

Working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence in British Columbia, Canada

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Abstract

This article outlines effective intervention strategies for probation officers working with South Asian men in British Columbia, Canada, who have assaulted their partners. It is part of a larger qualitative research study aimed at determining effective intervention strategies for frontline personnel that work with South Asian men, as well as determining effective prevention strategies aimed at policy makers and members of South Asian communities. Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted with South Asian frontline workers that included police officers, probation officers, counsellors, child protection workers and victim service workers. The audio-taped data was transcribed and analysed by identification of themes and subthemes. Probation officers need to respect their clients' cultural values while still holding these men accountable for their behaviour. Interventions that address patriarchal attitudes, the stressors arising out of immigration/acculturation, influence of extended family, and substance abuse were identified as being key factors in changing behaviour.

Keywords

culture, domestic violence, immigration, intimate partner violence, South Asia, substance abuse

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Introduction

The term 'South Asian' includes someone who migrated from or is a descendent of an immigrant from South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka; additionally, the term can include persons from places such as Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean and Europe who trace their origin to nations in South Asia. The region is linguistically diverse and world religions that are practised there include Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Sikhism (Ahmad et al., 2004; Assanand et al., 2005; Maiter, 2003; Papp, 2010; Raj et al., 2006; Tran et al., 2005; Vittala and Poole, 2004).

Professionals often misunderstand or minimize the impact of culture on their clients. Culture needs to be considered as a dynamic force rather than a monolithic entity. It is constantly contested, and therefore undergoes constant transformation, adaptation and reshaping. It can be both oppressive and supportive. Drawing simplistic explanations of culture in intimate partner violence is both incorrect and oppressive towards ethno-cultural communities (Thiara and Gill, 2010). Therefore, while South Asian communities are among 'the most unified when it comes to the value they attach to family interaction, the maintenance of social networks within their cultural group, and the preservation of ethnic customs, traditions and heritage languages' (Tran et al., 2005: 20) such commonalities cannot be universally applied to an individual or ethnic group.

According to 2006 Census data, there were 1.3 million South Asians living in Canada, and that number could grow to between 3.2 to 4.1 million by 2031. In 2001, 28 per cent of South Asian Census respondents reported they were Hindu, 28 per cent reported they were Sikh, 22 per cent were Muslim and 16 per cent were Christian. The majority of South Asians live in Ontario and British Columbia, particularly in the regions in and around Toronto and Vancouver. In 2001, 60 per cent of South Asians in the Greater Vancouver region were Sikh, while more than one-third in Toronto were Hindu and a quarter were Muslim. In British Columbia, the largest South Asian group can trace their heritage back to Punjab, in India and follow the Sikh religion. Over 262,000 South Asians lived in BC: 27.5 per cent of Surrey's and 10 per cent of Vancouver's population were South Asian, and almost 75 per cent of Abbotsford's visible minority population is South Asian – with 90 per cent of that group being Sikh. Over 84,000 households spoke Punjabi in Surrey, and over 32,000 spoke Hindi (City of Surrey, 2008; Lindsay, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2010; Tran et al., 2005).

Little research exists on the prevalence of intimate partner violence in South Asian communities in North America. Of the ones that exist, they are small-scale in nature (Dasgupta, 2007). One study in Boston of 165 female South Asian respondents found that 35 per cent reported violence at the hands of their partner (Raj and Silverman, 2002). Another study also in Massachusetts by Silverman (2002; cited in Almeida, 2009) found 48.8 per cent of 160 South Asian women had been physically or sexually abused by their partner. In Ontario, two separate focus groups (one with 12 women, one with 15 men) were conducted and 200 surveys were completed (100 women, 100 men) to elicit opinions and experiences of intimate

partner violence (IPV) among primarily Punjabi-speaking Sikhs in Ontario (Mutta and Kaur, 2010); this study found a large number of participants were dissatisfied in their marriages. In both the focus groups and surveys, male participants reported experiencing high levels of emotional and verbal abuse, while females reported experiencing high levels of physical, verbal, emotional, psychological and emotional abuse. Dagupta (2007) suggests the fact that minimal statistical data exists on rates of IPV in South Asian communities 'itself speaks volumes about the invisibility that shrouds the topic' (Dagupta, 2007: 14). This research was undertaken by the Centre for the Prevention and Reduction of Violence (CPRV) at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC). This article outlines effective intervention strategies for probation officers working with South Asian men who have assaulted their partners. It is part of a larger qualitative research study aimed at determining effective intervention strategies for any frontline professional that works with these South Asian men, as well as determining effective prevention strategies aimed at policy makers and members of South Asian communities.

