Mitigating Violence Against South Asian Women in Metro Vancouver: A Service Provider Perspective

by
Geetanjali Chopra
B.A. (International Relations), Mount Holyoke College, 2007

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

in the
School of Public Policy
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Geetanjali Chopra 2012
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2012

All rights reserved.
However, in accordance with the Copyright Act of Canada, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for “Fair Dealing.” Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.
Approval

Name: Geetanjali Chopra
Degree: M.P.P.
Title of Thesis: Mitigating Violence Against South Asian Women in Metro Vancouver: A Service Provider Perspective

Examining Committee:

Chair: Nancy Olewiler
Director, School of Public Policy, SFU

Olena Hankivsky
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor, School of Public Policy, SFU

_______________________________
Nancy Olewiler
Director, School of Public Policy, SFU

_______________________________
Judith Sixsmith
Internal Examiner
Professor, School of Public Policy, SFU

Date Defended/Approved: March 27, 2012
Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the “Institutional Repository” link of the SFU Library website (www.lib.sfu.ca) at http://summit.sfu.ca and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author’s written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

revised Fall 2011
Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

c. as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

d. as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

update Spring 2010
Abstract

Available services and policies in BC do not adequately address the needs of women experiencing abuse within the South Asian community. Twenty-two semi-structured interviews with government and community organizations were used to identify gaps in current policies and services. Findings are divided into 2 sections relating to barriers and challenges caused by community-based services and government policies. The findings address the need for programs that focus on both prevention and intervention, the importance of cultural safety training, and increased co-operation between service providers. Policy options are evaluated within the context of the South Asian community culture and the existing provincial framework. Although a long-term shift in the provincial approach to VAW is needed, the recommended short-term strategy is a policy suite including: (1) cultural safety training for all service providers, (2) establishment of new 2nd stage transition homes, and (3) community-based media campaign.

Keywords: Violence against women; South Asian diaspora; domestic violence; Metro Vancouver; intersectionality
This research is dedicated to my late uncle, Dr. S. K. Chopra. I would not be the person I am today without his constant encouragement and support. He is dearly missed.

This work is also dedicated to two of the strongest women I know; my mother and my grandmother. You inspire me every day.
Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the support, both direct and indirect, of numerous people. This truly was a group effort.

Thank you to Dr. Olena Hankivsky. Your patience and encouragement enabled me to realize the potential and importance of this work, and to shape and conduct this research. I could not have reached the finish line without your support.

Thank you to Dr. Judith Sixsmith for serving as my external advisor, and for your valuable feedback and insight. To Dr. John Richards: thank you for inspiring me to work on this subject and for entertaining my constant office visits. My gratitude also extends to the faculty and staff in the School of Public Policy for providing me with the skills and support to effectively conduct this research.

My interview participants work to support women experiencing violence on a daily basis. Please accept my immense gratitude at your willingness to share your wealth of knowledge and experience. Your passion for your work is inspiring, and I can only hope to follow in your footsteps and have as positive an impact as you.

To my family: both my research and my participation in this program would have been impossible without your unyielding support and encouragement. Thank you for bearing with me during this process, and for always being there for me in every imaginable way.

My classmates, friends and extended family deserve much appreciation as well. Your faith and reassurance in my work, as well as your constant cheerleading and amusing distractions, enabled me to survive this process and this program. Thank you all for everything.
Table of Contents

Approval ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Abstract .......................................................................................................................................... iii
Dedication ....................................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................................ vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................ viii
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................... ix
List of Acronyms .......................................................................................................................... x
Executive Summary ...................................................................................................................... xi

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1

2. Background ........................................................................................................................................ 5
   2.1. Violence Against Women in Canada and Metro Vancouver: Understanding the Issue and the Target Community .................................................. 5
      2.1.1. VAW in Canada and BC .............................................................................. 6
      2.1.2. VAW in the South Asian community in BC ................................ .................. 8
   2.2. BC’s Response to VAW ................................................................................................. 12
      2.2.1. Types of Strategies ................................................................................... 12
      2.2.2. Current Policies and Legislation ................................................................. 13
      2.2.3. Current Services ....................................................................................... 15
         2.2.3.1. Police Services ...................................................................................... 15
         2.2.3.2. Victims’ Services ................................................................................ 16
         2.2.3.3. Services for Men and Perpetrators of VAW ................................ 17
         2.2.3.4. Community Response ........................................................................ 18
      2.2.4. Gaps in the Current Framework: A Systemic Issue ................................... 19

3. Methodology ..................................................................................................................................... 21
   3.1. Research Question and Key Objectives .......................................................................... 21
      3.1.1. Definitional Parameters ............................................................................. 21
   3.2. Intersectionality as a Research Framework ....................................................................... 22
   3.3. Semi-Structured Interviews with service providers .................................................... 23
   3.4. Participant Descriptions ............................................................................................... 24
   3.5. Thematic Analysis .......................................................................................................... 25

4. Analysis .......................................................................................................................................... 26
   4.1. Challenges due to Culture, Family and Community-Based Services ......................... 27
      4.1.1. Understanding Women’s Roles Within the South Asian Family Structure .......... 27
      4.1.2. The role of the South Asian community ....................................................... 30
      4.1.3. The role of the (ethnic) media ................................................................. 31
      4.1.4. Limited Male and Family Oriented Services .............................................. 33
      4.1.5. Community Outreach ............................................................................. 35
      4.1.6. Empowerment ......................................................................................... 37
   4.2. Barriers due to Government-based Policies and Services ........................................... 39
      4.2.1. Limitations in the VAWIR Policy ............................................................... 39
4.2.2. Limitations of the Public Legal System (Cuts to Legal Aid) ......................... 41
4.2.3. The role and impact of the police .............................................................. 42
4.2.4. The impact of limited social services ......................................................... 43
4.2.5. The impact of the immigration system ....................................................... 45
4.3. Cross-Cutting Themes .................................................................................. 46

5. Policy Options .................................................................................................. 53
5.1. Updating the VAWIR Policy ........................................................................... 53
5.2. Increase in 2nd stage Transition homes .......................................................... 54
5.3. Community-focused Outreach Campaign ..................................................... 55
5.4. Media Campaign ............................................................................................ 56
5.5. Cultural Competency Training for All Service Providers ................................. 58

6. Description of Criteria and Measures ............................................................... 60
6.1. Cost ................................................................................................................. 61
6.2. Stakeholder Acceptance .................................................................................. 62
6.3. Implementation Complexity .......................................................................... 63
6.4. Effectiveness .................................................................................................. 63
6.5. Equity ............................................................................................................. 64

7. Evaluation ......................................................................................................... 66
7.1. Evaluation Summary ....................................................................................... 66
7.2. Amending the VAWIR Policy ........................................................................ 67
7.3. Increase in 2nd Stage Transition Homes .......................................................... 68
7.4. Community-focused outreach campaign ....................................................... 70
7.5. Media Campaign ............................................................................................. 72
7.6. Cultural Competency Training for all Service Providers .................................. 73

8. Recommendation and Discussion ..................................................................... 76
8.1. Recommendations ......................................................................................... 76
8.2. Further Considerations ................................................................................. 77
8.3. Contributions to other research ..................................................................... 78
8.4. Limitations and Constraints .......................................................................... 79

9. Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 82

References ............................................................................................................ 83

Appendices .......................................................................................................... 88
Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule .................................................... 89
Appendix B: List of Interview Participants .............................................................. 90
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form ..................................................................... 91
Appendix D: Types of Violence ............................................................................ 93
Appendix E: BC’s Report Card ............................................................................. 95
List of Tables

Table 1: Definition of Criteria and Measures .......................................................... 60
Table 2: Evaluation Summary .................................................................................. 66
Table 3: BC’s Report Card, 2011 ......................................................................... 95
List of Figures

Figure 1: Power and Control Wheel................................................................. 11
Figure 2: Typology of Violence Against Women ............................................. 94
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWSS</td>
<td>Battered Women’s Support Services (non-profit organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVA BC</td>
<td>Ending Violence Association of BC (non-profit organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIBC</td>
<td>Justice Institute of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICS</td>
<td>Progressive Intercultural Community Services (non-profit organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAWIR</td>
<td>Violence Against women in Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLMFSS</td>
<td>Vancouver &amp; Lower Mainland Family Services Society (non-profit organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LoF</td>
<td>List of Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToC</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Violence against women is a pervasive issue in all communities. Although the province and community organizations have developed and implemented a variety of policies and services to address violence, services available do not adequately meet the need of women from minorities or marginalized groups.¹ This is true for women experiencing violence within the South Asian community, one of the largest minorities in the province.

This research, through twenty two qualitative interviews with government and community-based service providers, identified structural barriers faced by South Asian women experiencing violence at both the community and government levels. Government barriers included (1) limited social services including housing and welfare, (2) lack of a guiding policy and limited training for those interacting with women experiencing violence, and (3) the negative impact of systems such as immigration and cuts to Legal Aid. Community barriers included (1) limited understanding and the potentially negative impact of the South Asian family structure, (2) the media, and (3) the community itself. Finally, three overarching themes, namely co-ordination between service providers, the need for cultural understanding and the importance of addressing both prevention and intervention, were stressed by most participants.

The policy options identified addressed the three overarching themes in the short and medium term. Upon evaluation, it was apparent that no single option would effectively resolve the problem. Therefore, this research recommends a policy suite comprised of media outreach, cultural competency training and establishment of additional second-stage transition homes. These options predominantly build upon existing programs and structures. This is due to the fact that only an intensive, long-term approach that shifts the focus of this problem from an individual to a collective one is likely to have a positive impact. In the long term, a shift at the political level

understanding and prioritizing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable women is urgently needed. At the community level, a long-term, grassroots focus on empowerment would address the gap between awareness and access.
1. Introduction

A recent World Health Organization report found that globally, “between 15–71% of women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner”. In 2010, BC reported 2,932 cases of sexual assault; the third highest number of incidences in the country that year. In addition, domestic violence cases constitute the most numerous cases for the provincial Crown counsel.

Violence against women (VAW) is by no means a new or recent issue; however it is an important one that affects individuals, their families, their communities, and society as a whole. The BC Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) policy defines “domestic violence” as a unique crime; “no matter which form it takes, the dynamics of abuse in domestic violence situations differ significantly from other crimes. The victim is known in advance, the likelihood of recidivism is common and interactions between the justice system and the victim are typically more complex than with other crimes”. Domestic violence generally reflects a power imbalance within the relationship, and as such it is often difficult for a victim to leave “due to feelings of fear and isolation as well as cultural/religious values, socioeconomic circumstances, or even denial of the violence”. Should the victim remain in the relationship, the violence often escalates over time and may continue or even worsen if the victim attempts to leave the relationship. The VAWIR policy acknowledges that “despite the harm that the abuse may have caused and the risk of continued or more serious harm, the dynamics of the

---

2 World Health Organization Factsheet “Violence Against Women”
3 Statis Can: Police Reported Crime by Territory, 2010
4 VAWIR P 4
5 VAWIR P 3
6 Ibid
7 Ibid
relationships in which these crimes arise may result in the victim’s reluctance to fully engage with the police or Crown counsel in the investigation and prosecution of these crimes”. The document cites a 2006 Statistics Canada report which suggests that nearly two-thirds of women who are victims of a spousal assault do not report the violence to police.\(^8\)

Emerging research indicates the existence of various factors that intersect in women’s lives that impact their experience and disclosure of violence and abuse.\(^9\) The policy recognizes that immigrant and visible minority women who experience abuse are less likely to report, or to be aware of or access available support services.\(^10\) Additionally, new immigrants not connected to integration or settlement services are likely to be unfamiliar with laws, socio-cultural norms, and their rights and responsibilities.\(^11\) Furthermore, lack of community and social networks, and/or limited language skills may impact their interactions with community services or the justice system.\(^12\)

A 2007 briefing note by EVA BC and the BC Society of Transition Houses builds upon this understanding and conceptualizes violence as a structural issue. The brief asserts that “the major issues facing marginalized women who are victimized include inaccessibility of existing services and resources and lack of specialized services that target their particular needs and their social isolation”,\(^13\) and these barriers place them at greater risk. Battered Women’s Support Services reinforced this concern in their 2009 report by concluding that most service provision models are developed with a number of incorrect assumptions about the nature of violence, thereby negatively impacting

\(^8\) Ibid
\(^9\) Ibid
\(^10\) Sokoloff and Dupont (2005)
\(^11\) VAWIR P 5
\(^12\) Ibid
\(^13\) Ibid
\(^14\) EVA BC P.2
vulnerable women’s access to, and engagement with, available services.\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, it is evident that current services do not meet the needs of ‘vulnerable women’ experiencing abuse. Both the BWSS report and the EVA BC policy brief identify immigrant women\textsuperscript{16} as vulnerable.

