar, 2004) on the lived experiences of abused South Asian immigrant women and how they perceive available formal support services. Instead Canadian literature tends to focus on the service providers' perspectives of how South Asian women or immigrants in general experience challenges in reporting abuse (Agnew, 1998a, b; Chokshi et al., 2010; Smith 2004). The current study builds on existing literature by focusing on women's first-hand accounts in accessing services. Furthermore, these accounts of South Asian immigrant women

might be used to some extent to empower other women to challenge their own perspectives on domestic violence.

This thesis can be used as a tool to raise awareness of the many issues South Asian immigrant women face and find potential solutions. Although the findings from this study are specific to the needs of a sample of South Asian immigrant women in Edmonton, they could be used as a model to develop tools to serve other ethno-cultural communities. Furthermore, the interviews also indicated that there is a need to continue to improve the resources that presently do not fit with South Asian immigrant women's needs or which indicate gaps in accessible services. Certainly, the current response system is not equipped to deal with the needs of South Asian women. However, if we act on the recommendations arising from the conversations with the participants of this study, then the pieces will come together.

What follows are summaries of the salient points. These recommendations are listed under four recommendation categories: improve accessibility to existing resources and services, inform new immigrants of their rights, laws and the legal process, make changes to CIC policies and settlement processes, and provide education to reduce the silence and increase community involvement.

1. Improve Accessibility to existing Resources and Services

i.) Resources are scattered in the community and not easily accessible

- The location of some services is unreachable in downtown/industrial areas and there tends to be a higher prevalence of services in certain areas of Edmonton.
- Leaving can be an overwhelming process, so a central hub with information on various resources and services (e.g. legal processes, immigration issues,

employment and housing) can reduce anxiety and tension. This would also allow for less duplication, more efficient referrals and less confusion.[46]

- Improve where resources are currently located or disseminated. For example, a poster in Edmonton's Southside police station where the image is "*mehendi*" (henna) on a set of hands would be more effectively placed in public settings (e.g. washroom or library) to have more impact. How likely is it that a South Asian woman will enter a police station and see the warning if she fears authorities?

- Use other areas for providing resources in public: school settings, buses/bus stations, public libraries, daycares, grocery or drug stores (e.g. it was evident in the women's abuse stories that they were allowed to go out with family members to purchase goods; see previous chapters). Resources should be made available at the airport since some of the women were forced to leave the country by the abuser.

- Gender specific places for resources such as public washroom facilities (e.g. in a shopping mall, hospital[47] or airport) are effective since sometimes these are the only places women are alone or away from the abuser.

- Provide information at community, cultural/religious events (e.g. Heritage days, Nagar Kirtan[48]) and religious institutions (e.g. Gurdwara and Mosque).

ii.) Interpreters and Linguistic Competence

- Even though resources are available this does not mean people are receiving the information. Language barriers decrease confidence levels and a woman's ability to maneuver through the system. Women should have a chance to receive written help in their first language.

- Some women may not speak English, therefore having oral support available in a wide range of languages (e.g. Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi) is helpful to address the lack of fluency in English. Providing interpreters or trained cultural liaison navigators to work with clients would reduce feelings of isolation when approaching different services and would also decrease the number of times women are expected to repeat their stories.

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[46] An organization in Edmonton had multiple services available at one location, but this did not last long.

[47] To my knowledge resources are not available at all hospitals (e.g. University of Alberta, health community centres and physicians' offices).

[48] A Sikh religious custom involving the processional singing of holy hymns throughout a community in the form of a festival/parade that occurs annually in the month of May where a lot of South Asian people are present.

iii.) Cultural Competence by service providers and others outside community

- Cultural factors/barriers in accessing, and using resources and services should be understood by service providers as part of cultural competence training.

- Mainstream organizations should collaborate with SAWOs to increase the language capacity and understand the cultural dynamics or contexts surrounding abuse in South Asian families. In turn, SAWOs can work closely with other mainstream providing organizations to educate and inform the South Asian community about domestic violence.

- Service providers should be cognizant about cultural issues. Training should be on issues influencing violence such as dowry demands and laws, son preference, and relationships between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. Workers should also understand how abuse may be experienced in the home country or can affect the family member's safety in the country of origin. For example, information about abuse in South Asian families should be provided to those working in the health care sector (e.g. nurses and doctors in office and hospital settings).[49]

- There is a need for police officers to reduce barriers when working with marginalized women who are apprehensive about involving authorities.

- Service provision that immigrant women from the South Asian community receive from shelters should meet their requests by respecting their ethnic background, cultural and religious beliefs.

- The commitment of working together is needed to make services culturally accessible. Service providers need to build and sustain relationships across the various sectors to create and promote culturally competent programs.

- Service providers especially of South Asian descent need to abide by boundaries of professionalism. Members of the community should offer support, but need to refrain from using vulnerable women to their own benefit.

<u>2. Inform New Immigrants of their Rights, Laws and the Legal Process</u>

i.) Not knowing their rights or understanding that domestic violence is against the law makes immigrants vulnerable to abuse.