Methodology

The research took place within a transformative paradigm that understands research as an ethical and systematic inquiry embedded in social relations and beginning from the standpoint of those living and working within particular communities – communities that are shaped by, but not determined by, values arising out of the intersection of culture, gender, geography, generation and other individual and collective attributes (Mertens, 2009). An interview guide was developed based on background interviews with key South Asian frontline practitioners, some of whom were later interviewed. These same practitioners also provided names of other potential participants. The researcher is a former probation officer and currently works as a therapist, and therefore is also familiar with South Asian community members who have significant experience working with South Asian men, women and/or children. A reference group for the research project, consisting of several South Asian community activists, was formed and they were given regular updates as well as given opportunities to provide feedback on the project.

Seventeen members of South Asian communities in Surrey, Abbotsford, Vancouver, Burnaby and Delta were interviewed. These counsellors, probation officers, police officers and elders had a combined experience of over 200 years working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence. They had worked directly with thousands of men and many of them had also worked with women and children from the same families. They talked about their work over the years, including what they had learned about the influences of immigration experiences, family structure, community expectations, and substance use. They talked about situations of violence and how these situations unfold, what the assaultive men said they wanted to happen once the police were called, they went through the legal system and participated in mandated programmes. They talked about how, as frontline practitioners and community members, they envisioned more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Data analysis

Audio-taped interviews were transcribed by an external professional transcriber. These transcripts were then reviewed by the researcher to ensure accuracy, as well as to 'clean' them (remove names and any references that could identify participants). Interview transcripts were reviewed and prominent themes were identified by two separate coders (the researcher, and the project coordinator). The researcher then used NVIVO software to code identified themes. Additional themes were identified as analysis progressed and were added as necessary, and after review by both researcher and the project coordinator.

The researcher produced a new document for each theme, with key phrases and quotes placed in the appropriate document. These documents were reviewed by the project coordinator. A thematic analysis was then conducted for each major theme. The major themes identified include: cultural differences, patriarchal values held by some South Asian families, immigration/acculturation and substance abuse.

These themes, of cultural differences, immigration/acculturation and substance abuse, and how they pertain to probation practice, will be discussed in the next section. Greater awareness of these issues can improve the way probation officers work with assaultive South Asian men and the victims/survivors.

Cultural differences

When you're talking about the South Asian community, it's not generic. It's shifted so much over the last 25, 30 years, where you do have kind of the more traditional South Asian family which has multi-generations in there, and, now you're starting to get your typical kind of mom, dad, two kids in the household and that's it (Probation Officer).

The South Asian family unit typically extends beyond the western concept of a nuclear family to include grandparents, siblings and their families and interdependence is highly valued. The needs of extended families will often factor into an individual's decision-making process (Assanand et al., 2005; Dosanjh et al., 1994; Maiter, 2003; Rastogi, 2009). Given the interdependent nature of South Asian families, they can generally be considered to hold a collectivist worldview (Abraham, 2005; Assanand et al., 2005; Maiter, 2003).

The 2001 census reveals that 4 per cent of South Asians in Canada aged 15 and over lived alone, compared to 13 per cent of all adult Canadians. Eight per cent of South Asian seniors reporting living alone while 25 per cent reported living with extended family, compared to 29 per cent of all seniors that lived alone and 5 per cent that lived with family. In 2002, 86 per cent of South Asians reported having had contact in the previous year with family that resides in their parent's or grandparent's country of birth and 56 per cent reported having regular contact of at least once a month (Lindsay, 2007; Tran et al., 2005).

