Understanding and Addressing the Needs of South Asian Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review was conducted to understand the unique experiences of South Asian victims/survivors of domestic violence. The literature suggests that factors such as marginalization, race, socioeconomic status, the immigration experience, and perceived prejudice in the criminal system intersect to create unique experiences for South Asian women who experienced domestic violence (Sheppard, 2000; Battered Women's Support Services, 2015; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Singh, 2009; Singh, 2010; (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014; Chatha, Ahmad, & Sheikh, 2014; Mahapatra, 2008). The literature also suggests the need for a collaborative effort between the client and profession, as well as the need to incorporate the victims culture and spirituality for individual and larger scale responses to domestic violence in South Asian communities (Singh, 2009; Kallivayalil; Mohan, 2012; (Nath & Craig, 1999; Sandhu, 2005; Dugsin, 2001; Shariff, 2009; Busch & Valentine, 2000; Morjaria-Keval, 2006).

Understanding and Addressing the Needs of South Asian Victims/Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

Introduction

The literature suggests that the unique systemic barriers experienced by South Asian women blend together to increase a South Asian women's vulnerability in regards to domestic violence. The unique problems faced by South Asian women who experience domestic violence include immigration status, language issues, marginalization, socioeconomic status, race factors, and beliefs of the prejudicial nature of the criminal justice system (Sheppard, 2000; Battered Women's Support Services, 2015; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Singh, 2009; Singh, 2010; (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014; Chatha, Ahmad, & Sheikh, 2014; Mahapatra, 2008). Thus, in order to effectively understand and address the needs of South Asian survivors of domestic violence it is important to respond to these larger scale systemic barriers. Furthermore, as the experiences of South Asian women who are victims of domestic violence are unique it is also important to develop unique responses and programs for the South Asian communities that are affected by domestic violence.

Cultural responsivity needs to be considered for large-scale community interventions as well as small-scale interventions (Maiter, 2003; Russell & White, 2001, 2002; Shariff, 2009; Khanna et al., 2009; Williams, 2010). The South Asian community may be more receptive of restorative justice responses as such responses may be responsive to the South Asian culture, tradition, collectivist beliefs, and the South Asian communities beliefs of a prejudicial justice system (Singh, 2009; Kallivayalil; Mohan, 2012). On a smaller scale when providing therapy it would be beneficial to incorporate a client's culture and belief system, as well ensure that the client is provided the opportunity to collaborate in the client's goal planning client (Nath &

Craig, 1999; Sandhu, 2005; Dugsin, 2001; Shariff, 2009; Busch & Valentine, 2000; Morjaria-Keval, 2006). In addition, group therapy may also be beneficial for South Asian survivors of domestic violence because of the collective views of individuals within the South Asian community (Raj et al., 2006; Tutty, 2006; Light, 2007; Izzidien, 2008; Singh & Hays, 2008; Samuel, 2009; Ahmad et al., 2009).

Intersectionality

Researchers, advocates and front-line workers from a variety of disciplines (Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Public Health, Communications, Women's Studies, Post-Colonial Studies) have been involved in research and publications concerning intimate partner violence within South Asian communities in Canada, the United States and England. The term "South Asian" includes someone who immigrated from or is a descendent of an immigrant from South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka; additionally, the term can include persons from places such as Africa, Fiji, the Caribbean and Europe who trace their origin to nations in South Asia. The region is linguistically diverse and world religions that are practiced there include Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Sikhism (Assanand, Dias, Richardson & Waxler-Morrison, 2005; Ayyub, 2000; Maiter, 2003; Merali, 2009; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006; Tran, Kaddatz & Allard, 2005. South Asians are the fastest growing immigrant group in Canada and their numbers could grow to between 3.2 to 4.1 million by 2031 (Statistics Canada 2010; Tran, Kaddatz and Allard 2005).

It became clear while reviewing literature and through consultation with the reference group members created for this research project that defining one monolithic South Asian culture (characteristics that were applicable to all people of South Asian heritage) is impossible. Often

the differences along religion and language are considerable. First generation immigrants, in particular, may consider the differences especially pronounced (Sundar, 2008). Falicov (1995) defines culture as:

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

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. Therefore, even though 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, Kaddatz & Allard, 2005, p.20) such commonalities cannot be universally applied to any individual or ethnic group. Furthermore, a person of South Asian descent who lives in North America would be influenced by both dynamic cultures (Ahmad & Reid, 2009).

Patriarchy as a Universal Problem

Patriarchy is often present amongst South Asian groups although the religious beliefs of such groups may condemn inequality amongst men and women (Mandair, 2013). Thus, many professionals suggest the importance of viewing violence against women as a universal and worldwide problem, rather than the product of a subgroup (George & Rashidi, 2014).

Professionals often highlight that social service providers often approach individuals from different cultures with negative and stereotypical views (George & Rashidi, 2014). Such racist beliefs may further damage South Asian communities, as individuals may prefer to remain silent about domestic abuse that occurs for the fear that they may perpetuate stereotypical beliefs of domestic abuse being solely an issue present in the minority community (Singh, 2010).

Immigration

The immigrant status of South Asian women often leads to unique barriers for South Asian women (Sheppard, 2000). As identified by Sheppard "immigration policies, which too often subsume a wife's identity to her husband, require and reinforce economic dependency within the family unit, remain inaccessible and discretionary and create systemic obstacles to leaving an abusive family situation for many immigrant women" (Sheppard, 2000, p. 2).

Immigration Status and Rights

Immigrant women may have fears in regards to leaving their husband, or pressing criminal charges, as the immigrant women may be concerned about how doing so will affect her legal right to reside in Canada (Sheppard, 2000). Thus, "if immigration law is not supportive of an immigrant woman's decision to leave an abusive family situation, she is faced with a choice between staying in a dangerous and violent home or putting her immigration status in jeopardy" (Sheppard, 2000, p. 7).