- Immigrants should receive information about services (e.g. police, court system and shelters) in their home countries and upon entry into Canada at the host airport, for example, how to report abuse.

[49] In chapter four Preet's narrative highlights how the nurses were being misled about her situation.

- Once immigrants arrive in Canada, CIC officers should provide information outlining their rights and responsibilities, including Canadian culture, laws related to domestic violence and what services they are entitled to access regardless of immigration status.

- Provide new immigrants the Citizenship guide resource in their native language and in English once they arrive in Canada. Part of this education should include an introduction to settling in the new system which includes banking (e.g. opening an account), finding employment and how to navigate in the city (e.g. a map of the city and information about public transportation).

- Educate immigrants to keep documents (e.g. passport) in a safe place.

ii.) Cultural Practices (e.g. dowry rights and exchanges) should be recognized in Canadian law.

- Laws in home country (e.g. Pakistan) allow women to receive a dowry or be paid out if they leave the marriage; however, Canadian laws do not recognize such cultural practices, particularly in the court setting.

iii.) Legal Services

- Offer non-judgmental legal advice and free legal aid services.

<u>3. Make Changes to CIC Policies and Settlement Processes</u>

i.) Changes to Immigration Policy

- Allow immigrants to apply for citizenship sooner than three years to reduce the fear of permanent residency expiring or deportation if a sponsorship breakdown occurs.

- Issue permanent residency (PR) cards in home countries. Immigrants should also be aware of how to become eligible to receive status, primarily the process involved in obtaining a PR card and citizenship, because they are usually misinformed.

- When reviewing spousal sponsorship applications there should be a stronger background check or verification process into marriages abroad.

ii.) Smooth integration for newcomers into Canadian society

- Learning the English language should be mandatory before immigrating because some women may not be allowed to learn to speak, read or write. Provide language instruction for newcomers to Canada or English as a second language (ESL) courses in their home country. Otherwise it becomes a

difficult or overwhelming process for immigrants to learn the language skills once they arrive. Sometimes they are denied the opportunity. For example, they may be forbidden to take ESL classes by the sponsor who doesn't want them to improve their status in Canadian society. Also, it is more difficult for immigrants who are not allowed to work outside the home to learn the language, nor are they in a position to practice speaking English.

- Have a CIC officer follow-up or make home visits to recently arrived immigrants about how well they are integrating into Canadian society and to determine if they need any resources or services.

- CIC officers should understand sponsorship applications, as well as the breakdown of sponsorship and status after abuse has occurred. Landed immigrants who have PR status or Canadian Citizenship should be informed that they cannot lose that status or be removed or deported from Canada when leaving an abusive relationship. This is especially true even if the abusive person is the sponsor. Immigrants should be informed of their rights during this sponsorship period because some want to leave, but fear jeopardizing their immigration status.

iii.) Recognize International Educational Skills and Credentials

- The International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) to assess international educational credentials in comparison to credentials in Canada should be offered in home countries. New immigrants should begin the assessment process before arriving in Canada and be offered employment in their prospective fields. This may help reduce not only the current problem of not acknowledging foreign credentials, but also the marginalization of women in patriarchal households.

- Government should support new immigrants wanting to pursue an education and recognize foreign education/training.

<u>4. Provide Education to Reduce the Silence and Increase Community Involvement</u>

i.) Empowerment and Awareness

- Begin a door to door campaign program to start a grassroots or active movement in areas where South Asians are residing. Target women in various age groups. Create awareness among the older generation who participate in abuse in South Asian families.

- Eliminate gender inequalities and address patriarchal traditions at cultural events.[50] Use a range of mechanisms such as public service announcements (PSAs) and documentaries on real life stories to create preventative measures, but in various languages across the different forms of media (e.g. South Asian radio show and television or community/ethnic newspapers).

ii.) Community Support and Involvement from Men

- Currently domestic violence is a forbidden topic of discussion among men from this community, among faith leaders and within religious institutions because there is fear of negative representation of their community. Engage in more open communication with community leaders and politicians. Connect both groups to hold discussions on topics underlying abuse such as gender values in the South Asian community. Also garner support from respected community leaders to participate in prevention efforts.

Participants discussed a wide range of recommendations to improve service delivery to be sensitive and inclusive. Participants also focused on where resources are currently located: they are not easily accessible. While discussing some of the recommendations women shared how service providers should continue with some of the good work they are doing. For example, Preet found resources on legal rights helpful. She was given a book on legal rights in Punjabi