The rationale for focusing on violence within the South Asian community stems from the recent media attention on the subject. Ethnic and mainstream media coverage of recent murders in effect stigmatizes the South Asian population by attributing the problem to culture, thereby identifying the issue of violence against women as most prevalent amongst, and specific to, South Asians in BC. This type of focus diverts attention from the real issue at hand- not that the problem of violence is specific to or more prevalent within this community- but rather that there are unique barriers and challenges faced by South Asian women experiencing abuse in terms of accessing services, and ensuring that available services are able to meet their needs. Of course, any continued focus on this particular community in relation to violence has the potential to further perpetuate negative stereotypes and stigmatization. However, this project seeks to resist this trend by bringing attention to the real problems faced by South Asian women who experience violence in their lives. Given the fact that South Asians are a significant minority in BC, violence against women in this and all communities is an important public health issue because of the costs to society.

With these factors in mind, the goal of this research is to advance the understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by South Asian women who experience abuse. This is achieved through interviews with service providers, and results in the recommendation of feasible and viable solutions for service agencies and policymakers to mitigate these challenges. Service providers were interviewed as opposed to survivors or women currently experiencing violence due to their ability to adequately speak to the challenges and barriers faced by these women.

\textsuperscript{15} BWSS pg 15
\textsuperscript{16} Both reports consider define “immigrant” women as women who have either recently or previously immigrated to Canada, regardless of their current citizenship.
The structure of this report is as follows: Chapter 2 provides a background of the problem, including an overview of the current framework to address VAW at both the provincial and community level. The methodological approach adopted in this study is outlined in Chapter 3. An analysis of the interviews conducted with service providers is presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 7 evaluates the policy options identified in Chapter 5, using the criteria and measures presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 8 offers a recommendation and further considerations, followed by a discussion of the research in Chapter 9. Further background and information about the interviewees and the research process is included in the appendices.
2. Background

2.1. Violence Against Women in Canada and Metro Vancouver: Understanding the Issue and the Target Community

Understanding the political framing of VAW is integral to any research or strategy targeting the issue. VAW is a problem that concerns almost every culture, religious group and community around the world. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as “…any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”\(^{17}\) ‘Gender-Based Violence’ is defined as “acts, or threats of acts, intended to make women suffer physically, sexually or psychologically, and which affect women…disproportionately.”\(^{18,19}\)

The language used to describe the problem in Canadian systems varies widely and terms are used interchangeably. A report recently launched by the Justice Institute of British Columbia argues that, in BC, the language of “[domestic] violence against women” is preferred to reflect the gendered nature of the problem;\(^{20}\) this is reflected in the province’s Domestic Violence Action Plan.\(^{21}\) As well, provincial policies addressing domestic violence refer to ‘violence against women in relationships’ to acknowledge that

---

18 Krantz and Garcia-Moreno, pg. 818
19 Vlachoud and Biatson, Pg 4
20 Rossiter Report (2011) Pgs 6-7
21 Rossiter Report P 6
“domestic violence is a power-based crime, and that women are more likely than men to be the victims, although it applies equally to situations involving male victims and same-sex partners”. In contrast, the federal government takes a more gender-neutral approach through the use of the term “family violence”, while the international community strongly emphasizes the gendered nature of violence through the use of terms including “violence against women” and “gender-based violence”.

Also of value is understanding of the various types of violence that women can experience, and the way violence can manifest itself. A summary is provided in the appendix. The following sections provide a brief outline of VAW in Canada and BC, an overview of the South Asian community in BC, and a summary of previous research regarding VAW within the community.

2.1.1. VAW in Canada and BC

Women represent almost half the Canadian population. Estimating the prevalence of all forms of violence against women is challenging due to the private nature of the issue. Limited data is available, as not all cases are reported and most types of violence against women are easily concealed.

The data that does exist regarding VAW in both Canada and BC speaks to the severity of the problem. Of all solved homicides in 2008, about 40% of victims were killed by an acquaintance and 33% by a family member. According to Statistics Canada, there were over 38,000 incidents of family violence that were reported to the

22 Ibid
23 Ibid
24 Stats Can: 2006 Counts for Age and Sex, by Province or Territory
25 Government and non-profit agencies do not collect much data, specifically community-focused data, about incidences of VAW.
26 BC reported 118 homicides in 2009 and 111 cases of attempted murder, with the Vancouver region reporting over 2.5 homicides per 100,000. Canada’s average is around 1.8 per 100,000, which is significantly lower than that of the US but still higher than many Western European nations. Stats Can: Homicide Rates by Province or Territory, 1978-2008
27 Stats Can: Solved Homicides by Accused/Victim
police in 2006.\textsuperscript{28} In 2007, 146 women were victims of homicide across Canada; of which 45 were victims of spousal homicide.\textsuperscript{29} There were approximately 305 police-reported cases of spousal violence per 100,000 in 2007, and almost 62,000 women were admitted to one of 569 shelters across Canada between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008.\textsuperscript{30} A 2005 Statistics Canada report on the subject acknowledges that women were twice as likely to suffer from severe forms of violence from men.\textsuperscript{31} Another report from Statistics Canada in 2008 stated that, from 1997 to 2006, over 1150 cases of intimate partner homicide occurred in BC.\textsuperscript{32} That these numbers exist at all indicates that there are structural barriers in place that essentially enable these types of crimes. This is particularly true within visible minority communities, specifically the South Asian community. In the past year alone, three women of South Asian descent have been murdered.\textsuperscript{33} However, little data is available regarding the existence of other types of violence against women in the community.

The social costs associated with VAW are heavy. The impact of VAW varies in severity and includes death (murder or suicide), injury, health issues, substance abuse and decrease in income. The most recent estimate regarding the public and private sector costs associated with VAW and intimate partner violence is approximately $13,162.39 per Canadian woman.\textsuperscript{34} This figure is used for evaluation purposes later in this study.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid
\textsuperscript{32} Stats Can: Solved Homicides by Accused/Victim
\textsuperscript{33} Victims include Ravinder Kaur Bhangu, Maple Batalia, and an unnamed victim stabbed to death by her husband and mother-in-law in Surrey.
\textsuperscript{34} Hankivsky, Varcoe et al
2.1.2. VAW in the South Asian community in BC

According to the 2006 Census, one in every 5 Canadians was an immigrant\(^35\), while 16\% of Canadians identified as a visible minority\(^36\). In 2006, 26\% of visible minority individuals in BC identified as South Asian\(^37\). Further data showed that, in 2006, over a third of South Asians in Metro Vancouver were born in Canada; the rest were immigrants from South Asia\(^38\). In that same year, there were over 265,000 South Asians in British Columbia; over 207,000 of them were based in the Metro Vancouver region; this number has only increased in the past 6 years.\(^39\) As such, they are a significant minority in Canada and in BC.

Exact data is unavailable for the number of reported cases of violence against women in the South Asian community.\(^40\) However, concerns regarding the high incidence of violence against women in the community have been raised due to the murders of Navreet Waraich, Manjit Panghali, Gurjeet Kaur Ghuman\(^41\) and more recently, Sukhwinder Kaur Johal\(^42\), Ravinder Kaur Bhangu\(^43\) and Maple Batalia.

Thandi (2011) and others attribute this concern regarding VAW in the community to culture. Thandi’s recent report *This is a Man’s Problem* asserts that “often incidents of violence by a Caucasian person are considered deviance on the part of that individual and never cultural, whereas when violence occurs in immigrant communities, that violence is attributed to that whole community”.\(^44\) He argues that violence within the

---

\(^{35}\) Ibid P 336  
\(^{36}\) Visible Minority Groups, for Canada and Census Metropolitan Areas (2006)  
\(^{37}\) Ibid.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid.  
\(^{39}\) Ibid.  
\(^{40}\) Government and non-profit agencies do not keep ethnicity-specific records regarding their clients. Any estimates used in this study were unofficially provided by interviewees.  
\(^{41}\) Surrey Man Charged in Wife’s Death: CBC  
\(^{42}\) Indian Held for Killing Teenage Stepsons: Wife Serious. The Hindu  
\(^{43}\) BC Woman Slain at Work, Husband Charged, QMI Agency  
\(^{44}\) Thandi P 68
South Asian community is often sensationalized by the media and the public, who incorrectly attribute such issues to the culture. Thandi labels this as marginalizing or “problematizing” the culture, an issue he considers to be an internal one as well.46

Given the sensitive nature of the issue, coupled with the cultural attitude towards the subject, it is unsurprising that little data is available. Despite awareness and outreach efforts by community leaders and service providers, many cases go unreported by the victims. However, several studies have attempted to identify the issues and factors that either result in abuse or prevent women experiencing abuse from accessing services. One such report was conducted by the India Mahila Association in 1994; 15 South Asian abuse survivors were interviewed about the factors that contributed to the abuse they endured, and about the barriers they faced in terms of seeking support. The factors that contributed to the existence of abuse47 included:

- Alcoholism
- Finances
- Family conflict
- Dowry
- Control and Power

Some of the factors and barriers to reporting abuse identified by the survivors include:

- Extended Family: The report asserts that “whether South Asian women live in the extended family structure or not, the extended family features very strongly in a positive or negative manner.”48 The participants in the study all stated that the extended family of their husbands did not support them either during...

---

46 Ibid
47 IMA P28
48 IMA P22
or after the abuse; some of the women had also been directly abused by various members of their extended family as well.\textsuperscript{49}

- Dependency on husbands, particularly for those who are sponsored immigrants. According to the findings in the report, “husbands abandoned their responsibilities of sponsorship support to help settle their wives in Canada. Instead they transformed the sponsorship into a form of new power over their wives… [which] created a nearly insurmountable inequity in their relationship and made the women socially, psychologically and financially dependent on their husbands”.\textsuperscript{50}

- Isolation and lack of community support: The report attributes isolation to women’s “multi-level dependency” on their husbands, which also led to a “severe limitation in their decision-making powers” in terms of their sole social contact being with their husband’s family and friends.\textsuperscript{51}

- Linguistic and cultural barriers, due to their inability to speak English and their lack of knowledge of available resources.

- Strong opinions regarding family issues remaining private.

The report argues that immigrant women who faced abuse also faced immense challenges, such as leaving their families, immigrating to a new country, and starting a new life. Reporting abuse “thrust them into yet another unknown territory”, in terms of different language, customs, rules, and way of life.\textsuperscript{52} These challenges “arrived at a time when they felt most vulnerable” and had little support. Further complexities arose in terms of lack of financial stability and employment, and the fear of losing their children. Women either became the sole guardians of their children, or faced the threat of their husbands taking their children away from them.\textsuperscript{53} The existence of these challenges has been reinforced in more recent studies conducted by organizations including Battered

\textsuperscript{49} Ibíd.
\textsuperscript{50} IMA P1
\textsuperscript{51} IMA P2
\textsuperscript{52} IMA P3-4
\textsuperscript{53} IMA P5
Women’s Support Services. A summary of the various types of violence experienced by women is provided in the appendix.

A tool used to understand the pattern of the various types of abuse in relationships and families within the community is the Power and Control wheel. Developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, the wheel has been used in several training documents, including those recently published by the South Fraser Legal Resources Center.

Figure 1: Power and Control Wheel
The Power and Control Wheel illustrates different forms of abuse against women as intentionally aimed at controlling their actions, and as part of a consistent pattern of behaviour rather than isolated incidents of abuse.\textsuperscript{54} The developers of the wheel reason that “by naming the power differences, [we] can more clearly provide advocacy and support for victims, accountability and opportunities for change for offenders, and system and societal changes that end violence against women”.\textsuperscript{55} Service providers argue that the Power and Control wheel is applicable to the South Asian context, as it clearly identifies the many ways in which patriarchy manifests itself within the family structure and the community.

\section*{2.2. BC’s Response to VAW}

\subsection*{2.2.1. Types of Strategies}

Violence prevention strategies can be placed into three categories, each of which affects different populations with varying levels of exposure to domestic violence.\textsuperscript{56} \textbf{Primary prevention strategies} are directed at the population as a whole, and include media and awareness campaigns. \textbf{Secondary prevention strategies} target individuals who are at risk of being perpetrators or victims of violence, and focus on community-based early intervention for at-risk populations or individuals who may be exposed to violence. Finally, \textbf{tertiary prevention strategies} focus on individuals who already perpetrate or experience violence, and are already engaged with the social service or criminal justice system. Although tertiary strategies are currently the most common approach to violence mitigation, they have also been shown to be the most costly and the least effective.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200390001&itemid=1279
\item \textsuperscript{55} http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html
\item \textsuperscript{56} Rossiter Pg 17
\item \textsuperscript{57} Rossiter Pg 17-18
\end{itemize}
Rossiter states that a comprehensive approach that includes all three strategies is needed.\textsuperscript{58} Service providers often highlight the interdependency of prevention and intervention strategies in that they are “mutually reinforcing”.\textsuperscript{59} A 2002 report by the World Health Organization which further contends that “a promising approach to violence prevention is “one that not only protects and supports victims of violence, but also promotes non-violence, reduces the perpetration of violence, and changes the circumstances and conditions that give rise to violence in the first place””.\textsuperscript{60} The challenge is to find the appropriate balance between prevention strategies that still provide for adequate intervention efforts and do not redirect resources from the victims who need the support the most.