A difference [between South Asian and mainstream men] I noticed is that with South Asian men, they bring a lot of extended family issues. And mainstream, they don't

bring that. And when we explore that [with mainstream men] you know there's some interferences there from extended family, but it's less (Counsellor of Women).

Marriage is considered a union between families, not individuals. An arranged marriage is common, though in Canada and the US young people are often able to meet to get to know each other prior to the wedding date (Abraham, 2005; Assanand et al., 2005; Nath and Craig, 1999). In South Asia, arranged marriages are considered 'an alliance between two families. This alliance is based on economic worth, education, appearance, family background and social status and is considered to be much more desirable than the notion of love between two individuals; love blossoms if the above-mentioned criteria are met' (Pillay, 2004: 28).

In 2001, 61 per cent of South Asian in Canada aged 15 and over were married, compared to 50 per cent of all Canadian adults; 2 per cent reporting living common-law, compared to 10 per cent of all Canadians (Lindsay, 2007). In their study of African American, Hispanic and South Asian victims/survivors, Yoshioka et al. (2003) found that amongst the three groups the South Asian women were more likely still to be married to, or had been married to, their abuser.

You know the son has a tremendous amount of commitment to his extended family for keeping his family together because this is the sort of 'continuation of our lineage, our name', and all that. So there's quite a bit of pressure on South Asian men to keep their marriages together . . . I would say that's different on a cultural level. It's value based in the sense that there's a lot of shame attached to marriages breaking down. I think it's changing. There's a lot more marriages falling apart now and I think it's becoming more accepted that somebody would get divorced. It's not the stigma that it used to be 15, 20 years ago. However, it's still very status-based. If you're married, then you have higher status. If you're divorced, then you have low status (Counsellor of Men).

After an assault occurs and police are involved, the perpetrator may be arrested and released with conditions that he have no contact with the victim nor return to the residence. Given the value placed on marriage and interdependence, there may be considerable pressure to reconcile. All 17 research participants noted both the perpetrator and the victim/survivor most often wanted to reconcile, and that this was considerably different than mainstream (Caucasian) clients; the difference was less marked amongst second generation South Asian Canadians. They noted greater interconnectedness amongst family, greater value placed on two-parent families, and greater stigma on divorce and separation were factors that influenced the mutual desire to reconcile. Emphasis is often on the couple reconciling within South Asian communities and less emphasis may be placed on addressing the abusive behaviour (Assanand et al., 2005; Gill, 2004). A research participant with decades of experience noted, 'In the beginning you were more worried about the woman's side because pressure was there. These days we are also noticing [pressure] on men also. They are not ready to go back, to reunite, but they are pressured'. One counsellor who has facilitated therapeutic assaultive men's groups with both mainstream and South Asian clients noted:

In mainstream, we were taking 12 people and eight out of those 12, or nine sometimes, were not with the same partner they had abused. One-third will still be with the same partner, and they want to learn how to control their anger and how to strengthen that relationship. The other two-thirds were more interested in learning skills so they can apply them to a new relationship In South Asian [groups], out of 12 people, ten will be with the same partners, and two are separated or there's a no contact order, but mostly people are with the same partner. And mostly it's their first marriage and the only marriage.

Patriarchy in South Asian families

Patriarchy exists in most societies, and while overt patriarchy is decreasing in many societies it is still prevalent in many South Asian nations. In a patriarchal South Asian home, gender roles are clearly defined. The male is considered the head of the household, chief provider, and chief decision-maker while the woman is responsible for looking after household chores, including having greater responsibility in child-rearing. The South Asian woman may have no rights to property. A male who sponsors his spouse can yield considerable power over her, especially if she is not familiar with her rights (Abraham, 2000, 2005; Ahmad et al., 2009; Assanand et al., 2005; Dosanjh et al., 1994; Vittala and Poole, 2004).

You can talk about this whole notion of power and control and yes, that exists very much in a non-South Asian community, but it's a little bit different in a South Asian community, because there's a different degree of male privilege. There's a different degree of roles. There's a different degree of what is going to be accepted, what isn't going to be accepted (Probation Officer).