The process of sponsorship also shapes a patriarchal framework in families (Sheppard, 2000). Sheppard states "spousal sponsorship reinforces a vision of the family in which the husband/father is treated as the "head of the family" and the wife and children are treated as the economic dependents, lacking status in the public sphere" (Sheppard, 2000, p. 9). Consequently, in order to complete the sponsorship process the individual acting as a sponsor is required to sign

an agreement with the federal government to support the individual that the individual is sponsoring for a term of 10 years, and 3 years if the individual resides in Quebec (Sheppard, 2000). This further positions the spouse as the leader in the household, in contrast to the women's role as his dependent (Sheppard, 2000).

Moreover, immigrant women have identified to be on the receiving end of threats about their immigration status as immigrants from their husbands (Sheppard, 2000). Sheppard suggests that, "in the absence of clear and accessible information, many women believe that they risk deportation, loss of custody of their children or economic destitution if they challenge or leave an abusive husband who has sponsored them to come to Canada" (Sheppard, 2000, p. 17). Thus, a woman who is sponsored by her husband and subsequently experiences domestic violence may fear speaking about the abuse, or may refrain from receiving assistance as she may be scared of the possibility of her husband revoking her sponsorship (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014). Furthermore, the 2012 conditional permanent residence requirement requires spouses who do not share children to reside with their spouse for two years (Battered Women's Support Services, 2015). The exception for this legislation is when the individuals spouse dies or "situations where the spouse engages in abusive and/or neglectful behaviour" (Battered Women's Support Services, 2015, p. 2). In the process of receiving the conditional status the women is told that her status is conditional on her residence with her spouse (Battered Women's Support Services, 2015). At this point the existing language barriers may lead the women to understand that this condition is absolute (Battered Women's Support Services, 2015). Thus, the language barrier may lead the women to have very little knowledge of the abuse and neglect exception to the conditions of residence (Battered Women's Support Services, 2015). Thus, "in the absence of clear and accessible information, many women believe that they risk deportation, loss of custody

of their children or economic destitution if they challenge or leave an abusive husband who has sponsored them to come to Canada" (Sheppard, 2000, p. 17). Research identifies that immigrant women often have little knowledge of the laws regarding sponsorship (Raj & Silverman, 2007).

Isolation

The immigration experience may also lead the women to be increasingly isolated as her family may be in the country of origin, and as a result may be unable to provide social support (Anitha, 2011). These factors may work simultaneously to render the woman increasingly more dependent on her husband, and as a result more vulnerable (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014). Many of the women who were interviewed in past research identified goals for gaining independence and addressing immigration issues (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014).

For men and women alike, the act of migration can be traumatic, with immigrants being separated from relied upon sources of support such as family and community. They may face cultural, linguistic, informational and systemic barriers related to settling. Considerable stress can arise from adjusting to new cultural norms and from the changes in family structure, socioeconomic and social status. Furthermore, immigrants from South Asian countries have high expectations of what life in Canada will be like, and when these expectations fall short of reality considerable stress, disappointment and/or psychological distress may result. Acculturative stress can lead to depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Ahmad et al., 2004; Ahmad et al., 2009; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Maiter, 2003; Rastogi, 2009; Samuel, 2009; Sharma, 1998; Sharma, 2001).

Marginalization

Immigrant women in Canada "continue to experience patriarchal structures in the same way as Canadian-born women but may be further marginalized due to race discrimination,

language barriers, class oppression, prejudicial attitudes" (Alaggia & Maiter, 2006, p.104). While the predominant culture and society enjoys privileges at the expense of minorities, the marginalization faced by South Asian women along with the absence of support systems may help form a "violent space" (George & Rashidi, 2014, p. 68).

The Criminal Justice System

A violent space may be also be fostered by the justice system (George & Rashidi, 2014). South Asians identify the court systems as places where they are not accepted (Singh, 2009). Often South Asians will be overtly careful as "South Asians view Canada's court systems as unwelcoming and are cautious about encountering prejudice within the system" (Singh, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, South Asians will expect to experience prejudice when they come into contact with the court system (Singh, 2009). Moreover, South Asians do not have an understanding of "the complexities of fair process or its purpose and will invest more authority in professionals than mainstream clients do" (Singh, 2009, p. 7).

In one research study several woman identified that police involvement would "isolate them from friends and community, foster feelings of disempowerment and place them in positions where they are forced to interact with someone who they may not trust, but who has power over them" (Singh, 2010, p. 39). Past research identifies that in many cases woman who had immigrated to Canada did not want to retain police intervention "out of fear that an officer would use his or her authority to engage in physical force with either the victim or offender in woman abuse cases" (Singh, 2010, p. 41). Thus, the presumption and views of potentially racist police led to victims deciding against police intervention (Singh, 2010, p.41). Singh suggests that "far less coercive than criminal justice intervention, community-based organizations are considered the most promising mechanism to ensure that immigrant victims have the requisite

support to protect themselves from both their abusers and the criminal justice system" (Singh, 2010, p. 41). Singh also outlines that informal methods of resolving such issues may be more fitting as informal methods respond to South Asian preferences for privacy, and the fear of stigma that South Asians may face (Singh, 2009).

Research shows that when seeking formal assistance or support in relation to domestic violence South Asian women are more likely to reach out to counselling services and therapist services in contrast to criminal justice interventions (Raj & Silverman, 2007). South Asian women believe that the inclusion of members from the criminal justice system may change their lives in such a drastic manner that they may conclude that the drawbacks outweigh the benefits (George & Rashidi, 2014). The drawbacks that they may consider may be the loss of financial security as the man may be a financial supporter for the family (George & Rashidi, 2014). Furthermore, the arrest of the husband may further impact the wife as she may not be able to speak English, and have little social support, both of which had been provided by the husband (Singh, 2010). The fear and potential drawback of the split and breakup of the family may be another drawback that may lead the women to be fearful of the involvement of criminal justice members (George & Rashidi, 2014). Thus, rather then seeing members of the criminal justice system as individuals who can increase the woman's safety the woman may start seeing the system as a threat (Singh, 2010). Often women who do make the decision to call the police state that they want the police to give their husbands a warning instead of having charges placed on the husband (Singh, 2010).