This has not been evident in the province’s views and response to violence. Since 2001, BC “[has] lacked leadership on women’s equality issues as well as financial resources”.\textsuperscript{61} The problem of VAW in BC “has since been taken up as an individual rather than a social problem, with much greater emphasis on intervention, reduction, and the mitigation of risk than on primary prevention”.\textsuperscript{62} The shift in focus has resulted in a more focused approach that drives women to take responsibility for their own security, rather than a social/structural analysis that point to gaps that “sustain domestic violence against women”.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{2.2.2. Current Policies and Legislation}

An up to-date list of current policy and legislation affecting domestic violence is provided in Section 8.1 of the Rossiter Report. Rossiter’s main finding is that “British Columbia is one of only a few Canadian provinces without specific domestic or family

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[58]{Rossiter P 52}
\footnotetext[59]{Ibid}
\footnotetext[60]{Ibid}
\footnotetext[61]{Ibid}
\footnotetext[62]{Ibid}
\footnotetext[63]{Ibid}
\end{footnotes}
violence legislation; however, a number of provincial laws have relevance for domestic violence victims”. 64

The VAWIR policy in particular is interesting because of its intent “to guide a multi-agency, coordinated, and effective response to domestic violence”, minimize violence risk, enhance victim safety, and improve offender management. 65 The report has been updated several times since its release in 1993, and currently outlines the role and responsibilities of nine different agencies when encountering situations of family violence. BC’s Domestic Violence Action Plan (2010) was developed in response to the Lee inquest initiated in 2007 66 and focuses on improving the short-term criminal justice response to domestic violence.


64 Rossiter Pg 20-21
65 VAWIR P 59
66 Rossiter P 21
67 Rossiter Pg 21
68 Rossiter P 30
2.2.3. Current Services

The province supports a variety of services for victims and perpetrators, including community-based victims’ services (e.g. transition homes), government-based services, police-based victim services and services for violence perpetrators.

2.2.3.1. Police Services

The 2010 VAWIR policy outlines protocol for police when responding to domestic violence calls, which are highlighted as “a priority for assessment and response” and are directed to prioritize the victim’s safety.\textsuperscript{70} The police must respond to the call regardless of any indication about their services no longer being needed.\textsuperscript{71} They also have a ‘pro-arrest policy’ of the primary aggressor, or the individual identified as “the most dominant rather than the first, aggressor”,\textsuperscript{72} and are required to consider the presence of children in the situation.

In terms of domestic violence response training, police officers receive little more than a recently-designed ‘Evidence-based, Risk-focused Domestic Violence Investigations’ course that is 3.5 hours in length. The course trains officers in domestic violence response protocol, highlights the importance of evidence-based assessment and the value of inter-agency co-operation, as well as provides a list of available organizations, services and resources for victims. A second course, ‘Domestic Violence Investigations: Assessing Risk and Safety Planning (or Introduction to Domestic Violence Risk Assessment and Safety Planning)’, is currently under development.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{69} Website: www.domesticviolencebc.ca and Victim Link, (a toll-free telephone, province-wide, multilingual helpline available 24/7. The helpline provides information and referral services to victims of crime and immediate crisis support for victims of family and sexual violence in more than 110 languages, including 17 aboriginal languages in North America. (VAWIR p 35)

\textsuperscript{70} VAWIR 2010 P 7

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid

\textsuperscript{73} Rossiter P 25
2.2.3.2. Victims’ Services

The VAWIR policy describes at length the various types of victim service programs in British Columbia.\textsuperscript{74} Police-based programs that operate out of RCMP detachments and municipal police departments serve victims of all crime types. Community-based programs generally operate out of non-profit organizations and primarily serve victims of family and sexual violence. These programs have specialized expertise in dealing with power-based crimes and are well situated to assist victims who might initially be reluctant to engage the criminal justice system.

Due to the distinctive nature of issues surrounding violence against women, including the potential for ongoing violence, victim service programs treat domestic violence cases as a priority when delivering services. Per the VAWIR policy, victim service programs “prioritize service delivery based on victim safety, victim vulnerability, type of crime and identified risks”.\textsuperscript{75} Victim Service providers deliver a variety of services, including critical incident response, criminal justice support, safety planning, and information and referrals to other services.

The Ending Violence Association of BC and the BC Society of Transition House are two member-based organizations that represent and support over 400 specialized, community-based programs and services for women and children experiencing violence. As well, over 60 community-based programs and services in BC provide support, information, and referrals to victims of domestic and sexual violence\textsuperscript{76}; these are supplemented by 90 Stopping the Violence Counseling programs and 90 Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Counseling programs.\textsuperscript{77} A further 50 outreach services programs offer “counseling, referrals, and advocacy for women and children who are (or

\textsuperscript{74} VAWIR P31
\textsuperscript{75} VAWIR P32
\textsuperscript{76} These programs are extremely valuable, but operate on annual or regular funding from the government or other sources. As such, they are dependent on funds, which renders them unreliable in the long-term.
\textsuperscript{77} Rossiter Report P 33
are at risk of experiencing violence, as well as 12 multicultural outreach service programs offering these services in 24 languages.\textsuperscript{78} Finally, the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General publish a Directory of Victim Services in British Columbia, which provides a list of police and community-based services across the province.\textsuperscript{79}

### 2.2.3.3. Services for Men and Perpetrators of VAW

While there exist a large variety of services for victims of domestic violence, programs for domestic violence offenders are far less common. Specifically, community-based domestic violence prevention programs focused on early intervention for men who have assaulted their partners or are at risk of assaulting their partners, but have not yet been involved with the criminal justice system, are rare.\textsuperscript{80}

Community-based multicultural organizations, including MOSAIC and DIVERSEcity deliver the Relationship Violence Prevention Program– Cultural Edition to sentenced male domestic violence offenders on probation. MOSAIC also offers the Men in Change Community Program, a short-term individual or group counseling program, funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. DIVERSEcity Community Resource Society provides a Spousal Abuse Program for court-ordered South Asian men delivered in Hindi and Punjabi.\textsuperscript{81}

In terms of court-mandated, Crown-sponsored programs, the Corrections Branch provides a Relationship Violence Prevention Program to sentenced medium and high

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid
\textsuperscript{80} Rossiter Report P 36
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid
risk domestic violence offenders across the province.\textsuperscript{82} The court-mandated program is comprised of two consecutive components lasting approximately 7 months.\textsuperscript{83}

**2.2.3.4. Community Response**

Both the VAWIR Policy and the Rossiter Report emphasize the importance of community response. Rossiter asserts that "friends, families, neighbours, coworkers, and communities play an important role in the prevention of domestic violence, as well as in early detection and intervention".\textsuperscript{84} However, for communities to participate effectively in prevention and intervention efforts, "they must be well informed about the early warning signs of abuse, how to approach victims and abusers, and what services are available in their communities".\textsuperscript{85} Several efforts have been initiated by both community-based service providers as well as the provincial government in this area.

The Law Foundation of BC has funded projects related to immigrant, refugee, and non-status women. One such program was the Legal Education for the South Asian Community project, which used television and radio to relay information about the justice system and violence against women in English and Punjabi. 10 TV episodes on a variety of immigration and women-centered issues were developed in partnership with MOSAIC and aired on South Asian community television. Another project involved a South Asian Legal Educator, who offered information and advocacy services to South Asian women and children experiencing violence.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{82} Crown Counsel Policy Manual on Spousal Violence, P 12
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. Respectful Relationships is a 10 week program delivered by Corrections Branch staff, which is followed by the Relationship Violence Program, a 17 week program that is delivered by contracted service providers.
\textsuperscript{84} Rossiter Report P 30-31
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid
2.2.4. Gaps in the Current Framework: A Systemic Issue

Canada is a signatory to several international framework documents protecting human and women’s rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2008, a coalition of women’s organizations in BC produced a report about the situation of women in BC. The Committee was concerned about specific issues pertaining to women’s rights in Canada and BC, including the importance of funding social assistance programs and increasing access to justice. The most recent report noted that while government agencies have altered their domestic violence policies, women’s centers and shelters are closing at an alarming rate and domestic violence continues to be of concern. A summary is provided in the appendix.

Another report by the BWSS is far more critical of available services. The report concluded that most current services are developed using “a white, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class woman’s perspective”. This perspective includes violence being narrowly defined as an interpersonal issue, and the goal of intervention being for women to leave the relationship through services including transition homes. As well, interventions are conducted on an individual level, designed to fit a “homogeneous survivor profile” that fails to account for important characteristics such as ethnicity, immigration status and class. The report also found that most community agencies have adhered to the aforementioned service model structures and “tend not to have dramatically different models from mainstream anti-violence organizations except for bilingual staff and/or outreach workers”. More alarmingly, these agencies “directly and

87 CEDAW enshrines important protections for women in international human rights law, and was ratified by Canada on December 10, 1981.
88 West Coast Leaf CEDAW Report (2011)
89 Ibid
90 BWSS P 14
91 BWSS P 15
92 Ibid
93 Ibid
indirectly encourage women to remain silent about their experiences of violence” by prioritizing the family, focusing on the culture as the main risk factor, and encouraging them to engage in the system that fails to address their unique circumstances.94 The report highlighted the need for more community-focused strategies that effectively embrace BC’s cultural diversity. As well, although initial steps have been taken by both the province and community services to incorporate cultural diversity into their programs, the fact remains that without effective community engagement, these efforts are ineffective.95

From these emerging critiques, it is becoming more apparent that available services are not addressing the diverse needs of women who experience violence, including but not limited to women within the South Asian community. There are ample reasons for the need to provide abuse victims with the proper support and resources they require. Vlachoud and Biatson cite a 2004 report which argues that “without first addressing individual core needs, there will be obvious obstacles for South Asian women to access the many services that exist to assist victims of violence.96 The remainder of this report advances understanding of the various challenges to access faced by women experiencing abuse within the South Asian community.

94 Ibid
95 Ibid
96 Vlachoud and Biatson P 487
3. Methodology

3.1. Research Question and Key Objectives

The main goal of this research is to advance the understanding of barriers and challenges faced by South Asian women experiencing violence in BC. The research questions used to guide this research are as follows:

• What are the challenges and barriers faced by South Asian women in Metro Vancouver experiencing violence?
• What has been working in terms of services available for South Asian women in Metro Vancouver who experience violence?
• How can the provincial government and community organizations in BC address and facilitate these barriers and challenges?

3.1.1. Definitional Parameters

The definitional parameters of the terms contained within the research question are as follows:

**Service Providers and non-profits**: Refers to primarily non-profits and certain government agencies that provide front-line services to victims.

**Role in mitigating violence against women**: refers to the various roles that these organizations have to mitigate violence, including service provision and advocacy.

**South Asian community**: refers to the community of people who have either immigrated from South Asia, or to individuals whose families immigrated from the area.

**Metro Vancouver**: refers to the cities of Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, New Westminster and Richmond.
The research employs intersectionality as a theoretical framework for data collection and analysis, while the overall project is conducted within the pragmatic paradigm.

3.2. Intersectionality as a Research Framework

Intersectionality is a feminist theory and analytical research tool for understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities, and how these interactions contribute to unique experiences of oppression.\(^{97}\) This framework “moves beyond single categories of analysis… to consider simultaneous interactions between different aspects of social identity”.\(^{98}\) Based on the understanding that people have layered identities and can be placed within dynamic social categories, intersectionality strives to expose “the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities”.\(^{99}\)

The use of intersectionality in research implies that we should understand the combination of identities as producing “substantively distinct experiences”. The goal is to expose “meaningful distinctions and similarities in order to overcome discriminations”\(^{100}\), or to promote social justice.\(^{101}\) Additionally, it helps to evaluate the effect of these converging identities on access to rights, and to see how “policies, programs, services and laws that impact on one aspect of our lives are inextricably linked to others”.\(^{102}\) The goal of intersectionality as a research paradigm is to use data to inform policy as opposed to creating it.\(^{103}\) As applied to the research of violence against women, intersectionality indicates that VAW is not experienced the same way by

\(^{97}\) AWID, Pg 1-2
\(^{98}\) Hankivsky and Cormier, Pg 2.
\(^{99}\) AWID, P 2
\(^{100}\) AWID, P 2
\(^{101}\) Ibid.
\(^{102}\) Ibid.
\(^{103}\) Shields, p 309
everyone, and emphasizes “both individual and structural analyses of race, class, and gender inequality and marginalization in culturally diverse communities”. Additional emphasis is placed upon considering a variety of perspectives when developing mitigation strategies, and that failing to recognize the impact of a variety of factors on the existence and experience of violence would result in further marginalization of already vulnerable populations. Of particular note is the push within intersectionality to “expand the definitions of woman battering to include culturally specific forms of abuse, the call for a greater emphasis on the structural causes of woman battering, and exploration of the complex role of culture in understanding abuse and our responses to it”.

The intersectionality paradigm was applied to the research and analysis in two ways, first by focusing on “points of intersection” and “structures that define our access to rights and opportunities”, and secondly, a “bottom’s up” approach that involves asking participants basic questions upon which various influences can be considered. In turn, the analysis aimed to recognize how practices and policies shape the lives of those impacted.