Bhanot and Senn (2007) suggest South Asian men's gender role attitudes influence their attitudes on violence towards an intimate partner. While a South Asian immigrant male may be quick to adopt some Western values, his belief system regarding gender roles may take considerably longer to change (Sharma, 1998). While not all South Asian men subscribe to such rigid patriarchal attitudes, many benefit from them (Balzani, 2010).

It is important to recognize that it is not familism and collectivism values themselves, but rather 'the exploitation of these values through dynamics of unequal power in the trusted relationship' (Ahmad et al., 2009: 620) which can result in instances of intimate partner violence. In fact, familism and collectivism can be protective factors, 'as shared responsibility can make a woman less vulnerable, because an attack on her could be seen as an attack on the whole family' (Izzidien, 2008: 22).

Immigration/acculturation

The act of migration can be traumatic, with immigrants being separated from relied upon sources of support such as family and community. Immigrants may face cultural, linguistic, informational and systemic barriers related to settling (Abouguendia and Noels, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2004, 2009; Alaggia and Maiter,

2006; Maiter, 2003). Considerable stress can arise from adjusting to new cultural norms and from the changes in family structure, socioeconomic and social status. These can be compounded for persons of colour, given their visible minority status. All of these stressors are in addition to the everyday stressors faced by all individuals such as concerns over finances, decisions about the future and problems related to school or work. Research indicates that IPV can increase in the face of stress (Abouguendia and Noels, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2009; Balzani, 2010; Maiter, 2003; Sharma, 1998).

When a person migrates, there is a tendency not to open up to the new but to become more rigid on what you already know Imagine someone who's been uprooted and just leaving everything, right? There's a big time fear. Big time insecurity involved and part of that is, what do I cling to for a source of strength? So I could go to my traditional values. But many times old traditional values become warped. So for example, when 'I'm supposed to be a defender of the family', instead of being the defender, he starts becoming overprotective. He starts becoming too controlling because that value now becomes warped and it turns into something else because he's relying on that value for a sense of self-preservation, family preservation, but it's now being taken to the extreme it wasn't intended for. And that's part of the migration experience (Alcohol and Drug Counsellor).

The South Asian male may find his status in his host country lower, going from the major and often sole breadwinner to potentially making less than his spouse (Pillay, 2004). Changes in breadwinner roles 'have the potential to create conflicts, unless family members are able to adjust to the new order' (Gill and Matthews, 1995: 257). Professionals may find themselves unemployed or underemployed, as their credentials are not recognized in Canada, or they are unable to find work in their desired profession because of a requirement to have prior Canadian work experience. Skilled immigrants may need to undergo recertification, though recertification placements may be limited, as well as lengthy and costly (Light, 2007; Maiter, 2003; Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005). Experiences of immigration are not a cause of IPV, though it may be a category worth exploring, whether someone is first, second or of a latter generation. As Alaggia and Maiter (2006) state:

Regardless of their reasons for migrating, [immigrants and refugees] bring with them deeply embedded cultural and familial values, religious beliefs, and they are influenced by societal expectations regarding sexual and gender roles acquired in their country of origin. All of these factors serve to shape beliefs and attitudes regarding familial relations, including marital arrangements, assigned gender roles, child-rearing practices, and the role of extended family. When abuse or violence is a reality in the family life of immigrants, how it is understood and addressed is influenced by all of these factors. (Alaggia and Maiter, 2006: 100)

Substance abuse

Certainly addiction, domestic violence, youth violence happen across all communities, but it's just been a little bit slower for [South Asian] communities to deal with it. And, they've had less time, they haven't been around as long, so it's understandable.

During the early years of mass immigration, many within immigrant communities in North America went to great lengths to project a model image to the host society. Scholars have coined the phrase 'model minority' to describe this phenomenon, where community members want to promote their achievements, particularly economic successes, while denying the existence of social problems such as substance misuse, intimate partner violence and child sexual abuse. Those that does not fit into the model minority image then are ostracized within their community and experience considerable shame and guilt (Abraham, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007; Walton-Robert and Pratt, 2005); 'any incident that comes to light regarding members of the community is ignored, denied or explained away as merely a case of particular violent individuals or relationships rather than as a social problem' (Abraham, 2000: 15). One research participant, a probation officer, noted his South Asian immigrant clients have 'a strong desire to succeed because they have come to a new country and they want to do well. And I guess one of the other things that comes with that is making sure people are aware of your successes but not aware of any of the negatives in your life'.