An informal manner of resolving the family disputes may be welcomed by South Asians who are generally more cautious of the criminal justice system (Singh, 2009). Moreover, South Asian values in keeping family issues private may also render informal dispute mechanisms to be

more welcomed (Singh, 2009). Since immigrant and refugee women may not want to involve police and are not aware of community resources, they may also benefit from outreach services (Light, 2007). Research is reflective of this preference as it shows that when South Asian women did try to retain some formal level of assistance in regard to domestic abuse it was most often therapy or counselling, in only a few circumstances did the women contact police for help (Raj & Silverman, 2007). Those who did retain assistance from the police did so when the abuse became severe (Raj & Silverman, 2007).

Race

Many individuals argue against the pro-criminalization approaches taken by researchers and activists outlining that responses to abuse "must acknowledge how race, class, citizenship, and other structural locations intersect with gender and complicate a woman's experience of violence as well as her interaction with the criminal justice system" (Singh, 2010, p. 38). The violent sphere can be created by racist and sexist immigration policies. It can be understood that the patriarchal violence faced by South Asian women also occurs in a space in which the dominant group within society hold power due to class and race over the women (George & Rashidi, 2014). For example, racism operating within the employment sphere may lead to poverty faced by immigrant women and families (George & Rashidi, 2014). South Asian immigrant woman face racism within society as they are often viewed as lacking productivity by the dominant society (George & Rashidi, 2014). Furthermore, professional practitioners also identify that South Asian women are often on the receiving end of the stress of poverty and racism faced by immigrant men (George & Rashidi, 2014).

Incidents of violence by a Caucasian person, are considered deviance on the part of that individual and never cultural, whereas when violence occurs in immigrant communities, that

violence is attributed to that community (Jiwani, 2001, 2006; Volpp, 2005). Only in the latter do murdered women suffer, as Narayan (1997) describes it, “death by culture” (cited in Volpp, 2005, p. 42).

Journalists are expected to conduct their work with the principles of ethics, balance, objectivity, and impartiality in mind (Mahtani, 2001). However, many journalists fail to meet this standard as they fail to be objective and impartial in their portrayal of individuals of different ethnicities (Mahtani, 2001). Often the media will act unethically as it marginalizes ethnic minorities and creates a narrative that allows for the dominant culture to be viewed as normal (Mahtani, 2001). Professionals in the media hold considerable power as they themselves identify how they want to depict minorities for the general public to view through their media outlets. (Mahtani, 2001) This leads to inaccuracies’ and unfair treatment of minorities as the media often presents stereotypical or negative images of minorities (Mahtani, 2001). Volpp (2005) observes how the media “happily picks up the defendant’s claim (or proffers its own claim) that this problematic behavior is a product of a certain community’s culture because the idea that nonwhite others engage in primitive and misogynistic cultural practices fits preexisting conceptions” (p. 43). Furthermore, no white male "would receive a pass from service providers explaining his violence toward his partner as being culturally normative. This impossibility speaks directly to the differing levels of safety our institutions afford white women versus women of color” (Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 1999, p. 655). Minority groups are not oblivious to this lack of impartiality afforded to minorities within news and the media (Mahtani, 2001). Often minority groups identify that the Canadian media does not provide an accurate picture of who they are (Mahtani, 2001).

Such instances of marginalization as those described above can quickly lead to oppression, as the greater the distance that exists between a person and access to power and privilege, the greater the potential for that person to exert power and privilege at home (Purkayastha, 2000). And the belief that "West is Best" only creates defensive reactions by communities that are feeling attacked, which "plays into the hands of those who choose to defend sex-subordinating behavior" (Volpp, 2005, p. 46).

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic factors that increase the woman's dependence on their husbands may include insufficient education and lack of previous work in terms of employment (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014). Mahapatra states, "a women's education can expose her to the outside world, increase her decision making abilities in terms of seeking help outside the family, and broaden her awareness of options available to her in the community" (Mahapatra, 2008, p. 52). In addition, "an educated women is more likely to be economically independent from an abusive husband" (Mahapatra, 2008, p. 52).

Moreover, in a research study conducted by Horton and Johnon it was found victims who had higher education and also worked had a greater success rate "in leaving their abuser and ending the abuse against" (Mahapatra, 2008). In addition a 2014 research article, which looked at victims of domestic violence in Pakistan, found "that literate and working women were less exposed to domestic violence compared to illiterate and nonworking respondents" (Chatha, Ahmad, & Sheikh, 2014, pp. 235-236). However, at the same time one must also be aware that there are cases of educated women who also stay in abusive relationships (Mahapatra, 2008).

Restorative Justice

Punishing individuals in regards to domestic violence often leads to individual accountability (Singh, 2010). However, a response to the individual has the potential to take away societies responsibility in regard to domestic violence (Singh, 2010). Thus, some individuals argue that the responsibility to protect victims of domestic violence must swing from the criminal justice system on to the community (Singh, 2010, p. 39). Judge Barry Stuart and Kay Pranis identify that "when the state takes over in our name, it undermines our sense of community" (Zehr, 2002, p. 17). Furthermore, because these criminal acts affect communities, communities should also be identified to be "secondary victims" (Zehr, 2002, p. 17). However, at the same time the community should also hold a level of responsibility as community members can create an impact in regards to domestic violence issues, and thus communities can be identified to have a level of accountability towards victims, offenders, as well as themselves (Zehr, 2002).

The restorative justice model has also been identified as "a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offence and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible" (Mitchell, 2006, p. 22). When engaging in restorative justice circles each participant is provided the chance to talk about the impact that the criminal offence has had, the factors involved prior to the commission of the offence, as well as suitable "ways to address healing for both the victim and the community" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007).