3.3. Semi-Structured Interviews with service providers

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information regarding the issue, as well as the feasibility of different policy options to address the issue. Details about implementation difficulties associated with reforms and insight into the current programs that exist in BC were also sought during these conversations. An interview schedule with questions and themes is provided in the appendix.

104 Hankivsky and Cormier, P 43
105 Sokoloff and Dupont, P 40
106 AWID, p 5
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
The rationale for using interviews was that they are the best way to research current practices by front-line service organizations, as well as the root causes and potential solutions as perceived by those participating in service delivery. The interviews were semi-structured to allow for two-way communication and flexibility in the discussions. The interviews also provided insight on actions taken that help to explain different approaches to the same problem.

3.4. Participant Descriptions

An initial list of interviewees was compiled using internet research and recommendations from conversations with a representative from the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, the Vancouver Lower Mainland Family Support Services Agency, as well as through snowball sampling during initial interviews. Representatives of these organizations were contacted via e-mail or telephone to solicit participation.

In total, twenty-four non-profit and government representatives participated in 22 interviews over a two-month period. Twenty of the interviews were with individuals, while two were multi-person interviews. The interviewees were primarily female; of the 24 participants, only one is male. All except four are of South Asian descent.

Three of the interviewees work within the provincial government system, and two individuals work in the nursing sector. The remaining participants work for non-profit agencies or foundations in Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey. Of the 24 participants, 8 are not currently involved in front-line work, but most have experience working with abuse victims. All had at least 3 years of experience in this field.

Most of the interviews were conducted in-person, while 7 were conducted over the phone. The interviews were on average 45 minutes in length. The interview
schedule was adapted as necessary based on time availability and the type of work performed by the interviewee.

All interviewees completed an informed consent form\textsuperscript{109} outlining the research process. During in-person interviews these were presented at the beginning of the interview; in the case of a telephone interview, the form was sent prior to the meeting and interviewees verbally confirmed their participation at the beginning of the interview.

### 3.5. Thematic Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis within the pragmatic paradigm. This is a method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”\textsuperscript{110} with the understanding that information is co-constructed during the interview process. According to Braun and Clarke, there are several benefits to be derived from this type of analysis, including flexibility, the reflection of reality and sub-reality, and identification of semantic and latent themes.\textsuperscript{111} In this process, the researcher plays an active role in identifying and reporting patterns and themes of interest to them.\textsuperscript{112}

There are two types of thematic analysis, essentialist/realist or constructionist. Essentialist (or realist method) reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, while constructionist method examines the ways in which “events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society”.\textsuperscript{113} In this project, the constructionist framework was used to analyze interviews.

\textsuperscript{109} Included in the Appendices. This document also dealt with issues of anonymity as necessary.

\textsuperscript{110} Braun and Clarke P 79

\textsuperscript{111} Braun and Clarke P 79-81

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} Braun and Clarke P 81
4. **Analysis**

A number of themes emerged through the thematic analysis process. The following section outlines the key themes identified by most or all of the interviewees. The themes are divided into three main sections. The first section outlines themes that refer to the role and impact of culture, community and community-based service providers. The second identifies themes pertaining to the role of the government in addressing violence against women in the South Asian community. The final section presents cross-cutting themes that permeated most of the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community-based challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited understanding of family structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative Impact of the Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The community itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of Guiding Policy on diversity of VAW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative impact of social systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-cutting themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Need for Cultural Competency training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prevention Vs. Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Importance of collaboraton between service providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1. Challenges due to Culture, Family and Community-Based Services

4.1.1. Understanding Women’s Roles Within the South Asian Family Structure

Understanding South Asian culture, particularly the ways in which patriarchy manifests itself within the culture and how this affects the perception of women’s roles and the manifestation of violence within the community, was a key theme that emerged from the interviews in terms of understanding why violence occurs. The first issue is the cultural preference for male children over female children. As Perminder and Rubina stated, “it’s a given that in our culture, boys are preferred to girls”. Sukhi further argued:

We look at our boys differently than our girls. It goes back to the way we think of the females of our family- they are seen as a burden. It was because if somebody ever touched your daughter or your sister or said something to them, it used to be very disrespectful. It will tarnish your family’s honour. That’s why we used to think of our daughters as burdens- because you wanted to protect your daughter, you wanted to keep them pure until they got married. Then there is the additional burden of the dowry system.

The dowry system, one that is prevalent within the community, furthers the notion that a female is a financial burden as well as a short-term “guest” for her birth family. It is also a culturally-specific form of violence against women. Dowry can potentially play a role in exacerbating violence against women in their new homes, if the amount of dowry a woman brings during the marriage is unsatisfactory to her new family. Upon marriage, the woman’s role is to carry on her new family’s traditions, produce heirs (preferably sons), and devote herself to her new family, while men typically hold the role of disciplinarians within the family structure. Sokoloff and Dupont stress the importance of understanding that patriarchy (and resulting violence) manifests itself in different ways
amongst different groups, and that culturally specific forms of abuse are frequently considered to be worse than more typical forms of abuse.  

Another common practice within the South Asian community is that of the joint, or extended, family. For example, a woman who is newly married may move in to her husband’s house where his parents or siblings may live as well. Alternatively, although she may live independently with her husband, his family may still be heavily involved in their day-to-day activities and decision making processes. While Daisy felt that these extended family structures were “oppressive”, Veenu described them as more “complex”:  

The fact [is] that often South Asian families are shaped differently and decision making is shared. I think the service providers and lawyers and decision-makers have a really hard time wrapping their mind around that. But what you may agree to might have an impact on other family members in a huge way that the more nuclear models of families do not have. Even if you're living in what looks like a nuclear family in the South Asian context, how it runs is way different. And even when people understand that, they see that as negative, rather than something positive to work with. But when you're [working] with South Asian people, it's way more complex. It's never straightforward because there are so many factors to think about.

Most of the interviewees agreed that extended family could prove to be either a barrier or a resource; a resource in terms of supporting the woman’s inclusion in her new home, or a barrier in terms of exacerbating an already stressful situation in a variety of ways. At Deara’s agency, clients often report extended family members, particularly female family members, of initiating or perpetrating violence. However, a bigger issue is the impact the extended family can have on a woman experiencing or seeking to report abuse, or accessing services. This impact was exemplified by the following quote from Ram, who discussed the extended family’s desire of keeping family problems private:  

Sokoloff and Dupont, P 42. The authors present research discussing a variety of culturally-specific forms of violence, including dousing a woman in liquid (thus identifying her as “impure”), is considered to be worse than more typical forms of abuse such as slapping, pushing, etc.
Families are involved, sometimes to the detriment of the client. What we see is a lot of these family meetings. Like, let's get everybody together and let's try to solve the problem on our own. Don't go to courts, we'll figure it out. Because what happens is she's sitting in a room with the elders, who supposedly know better and then she's being told you should do this and usually most of our clients don't have that voice or the self-esteem to be say no, that's not going to work, so they end up agreeing to orders that usually don't benefit them or they agree to go back.

The issue is further complicated by women who immigrate to Canada from South Asia after marriage. In the diaspora, a marriage is not simply between two people. Rather, it is considered to be a union between two families. As such, there is immense pressure on women, particularly women coming from South Asia, to conform to cultural norms and to integrate within the family with as little conflict as possible. Despite the potential or evidence of abuse, women are encouraged to bear it for the family’s sake. Pardeep reinforced this fact by stating:

In a lot of South Asian-like cultures, a marriage isn't really just between two people, it's between the families. So the families solve a lot of the problems, which is the case for women that are being abused here if their families are actively supporting them. But for women that come from other countries, they have no one here, there's no one to intervene, and often they do not want to leave their husband. They want to live harmoniously with the husband, but they want to live violence-free or they want to live with their husband minus the in-laws that are causing the friction. So they come to us as they are reluctant to report it because they don't want it to be a bigger issue than it is, but they want us to step in and support them, to intervene on their behalf, and that becomes obviously problematic. They're very reluctant to report abuse because they think it's a misunderstanding, they're not ready to leave.

Maryam added:

The unfortunate thing is, and it's not only the South Asian community, it's every new culture coming to Canada, the community is quite reserved. When a woman calls the police, [the family] actually think that she's done a horrible thing against the community and the family, so they normally abandon the victim. That's why we lose a lot of those cases in courts, because the victim recants, go back to the abusive husband, gets abused again, and it's just like a revolving door.
While many interviewees considered the extended family to be a potential resource, there was a general consensus that extended family has, for the most part, proven to be a barrier for women seeking to report or flee abuse. This is especially true of new immigrant women.

4.1.2. The role of the South Asian community

Another barrier is the perception of the community’s general lack of support for women, particularly women experiencing abuse. Pardeep described the community as being "close-knit" and reluctant to discuss the issue at more than a superficial level. She further maintained that women who immigrate from India as wives are “left vulnerable because they have no support system. The community is very close-knit and they're almost hesitant to talk about their issues. So whereas there are a lot of programs and initiatives done by members of the South Asian community, they don't reach out to people… It's very difficult working with the community”.

Lali furthered this idea by pointing out that in the community women are generally the ones who can be an impediment to service access.

Sometimes women are the worst… They're the ones [that] aren’t supportive of other women and that's why they're not getting the services they need. We're not just talking about mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws, but within the community. When we say that women need support, other women say, well, no, you're breaking homes, you're giving them the wrong education. They should just be quiet and not do anything about it.

Perminder and Rubina asserted that women were often hesitant to come forward to report abuse due to lack of support at home and within the community, as well as a fear of isolation or stigmatization. Several interview participants shared stories of clients who were afraid to report violence because they did not want others to find out, were afraid of losing their friends and/or family, or had heard of other situations in which inaccurate stories and gossip about the victim was being spread. Deara affirmed this by sharing a story of one of her clients leaving her organization’s transition home, stating that “she said that one of the most difficult things for her was the isolation and sense of loneliness that she felt after she left”. Other interviewees agreed that fear of stigma and isolation were a significant impediment to accessing services. According to Veenu,
One thing often service providers, police included, do not take into account is when you're talking about safety, the threat comes from a different source sometimes and they don't see that. The threat is not just the violent partner, but there's stress from other family members. There is the stuff that goes on in the community that is not necessarily criminal, but it can be really damaging to the woman and her children. There's [very little] understanding of that.

Many participants felt that public legal education would at least partially resolve this issue. However, Parminder stressed that while education is important, it needs to be appropriate, informative and empowering:

Women are the ones who rear children. Women are the ones who do continue that education more than men. For sure that education is important, but it has to be done in a way that actually helps change and holds people accountable for what they're saying.

4.1.3. The role of the (ethnic) media

The way the community, and community-based and local media, frame the issue of violence against women within the South Asian community was another consideration of importance to interview participants. The first concern was that of ‘shaming and blaming’, in that both the community as well as the media framed the problem in terms of the victim being at fault. Several participants shared examples of how their clients had been blamed of having done something to aggravate the situation that led to violence, or that rumors regarding affairs and provocative behavior were spread about the victim to justify the crime. According to Perminder and Rubina:

Unless we hear it from community groups or people working in the field, rarely do we hear that was awful, a woman was killed and, therefore the man who has killed her should get punished. It's usually the other things that we hear.

A bigger concern was the framing of VAW as being a “South Asian” problem. While there was consensus among the interviewees that violence against women cuts across all communities, there was also a clear view that the media, both within the community and on a larger scale, frames and stereotypes violence as “belonging” to the
South Asian community. This focus not only stigmatizes the community, but diverts attention from the real issues at hand. This view is exemplified by Lali’s quote:

The media has made the South Asian community’s issue domestic violence. I don’t know why. It’s not. If you can count how many non-South Asian incidents of murder and domestic violence that happen in the courthouse. I work here and the media is never here when a Filipino lady is killed. The media is never here when a Vietnamese woman is so abused that she’s in a coma. So why is it when there’s one incident that we have all the cameras from our own South Asian media, which I think they’re at fault, but also the mainstream? So where I find that the media has labeled South Asian as being violent with their women, they’ve labeled the Vietnamese community with youth and drugs, it just kind of fits in their pockets, but that’s not reality.

While Pardeep, Sukhi, Shashi and others reiterated this concern, they raised a third issue specific to ethnic media, namely the fact that most ethnic media is run by men. This is problematic because not only does ethnic media typically downplay the issue of violence, but their shaming and blaming practices negatively impact victims’ desire to access services. Pardeep argued:

I’m going to link men and media together and say that men, particularly men in ethnic media, downplay the issue of domestic violence quite a bit. If you’ve got the audience of thousands of people listening to you on the radio, why would you say that domestic violence doesn’t exist and women have too many rights in Canada? They don’t realize that they’re putting back all the work that we’ve done for several years because you’re telling these people, who are dedicated and believe everything you say, that women have too many rights, and that there’s programs for women, but what about men? And then we’ve got a middle-aged man, who's fairly educated, saying this on the radio to people. Then you have the uneducated masses and you’ve got the older generation that echo this.