While these issues are considerably less hidden and less denied as a result of the hard work of activists within immigrant communities (Abraham, 1995, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007), this desire to adhere to the image of a model minority can still inhibit immigrant communities from addressing social issues affecting them.

Studies on substance use by South Asian in the West are limited. Of the ones that exist, many are based on data that is about 20 years old (i.e. Cochrane and Bal, 1990; Kunz and Geisbrecht, 1999). Qualitative research undertaken in South Asia found men who consume alcohol have more conflicts in their relationships and are more likely to resort to violence to resolve conflict with their spouse (Krishnan, 2005). Immigrant South Asians may drink more frequently in the host country as they believe it is symbolic of their modernity and it is a means of being social (Agic, 2004).

I would say between 70 and 80 per cent of the files involved some form of alcohol use or misuse and that resulted in conflict, whether violence or other types of conflict in the home that led to violence. So I think it was pretty high, in my experience (Probation Officer).

South Asian immigrant men may view alcohol as a way to relax, reduce stress, deal with problems at home, and reduce loneliness (Agic, 2004). Women are not expected to drink at all (Agic, 2004; Kunz and Geisbrecht, 1999); however they 'are vulnerable to depression because of their social isolation, loss of extended family support, racism, alienation, and domestic violence. This means they are at risk of being overprescribed anti-depressants' (Vittala and Poole, 2004: 32).

Interventions with South Asian assaultive men

While the literature on men who batter is limited, there is significantly less focus on South Asian males who have perpetrated intimate partner violence, particularly looking at effective intervention and prevention strategies with this population. As

recently as 20 years ago, IPV programmes for assaultive men were culturally neutral and only recently have scholars noted the role of race, culture and ethnicity in assessments and interventions (Bent-Goodley, 2005).

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

There is great potential for client change within the probation officer-client relationship. A probation officer, as well as anyone else that works with South Asian clients, must recognize that 'expecting them to self-disclose is asking them to be the center of attention and is against their value of modesty and selflessness' (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; in Sharma, 1998: 25).

I think it can have just amazing, positive impact on this guy. As long as they can be patient and be willing to understand this South Asian guy – or really whichever group he's from, eventually this person will get there, to talk about what brought them there and get an understanding of their own role in it. On the other hand, you wind up with a probation officer or a police officer who doesn't want to give them the time of day and treats them like they're less than human, then I don't think you've done any good at all. You've basically continued to humiliate and shame this person and really, those strategies don't work. In all likelihood, the guy's probably just going to wind up internalizing it and probably taking it out somewhere else, if not back on his spouse at some point (Probation Officer).

In addition to a referral for assaultive men's counselling, the client may also need some support related to their integration/acculturation. After being arrested, one research participant noted, 'the stresses on the guy are through the roof and if he is South Asian and he's not familiar with the legal system as it is, he is probably going to be feeling far more frustrated than someone who is familiar with the system'. Therefore, the supervisor may need to spend some time explaining court, bail and probation procedures:

The majority of them [South Asian immigrant men] don't know what's going to happen. And I think the majority of them don't know what's happening while it's happening. If they're in the criminal justice system, the woman has Victims Services telling her what's happening. The guy's gone to jail maybe overnight or the weekend and he's out... [there is] a huge lack of knowledge (Counsellor of Men).

Furthermore, often South Asian immigrant couples who have conflict in their marriage have only each other to turn to – whereas back home they had the support of extended family; therefore, clients may need assistance finding new support structures (Maiter, 2003; Rastogi, 2009). One way this could be done is through linking newcomer families to host families through 'host programs' where the host family can provide support and adaptation assistance (Ahmad et al., 2004).