Supporters of the restorative justice response suggest "unlike the traditional court setting, victims have the freedom to share their story on their own terms" (Mitchell, 2006, p. 23). Victims may feel more empowered and healed through the restorative justice experience as they are able to freely vocalize their experience (Mitchell, 2006). In contrast, in the mainstream

criminal justice system victims are not able to speak with the same degree freedom as they are often under the pressure of adversarial strategies (Mitchell, 2006).

When navigating the legal system victims confront different feelings (Mitchell, 2006). Victims can often feel overwhelmed, and confused often feeling as if they had been the perpetrator who was charged and tried in court (Mitchell, 2006). Moreover, three reports released by the National Institute of justice identified "significant dissatisfaction among victims having gone through the traditional court system" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 126). The level of satisfaction identified in the report was connected to the victim's amount of perceived level of control in regards to the process as well as the court outcome in the case (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007). Subsequently, the victim's dissatisfaction resulted in the "reluctance to report incidents in the future" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 126). An additional research study was able to make this distinction by finding that "80% of victims participating in the victim/offender dialogue thought the process was fair while only 37% thought the traditional criminal justice process was fair" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 126).

A restorative justice process may minimize the level of psychological trauma for victims (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007). Researchers had conducted a study to analyze the impact that restorative justice had on scores of post-traumatic stress symptoms (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007). This study found "victims who participated in a restorative justice practice consistently scored lower than those who only experienced in the court process, both immediately after the case was completed and six months later" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 127).

When attempting to apply restorative justice approaches it has been suggested that appropriate screening would be needed to identify cases that may be appropriate for a restorative justice response (Mitchell, 2006, p. 23). Thus, offenders who should be considered should be

individuals who are motivated to take accountability "for their criminal behaviour and who seek to make restitution" (Mitchell, 2006, p. 23). Moreover, it would be important that facilitators ensure that victims in the restorative process are completely aware that they can stop the restorative process if any discomfort arises or if the victim feels threatened (Mitchell, 2006).

Intimate Abuse Circles

Grauwiler and Mills identify "intimate abuse circles" as responses, which may be more suitable for individuals from different cultures (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012). They identify that these circles may be beneficial for "immigrant, minority, and religious families where it is more likely that the family will remain intact" (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012, p. 125). This model is reflective of research which identifies that males engage in less violence, and that woman begin to feel empowered if the both the man and woman feel that professionals and the members of the care community are listening to them and providing a level of respect (Mills, 2009). These circles involve both the partners and the communities of the individual who are all involved in the "process of recognition, responsibility, and change" (Mills, 2009, p. 13).

Such a model may suit families from immigrant as well as religious communities that wish to keep the family together, but seek to eliminate the violence that exists within the relationship (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012). This framework keeps in mind that numerous individuals wish for the violence in the relationship to stop, but do not seek for the relationship to end (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012). Furthermore, Hayden identifies that members of different cultures "might welcome the opportunity to resolve conflict in a community setting in which respect is shown to all parties and which thus avoids loss of face for their partners" (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012, p. 125). Consequently, the involvement of the community within the intimate abuse circles may influence the community connected to the couple, as the "effects are sure to

ripple beyond the men and women who participate in them, to other family members and to future generations" (Mills, 2009, p. 13).

It is important to consider different approaches that allow community members to be involved (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012). This separate avenue may also benefit women who fear and distrust the criminal justice system, and as a result may wish for different avenues to resolve such issues. Although "more conventional interventions such as imprisonment may still be used for offenders who do not change their behaviour, Braithwaite and Daly see community involvement in decision-making as more beneficial than terms of imprisonment" (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012, p. 125). Such an avenue that allows for community involvement in circles may allow community members to be "able to bring social pressures to bear on the offender in a supportive but safe setting" (van Wormer & Hayden, 2012, p. 125). In cultures such as the South Asian culture in which individuals view themselves as being a part of a community, and a family in contrast to an individualistic selves such culturally responsive approaches may be beneficial.

The Missouri Model

The involvement of similar community members which have been involved in Missouri restorative justice panels may be appropriate to consider when designing a restorative justice program for South Asian individuals. The Missouri model of restorative justice involves a panel that includes "not only the survivors but a family member of a survivor, a grown child of a survivor, a family member of an offender, a prior rehabilitated offender, and community members such as law enforcement, business leaders, elected officials, and faith leaders" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 132). The aim of this program is to allow for conscious raising of the effect that the perpetrators actions has had and to provide greater community support to the survivor of domestic violence, all of which lead to increased healing as well as empowerment

(Burkemper & Balsam, 2007). An additional goal is to place greater "pressure on the perpetrators to change their behaviour" (Burkemper & Balsam, 2007, p. 132).

The Panchyat (The Assembly of Five Respected Elders)

Individuals from a South Asian background may wish for traditional community level involvement in comparison to a systemic response (Mohan, 2012). In India issues amongst individuals were traditionally solved by a group of chosen leaders called the Panchyat (Mohan, 2012). The word panchayat "means an assembly of five wise and respected elders, chosen and accepted by the village community" (Mohan, 2012, p. 190). In India "traditionally the panchayat settled disputes amongst villagers and maintained general peace" (Mohan, 2012, p. 190).

Thus, when analyzing appropriate responses to issues faced by members of the South Asian population it is important to understand the past traditions of South Asians. South Asians values and tradition of community involvement to solve issues suggests that a restorative justice response may be beneficial for members from the South Asian community. In addition research also shows that South Asian are more likely to utilize informal methods of support such as reaching out to their mothers or friends, rather than formal services (Raj & Silverman, 2007).. In other cases, women may try to reach out to leaders within their communities (Raj & Silverman, 2007). These findings further suggest the importance of community involvement in domestic violence cases for South Asians.

The Available Evidence

When evaluating whether restorative justice programs may be beneficial for the South Asian population who experienced domestic violence it may be appropriate to evaluate the available research on the effectiveness of such programs for members of other cultures. Upon

analyzing the available research one may be able to hypothesize the potential effectiveness of restorative justice programs for the South Asian community.