Ranjeet and other participants identified male dominance in media as a problem due to its impact on using radio as an outreach tool. They described various efforts made by community agencies of hosting call-in shows. While initially well-received because they included a legal expert, a health expert and a service provider, most shows were co-hosted by males, most of the calls were from men and answered by men who had little or no training in how to respond to the few calls that did involve women who had experienced abuse. Incoming calls often turned hostile, with service providers being harassed by callers, rendering them fearful of their safety. In her capacity as
executive director and to protect her employees, Shashi decided to be the public voice of her organization. Other organizations have followed suit and radio outreach efforts have decreased.

In 2007, MOSAIC attempted to address the media-legal education gap by creating TV programming around the issue. Funded by the Law Foundation of BC and in partnership with Red 93.1FM, MOSAIC developed 10 Punjabi language television episodes on various issues including criminal law, family law, sponsorship, domestic violence, senior abuse, and so on. Guest speakers familiar with each topic provided background and responded to host and audience questions. A second stage of this project is currently in progress, and involves the development of workshops around the themes of the TV shows. The workshops will be presented both in Vancouver as well as other rural parts of BC, including Kamloops and Prince George. A final aspect of the project would involve delivering cultural safety training for service providers, and a day-long wellness forum for women to access information and resources. This is similar to work done by the SAFA and the India Mahila Association, who recently held well-attended women-only events on the subject of wellness. Such events with a focus on women are intended to increase women’s empowerment, but this focus has also raised some concerns amongst service providers because of the limited focus on ‘family’.

4.1.4. Limited Male and Family Oriented Services

One of the concerns raised dealt with both prevention and intervention services for men. While organizations such as DiverseCity, MOSAIC and VLMFSS have family counseling services for women and children, only the representatives from MOSAIC specified a project devoted specifically for men engaged in the justice system.\textsuperscript{115} According to Perminder and Rubina, MOSAIC was the pioneer in terms of service providers offering programs for men who use violence. The program, primarily for those receiving court-mandated therapy, has experienced more success with first-time offenders than repeat offenders. Perminder emphasized:

\textsuperscript{115} Katherine Rossiter identified additional men-focused services in her report.
Basically those men who get caught and they're in the system and end up in the program and they acknowledge, those families do move on to a healthier relationship than those that are the repeat offenders and [are] more violent.

Gary further stressed the need for an increase in men’s programming. He admitted that though there currently is not a big demand for the (intervention-type) service, demand may increase if there is more awareness- which would require the creation of more male-centered programming that focuses on prevention but would not take away from women-centered programs. He argued:

The other part of it is there's not many people even asking for that service, but... I feel, yes, we can have that intervention service, but we also need a prevention piece to do sort of a mass education kind of campaign. If you tell people that it's available, then perhaps they'll come, but right now because we don't have that capacity we don't tell people... Men do need to deal with the issue and acknowledge that this is an issue

The rationale for providing services for men is that socialization that violence is wrong will result in men seeking help. He maintained:

At that point when that light bulb goes off or once they're ready, then if we don't have that service right now, what are we doing? We're setting them up to fail. If we're going to say let's talk about this, let's say this is wrong, get out there and really make a concerted effort, then we have to give these people a place where they can go. I'd like to see [services] for men who have maybe been abusive or getting to that point, I think having a group program really works well where they can sit with other men and they can really work with some of the issues they're struggling with.

Sukhi agreed by stating:

Maybe the focus should now shift to the men because the men are the ones who are needing a lot of stress management anger management and education that it's not right to start beating your wife up just for no reason. And just keep them away from liquor and substance.

Parminder also felt that “men are abusing women and there’s nothing in place to help create change around that.” She maintained that some services were necessary,
since “a woman gets divorced, but that guy is going to do the same thing to someone else.”

In Gary’s experience, group programs have been effective due to the group discussions. This was true of Perminder and Rubina’s experience with MOSAIC’s Men’s programs as well. However, several interview participants were not convinced, as they felt that providing services for men would result in fewer resources for women, and would take the attention away from men as the predominant perpetrators of violence. Parminder argued:

The only thing I noticed that happens when they talk about helping men dialogue is that it takes the attention away from men being [the abusers]. It's about how do you support men who are abusing. There are some good things in place, but they are for men who [are already within the system]. There needs to be more [for] men who abuse and it needs to be more open and there needs to be a few more services, but it shouldn't ever be done at [the risk of] taking services away from women's services because that's really important.

Others concurred with Parminder’s view, arguing that while the idea of providing services for men was worth consideration, men are reluctant to admit that they have a problem and the community is therefore not ready for such services. One way to address this challenge is more outreach to community organizations and leaders. Parminder felt that “as the systems start to change it can only have an effect if the right people in power are saying this isn't okay.” In order for change to occur, community leaders need to engage.

4.1.5. Community Outreach

In the past few years, organizations such as South Fraser Legal, VLMFSS, Law Foundation of BC and PICS have conducted outreach at religious institutions, with gurudwaras116 being the most receptive. This is due to the fact that while temples and

116 A gurudwara is a Sikh religious institution, similar to the Hindu temple.
mosques have fixed hours and times for events and prayers, gurudwaras almost always can be accessed by anyone during the day. According to Pardeep:

The onus is also on the social service agencies to reach out to the temples. Because in the temples, it's still a religious place, so they're going to talk about the issue within the context of the religion. I think that community organizations need to engage a little bit more with the religious places because that's where a woman will always be allowed to go. She's never going to be told by her in-laws or her husband that she can't go to the Sikh temple or that she can't go to the [temple] or she can't go to the mosque. So that's somewhere where we would be able to reach our demographic.

South Fraser Legal, PICS and others have successfully liaised with gurudwaras in Surrey in the past through programs involving an outreach worker visiting certain temples to provide general legal support. Funding has been an issue in terms of sustaining these programs, but the interviewees whose organizations had engaged in such programs highlighted them as useful tools to reach out to the community, and particularly women experiencing abuse. Gurudwaras in particular were locations of choice because of the ability to build rapport and trust with temple-goers. Once that trust was established, it was easier to provide more sensitive information to those who needed it. Outreach was also key in terms of establishing sustainable relationships with religious leaders, which ideally would lead to more substantive discussions on violence with their congregations. This, in turn, could result in the implementation of other programs, including pre-marital counseling that Gary recommended could be included as part of the marriage services offered by these institutions.

Another type of outreach conducted by South Fraser Legal entailed developing toolkits\textsuperscript{117} for service providers such as doctors, school counselors and beauticians. The purpose of these toolkits was to provide an introduction to recognizing signs of, and working with, women experiencing domestic violence. As well, the toolkits provided a list of available community-based and government services. These kits were distributed to

\textsuperscript{117} The toolkits are available for download on the South Fraser Legal website.
medical clinics, schools and beauty parlours\textsuperscript{118} in areas with high South Asian populations.

\subsection*{4.1.6. Empowerment}

A final barrier identified by interviewees was that of the need for empowerment for the community, but most importantly for women experiencing violence. Empowerment was an idea that all interviewees felt was vital to effective outreach and service provision, as they found that it is more likely for women with at least a little support to report abuse or to engage the criminal justice system than women who do not. As Sadia stated, “we need to help them define their sense of self. Those who want help will seek it”.

Athena, Ranjeet and Sukhi agreed, emphasizing that the best way to empower their clients was to listen, outline the various options available, and to not be ‘prescriptive’ in terms of diagnosing the client’s issue. Many participants felt that if the victim is not ready for help, no service would be effective. Shashi concurred by arguing:

I do believe that violence is not going to stop until the abusee says stop. If the abusee herself is not ready, you can put in as many laws as you want, the abuser or the abusee is not going to change.

Nasreen and Bethany faced a similar challenge in their work, as they frequently encountered the long-term view that the victims are the cause of the problem. In their work with government-based victims’ services programs, they generally see clients when the issue goes to trial, usually 3-6 months after the incident. As well, they still see clients who focus on the accused as opposed to themselves; in their role they try to focus on empowering their client. They explained:

We're acknowledging that they're also part of this and, you know, that they need to focus on themself, as opposed to what will happen. And for them the legal system is all about the accused, what will happen to him. I

\textsuperscript{118} Toolkits were sent to beauty parlours as this is a service regularly frequented by women.
find that on "K" [violence] files very few victims actually focus on themselves.

A lack of understanding about confidentiality was also identified as a problem. Participants addressed this by explaining the clients’ right to confidentiality in the first few sessions, and followed by identifying their options. In doing so, the women would have a fuller and informed idea about their options and could opt to engage effectively in the system should they choose. According to Sukhi and Maryam, the best tools for empowerment are awareness and education. Maryam stated:

Empowerment is going to come with the education. Having the knowledge is empowerment. So if you know that you have a right, if you know where to go, if you know that it is not right to be beaten by your husband, you're empowered. Not knowing it is the worst thing. So if you give them the information and the resources and say this is where to go and why it is confidential, then you have empowered them to decide. We know no woman for the first time being assaulted calls the police. We know they have been abused many, many times. It has to get to the point they say I can't take it anymore.

Parminder summarized the importance of empowerment by comparing the “Western” and more “traditional” views of domestic violence, and how empowering women allows them to overcome the boundaries of patriarchy by allowing them to make their own decisions. She said:

I think in the Western lens of looking at things, things like divorce are really normal. Individualism is the way. So if you're in a violent relationship, it doesn't make sense to remain in it, so getting a divorce and separating is the more acceptable thing to do. But in more traditional societies, in a lot of the immigrant communities that it's the opposite, where ... family is important. And I think both of them can be a problem. So you actually see community workers telling women not to get a divorce and stay in a violent relationship, and that patriarchy is so predominant in the South Asian community. I think the best thing to do ... is [to] give women their options and they can choose for themselves what's best. I find often as some women start to feel more empowered, they don't always want to stay in an abusive relationship. But if they choose to, [they] can -- because it's hard to leave for immigrant women because you don't always understand the language, you don't always have people here to support you. When women leave abusive relationships, they end up in poverty and welfare. That's not enough money to get by.
Parminder’s final point refers to one of the many barriers that women face that are government-centered. The following sections outline the government-based barriers as identified by the interview participants.

4.2. Barriers due to Government-based Policies and Services

4.2.1. Limitations in the VAWIR Policy

As discussed earlier in the background section, BC’s VAWIR policy was most recently amended in 2010, with a stronger pro-arrest feature and an argument surrounding empowerment and further training. However, interview participants felt that there are still several gaps within the policy that need to be addressed. The first, according to Shahnaz, is a continued lack of understanding of the ‘primary aggressor’. She explained:

The VAWIR Policy is watered down a lot from 1993. So basically now they’re dual charging, dual arrests. So when a woman does call, the police may show up and arrest her as well if the man says “she hit me too”. They don't have the thing of primary aggressor. They don’t have this risk assessment tool of who is the stronger person in the relationship, or she may have hit him in self-defense. Or who has the potential to be harmed more in a violent relationship? They don't understand those dynamics.

A second issue is the framing of the problem. While the policy correctly focuses on violence against women, there is limited understanding of the different types of relationships, and the various potential perpetrators. Interviewees felt that the definition of the aggressor was limited within the policy and did not accurately reflect the South Asian context. This concern is articulated by the following quote by Lali:

Violence against women doesn't necessarily mean man violence against women. It's also women against women. There [are] also gay and lesbian relationships. That policy alone is very restrictive as far as the definition and the reality. In the South Asian community, we have so many issues of mother-in-law, daughter-in-law issues, up to abuse and violence and assault cases that happen, where would that be? Defined under what?
Pardeep also expressed her concern, citing conversations she’d had with clients who accessed her organization’s services. She argued that her organization’s clients generally faced physical abuse from their spouses coupled with emotional or other forms of abuse from in-laws and extended family. As such, her clients advocated for legislation to “monitor abuse by in-laws”. This is because:

Often with especially newly arrived immigrants or women that come over as brides, there’s physical [or other types of] abuse and it doesn’t necessarily come at the hands of the husband, it sometimes comes at the hands of the in-laws. There need to be stricter policies on domestic violence. There are no laws besides assault that talk about the in-laws within domestic violence. There are policies for women and ways for women to get out of domestic violence and to get into a transition home and a second stage and to be able to leave their spouse, but none of that actually looks at the cultural aspect of why domestic abuse happens.

While there was a clear consensus that current policies, specifically the VAWIR policy, do not adequately reflect the potential of violence from different sources within the South Asian family construct, participants hesitated when asked if amending the policy would address this issue. Several participants were concerned that amending the policy would take the focus off men as primary aggressors. Perminder and Rubina reasoned that, in order to properly mitigate violence, we need to consider the original issue of why men commit acts of violence in the first place. Considering the extended family, they argued, would take the focus off the man as the primary aggressor.