[50] There is a strong preference for sons in the South Asian community. Some scholars (Gill and Mitra- Kahn, 2009) focus on how daughters are strongly devalued or seen as a burden. Here is a common example I myself witnessed as a member of this community. In some South Asian families when a son is born everyone praises the little bundle of joy. This is done as cultural rituals exist in the form of handing out "*ladoo's*" (Indian sweets) for sons and when a girl arrives no cultural traditions occur. Some family members get upset and question why it was not a son that was born who could have carried on the family name. Some families stress about the dowry related pressures they might encounter in the future because they are unable to raise funds. This point is also acknowledged by Gill and Mitra-Kahn (2009) who state how society prefers sons because a major disadvantage in raising girls is dowry exchange. Over the years spouses and extended family members may continue to blame the mother or pressure her to give birth to a boy. Thus, it is important to recognize how gender inequalities exist as some South Asian families continue to devalue girls and women. By providing the above example, I am arguing how the status of South Asian women should be improved rather than mistreating them. It begins from birth onwards for some of these women and the treatment can be very different compared to men. Such gender inequalities are important to touch on as they often mutely contribute to violence. I am not trying to say that all South Asian women are treated this way by their families, but instead I would like to offer how we need to change the way we think, feel, and act towards females in this community. Asha supports this idea and states how "[f]emales are actually an asset to the family; if you treat them well they wouldn't mind filling their last drop of blood for you." Unfortunately, women in patriarchal families are socialized from birth into norms that reinforce the privilege men have over them which carries on in a marriage.

by a South Asian outreach worker from a mainstream organization. Women also expressed how they would pass on advice or messages to other women in need, such as referring them to certain resources or organizations and providing contact information for service providers they appreciated or felt assisted them. Preet concluded her narrative by touching on how she has supported a woman from her own community who went through a similar situation as hers. She felt it was her responsibility or duty to help this elderly woman learn about the available services (e.g. shelter for elderly women) because she had a parallel experience. Participants also informed me of how their experiences have influenced their decision to assist others. Asha continues to volunteer her time with support groups at various organizations where she educates women about Canadian laws and immigration. She also explains to them what they can do in similar situations and how they can find help. She says "it's all about coming out of the abuse and protecting yourself." Emann eventually plans to become a social worker and has used her personal experience to guide her in this direction. The general message conveyed was that women in this study expressed a strong desire to empower others about available support.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The findings from this study still provide sufficient evidence that further work or evaluation in the area of domestic violence among the South Asian immigrant population in Edmonton would be valuable. In the next section, I suggest ways that this study can be built upon by improving or extending the findings to generate further questions for research in this area.

Keeping in mind that the number of South Asians living in Canada is growing steadily, it is important to continue research with this population to serve their needs. South Asians are projected to be the "largest visible minority group" in Canada, as numbers will increase dramatically by 2017, reaching close to 1.8 million people (Statistics Canada, 2005b). The current immigration trends and projected future migration patterns of South Asia to Canada illustrates that there is a need for more in-depth cultural understanding. Thus, we must ask: are service providers prepared and trained in cultural competency to provide services as the population of South Asians grows in Canada? There needs to be an analysis of how to train service providers to meet this need.

A small number of participants (seven immigrant women) were interviewed; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the larger South Asian population. Future research should include a larger sample size if possible to extend this particular study and should also include the voices of service providers, for example, front-line workers at women's shelters, social workers or outreach workers at both mainstream/SAWOs, police officers and legal professionals such as legal aid lawyers. Of course, South Asian immigrant women who may have not accessed any services in a domestic dispute and men or extended family members' points of view should also be surveyed. Furthermore, children's perspectives from this community should be included in studies of this nature to highlight how they too maybe witnessing violence or are victims of abuse. All the women except two (Asha and Zaara) had children, but the experiences or effects on the children were not built into the questions asked in

this study. To my knowledge few studies (see chapter six in Thiara and Gill, 2010) have focused on the voices of children in the South Asian community and their vulnerability.[51] Children from the South Asian community may be victims of abuse or witness others' suffering which can affect their childhood experience, but also influence their own relationships or how they access support. As a result, the voices of children should be included in the ongoing discussions to determine their needs.

Additionally, as discussed in chapters five and six, the present study highlighted a number of barriers women encountered when accessing services. Thus, it would be interesting to evaluate the effectiveness of these services again in a follow-up study with the same participants, if possible, a few years later to determine whether their experiences or emotions about reporting/accessing services changed. If not possible, a similar study should be conducted with a different group of participants to see whether service delivery changed or improvements were made. Each of the above mentioned points should be considered when thinking through a similar project so it can take into account many different perspectives.

The present study was limited to three research questions as outlined in chapter one, but the findings also showed how religion was a mechanism or coping strategy women used to manage the abuse before reporting and after. It would be interesting for future research to explore how religion plays a role in shielding women from reaching out and acts as a form of spiritual comfort. The women had also identified during the interviews how challenges continued to

[51] For example, a child under a certain age cannot report the abuse to authorities.

exist once they had escaped the abuse. Some women stated how after leaving the abuse they struggled to support their children (e.g. child custody), manage their own health issues (e.g. feeling stressed, depressed, blaming themselves or feeling victimized, but also suffered from being awakened at night by horrific nightmares or memories of abuse), had feelings of isolation/loneliness in Canada, and experienced financial difficulties (e.g. finding a job, new home and going back to school). In this regard future research should explore what some of the challenges are for South Asian immigrant women after they escape the abuse. Other areas participants made reference to are the mental health characteristics of the abuser. It is suggested that there should be further investigation into how mental illness such as depression and substance abuse/alcoholism are factors contributing to abuse in some South Asian families.