In South Africa 21 survivors of domestic violence went through mediation with the abuser (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). Once the mediation process was completed the women were interviewed (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). In their responses "participants indicted that the mediations had positive effects in regard to the victims' sense of safety, the opportunity to speak on an equal basis with their partners, and the option to resolve matters privately or with supporters present" (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 6). In addition those who were involved in the mediation program had identified that the abuse had ceased to occur after the mediation process (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). Moreover, enhanced communication as well as a decrease in abuse of the verbal nature was identified by individuals in the cases in which both the victim and abuser chose to remain in the relationship (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004)

A research study was also conducted to evaluate the results of the Community Holistic circle healing process in the province of Manitoba (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). This community holistic circle healing process, which implemented treatment, restorative justice circles, as well as the mainstream criminal justice component, produced positive results (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). The 2001 research study identified that the program "resulted in lower rates of domestic violence, lower rates of youth incarceration, lower than usual recidivism, children staying in school longer, and a general improvement in the community's quality of life" (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 7). However, the individuals involved in this research study also stated that individuals within the community as well as individuals in other communities identified many concerns (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). These concerns outlined by those within and those in other communities included the opinion that the program placed too much of its emphasis and

attention on the perpetrator, the possibility of victims being pressured to engage in the process (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). These individuals also outlined the concern that the program relied on traditional approaches, which the community members did not align with (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004).

The South Vancouver Island Justice Education Project was created through the alliance between the First Nations justice system as well as the mainstream traditional justice system (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). However, this project was closed after two years of operation (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). The identified issues were "insufficient consultation with the community, lack of credibility of key participants, political unrest, feuding, and differences in cultural values" (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 7). Furthermore, "victims often felt pressured not to pursue criminal charges, and community members perceived that family connections made it possible for offenders of serious offences to go through diversion instead of through court" (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 7).

The Navajo peacemaking circles were evaluated by Cooker through different methods including various interviews, an analysis of different case records, and observation (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004). The researcher found that the peacemaking process

> "may increase a womens material resources through reparations and referrals to social services, increase her familial, emotional, and spiritual resources through redefined relationships, counselling, and other kinds of support, help disrupt familiar supports for battering, by confronting denial and minimizing from the abuser and the abuser's family; allow for recognizing the effect of oppressive systems in the lives of men who batter,

> without excusing their battering; provide women with tools to change the balance of power within their relationships"
>
> (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 7)

However, Coker also identified dangers in the peace making circles, which included "coerced participation, poorly informed decisions about participating, and peacemaker bias against separation" (Edwards & Sharpe, 2004, p. 8). These dangers identified in peace making circles suggest the importance of trained facilitators who have appropriate training that emphasizes the need of victim participation to be voluntary. Furthermore, these identified dangers also suggest the need for trainer's to ensure that counsellors and facilitators take an unbiased approach when facilitating any restorative justice circle.

Criticisms

Some researchers and professionals criticize the restorative justice response in cases of domestic violence, as they suggest that restorative justice responses may not be well suited for women as values of forgiveness and community interconnectedness may lead women to remain in abusive relationships (van Wormer & Hayden). Critics also identify that restorative justice processes may be inappropriate in cases of domestic violence because "some offenders continue to wield power over victims of domestic violence even after an arrest" (Mitchell, 2006, p. 23). Moreover, issues such as the male perpetrators redirecting blame from themselves, and minimizing the amount of abuse present may jeopardize the restorative justice process (Aziz, 2010). Thus, the Aziz suggests that those involved in carrying out the restorative justice programs should have appropriate experience, knowledge, and training (Aziz, 2010). In addition,

Aziz also suggests that appropriate guidelines need to be established as well as appropriate safeguards prior to carrying out restorative justice approaches (Aziz, 2010).

Howard Zehr, one of the founders of restorative justice, also suggests that restorative justice principles should be applied with caution, as the concerns outlined by the advocates of victims are valid (Zehr, 2002). Similar to Aziz, Zehr also suggests that the cautious oversight of such cases by individuals who have received the appropriate training in the area of domestic violence would be an appropriate remedy for the concerns that are raised in regards to cases of domestic violence (Zehr, 2002). Howard Zehr outlines that "there are profound dangers in an encounter where a pattern of violence continues or where cases are not being carefully monitored by people trained in domestic violence" (Zehr, 2002, p. 39).

Working with South Asian Survivors of Wife Abuse

Health Care

Health care workers need to understand the reasons why South Asian women may not speak out about abuse they are experiencing, and be willing to ask about stress and abuse in their relationship in an empathic and compassionate manner (Ahmad et al., 2009). Family physicians in particular "are in a unique position to inquire about intimate partner violence because of their focus on comprehensive care, health promotion, and early detection, and the ongoing nature of physician-patient relationships. These factors make family practice an appropriate setting for inquiring about and addressing intimate partner violence" (Ahmad et al., 2007, p. 462). Evidence suggests disclosure will often occur if questions about intimate partner violence are asked (Ahmad et al., 2007; Izzidien, 2008).

Explaining Counsellor Role

South Asian immigrants may not be familiar with the concept of therapy, as they have no prior experience of it back home. They may hesitate to seek out counseling services, out of concerns of being stigmatized and because of a desire to keep what is perceived as family matter private (Shariff, 2009). Or they may take a route to address their concerns that is more familiar to them, such as seeking out family or religious supports (Singh & Hays, 2008). In their study of social workers and anti-oppressive practice with immigrant communities, Russell and White (2001, 2002) indicate social workers had to both explain their role to their clients as well as explain certain aspects of mainstream culture. The authors underline the importance of training to ensure the workers are able to clearly and respectfully articulate that role while at the same time not judging their clients' cultural beliefs. Many South Asian women who were victims of abuse identified that South Asian- oriented advocacy agencies were often beneficial, "because staff recognized the influence of the cultural context on women and their marital family members" (Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014, p. 154). Moreover, it would also be beneficial if agencies working with immigrant populations ensured that language needs were met, either through ensuring bilingual staff are available or through hiring bilingual staff to meet the demand (Russell & White, 2001).