Then you're saying it's not his fault or it's not issues related to the man, it's because of the extended family. So by doing that, we are sending this message to those men who use violence against their intimate partner who don't have an extended family, that it's okay because they might look at [his] extended family and the focus may be taken off of him. I don't know if that would be useful. Definitely not in all cases, but maybe in the situations where extended family plays a role. But really when we're thinking about this question, I think it's important to take it a step back and say why is this man using violence against his partner? And if the issue is because of extended family then how can we work with this man to resolve whatever issues he has with the extended family so that he doesn't use violence against his intimate partner?

Instead, interview participants felt that more training around cultural sensitivity and domestic violence would be more effective. Ram maintained that “the policy could
probably do more around the training and explaining more how the relationship of the extended family works, that it's not a nuclear family”. Veenu agreed by insisting that implementation, including further domestic violence and cultural understanding training needs to be considered:

I think that [amending the policy] would be useful, but again you can have the best policies. When you have attitudes that service providers or people that you deal with, I've heard police officers say sort of openly that South Asian woman, she's going to go back anyway, we'll be looking at the situation again and again.

4.2.2. Limitations of the Public Legal System (Cuts to Legal Aid)

Aside from the VAWIR policy, the provincial legal system, specifically cuts to Legal Aid, was cited by many participants as a barrier to access for women experiencing violence. Parminder felt discouraged by the support offered by the legal system, arguing:

The reality is that if you go through the family law system, some women have lost their children and some people don't know how to navigate these [systems]. So often there [are] almost more supports in place to help women stay because the welfare system, the justice system, it's discouraging to navigate, especially for an immigrant woman.

Bethany and Nasreen concurred, stating that the legal system “is a maze” because of all the different systems that are involved, including the criminal and family court as well as the welfare system. Some challenges included duration of trials as well as length of time between reporting the case and trial dates.119 In the past, access to legal aid had been an immense source of support to women in terms of affordable legal assistance in understanding and navigating the system. Due to what interviewees labeled “massive cuts” to Legal Aid, such support is no longer possible, and the slack has had to be picked up by community organizations, particularly multicultural outreach and victim service organizations. Parminder argued:

119 The length of time between reporting a crime and a trial date is typically between 6-9 months.
Some women are forced to self-represent in a court without a lawyer because they’re not eligible. How do you do that when you don’t even speak English properly?

Ranjeet was concerned about this movement towards “self-help” by the province:

10 years ago I used to find women were feeling more supported by the dominant systems. Not anymore. With so many cutbacks, there is a trend evolving where there is emphasis on self-help kind of a phenomenon. But with immigrant and refugee populations, that self-help concept is not workable at this point.

Veenu expressed her concern about lack of Legal Aid support in terms of current and future costs to the province:

Unfortunately there’s a huge cost when you don’t provide Legal Aid funding. There are costs elsewhere that the province is paying for or the country is paying for already anyway. So that needs to be recognized across the board. When you don’t fund something, you’re making a decision about funding it elsewhere. It’s one of those things you pay now or pay later. And unfortunately as a province we’ve made a decision to pay later and pay a lot more.

4.2.3 The role and impact of the police

Several interviewees raised the issue of the negative impact of the police in responding to and dealing with cases of domestic violence. Ranjeet vocalized her concern about the onus being placed in the woman to prove abuse when reporting to the authorities. Despite the police charging the husband when abuse is reported, Ranjeet felt that many women “are not being heard, that they are further silenced”, and that they are essentially forced to prove the existence of abuse, particularly in historical cases. She further maintained that “the reactions of the system, in particular towards women is it's quite demeaning. It's further silencing women”. This finding is consistent with
existing intersectionality literature about the ambivalence of abused women in terms of their experiences with the police.\textsuperscript{120}

Maryam, Gary, Shahnaz and others all felt that additional, more in-depth training, as well as more collaboration with service providers, was necessary. Maryam said:

We are missing a huge, big thing about educating women that it's okay to talk. And that's another thing that I've been trying to get the RCMP here do is to when the police officer goes to a domestic violence and the woman says I don't want him to be arrested, pass the Surrey Women's Centre phone number to them and say if you go there it is confidential, they won't tell us. Go and talk to somebody. See if they can have a risk assessment for you and a safety planning so at least you don't get killed. So at least you know where to go if something happens, who to call when something happens. That is missing.

Currently the RCMP only provides less than a day's worth of training on domestic violence but has realized that more is needed. A recently launched online workshop on community partnerships is a small step forward, but a lot more needs to be done.\textsuperscript{121}

4.2.4. The impact of limited social services

Insufficient finances, limited accessible housing and lack of social services such as childcare are other barriers abused women face, especially when making the decision to leave their abuser. Daisy, Deara, Amy and Ranjeet argued that the Lower Mainland faces a shortage of affordable, safe housing\textsuperscript{122} for women with low incomes. Welfare was another concern. Even though the province has attempted to streamline the application process by setting up a call center, expediting the process for those who are

\textsuperscript{120} Sokoloff and Dupont, P. 55
\textsuperscript{121} Canadian Police Knowledge Network
\textsuperscript{122} This is in part due to limited second-stage housing, or lack of affordable housing in the Greater Vancouver area in general. While there are ways to mitigate this issue, including considering rent bylaws, interviewees felt that increasing availability of transition homes would best address the problem.
fleeing abuse\textsuperscript{123} and contacting applicants up to 3 times, the process was still difficult for applicants. Deara alluded to the fact that clients had to wait by the phone on the days they expected to hear back from the Ministry, and that language was often a barrier during the application process. Ranjeet stated:

For eligibility, they have made it more challenging for women to get onto income assistance. There is so much of investigative kind of interviews they do and the amount of accountability they expect from the women is just overwhelming. And because of this a lot of times the women kind of regress and go back to their abusers because they feel that the system outside isn't that easy to approach either.

The amount of income assistance available to women is extremely low,\textsuperscript{124} is only available for three months, and barely covers basic expenses such as rent, childcare, transit passes and so on. Amy and Deara shared stories of clients leaving first-stage transition homes were forced to live in areas where they felt unsafe; housing that is safe and affordable was a challenge to find. More often than not, women were forced to live in basement suites in neighbourhoods or buildings housing people recovering from drug addictions or with mental health issues. Limited affordable childcare or community activity options, coupled with the need to work, forced them to leave their children at home during court dates or work hours, and they felt uncomfortable or guilty letting their children play in their neighbourhood which they considered unsafe. Ostracized by their community and with limited social services and employment options, women often felt pressured into returning to their abusers because their income was insufficient to cover basic expenses, or they felt unable to appropriately care for their children. Only a few community based multicultural outreach services (such as the service provided by Options BC) exist to help women overcome these systemic barriers. As a result, in

\textsuperscript{123} MSD 3 Week Work Search Policy, Exemptions: http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/application/threeweek/policy.html#2

\textsuperscript{124} The income assistance rates table, available at http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm specifies that income assistance for a single parent under 65 years of age with 1 child or more is approximately $500. Maximum income assistance per month is $610.
many cases women returned to their husbands because of the financial security they afforded, and considered that to be sufficient reward for bearing the abuse.

4.2.5. The impact of the immigration system

Maryam and Sukhi both blamed the immigration system and cited lack of awareness about services amongst new immigrants as a problem. Sukhi argued that the desire to immigrate, followed by problems surrounding lack of credential recognition and fulfilling work can be key factors that lead to abuse by men. Furthermore, pressure from family in India as well as fear of being deported and lack of awareness of existing services are other factors that result in women staying with their abusers. Maryam affirmed:

The problem with the new immigrants or refugees is they really don't know where to go. And if we don't have an outreach program, which we don't because we don't have enough money to do it, that's missing. It's missing to go to mosques and talks [sic] to women who come as a new refugee. What we have done to fix that, because most of those new immigrants, the South Asian ones, they go to PICS and we get the referral from PICS. So that's how we access them. They do have ESL classes. If a woman goes and studies, then they have information about Surrey Women's Centre, we get that. But other than that, there are a lot of people coming here they don't have a clue where to go and what to do. We let them in, but we don't give them any information.

This issue could be dealt with in multiple ways, whether through pre-arrival services or within information packets handed to newly landed immigrants. Alternatively, settlement agencies or community organizations could be more involved in awareness campaigns. As well, the federal and provincial governments could continue to fund ELSA classes at settlement agencies such as PICS, which have proven to be effective
Either way, Maryam argued that there were people falling through the cracks who needed to be found:

The newcomers are the ones that we are missing because they don’t get the information. Immigration Canada, when they let people in, they have to have them connected to somewhere. They don’t. It's just so simple.

4.3. Cross-Cutting Themes

Three cross-cutting themes, namely co-ordination between service providers, the need for cultural sensitivity training and the importance of addressing both prevention and intervention, permeated all of the interviews.

Firstly, most participants agreed with Rossiter’s argument that prevention and intervention efforts are interrelated. Shashi felt that “the concept of multiculturalism needs to be fully understood”; Sadia maintained that it is impossible and ineffective to focus on one versus the other. However, there was disagreement in terms of how far back to focus preventative strategies. Ram felt that ensuring that a woman fleeing abuse for the first time has enough support in place so that she doesn’t feel the need to return is a form of prevention:

[It's] very hard in most communities, especially South Asian communities. People don’t want to acknowledge it or do anything until the situation is at its worst, e.g. when a murder occurs. I know we always say in all this work prevention is the best, but it's so hard in this work. It's almost like in a way prevention is when that woman leaves the first time, if we can surround her with so many services and supports that she doesn't feel that she needs to go back. Clients feel like they have to go back because A. They don’t have the financial means to support themselves. So the

Pardeep detailed how ELSA classes at PICS were useful in terms of disseminating information and resources. In her experience, women built a rapport with the teachers and were then able to reveal violence, or were able to learn about the variety of resources available in the community through guest speakers. Another reason why the ELSA classes were effective was that they were housed in the PICS building which also housed other offices, therefore the families of women experiencing abuse never suspected that they were doing anything other than learning English.
welfare system is not supporting them. B. They don't have lawyers to fight for custody of their kids and they'd rather be in a violent relationship than lose that custody. So I think if we can put those supports in place the first time they leave, and prevent them from going back, that's kind of the prevention piece. I don't see it happening too much further back. There's [the lack of] funding for us personally, but then funding for the bigger issues around Legal Aid, court systems and all those sort of things. If those systems don't work well, then we're not able to protect [the clients]. The policies can be great, but if the systems aren't there to apply the policies, then it's not going to work.

Sukhi and Daisy argued that prevention goes much further back. While Sukhi advocated for more education and awareness for both the individual and the community, Daisy felt that a more fundamental change was needed:

We cannot separate services from a larger political agenda. The discussion isn't only about services- we need to have a fundamental political ideology shift that sees that VAW is a stark example of patriarchy. It cannot be solved by more services. Services are part of that, but it's not the be all and end all.

Shahnaz, however, concurred with Sukhi and equated prevention with community awareness and education:

We definitely need… educational awareness around issues of violence for the South Asian community. Because she may link up with a service, let's say she links up with DiverseCity or Multicultural Family Support Services, at the end of the day if her community that she lives in is not informed on those issues, she will get no support from them. So community awareness is really important. We've heard from women that have said, well, yeah, they left the relationship, but the community has now ostracized them, blaming them for the violence. So public legal education for community on violence issues should be a priority.

Many participants believed that public education would encourage empowerment amongst both the community as well as women experiencing violence. The 2010 VAWIR policy recognized the importance of empowering women by stating:

The most effective responses for victims of domestic violence are those that empower the victim; that is, services that enable victims to improve their lives and keep themselves and their children safe. A respectful response to the needs of victims is one that takes into account their individual circumstances, including socio-economic factors, culture,
language, refugee/immigration status, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental disabilities, geographic location, family situation and lifestyle issues.\textsuperscript{126}

Interview participants identified two ways in which to provide for the type of “respectful response” detailed in the policy. The first way was to change employment practices to reflect the changing demographics in the Lower Mainland. The second was to implement cultural sensitivity training in all organizations, both government and community-based. According to Ram:

In the last four or five years there's been this great push to really understand the issues of violence against South Asian women/Indian women, but I don't know if it's really done more than scratching the surface. It's just kind of now stereotyped it a little bit more and we have not really hit the real issues. We're still at they [stage where] we think they need help with language [and so on] without really looking at what's going on deeper than that. The deeper issues include the cultural factors, and those are the things we need to focus on.

Participants identified “cultural competence” (or “cultural sensitivity”) as an option. Sadia argued that “being culturally competent and sensitive is important in program success”. Sukhi further maintained:

It doesn’t have to be a person from the community to provide care if we adapt cultural safety in the training- they will not be judgmental. Keep an open mind, listen to the full story, don’t make assumptions and make careful recommendations. Just being someone from a similar culture does not result in appropriate care: skills, knowledge of how to provide the care are important, as are communication and interpersonal skills. The way I teach my students is, in order for me to provide care for anybody I first need to know who I am: my beliefs, values and attitudes, and how my beliefs and values can impact the care I provide for my client. If I don’t know who I am, I can’t provide adequate service.