This study also offered a theoretical tool to be applied to understand how power imbalance and unequal power relations contributed to the abuse experiences the women shared. There is no quick fix solution to violence due to culturally specific forms of abuse perpetuated against women, and no theory explains this issue fully. However, grounded theory helped create a model to visualize and describe how immigrant women in this study lacked agency and remained powerless due to a number of barriers that prevented them from reaching out. Once they eventually accessed services they continued to feel marginalized which caused them to mistrust others. The women wanted to overcome feelings of powerlessness in the relationship, as well as subordination and oppression they experienced in society as a result of the abuse. Thus, this

study has implications for future theory development around the meaning of power. More contributions to these theoretical gaps in the previous research are necessary to open the dialogue as the work is far from complete.

Benefits of this Research and Original Contributions

Overall, this research contributes to an existing body of knowledge in an area that has been under-researched (domestic violence and South Asian immigrant women), contributes to an understanding of what support services and resources are required for this population, and works to enhance the reporting of abuse. The firsthand accounts in this thesis are one piece of the puzzle to identify opportunities or strategies to improve existing services. It is my hope that this thesis will serve as a knowledge transfer tool to implement the results into practice. Thus, I plan to provide the results as well as the full thesis to the service providers with whom I worked. While conducting this research study, I was constantly surrounded by media headlines of a South Asian woman being killed. The general public is hearing about these deaths related to domestic violence as the media is reporting more of these cases. Violent acts like this should not be labelled as a part of South Asian cultures, but the media and those outside of this community continue to frame stories in such a way that it seems "normalized" by South Asians. While this thesis will be of benefit for other academic scholars interested in domestic violence in the South Asian community, it will also be of great benefit to the general public hearing similar stories in the media, community and religious leaders, public policy-makers, non-government organizations (front-

line workers/service providers), government agencies and the criminal justice system law enforcers (e.g. police and immigration officers).

Therefore, it is believed that this thesis is timely in the ongoing discussions currently occurring in Canada, and especially in Edmonton, involving the South Asian community to improve the type of protection offered to abused immigrant women. As Jane Hurshman, a survivor of domestic violence[52] publicly stated, "[b]attering isn't the taboo—talking about it is. And it can only continue if we keep silent" (Vallée, 2007). Why is the South Asian community so uncomfortable in recognizing that abuse occurs and so reluctant to discuss solutions? As Vallée (2007) argues, the worst response to this war on women continues to be silence. I truly hope that the words of Jane Hurshman and Brian Vallée (2007) can be put to practice to make a difference in this specific community as the population of South Asians in Canada increases over the next decade.

Final Concluding Thoughts

While writing this thesis, I have been able to be a part of changes and ongoing conversations about overcoming some of the barriers in reporting domestic violence by reaching out to Edmonton's South Asian community about the services available. This required a lot of time and was secondary to writing this thesis, but my personal goal as an academic was to position myself not only as a researcher, but also an advocate willing to share findings in order to make a difference on behalf of the marginalized or vulnerable women I interviewed. As a

[52] Jane spent five years in an abusive relationship with her partner Billy Stafford. She suffered from physical and sexual violence and finally shot him in order to save herself and children (Vallée, 2007; see other books "Life with Billy" written by Vallée on the true life story).

researcher, I believe activism and research go hand in hand and that I am in a position to advocate by disseminating these findings through various channels (which I plan to continue doing). The two main suggestions the women offered in this thesis were (1) to provide to immigrants adequate information on human rights to increase reporting of abuse, and (2) to improve or enhance the type of resources/services offered. While this thesis is an academic study, it is also a contribution to conversations about domestic violence which are not limited to academia. Thus, readers of this thesis are considered not only potential academics, but also advocates who are reminded that one woman's "*kahani*" (story) may help another with her own. Therefore, I ask you to do the following: support immigrant women, guide them, and help them to get in touch with the right resources or experts in this field of work. Educate and empower the young, eliminate gender inequalities, and create change for future generations. Lastly, as readers of this thesis, please remember that you can also make a difference. If you know of someone suffering from violence from any culture or community it is important that you listen to their needs, but more importantly recommend professional help before it is too late.

Advocacy and Activism

Most of all this study allowed me to hear the women's experiences and to learn from them how we can push the boundaries beyond these findings. As a member of one of the largest visible minority communities in Canada, I request those working in the field and others to please come forward to say that domestic violence is not acceptable in any culture and together we are working on the issue.