Collective Identity

For South Asian woman a focus on self may conflict with the client's focus of family or extended family (Kallivayalil, 2007). A South Asian woman's identity may be based primarily on her roles of wife and mother, and other attributes may be less valued (Singh & Hays, 2008).

Therefore, when South Asian women survivors of IPV present for counseling, they may relate to their counselor according to their gender and cultural roles as a wife and mother.

> These roles further delineate the power differential that exists between counselor and client, which has the potential to create barriers in the therapeutic relationship. These barriers may also contribute to South Asian women's discomfort with disclosing their abuse outside of their family system" (p.87).

However, Maiter (2003) warns against making generalizations based on an unchecked belief that their South Asian client belongs to a large extended family that is interdependent and holds a collectivist worldview. Additionally, she advises that practitioners should not confuse interdependence with enmeshment or characterize it as pathological dependency. A South Asian victim may spend several sessions just talking about the abuse, or may spend a session not wanting to talk at all about it. Patience, understanding, non-judgmental support and validation – whether a client has left the relationship or is still in it - are key therapeutic skills (Sharma, 2001; Uppal, 2005; Kallivayalil, 2007).

Cultural Responsivity

A culturally competent practitioner:

- Has a working knowledge of the client's heritage, cultural beliefs, traditions and values
- Will take the time to understand the clients' current circumstances and consider and use interventions that respect that client's worldview and customs
- Understands there are differences in cultural groups' help-seeking behaviours (i.e. some may turn to family, religious figures or texts, or elders before considering other options such as contacting police or accessing formal counseling)
- Understand barriers that diverse clients may have in accessing services
- Is able to ask questions in a respectful, non-judgmental and open-minded manner

- Does not rely on preconceived concepts or stereotypes
- is sufficiently self-aware of her/his own values and beliefs and how they impact the counseling relationship

(Maiter, 2003; Russell & White, 2001, 2002; Shariff, 2009; Khanna et al., 2009; Williams, 2010)

> The temptation to inappropriately perceive a client through a particular lens may result in stereotyping and reductionism …. Skilled counselors are sensitive and actively engaged in avoiding discrimination, prejudices, and stereotyping. This improves the chances for successful interactions with not only South Asians but also other non-dominant groups (Beharry & Crozier, 2008, p. 274).

Discussing the Immigration Experience

Counselors should discuss the client's immigration experiences, such as the difficulties they experienced during that process (Sharma, 1998). Also, any day-to-day struggles must be identified and addressed. The South Asian client or family may need assistance in securing housing, learning about the transit system, locating English language training courses and mediating between the family and the children's school. They may also need assistance finding new support structures (Maiter, 2003; Light, 2007; Khanna, 2009). South Asian women who have experienced domestic violence have suggested that services involving immigration, financial assistance, and help in navigating social, health, as well as welfare assistance are necessary (Raj & Silverman, 2007). It may be appropriate to link newcomer families to host families through 'host programs' where the host family can provide support and adaptation assistance (Ahmad et al., 2004).

The Collaborative Effort

Webb suggests, “we cannot assume that our views about the clients’ needs match the individuals’ own assessments of the kinds of services they need or want” (Webb, 2011, p. 45). Therefore, social workers, therapists and counsellors must be open to working collaboratively with clients, by allowing clients to develop their own goals, which may not necessarily match the clinician’s goals for the client. Client involvement and collaboration is an approach that can be highly empowering for clients who are victims of domestic violence (Busch & Valentine, 2000). DeLois suggests that the following intervention strategies allow for the empowerment of clients;

> “basing the helping relationship on collaboration, trust and share power; utilizing small groups; accepting the clients definition of the problem; identifying and building on the client’s strengths; raising the clients consciousness of issues of class and power; actively involving the client in the change process; teaching specific skills;…experiencing a sense of personal power within the helping relationship; and mobilizing resources or advocating for clients”.
>
> (Busch & Valentine, 2000, pp. 83-84)

Client goals may include getting assistance with securing employment, improving their English, and taking small skills courses that may lead to future employment. Silverman identifies other goals may include services involving immigration, financial assistance, and help in navigating social, health, and welfare assistance (Raj & Silverman, 2007). Although professionals may believe that such goals may be inferior to the action of the women leaving the household, it is important to understand that these alternative goals may also help reduce the women’s vulnerability, and her dependence on the husband or other individuals who may hold power over the women. Thus, such changes may help to make leaving the husband a real choice

for the women whose dependence originally made the option of leaving the husband seem unrealistic.

Therapeutic Approaches

As Tyyska and Dinshaw (2009) notes "effective treatment programs should not assume that the same model fits all immigrant groups" (p. 4). A culturally responsive practitioner can use elements of existing therapeutic approaches in their work with South Asian families. South Asian clients in counseling respond well to interventions that are both guiding and nurturing. They see counselors as hierarchical figures and expect some direction to deal with immediate stress. In fact, South Asian clients may drop out of counseling if the counsellor is perceived as being completely non-directive. Clients also want to learn skills early on that they can use in their day-to-day lives. A counsellor can provide guidance in their developing goals. Additionally, part of building a strong therapeutic alliance may entail self-disclosure on the part of the counsellor.

Incorporating Belief Systems into the Therapeutic Approach

Practitioners must learn about and integrate the client's culture and belief system into the therapeutic approach. By respecting cultural belief systems, the healing resources within those systems may be effectively accessed by the client (Nath & Craig, 1999; Sandhu, 2005; Dugsin, 2001; Shariff, 2009). Morjaria-Keval (2006) suggests

> [A]n assessment of a client's spirituality will allow for an exploration of the potential use of incorporating clients' own positive spiritual elements into the therapeutic process (p. 114).

Interventions may involve using positive cultural images i.e. Almeida and Dolan-Del Vecchio (1999) note that while motherhood is celebrated in Indian scriptures, poetry and music,

it may not be celebrated in reality given "power rests in the hands of men within hierarchical family structures. However, such culturally symbolic and positive reflections of women can be used to inspire the development of paths towards liberation in real life" (p.666).