\textsuperscript{126} VAWIR policy P 31
Lali, Bethany and Nasreen commented that the judicial system currently has cultural education training for their staff, but more is needed in terms of moving away from hiring staff that simply fit the changing demographics:

The judiciary do this as ongoing education, which is mandatory for judges and other legal professionals. Certain things like eye contact; this was an issue many years back; they found that women don't make eye contact. Sometimes people can misunderstand that to be some kind of admission of guilt. However, it's culturally inappropriate to have eye contact with a man, they think, oh, I'm being disrespectful. You can hire a Punjabi speaking counsellor, that doesn't mean that person is also effective. They might have the language, but they might not have the passion or understanding which is what you need to provide this service to make sure that it's client first and not about the position.

There is ample literature detailing the importance of cultural competence. Pon defines cultural competence as “the ability to “deliver professional services in a way that is congruent with behavior and expectations normative for a given community and that are adapted to suit the specific needs of individuals and families from that community”. Hutnik and Gregory define cultural competence as “a continuous process in which the [nurse] strives to develop an ability to work effectively within the cultural context of an individual, family or community from a diverse cultural/ethnic background”. They detail the process as involving the “development of cultural awareness, knowledge and skill, and is further enhanced and refined by one’s cultural encounters and a desire to consider cultural elements of one’s practice”. Furthermore, “it embodies willingness towards actual encounter with people of different cultures and an on-going desire to further the process of developing cultural competence”. In the context of violence, Bent-Goodly argues that it is “important to acknowledge that having a particular cultural orientation is not a predictor that [violence] will occur. However, understanding culture provides “an expanded awareness of potential factors, and a keen lucidity of latent

127 Pon P 60
128 Hutnik and Gregory Pg 172
129 Ibid
barriers and strengths that can be used to address the challenges of [violence]”. Also of note is the fact the definition of violence varies across cultures, and that there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for domestic violence; effective solutions must reflect these differences. Failing to ignore these challenges “denies and invalidates [their] experiences”, and could result in “higher levels of withdrawal from services and less effective treatment experienced among vulnerable populations”.

A few participants were uncomfortable with the idea of cultural competency training, as they felt that this practice stereotypes cultures. Parminder felt that this type of training was potentially racist and oppressive:

The biggest thing in policy is that lack of training and awareness… cultural sensitivity training is really different from antiracism training, because cultural sensitivity training is training people on how to be sensitive to someone’s culture, and violence isn’t a cultural thing. Racism isn’t a cultural thing. Even if you’re Indian and you’re working with Indian people, you can still be perpetuating [stereotypes] because we’ve internalized those feelings because of colonization. It’s not just lawyers or judges. There [are] lots of policies developed around culture, and I don’t think culture is a problem. And if we keep doing that, it keeps perpetuating [the stereotype that] violence is cultural, but it's not. We need to have affirmative action hiring, but it gets problematic when you hire people just based on their skin and language skills. I think that's where the problem comes in is the lack of trained workers.

This apprehension reflects the misgivings about cultural competency held by other researchers, academics and practitioners. Gordon Pon relates cultural competency to “a new form of racism” because it “seldom analyzes the role of whiteness in social work”. Sokoloff and Dupont argue that “when oppression and violence occur in communities of color or immigrant communities, culture is often alleged to have a particularly influential explanatory power. As evidenced from the interviews, specific

---

130 Bent-Goodly, P 93
131 Sokoloff and Dupont, P 50
132 Bent-Goodly P 96
133 Pon P 59
cases are not conceptualized as reflecting individual behavior; instead, entire groups are stereotyped.

Despite these criticisms, a majority of the interviewees felt that cultural competency would be a useful tool to encourage understanding and acceptance between women experiencing abuse and the service providers who work with them. This is because certain approaches, especially those by VLMFSS and South Fraser Legal, have attempted to bypass the critical observations and use cultural competency in a more useful, progressive manner.

A final concern was the need for increased co-ordination between service providers at all levels. Maryam argued that coordination between settlement workers and programs, coupled with a better referral system and education was needed. Specifically, policymakers need to engage and consult with the community they serve to accurately understand their needs, similar to her organization's partnership with the Ministry of Social Development.

The government needs get their act together and say we need more service providers. We need outreach people. We need to approach and give information to people, to real people who are getting hurt. People who are sitting in Vancouver writing policy and in Victoria writing policy may have never been to Surrey. For example, [they] don't have a clue how Muslim culture dictates a man running the whole household and not letting his wife to be seen by anybody. They don't know that. Writing policy for the majority of Canadians is one thing, really helping to solve the problem so we don't have five, six women in the last five years being murdered here in Surrey, that's another thing.

One way would be to reconsider the criminal justice response to domestic violence and adopt a more co-operative, community-based response, as well as specialized police units who are familiar with community-based resources. Maryam stated:

The most important [thing] is we are dealing with domestic violence cases like any other crime, which is wrong. Because domestic violence are not

References

134 Sokoloff and Dupont, P 46
a mischief or MVA, drunk driving. So I think the first thing that is lacking, the whole gap, is the criminal justice response to domestic violence. Instead of putting these cases through a horrendous bureaucratic position, by the time the guy is going to be in trial, the victim recanted a million times and has gone back to the family because of the pressure from the community. They should have a system that gets these cases through the system with knowledgeable Crown counsel, knowledgeable police officer, and a knowledgeable judge to deal with it as a domestic violence case and not as any other crime. The accused is going to be punished if he's found guilty, but it's going to go through the case faster. The Crown will listen to the victim, but it's because most of the time the woman calls just because they want to stop the violence. They really don't want to leave their family. There is a long list of cases, not enough expert judges that understand domestic violence, no expert police officers. We have any police officers going to a domestic violence dispute. We don't have specialized police. We have a DVU, or Domestic Violence Unit, with three counsellors for the City of Surrey, with over 500,000 people. It's not going to work. 300,000 of them are [South Asian]. So that's the response of the justice system is the main gap I see. Not the victims, most of the women, because they don't speak the language, not knowing their rights, not knowing their resources is another gap. We have to have more outreach programs to the community to explain. So not having enough outreach programs is a gap especially with the South Asian community. And not being familiar with the rights and the law. These are all gaps that need to be addressed cohesively.

Harjit summarized the need for a comprehensive, multi-level approach in order to effectively address violence by stating:

A lot work needs to be done at the societal level. I think we acknowledge that work needs to be done, but I think there should be enough of an investment in the communities. It needs to be addressed at so many different levels and we need a commitment. We need a commitment at every single level to say that this is not okay, for it to stop.

With these barriers, challenges and themes in mind, the following section identifies options for both the government and community-based organizations to address violence.
5. **Policy Options**

The following list of potential strategies and options are intended to improve the role of the government, service providers and the community in mitigating violence. The status quo, identified in both the background and interview analysis sections, is not listed as an option. The following are ways to address the issue in the short and medium term at both the prevention and intervention levels. The options are divided between government and community-based service providers. All of the options build upon existing programs and incorporate the ideals of intersectionality by instilling in service providers the understanding that women experiencing abuse come from a variety of backgrounds and unique circumstances.

**Options for the Government:**
1. Amending the VAWIR policy
2. Increase in second-stage transition homes and multicultural outreach programs

**Options for Community-Based Services:**
3. Community-focused awareness and outreach campaign
4. Media Campaign

**Options for Both Government and Community-Based Service Providers:**
5. Cultural Competency Training for all service providers

### 5.1. **Updating the VAWIR Policy**

Currently, BC’s VAWIR policy applies to those in all types of heterosexual and homosexual relationships and acknowledges the gendered aspect of the issue, in addition to the need for taking into consideration the individual circumstances of the complainant. However, the policy fails to acknowledge the dynamics that both impacts, and is impacted by, the South Asian family structure. This includes the existence of
multigenerational, extended families that could potentially perpetuate abuse (both physical and otherwise) by either the woman’s husband or other family members.

This option mitigates the lack of cultural understanding in the current system by providing further details regarding “diverse victim needs” in mediation processes, and acknowledging cultural factors such as extended families when it comes to identifying “primary aggressors”. As well, the policy would add a clear cultural competency and increased domestic violence training component for police in all detachments. The cultural competency training model would be a short workshop based on those currently provided by VLMFSS and South Fraser Legal. The increased training component for police would include two additional workshops on domestic violence for police during training in detachments across the province. The third section in the increased training module would be developed in consultation with community-based organizations and deal with understanding services that are currently available, and how best the police and community services can work together to meet the needs of women experiencing violence. Although adding details regarding diverse victims’ needs and including a third training module may not seem to be enough, this would be a small but important step forward in terms of providing service providers with training and awareness to appropriately respond to violent situations.

5.2. Increase in 2nd stage Transition homes

A need for an increase in services for all women after they leave first-stage transition homes is evident. One of the identified gaps is the lack of affordable and safe housing for women, as well as community-based support, after they leave 1st stage

Interview participants noted that vulnerable populations such as immigrant women fleeing abuse have a stronger need for public support systems including affordable housing. This was identified as a need for both women within the South Asian community, and for all immigrant women fleeing abuse in general.
transition homes. Currently, there are only 7 multicultural outreach programs\textsuperscript{136} and 9 second-stage transition homes in Metro Vancouver.\textsuperscript{137} This option would involve the building of at least two more second stage homes, one each in Vancouver and Surrey, devoted solely to women fleeing domestic violence.\textsuperscript{138} As well, the staff at each 2nd stage transition home would include at least two multicultural outreach workers who could assist residents in identifying community services and with other tasks, including going grocery shopping and learning about transit.

5.3. Community-focused Outreach Campaign

Empowerment plays a key role in ensuring that women who experience violence access available services. Through this option, non-profit service providers would collaborate with community leaders, particularly leaders at religious institutions, to promote awareness regarding available services. Further extension of current programs by South Fraser Legal and others of having a staff member on the premises once a week is also encouraged. Specifically, this option calls for collaboration with female

\textsuperscript{136} Multicultural Outreach Services in Metro Vancouver: http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/directory/docs/outreach-services-multicultural.pdf

\textsuperscript{137} Emergency Housing in Metro Vancouver http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Emergency_Housing/WTHSP/Access

\textsuperscript{138} The transition homes would be solely for women and children “in recovery” (who have fled abuse), as opposed to “harm reduction”, or for those who are recovering from drug addictions or mental health issues.
leaders at these institutions to encourage frequent discussions regarding violence and available services during the temple/gurudwara “seva” process.

As well, this option calls for a collaboration with agencies such as South Asian Family Association and India Mahila Association to host a seasonal, women-only event focused on health and wellness that also serves as an information dissemination platform. Similar events have already been held with much success by these organizations, but are time and resource-intensive. Collaboration between service providers would ensure that these events would be held more frequently with the support of the community and without negatively impacting the resources of any one organization.

5.4. Media Campaign

The media plays an important role in framing problems, disseminating information and promoting safety. This is true of the role that the South Asian media plays in framing the issue of violence within the community. Researchers including Bent-Goodly argue for more culturally-competent media campaigns which provide culturally-targeted messages of awareness and empowerment for both victims and community members. An effective media campaign focuses on the clarity, reach and impact of the campaign message, considers the audience and the goals to be

139 While collaboration with male leaders at religious institutions would be of value, the establishment of relationships with female leaders is more strongly encouraged. This is because women are the ones who are responsible for most of the temple’s social and daily activities; they are the ones most heavily involved. Interviewees stated how women in the community can frequently serve as a barrier to access for women experiencing violence; however, women experiencing violence are also more likely to speak to other women about their personal problems. Partnering with female leaders would encourage respect and would ideally foster a safe, open environment for women experiencing abuse to express themselves and seek help and support.

140 Seva at temples and gurudwaras refers to the service opportunities available to the congregation. Mainly, this includes preparation and cleanup for meals and help during special events.

141 Bent-Goodly, P 100
accomplished through the campaign, and identifies and monitors the channeling of specific messages through a variety of media.\footnote{NCSE 2005, Mann, P. 1} Mass media campaigns normally use radio, television, billboards or other media to reach a variety of audiences. Specific to domestic violence media campaigns, Nancy Berns (2004) argues that the “dominant portrayal of domestic violence in popular media is of victims and of what they can or should do to end their toleration of abuse”- this approach tends to unintentionally individualize the problem and frame the victim, and silence other alternative framings if the issue.\footnote{Ibid.} While no clear alternative to framing the problem is presented, this understanding needs to be incorporated into future media campaigns.