When Rajpinder Kaur Sehmbi, the case introduced in chapter one, was murdered in Edmonton, imagine how during this grief-stricken time a "*dhiyan de mela*" (a cultural celebration of daughters) carried on. This particular event in the South Asian community is for women to come together to sing and dance. This is exactly what happened as women participated in reciting traditional folk songs around "*dhiyan*" (daughters) and marriage. I argue that such cultural events should be tailored slightly for women to voice concerns about their marriages, and educational resources on violence should be handed out by service providers. This particular traditional space that is women only would be an excellent opportunity to enable a place to speak, and a possibility for community between women without the presence of abusers. Unfortunately, during this cultural event following the murder of Rajpinder Kaur Sehmbi this space was not provided, so the life and death of Rajpinder remained in the shadows. This event could have addressed what happened in so many ways; women could have spread a powerful message to reach out to others suffering. "*Dhiyan de mela*" celebrations across the world are a great place for women to support one another.

This study aims to explore the unique perspectives of South Asian immigrant women who have experienced domestic violence in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences, challenges in reporting, ways to facilitate more reporting and to determine what more is required for this vulnerable population. Service providers need to consider why women are reluctant to seek help and how the recommendations offered can allow services to be more responsive to abuse in the South Asian community.

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APPENDIX A: Cover Letter for Recruitment Process

July 4, 2010

Dear _____: **(Insert Organizations name here)**

I am a Graduate Student working on my thesis at the University of Alberta in the Department of Sociology on the topic of South Asian Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence. As a sociologist I have been studying and writing about domestic violence for quite some time. I have become aware of the work your organization does to support immigrant women suffering from violence and their families since____ **(include year if known)**. I understand that you are offering workshops and information on understanding family violence, the laws related to family violence in Canada and how immigrant communities respond. (**Or use this sentence instead where appropriate)** I understand that you are offering culturally sensitive workshops/counselling services and information on understanding family violence, the laws related to family violence in Canada and how immigrant communities respond. I would like to ask that your organization assists me in recruiting participants for my study that I have outlined below in this letter. Furthermore, if there are resources or information that you think might be useful for me to read about the work your organization does around domestic violence issues I would appreciate you forwarding those materials over.

I am interested in this larger question of how the experience of domestic violence differs for many immigrant women when compared to Canadian born women in Canada. However, the goal of this present study is to recognize immigrant women's experiences and challenges with local Edmonton organizations. The thesis is titled: Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence and Access to Services.

I am asking three core questions that will explore the kinds of resources, programs and services that are required for this population.

1. What are some of the challenges for South Asian immigrant women in reporting domestic violence?
2. What kinds of support would South Asian immigrant women like to have available that might facilitate reporting?
3. What types of services and resources are required for South Asian immigrant women?

I hope to recruit at least 10-12 South Asian immigrant women suffering from abuse to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview lasting approximately 90 minutes in length. Interviews will be arranged by word-of-mouth referrals. Please note that ethics certification approval will be obtained from the University

of Alberta before data collection (interviews) begins. If a prospective participant expresses interest to be a part of this study, I would ask that you forward my contact information so that they could contact me directly. The participants will be selected based on specific criteria requiring that each woman:

1. Must be over the age of 18,
2. Immigrated to Canada from India, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka and is a part of the South Asian community in Edmonton,
3. Is a victim or survivor of domestic violence.

At this time the participant should be asked to identify which language she prefers to speak in for the interview. I am aware that many different languages are spoken in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka alone thus I am unable to speak all of these languages but will have interpreters/translators available. The names of the volunteer interpreters/translators provided by a respectable organization here in Edmonton will be told to the participants before the interview date is scheduled to ensure that they do not know them and that they feel comfortable. It is important to ask the women whether they recognize the names because they do have a choice for which interpreter/translator they wish to have present during the interview. Participants you may assist in recruiting should be informed that the interpreters/translators will be signing confidentiality agreement forms when agreeing to participate in this study. Furthermore, interpreters/translators will be provided with the questionnaire guide, consent form, and ethical procedures to be reviewed prior to the interview.

Additionally, I will ensure that the agencies/services/individuals that may be named by participants will remain anonymous. Anonymity will be protected by using pseudonyms when identifying information in any published materials. For example, if a woman discusses how good or bad a particular service was or the support of an individual social worker I will use pseudonyms.

I would be willing to provide you with more detailed information if you wish to assist me with recruiting women for this study. I would be happy to discuss this process further in person and look forward to meeting you at a time that is most suitable for you.
Meanwhile, if you have any further questions about the study or about me, please do not hesitate to give me a call at _____ or email waujla@ualberta.ca

Sincerely,

Wendy Aujla

APPENDIX B: E-mail Request for Participants

SUBJECT: ***RECRUITING SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN FOR RESEARCH STUDY!***

As you may have heard I am currently working on a thesis titled: Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence and Access to Services. I am asking three core questions that will explore the kinds of resources, programs and services that are required for this population.

The questions are:

1. What are some of the challenges for South Asian immigrant women in reporting domestic violence?
2. What kinds of support would South Asian immigrant women like to have available that might facilitate reporting? and
3. What types of services and resources are required for South Asian immigrant women?

I need your help! Do you know of someone who is a victim or survivor of domestic violence in the South Asian community here in Edmonton?
If so? I ask you to read on...