When working with women who strongly align with the Sikh religion, clinicians may assist women who follow the Sikh religion by emphasizing their status as women in the Sikh religion through discussing relevant information in the religious text. For example, clinicians may discuss the passages in the Sikh religious text, the Guru Granth Sahib that describes the status of women.

> "[I]n a woman, man is conceived,
> From a woman he is born
> With a woman he is bethrothed and married,
> With a woman he contracts friendship.
> If one dies another one is sought for,
> Man's destiny is linked to woman,
> Why denounce her, the one from whom even great people are born?
> From a woman, a woman is born,
> None may exist without a woman."
>
> — (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473)

Increasing Consciousness

Ahmad et al. (2004) suggest that South Asian women who adhere to patriarchal norms would benefit from increased awareness of what abuse is for two reasons; one, so that they can seek out assistance and two, that they will not discount a victim/survivor's experiences by telling

her she did not experience abuse. They advise that an "understanding of patriarchy as an almost universal social norm that expresses itself differently across cultures may help distinguish between the aspects of their culture that they want to practice and those that they find oppressive. Women need to understand that they do not have to reject their culture or their identity as South Asian to resist patriarchy and wife abuse" (p. 278).

When assisting South Asian survivors of domestic violence in the initial therapy and counseling sessions it may be appropriate for a therapist to discuss the husbands actions by discussing the husbands inability to control his anger. Sikhism identifies anger, also identified as "krodh" in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib, as one of the five thieves that needs to be conquered and eliminated (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 81, p. 46, p. 600). The Hindu scripture the Bhagavad Gita states, "the door to hell, that destroys the soul, is three-fold: desire, anger, and greed; that is why you should abandon these three" (Doniger, 1988, p. 57).

Therefore, South Asian women may initially be more open to discussing the husbands' anger in contrast to discussing the specific acts carried out by the husband. By directing the focus on to the husband's anger the therapist may allow the victim to see the negative aspects of the husbands behavior. Furthermore, discussing the husband's anger in initial sessions may help as it positions the husband's behavior in a manner that the victim/survivor can process without needing to employ their defense mechanisms. Moreover, asking direct questions about the type of abuse too early in the session may lead to the individual employing her defense mechanisms although such questions may be necessary to gather information regarding the safety risk for the victim.

Mental Health

Women who have been victims of domestic violence may also experience PTSD, major depression, avoidant coping, and dissociation (Sharhabani-Arzy, Amir, Kotler, & Liran, 2003; Marais, de Villiers , Moller, & Stein, 1999; Krause, Kaitman, Goodman, & Dutton, 2008; Golding, 1999; Roberts, Williams, Lawrence, & Raphael, 1999; Seabury, Seabury, & Garvin, 2008). Therefore, frontline staff, therapists, and social workers should be sensitive when breaching the topic of domestic violence with victims. Moreover, when a client has been screened for domestic violence it would be appropriate for professionals to also screen for PTSD, major depression, disassociation, and avoidant coping. Professionals should also keep in mind that coping mechanisms such as dissociation, avoidant coping, or defense mechanisms of denial may arise in the absence of positive coping and grounding strategies.

Professionals must also consider the fact that a women's reluctance to engage in any social service process or programs for her self might not be due to a lack of motivation, but rather due to the impact of trauma that may lead to dissociation, avoidant coping, PTSD, or depression. Furthermore, a victim may engage in denial as denial may be an effective coping mechanism for the victim because "in order to continue to function on a daily basis, the client may need to deny what is happening to her" (Seabury, Seabury, & Garvin, 2008, p. 104).

Balancing Her Right to Choose with Keeping Her Safe

Clients may express a desire to leave home, but most prefer finding a resolution that keeps the family intact while addressing the conflict (Nath & Craig, 1999; Abraham, 2000). Yoshioka & Choi (2005) suggest worldview influences the manner in which one will respond to violence. They note that a woman from a collectivist culture may emphasize harmony and collaboration to address the violence and her collectivist value influence a woman's decision regarding who she will disclose the abuse to (Yoshioka et al., 2003), while a woman from an

individualistic culture may choose an approach that is considerably more confrontational. The authors contend there is a need to look at alternative frameworks for women who have a collectivist worldview, one that may allow them the often preferred option of staying in the relationship while being safe by eliminating the violence. They believe that service providers and activists "must continue to educate clients and their communities about their options to address intimate partner violence that include leaving abusive relationships but also honor their decisions by giving them the type of help they are asking for, which may include helping them to stay" (516). Williams (2008) advises that "although staying should not be encouraged, we know that many women leave violent relationships, but many stay. We must support the woman regardless of her choices" (104). A women's decision to stay in the relationship should not discount her right to receive support and services. At the same time, her reason for wanting to stay in the relationship needs to be determined. Part of the intervention needs to be to "defend against women believing that a batterer's participation in any change effort will guarantee change; we know better" (104).

Furthermore, Almeida and Dolan-Del Vecchio (1999) note the dominant ideology, where separation is seen as the primary solution to intimate partner violence, with shelter options that are based on the model of a typical western household, may need to be expanded to meet the needs of the South Asian client. This typical model, of "shelter, separation, divorce and then re-assault with a new partner by the perpetrator" (p.664) may not sufficiently meet the needs of these clients.

Group Therapy

Group therapy with South Asian victims/survivors can help reduce isolation and enable participants to see that they are not alone in their struggles. Group work can be particularly

effective given a South Asian woman's collectivist orientation (Raj et al., 2006; Tutty, 2006; Light, 2007; Izzidien, 2008; Singh & Hays, 2008; Samuel, 2009; Ahmad et al., 2009). A feminist group counseling approach can empower participants through the development of skills such as boundary-setting and assertive communication as well as helping them in understanding the sociopolitical context of the abuse they have endured while receiving support from other victims/survivors (Singh & Hays, 2008).