Asking about the man's extended family and relationship with his spouse's family can also help determine sources of support or possible risk. As one research participant noted, a couple can 'end up with some pretty strong informal support networks, where the elders in the communities and family members are involved. So if you are in a relationship where things are starting to go sideways, that support network is priceless'.

As for addressing their assaultive behaviour, one way to motivate South Asian clients to engage in change is to talk to them about their children. In the West, the dominant family dyad is the husband–wife dyad, whereas in the east dyads such as parent–child are given equal or greater value (Maiter, 2003).

Talking about children with South Asians is one way to engage them in the change process. They are willing to do anything when they know that this will be helpful to their children. They are quite devoted that way, so when we talk about how to be a good father and all, they are with you. Then they will say, 'Okay, how else can I strengthen my family? How could I make my relationship with my wife stronger? Because ultimately it will help my kids and my whole family' (Counsellor of Men and Women).

One participant, a probation officer, noted he tells new probation officers that 'You're in a very privileged spot, because this is one of the few places where you will not only influence the guy, but you will influence the next generation'.

Referrals to assaultive men's counselling

Individual counselling is considered ineffective as it may just rationalize the man's behaviour. Couples' counselling for intimate partner violence is also considered inappropriate, given it implies the victim/survivor is in some way also responsible for the abuse; she may also not feel safe in expressing herself fully or truthfully in the presence of the abuser. However, couples counseling may be appropriate at some point (i.e. after the male has completed his own counselling), especially when the victim/survivor insists on remaining in the relationship. Group work can help reduce social isolation and gives the men a safe place to discuss, both with facilitators and participants, difficult situations they are encountering. And research indicates that men need support from peers in order to abstain from further violence (Aldarondo and Fernandez, 2008; Almeida and Dolan Del-Vecchio, 1999; Pillay, 2004). For South Asian clients, one research participant noted:

If you're going to address South Asian violence, you have to have a program geared specifically to the issues that lead to the violence within that community. And, I think they're very similar issues, but they manifest themselves a little bit differently and that's the issues that have to be addressed (Probation Officer).

Furthermore, any counselling programme that the probation officer refers the South Asian client to needs to:

... go beyond someone who is familiar with how to get by in the Canadian community. It's about how to get by in a Canadian community, balancing my South Asian roots in it. And, you don't just forget your roots, you don't walk away from them because you've moved geographically. There are emotional ties to it, there are cultural ties to it, there are beliefs, there are values, there are attitudes and it's balancing those within this new community. And, that does take time and whatever program you're going to have for a South Asian relationship violent offender, has to have those ingredients as part of that program (Probation Officer).

A probation officer should discuss with their client the option of culturally homogenous groups, where they are available. Racially homogenous groups can allow for greater participation and engagement in what is discussed, greater supportive relationships among participants, and increased comfort and allowance to confront each other. Group work is also an effective therapeutic approach given the degree a South Asian society emphasizes community over individuality (Pillay, 2004; Sharma, 1998). When a culturally homogenous group exists, the client can be given the option of what type of group to attend (a culturally homogenous or heterogeneous group). A culturally homogenous group may be particularly appropriate for those South Asian clients who heavily identify with their culture. In reviewing similar culturally homogenous group batterer programmes (African-American and Hispanic), Bennett (2008) indicates 'the effectiveness of the culture-focused programmes over other forms of PAIP [partner abuse intervention programmes] has yet to be established, though the same judgment could be made about any approach to intervention with men who batter'. He notes 'men who scored high in cultural identification were more likely to complete the all-African American groups. These findings provide enough support to continue cultural-specific programming, particularly for men to whom ethnic identity is important. Culture-focused programmes, while not yet superior to other groups in terms of preventing recidivism, may be superior in preventing dropout' (Bennett, 2008: 240). A research participant indicated:

Usually groups really work for South Asian men, especially when they challenge each other. Then they hear other people's stories, that 'Oh, he's abusing his wife, and then they can also see what I'm doing'. When they challenge each other, that's really effective (Counsellor of Men and Women).

Substance abuse counselling

In our community, people say that men abuse their wives because they were drunk, right? They were drunk, that's why they abused their wife. The way I see it, they have two problems, one is that they have a drinking problem, plus they are also abusers. So they have to deal with the two issues, not only one issue (Counsellor of Men).