The participants will be selected based on specific criteria requiring that each women: Must be over the age of 18, Immigrated to Canada from India, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka and is a part of the South Asian community in Edmonton, Is a victim or survivor of domestic violence.

At this time the participant should be asked to identify which language she prefers to speak in for the interview. For the women who do not speak English as a first language an interpreter will be present. However, if you are willing to interpret during the interview, that might help build trust with the client and myself as a researcher so that is also something to consider.

I hope to with your help and others assistance recruit at least 10-12 South Asian immigrant women suffering from abuse to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview lasting approximately 90 minutes in length. Participants will be reimbursed for any transportation costs to the interview site. Please note that ethics certification approval has been approved as of November 2010 from the University of Alberta. If a prospective participant agrees to be a part of this study, I would ask that you contact me at (_____).

Thanks,

Wendy Aujla

APPENDIX C: Consent Form

Letter of Consent to Participate in Research Study

Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Wendy Aujla, a graduate student at the University of Alberta. This study is being done for thesis credit in the Department of Sociology under the Supervision of Dr. Jana Grekul. The purpose of this study is to determine and recognize to what extent the services and resources surrounding domestic violence in the South Asian community in Edmonton are accessible in how some immigrant women report their experiences of abuse. I am asking you to participate because you are an immigrant woman over the age of 18, affiliated with the South Asian Community (have migrated from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) and have experienced domestic violence. I hope that your participation in this research will contribute to understanding about how the needs and experiences of South Asian immigrant women differ from non-immigrant women. I am interested in hearing your personal story, some of the challenges and barriers you experienced in reporting abuse, and most of all your impressions of the services and resources that are available to women from the South Asian community in Edmonton.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to voluntarily participate in an interview that will last approximately 90 minutes. The style of the interview will be quite informal and conversational. A interpreter/translator will be present during the interview from the Welcome Centre for Immigrants Organization. The interview will be conducted at a time and private location that is suitable for you at the University of Alberta site. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed. I might also, with your permission, arrange for a brief follow-up interview if necessary.

All information from this interview will be kept confidential, and your anonymity will be protected by using pseudonyms when identifying information in any published materials. Please be assured that the consent form, audio-recording, transcription or any field notes taken by me will be stored in a secure location. They will not be seen in their original form by anyone but me and the interpreter/translator. Audio recordings will be destroyed immediately after the completion of the study. However, data from this project will be kept on file for five years, with your permission. The results of this study will be used for later academic publications or conference presentations. You have the right to opt out of answering any questions during and/or to withdraw from the study at any time before April 2011 before the publication of materials resulting from the study. If you have questions or concerns about the interview or the research project as a whole, please direct them to me at this time or contact my supervisor, Dr. Jana Grekul at (780) 492-0477 or at jana.grekul@ualberta.ca.

To be completed by participant and researcher

Consent to Participate: I understand that my participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. I have the option to refuse any question the researcher may ask and to discontinue to this interview at any time. I have read and understand this consent form and understand the purpose and procedures of this study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction thus far.

Please check yes or no with the following statements:	**YES**	**NO**
I am 18 years of age or older.	❑	❑
I am a woman from the South Asian community in Edmonton, Alberta who has immigrated from India, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka.	❑	❑
I have experienced some form of domestic abuse.	❑	❑
A volunteer will interpret/translate during the interview.	❑	❑
The interview can be tape-recorded.	❑	❑
I understand the purpose of this study and any questions regarding this study have been answered by the researcher.	❑	❑
I am aware that participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to answer a question or opt out at any given time.	❑	❑
I am aware of who will have access to the tape recordings, transcripts, and field notes.	❑	❑
I agree to have the data from this project kept on file for five years.	❑	❑
I have been informed about confidentiality and pseudonyms being used in any publications that come out of this research.	❑	❑
I agree to have short quotes or excerpts used and study results published or presented at conferences/shared with organizations.	❑	❑
I am aware that there are exceptions to confidentiality that the researcher must follow to prevent a suicide or homicide, report any suspicion or knowledge of child abuse to authorities under the Child Welfare Act.	❑	❑

I, the undersigned, consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature of Researcher	Date

APPENDIX D: Interview Guide

*****When asking questions downplay using word violence/abuse etc. *****

Interview's background information with a few introductory type questions:
Please, tell me a little but more about yourself *(see lead questions below).*

Age:
Marital Status:
Was your marriage arranged? How long did you and your spouse know each other for before the marriage? If divorced, when did the marriage end?
Number of Children:

Education, Occupation, Income and Employment:
Ethnicity and Religion:
Are you a permanent resident or do you hold Canadian Citizenship?
Number of Yrs in Canada and Status:
Country of origin:

Living Situation:
Tell me about the living situation and who you lived with when you arrived in Canada? Are your family members here?
***PROBES* –** living with extended family members?

Abuse
Can you describe your relationship with your spouse and extended family members?
Can you explain the difficulties you experienced in your marriage and relationships with others around you? When did you first recognize the problems? How long have/had you experienced abuse in your relationship?