In describing one such group, the authors noted the differences between it and traditional western group counseling approaches. The South Asian group allowed for greater interaction after the end of a session between participants and between participants and facilitators, greater socialization prior to group start, greater flexibility to accommodate participants that arrived late (a recognition of the different view of time the South Asian participants had, as well as recognizing their multiple family responsibilities and transportation issues) it was less confrontational, placed less emphasis on verbal communication of participants while considering alternative ways the women could express themselves, and did not promote independence over other values. Furthermore, differences in language, religion, marital status, skin colour, class and place/region of origin were respected and accommodated.

Immigrant and refugee women respond positively to service providers who are willing to go beyond their mandates (mandates which may not be culturally responsive) in order to meet their multilayered needs (Light, 2007). The author notes immigrant and refugee focus group participants considered this especially important.

> The women described the importance of those key agencies or workers that took proactive steps to provide them with information and to meet their needs, that anticipated

their needs, that came to them rather than always expecting them to come to the services, that linked them to other services, and that followed up to see how they were doing (p. 51).

Recommendations For Future Research & for an RJ Pilot Program

Future research for the South Asian population should be grounded on the basis of empowering the South Asian community. A shift from a deficit-based approach to strengths and empowerment-based approach would be an appropriate. Rubin and Babbie also identify the need to be conscious of ethnocentrism, "which is the belief in the superiority of your own culture" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 128). Thus, researchers must be careful not to begin future research with an emphasis with the "west is best" bias. Moreover, Grief and Ephross state, "it is time to develop practice principles that build on the strengths and resourcefulness of women who have experienced abuse" (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 126). Thus, it would be appropriate to evaluate different variables that may have been present that have allowed South Asian women to escape domestic violence. Studying the strengths and resources used as well as other variables may provide essential information in regards to empowering women who may be victims of domestic violence.

Future research should also focus on the interplay of the complex variables of race, socioeconomic factors, immigration status, marginalization, education, English language skills, past/current citizenship status and employment in regards to domestic violence for the South Asian population. Moreover, future studies should involve interviewing South Asian women who have reported being victims of domestic violence, South Asian women who have not been victims of domestic violence, and South Asian women who have escaped relationships characterized by domestic violence. Rubin and Babbie suggest the importance of assessing

socioeconomic status as they state, “culturally competent researchers will include socioeconomic factors in their analyses when they are studying other ways in which minority and majority populations differ” (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 147). Future studies should also focus on the beliefs that South Asians have in regards to the criminal justice system, and the experiences that South Asians may have had that may have fostered those beliefs. These future research studies can also include a qualitative analysis of the South Asian communities views and opinions of a restorative justice response to issues of domestic violence in contrast to their views and opinions of the mainstream criminal justice system.

Recommendation for a Restorative Justice Pilot Program

The lack of restorative justice initiatives for the South Asian population in regards to domestic violence has resulted in a lack of knowledge about the rate of effectiveness that restorative justice initiatives may yield for the South Asian population although restorative justice approaches have been shown to be effective for other cultural communities. A restorative justice pilot program would be essential to evaluate the rate of effectiveness of restorative justice programs for the South Asian population.

In order to measure the effectiveness of a restorative justice pilot program on South Asian families impacted by domestic violence it would be important to assess different factors. Effectiveness can be measured by looking for any reduction of future incidences of domestic violence in families after the restorative justice intervention. In addition, researchers can also assess for any reduction in PTSD scores for the victims of domestic violence. Moreover, overall satisfaction rates for victims in regards the outcome of the pilot project should also be assessed. These satisfaction rates in regards to the restorative justice pilot program can be compared and

contrasted with the satisfaction rates yielded by individuals who accessed the mainstream criminal justice system.

When assessing for effectiveness it would also be appropriate to see the impact of such restorative justice measures on the individuals connected to the couple. Thus, it would also be appropriate to assess the impact that the restorative justice program has on any child in the household. Any reduction in the level of difficulties for the child in the household could be assessed, by looking at the child's performance in school. In addition long-term studies can also look at the impact of the domestic violence restorative justice initiatives on children's behaviour in regards to criminality.

Conclusion

The systemic barriers faced by South Asian women survivors of domestic violence compound to increase the woman's vulnerability. These unique problems related to systemic barriers include the woman's immigration status, language issues, marginalization, race factors, as well as beliefs of a prejudicial criminal justice system (Sheppard, 2000; Battered Women's Support Services, 2015; Alaggia & Maiter, 2006; Singh, 2009; Singh, 2010; Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014; Chatha, Ahmad, & Sheikh, 2014; Mahapatra, 2008. Through an analysis of these unique systemic issues one may conclude that it would be necessary to respond to these systemic barriers in order to address the needs of South Asian women who are victims of domestic violence in a meaningful and effective manner. Moreover, since the experiences of South Asian women who experience domestic violence are unique it is also necessary for community agencies and program developers to create unique programs and initiatives for South Asian communities, which are impacted by domestic violence.

In order to create effective community interventions as well as effective smaller scale individual interventions cultural responsivity needs to be implemented when possible (Maiter, 2003; Russell & White, 2001, 2002; Shariff, 2009; Khanna et al., 2009; Williams, 2010). The implementation of restorative justice programs may be important as the South Asian community might be more likely to access restorative justice programs since such programs may be more reflective of their culture, tradition, and collectivist beliefs (Singh, 2009; Kallivayalil; Mohan, 2012). South Asian survivors who hold beliefs of a prejudicial justice system may welcome the departure from the traditional justice system towards a restorative justice approach. Lastly, when providing therapy it would also be appropriate to implement the client's culture and spirituality when possible (Nath & Craig, 1999; Sandhu, 2005; Dugsin, 2001; Shariff, 2009; Morjaria-Keval, 2006). Group therapy may also be beneficial as this approach is in line with the collectivist beliefs of South Asian communities (Raj et al., 2006; Tutty, 2006; Light, 2007; Izzidien, 2008; Singh & Hays, 2008; Samuel, 2009; Ahmad et al., 2009).

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