Batterers who have ongoing substance abuse issues should not be excluded from attending batterer programmes. These men may fall through the cracks of both batterer and substance abuse treatment programmes, which then increases risks to the victim/survivor (Bennett and Williams, 2003). Further, given the high numbers

of men who have both abused their partners and substances, there is a likelihood there will be men in recovery in the batterer programmes, and these men can help those who are struggling with substances. Regular assessments of substance use during batterer programmes is necessary, given substance abuse is a risk factor that can increase the likelihood of further abuse (Bennett, 1995, 2008). Bennett and Williams (2003) recommend wherever possible that the same agency and the same staff deliver the substance abuse and intimate partner violence treatment. They acknowledge that in reality this is unlikely (i.e. different agencies deliver different programmes) so a coordinated approaches between agencies with assertive supervision by a probation officer may be the most suitable model.

Intersectionality

Each male's an individual. There may be some commonalities as far as culture or origin but each male sees life differently and each person's situation in their home or whatever conflict they may have come from is individual as well. So there's no common way to deal with all men across the board (Alcohol and Drug Counsellor).

An intersectional analysis of intimate partner violence has been used for many years to describe the multiple experiences of victims; it can also be used as a method to better understand assaultive South Asian men. Intersectionality within critical race and feminist theories suggests that people's experiences are shaped by the intersections of systems of power and oppression. Categories such as gender, race, culture, class, dis/ability, age, sexual orientation, etc. are socially constructed, no one category can adequately define one's identity or social location, and an individual category cannot be empirically separated from the others as categories are not mutually exclusive nor static and may intersect in ways that make the effects of their whole greater than the sum of their parts. Based on a particular social location and time, these categories can be arranged in a hierarchy and a person can experience privilege via one or more categories while at the same time experience multiple oppressions via other categories (Thiara and Gill, 2010). South Asian men therefore may oppress their partners while being oppressed themselves (Balzani, 2010). Attempting to understand and utilize interventions framed around these intersections can improve the work that probation officers do with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence as well as the victims/survivors.

Conclusion

Canada is internationally renowned for its multiculturalism policies and it has some of the most advanced policies regarding intimate partner violence in the world (Shirwadkar, 2004), yet more work can be done in regards to perpetrators and victims/survivors of IPV, especially with those who belong to South Asian communities. All 17 frontline practitioners believed that a greater understanding of South Asian culture (while recognizing its fluidity and the individual characteristics of

South Asian community members) can result in interventions that can change assaultive South Asian men's behavior. Probation officers, as one of the first front-line practitioners that these men will come into contact with, are in a particularly influential position to change behavior. While any perpetrator of violence towards an intimate partner must be held accountable for his actions, recognizing and addressing, in a culturally responsive manner, the influence of family interdependency, the value placed on marriage, patriarchy and gender role expectations, experience of immigration/acculturation and substance abuse can increase the effectiveness of interventions with South Asian perpetrators. In addition to addressing the above factors, probation officers can work with these men to locate sources of support, such as family members who do not condone violence and immigrant settlement service agencies, as well as take the time to explain the role of probation officers and other criminal justice system personnel in order to reduce the stressors the men may be experiencing. Patience, understanding and respect can lay the foundation for considerable change. Where children are involved, a discussion around the man's role as a father and what type of father he wants to be to his children can also be an effective motivator for change.

In addition to the individual work with perpetrators of intimate partner violence, probation officers should also consider a referral to a batterer intervention group programme, where men have an opportunity to challenge each other and consider alternatives to violence. For South Asian men who identify highly with their ethnicity and culture, a referral to a culturally homogenous group, where it exists, should be discussed with the client. Reducing the instances and reoccurrence of intimate partner violence in South Asian communities does not require a re-writing of North American laws. It does require, however, greater willingness on the parts of governments, criminal justice system personnel, community service providers and members of South Asian communities to consider ways to address it. By effectively intervening with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence, we ultimately will enhance the safety of South Asian victims/survivors and their children.

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