PROBES – How frequently would you say you were being mistreated by your spouse? Were others (extended family members) feeding the situation? How? When did you realize that you did not have the ability to change things? Would you like to share an example of a particular time that you felt this is too much, I feel hopeless, what do I do etc. Where did you reach out for help? Did you talk to other women who experienced the same thing? Basically, when did you realize "I need to get help."

Seeking out for Help (Barriers/Challenges):
What were some of the challenges you encountered when seeking information or help whether it be informal (friends/family) or formal (organizations)?
***PROBES* –** Did you have second thoughts about disclosing the abuse? What things are/were you scared about when sharing what you are experiencing? Was the abuse disclosed to family members back home and in Canada? What type of guidance and support did you receive from family members?

What do you believe are some of the factors that limit South Asian immigrant women's access to services that assist with the issue of domestic violence? What do you think about the support available here?
***PROBES* –** Is the support here similar to or different from back home (country they came from)? What do you like most about it? Least? Are you familiar with the resources/services available in the community?

Reaching out to others in similar situations:
I would like to better understand how your experience and how you imagine what others might be going through when dealing with a situation similar to yours. This will help me learn from you and what you believe is the best approach/technique to use when reaching out to other immigrant women in these situations.

What advice would you give to a woman in a similar situation? ***PROBES*** –What are some of the places the woman should or should not go to when reaching out for help? Why? What things should she look out for?

Do you feel the organizations here in Edmonton are helping?
Why do you think some South Asian immigrant women refuse to access the help that is sometimes known to them?

Changes to the current services/resources that are available:
If you could change the current support available in Edmonton what would it be and why? Do you notice some changes currently happening in the community about domestic violence/abuse? If so, can you tell me more about these changes? Do you think the South Asian community is beginning to acknowledge abuse?

What challenges do you think the South Asian community in Edmonton faces when trying to create awareness around domestic violence? What do you think needs to be done?

Do you believe more services should be available in the South Asian community or better strategies to create awareness about the existing services?

Do the current community based and mainstream organizations help meet the needs of South Asian immigrant women suffering abuse?

What changes need to occur within the South Asian community organizations and mainstream organizations in order for front-line workers to be more accessible and of help (outreach) to immigrant women?

***PROBES* –**Do you feel the people you approached and worked with had some knowledge about the South Asian culture and family system? Where else do you think resources (material on abuse and the support available) need to be placed? How can these be made accessible to others?

APPENDIX E: Confidentiality Agreement for Interpreters

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT BETWEEN VOLUNTEER INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR FROM _____ORGANIZATION AND RESEARCHER WENDY AUJLA FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Date of Agreement:

_____

Languages to provide interpretation/translation for:

_____

_____

Name of volunteer interpreter/translator from _____Organization

Above is the name of a volunteer who currently provides interpretation/translation services at the _____ Organization and whom agrees to provide interpretation/translation services for the study titled Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence and Access to Services.

Interviews Arrangements: Approximately 10-12 interviews will take place with immigrant women from the South Asian community in Edmonton, Alberta. The interviews are expected to last approximately 90 minutes. The researcher will contact the interpreter/translator beforehand to ensure that the time/date the participant is requesting for the interview can be arranged. If need be other arrangements will be made.

Disclosing translator/interpreter names to the participants: The names of the volunteer interpreters/translators will be disclosed to the participants prior to the interview date being arranged to ensure that they do not know the interpreter or translator. This will also ensure that the participant and interpreter or translator both feel comfortable during and after the interview as personal information will be disclosed. Furthermore, it is important to ask the women whether they recognize the names because they have a right to select which interpreter or translator they would feel at ease with when disclosing personal information during the interviews.

Translator's Responsibilities: The researcher will ask a question in English which you will be required to translate the question/wording in the language you and the participant fluently speak. The response from the participant will then be translated back into English for the researcher. All interpretations/translations should be provided accurately without abusing the language or participants voice

inappropriately. Interpretations/translations should be of high quality, accurate and complete to the best of your ability. In addition to the volunteer being present during the interviews in order to provide accurate interpretation/translation for the participants and researcher other expectations are that the transcribed interviews be reviewed for a second time jointly by both the researcher and volunteer translator that translated during the interview. Thus, volunteer interpreters or translators should make themselves available after the interview has taken place. This will be done in order to ensure complete accuracy and cultural appropriateness of the translated transcriptions is maintained.

Confidentiality: The volunteer interpreter/translator provided by the _____ Organization acknowledges and agrees that during and after the course of performing interpretation/translation services for the interviewees involved in this particular study, they will receive information that shall not be disclosed to third parties at any given time. In signing this agreement information released during and after the interviews must remain confidential. Any questions related to this particular project should be directed to the researcher first and never directly to the participants/interviewees.

By signing this agreement form the volunteer translators/interpreters from the _____Organization and the researcher understand and agree to the above stated terms.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the volunteer interpreter/translator from the _____ Organization and researcher have agreed to this contract as of the day and year first above written.

_____

Name of researcher | Signature of researcher

_____

Name of volunteer interpreter/translator | Signature of volunteer interpreter/translator

_____

Contact information - Telephone number of volunteer interpreter/translator

APPENDIX F: Agreement Form for Experienced Interpreters

AGREEMENT BETWEEN _____ ORGANIZATION AND RESEARCHER WENDY AUJLA FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Date of Agreement:

I _____**(Insert name of Individual)**, _____**(Insert Position e.g. Team Leader/Manager/Executive Director/Coordinator),** at _____**(Insert Organization name)** a locally based organization in Edmonton, Alberta agrees to provide experienced interpreters/translators who currently volunteer at the organization for a thesis project as discussed with the researcher Wendy Aujla. I am aware of and have been informed about the research study (Master's thesis) titled: Voicing Challenges: South Asian Immigrant Women Speak Out about their Experiences of Domestic Violence and Access to Services that Wendy Aujla the Graduate Student is working on at the University of Alberta in the Department of Sociology.

I understand that the researcher Wendy Aujla will be providing a confidentiality agreement form to those individuals/volunteers who are currently offering their expertise and working with our organization as interpreters or translators speaking a number of different languages. I have seen a copy of the agreement form to be filled out between the interpreter/volunteer and researcher. This form indicates the responsibilities/ethical procedures the interpreters or translators volunteering their time currently with our organization are to follow while willingly dedicating their time to take part in this study. I will further assist in recruiting participants for the research study. If any resources or information that might be useful for this particular study become available I will forward them over.

By signing this agreement form I _____**(Insert name of Individual)**, at _____**(Insert Organization name)** and the researcher Wendy Aujla understand and agree to the above stated terms.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I _____**(Insert name of Individual)** from the _____**(Insert Organization name)** and researcher, Wendy Aujla have agreed to this contract as of the day and year first above written.

Name of Researcher	Signature of Researcher
Name of Individual and Organization Name	Signature of Individual from Organization

APPENDIX G: Domestic Violence Resource/Contact Sheet

(Adapted/Revised from Edmonton Police Services, The Support Network and City of Edmonton Family Violence Resources List)

University of Alberta Campus Security (Emergency)	**780-492-5252 or on campus 2-5252**
Police/Ambulance (Emergency)	**911**
Dispatch	**780-423-4567**
Victim Services Unit, Edmonton Police Services	**780-421-2760/ 780-426-8260**
Children Services	**780-427-7152**
Children Services Crisis Line	**780-422-2001**
24 Hours, 7 days a week – Help line in 170 languages	**310-1818**
Support Network	**211**
Edmonton Distress Line – 24 Hours a day	**780-482-HELP (4357)**
Groups Helping Abusers	
Changing Ways	780-439-4635
The Family Centre	780-423-2831/ 780-424-5580
The Edmonton John Howard Society	780-428-7590/ 780-423-1635
Immigration and Translation Services	
Catholic Social Services	780-424-3545
Changing Together – A Centre for Immigrant Women	780-421-0175
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative Ltd.	780-423-1973
Family and Counselling Services	
Catholic Social Services	780-432-1137
Changing Together – A Centre for Immigrant Women	780-421-0175
Edmonton Community Services	780-496-4777
Emergency Social Services (Province) (Day)	780-422-2001
(Evenings and Weekends)	780-427-3390
Family Violence Prevention Centre	780-423-1635
Islamic Family Social Services Association	780-430-9220/ 780-462-0772
Psychologists' Association – Referral Line	780-428-8255
S.A.I.F (Stop Abuse In Families – St. Albert) Society	780-460-2195
Salvation Army Community and Family Services	780-424-9222/ 780-429-0230
Sexual Assault Centre (Information Line)	780-423-4102

Spousal Violence Intervention Teams	780-421-2014
Terra	780-428-3772
The Family Centre	780-423-2831/ 780-424-5580
The Support Network	780-482-0198
Y.W.C.A. Counselling Centre	780-423-9922 Ext. 222

Shelters

A Safe Place (Sherwood Park)	780-464-7233
WIN Houses (24-Hour Crisis/Support Line)	780-479-0058
Edmonton Women's Shelter (WIN House)	780-471-6709
Lurana Shelter	780-424-5875/ 1-877- 252-233
Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre	780-423-5302
Youth Emergency Shelter	780-468-7070
Edmonton Seniors Safe Housing	780-702-1520

Legal Resources

Legal Aid	780-427-7575
Emergency Protection Order Program (EPOP)	780-422-9222
Student Legal Services	780-492-2226
Dial-A-Law (Pre-recorded tapes on general issues of law)	1-800-332-1091
Family Law Office (EPO's)	780-415-8800
Edmonton Protection Order Program	780-422-9222

Seniors

Protection for Persons in Care	1-888-357-9339
Health Link	780-408-5465
Elder Abuse Intervention Team (Intake)	780-471-1122
Seniors Helpline (24 Hours)	780-454-8888
Alberta Seniors Information	780-427-7876