One potential way to avoid this issue is to present the issue within the framework of larger issues more pertinent and palatable to the community. Therefore, this option calls on MOSAIC, the Law Foundation and other service agencies to partner with ethnic media (such as OmniTV) to update, promote and air the 10 previously developed programs that present the issue of domestic violence as one of many public law issues relevant to the South Asian community. As well, an effort should be made to discuss the messages within the 10 already-developed television programs on South Asian radio stations such as Red 93.1FM. The goals of this campaign would be to raise awareness about the existence of violence (particularly culturally-specific types of violence) within the community, and to provide family members and friends who may have the ability to support or assist with stopping the violence with information about existing programs and services.\footnote{Ibid.}
5.5. Cultural Competency Training for All Service Providers

The importance and value of instilling cultural understanding in service providers at all levels, as well as a critique of doing so, has already been demonstrated in the analysis section. Several service providers (including South Fraser Legal and VLMFSS) have already administered cultural competency training in the workplace.\(^{145}\) This option recommends the administration of cultural competency workshops in all service agencies at all levels, and to incorporate this training into orientation training for new staff. The purpose of these workshops would be to enhance the knowledge, skills and values of service providers to effectively analyze and respond to challenging diversity issues within multicultural communities.\(^{146}\) Following the workshops, participants should be able to identify what cultural competency is, and have a framework and understanding of approaching sensitive topics such as domestic violence with diverse audiences.\(^{147}\) As well, participants would “have a framework for navigating the impact of culture & systemic discrimination”.\(^{148}\) Finally, service providers would also have “the tools to effectively “analyze and respond to challenging diversity issues”\(^{149}\)

The content of the courses could be adapted from the workshops currently offered by South Fraser Legal\(^{150}\) or VLMFSS. Alternatively, these agencies could be contracted to provide workshops. In addition, South Fraser Legal has successfully

---

\(^{145}\) Workshop content includes discussion on violence in the Canadian context, approaching the topic with people from different cultures, and how to deal with barriers and challenges such as asking about violence, explaining confidentiality and “isolating” the client from her family when discussing violence, as their presence may potentially impede discussion.

\(^{146}\) [http://www.competenceconsultants.com/workshops.html](http://www.competenceconsultants.com/workshops.html)

\(^{147}\) Ibid.

\(^{148}\) Ibid.

\(^{149}\) Ibid.

developed toolkits to promote awareness amongst doctors, school administrators\textsuperscript{151} and community members such as beauticians\textsuperscript{152}. This option would involve South Fraser Legal identifying and sharing the toolkits with community service providers, including doctors, beauticians, school administrators and others who regularly work with the South Asian community.

\textsuperscript{151} South Fraser Women’s services Cultural Competency Toolkit for Physicians: http://sfwomensservices.com/images/VIOLENCE%20AGAINST%20WOMEN%20IN%20RELATIONSHIPS-2.pdf

\textsuperscript{152} South Fraser Women’s Society Cultural Competency Toolkit for Beauticians: http://sfwomensservices.com/images/REVISED%20SALON%20BOOKLET.pdf
6. Description of Criteria and Measures

The following set of criteria and corresponding measures were established as a guide to evaluate each option and determine which would have the greatest impact on mitigating violence against women within the community. Each criterion holds equal weight in the evaluation process. A full description of the criteria and measures used is provided following the summary table below.

Table 1: Definition of Criteria and Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>The financial resources required to implement each option.</td>
<td>High: above $2.5 billion/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Between $2.5 billion-$5 million/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low: Below $5 million/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptability</td>
<td>The likelihood of key stakeholders, both government and community-based, to accept and implement each option.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Complexity</td>
<td>The level of complexity involved in implementing each option.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>The effectiveness of each option in terms of prioritizing victims’ needs and addressing cultural differences.</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Community Equity: the</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1. Cost

Cost is a significant criterion in determining whether an option will be implemented and to what extent. Based on Veenu’s concern that refusal to fund a program results in the issue presenting itself in other areas, the costs are compared to the public and private cost to society of violence against women.\textsuperscript{153} Considering both sets of expenditures is necessary since violence against women is “unquestionably a ‘public’ problem because the whole of society pays monetarily.”\textsuperscript{154} As well, the costs of violence faced by women and society continue long after leaving the relationship.\textsuperscript{155} The figures used are for comparative purposes only, as the study focuses on women who have left abusive relationships. In contrast, this research concerns women who have left violent relationships as well as women who remain in abusive relationships.

| Likelihood of a positive impact of each option on South Asian women experiencing abuse. | Medium | Low |
| Population Equity: the likelihood of a positive effect of each option on all women experiencing abuse. | High | Medium | Low |

\textsuperscript{153} The costs used for this study are based on estimates provided by Varcoe, Hankivsky et al in their 2011 research report: “Attributing Selected Costs to Intimate Partner Violence in a Sample of Women Who Have Left Abusive Partners: A Social Determinants of Health Approach”.

\textsuperscript{154} Varcoe, Hankivsky et al P363

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
The cost of each option is compared $250 million/year, or the estimated costs of public and private expenditures on South Asian women fleeing abuse. The measures used are: high (above $250 million per year), medium (between $250 million-$5 million per year), and low (under $5 million per year). The scale is determined as such to illustrate the fact that the overall costs of violence to society (both the public and private sector) are overall greater in comparison to any prevention or intervention efforts intended to mitigate violence.

6.2. Stakeholder Acceptance

The stakeholder acceptability criterion captures how likely key stakeholders would be to accept and implement each option. Key stakeholders include community-based organizations (including religious institutions), cultural organizations, non-profit service providers/settlement agencies, women experiencing violence, families, and the community as a whole.

This criterion also considers the political viability of each option in terms of how actionable the option is within the context of the province’s and the community’s political climate. The political feasibility of any option is integral to its implementation. As such, this option would consider the likelihood of government or community support for, each option as being high, medium or low.

\[156\] Ibid. This number is estimated using 2006 census data. Given the fact that the 2006 ratio of men to women in BC was 0.9:1.1, this means there were approximately 188,333 South Asian women in Metro Vancouver. \((207,100/1.1) \times 0.09 = 18,833\) women experienced abuse, based on the assumption that only 1 in 10 women report abuse). This number is then multiplied by $13,162.39, or the estimated annual cost per woman attributable to violence. This number does not imply that every South Asian woman experiences violence; rather, it reflects the cost of violence to both the government as well as to the community.
6.3. Implementation Complexity

Similar to cost and political feasibility, the likelihood of implementation and effectiveness of each option is impacted by how complicated each option is to implement by either the government or community agencies. This takes into account the administrative complexity and the number of stakeholders involved in implementation. This criterion is measured as high, medium or low.

6.4. Effectiveness

The literature review and interview analysis clearly demonstrates that available services fail to meet the needs of marginalized women, particularly South Asian women, who experience abuse due to the “one size fits all” approach of violence mitigation, the inherent blame placed on culture, and limited support from both the community and government structures.\(^\text{157}\) The battered women’s movement, which has pushed for intersectional and targeted interventions, maintains that there are four essential goals to domestic violence intervention. These include:\(^\text{158}\)

1. Restoring battered women’s autonomy, agency and safety
2. preventing further violence
3. making egalitarianism and peace the community standards for conduct within intimate relationships
4. addressing solutions to the social context of crime.

Some of these goals, particularly an option’s ability to prevent further violence, are difficult to evaluate within the context of this research. Therefore, the effectiveness

\(^{157}\) Sokoloff and Dupont (2005), Bent-Goodly (2007), interviews
\(^{158}\) Namhee P. 45-46
of each option is evaluated based on the ability to meet at least three of the above criteria. A score of ‘high’ reflects the option’s ability to meet three criteria; a medium score indicates that two of the four criteria are met. A ‘low’ score indicates that the option meets only one of the criteria presented.\textsuperscript{159}

6.5. Equity

Equity reflects the ability of each option to affect the target population equally. Specifically, it reflects the ability of each option to impact the ability of women fleeing abuse from both within the South Asian community and the population in general to access services. As such, this criterion is divided into the following sub-sections, measured as high, medium or low.

1. **Community Equity** reflects how each option would affect all women experiencing abuse from within the community, especially considering socioeconomic status, new immigrant status, direct and indirect costs to the individual and so on.

2. **Population Equity** evaluates how each option affects women from all communities who experience violence, taking into consideration socioeconomics, immigrant status and so on.

Dividing this criterion in such a manner takes into account Geoffrey Rose’s two key approaches to public health intervention, namely (1) targeted strategies focusing on individuals at a personal increased risk and (2) population-wide approaches focusing on the whole population.\textsuperscript{160} His primary idea in ‘The Strategy of Preventive Medicine’ (1992) divides risk prevention strategies into two categories, including primary and secondary intervention, and he changed the model of risk prevention by focusing on the

\textsuperscript{159} Each option presented meets at least one of the four criteria.  
\textsuperscript{160} Ahern and Jones P 581
entire population as opposed to those who are high-risk.\textsuperscript{161} Assuming that risk is uniformly distributed across the population, he adopted a normal distribution model which argued that strategies focusing on the “high risk” individuals in the right tail were equally as important as strategies that focused on the population as a whole.\textsuperscript{162} This is significant because, as previously explained, violence cuts across all communities and cultures. As such, while the primary focus of this research is to improve support for women within the South Asian community, all options would ideally improve support and access for all women in all communities who experience violence.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{161} Muntaner P 1
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid
\textsuperscript{163} Rose’s model has been criticized by researchers such as Carles Muntaner, who argued that the strategy of “shifting the curve is inequality-blind”, as it fails to consider socioeconomic differences amongst the population in question. Therefore, considering both how strategies impact both the shift and shape of the curve is important.
7. Evaluation

The following section provides an evaluation of the options (presented in Section 5), using the criteria and measures outlined in the previous section. As previously stated, no status quo option is included for evaluation as the status quo has clearly failed to address the needs of women experiencing violence within the community. An evaluation summary precedes a complete evaluation description of each option.

7.1. Evaluation Summary

*Table 2: Evaluation Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amending VAWIR Policy</th>
<th>Transition Homes &amp; Multicultural Outreach</th>
<th>Awareness Campaign</th>
<th>Media Outreach Campaign</th>
<th>Cultural Competency Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium/Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptability</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Complexity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Equity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Equity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2. Amending the VAWIR Policy

Cost: The monetary cost of amending the policy is estimated at approximately $50,000 and would be low as compared to $2.5 billion per year. This value is based on the following estimates:

- Policy analyst conducting stakeholder engagement and redrafting the policy for 6 months: $30,000 (based on an estimated annual salary of $60,000)
- Legal Counsel: legal engagement for 1 month: $10,000 (based on an estimated annual salary of $115,000)
- Cost of distribution in print and online: $10,000. This estimate would include the cost of translations, printing and mailing, and uploading to relevant websites.

Stakeholder acceptability: Any adaptation of the policy would require significant stakeholder engagement, specifically with victims’ services, various police groups (including RCMP and VPD), community organizations and so on. As is evident from the interview analysis, reactions from community agencies regarding amending the policy were mixed. There was more focus on training and understanding the culture and community, which could either be outlined in an adapted policy or implemented directly without amending the policy. Finally, it would be challenging to engage stakeholders on an issue that would require significant changes in their operations, as would be the case for RCMP and VPD. Therefore, the likelihood of stakeholders accepting the redirection of resources towards adapting and rewriting the policy itself is not likely to be strong. In terms of political feasibility, this option would score low due to the fact that the policy was most recently amended less than two years ago, and that while the government identifies vulnerable populations they tend to avoid profiling (or collecting data) based on communities.

\[165\] Public Sector Salaries, Vancouver Sun
Implementation complexity: Amending a policy on paper is relatively easy as compared to implementing the changes made. Considering the fact that amending the VAWIR policy would require implementing significant training and monitoring changes to the domestic violence training and operations of the VPD and RCMP, as well as an increase in co-ordination efforts between community services, hospitals, transition homes and the police, the implementation complexity of this option would require the engagement of multiple stakeholders and would therefore be high.

Effectiveness: This option receives a medium effectiveness score because it accomplishes two of the four goals of DV intervention. If implemented properly, it would prioritize the needs of the victim or survivor in terms of the immediate response training for service providers, thus fulfilling the goal of addressing victims’ safety. More importantly, amending the policy would result in the development of a province-wide domestic response framework that incorporates cultural awareness and the understanding that violence can manifest itself in different ways across communities, thus addressing the social context of crime.

Community and Population Equity: With regards to both types of equity, this option would result in medium community and population equity; that too only if the option is implemented correctly. This is because while the increased training would ideally result in a change in the way the police work with women experiencing violence, this would only affect women who call the police, visit a hospital or government-based victims’ service. The same is true in terms of population equity. While a general appreciation for cultural differences would positively impact the way the police deal with women experiencing abuse from all communities, only women who access the services directed by the VAWIR policy would be affected.

7.3. Increase in 2\textsuperscript{nd} Stage Transition Homes

Cost: The cost of establishing two second-stage transition homes in Surrey and Vancouver, with eight beds each, would be in the ‘medium’ range. Based on estimates gained from interview participants, capital costs would be in the $1 million- $3 million range (including one-time costs such as alarm system, furniture, appliances, and so on),
depending on whether or not BC Housing already owns property. Annual operational costs, including general supplies, staff wages (5 staff at each home, including outreach workers), is estimated at around $250,000 per home\(^\text{166}\) (or $500,000 total). Of note is the fact that monthly operational and administrative costs would be somewhat offset by rent income.

**Stakeholder Acceptability:** This criterion is expected to score highly, particularly amongst community-based organizations, since it came across as an urgent need in the interviews. However, given the housing crunch in the Lower Mainland and the lack of affordable housing across the board, it is unlikely that this issue would take precedence over more pressing housing issues such as homelessness. This is especially true since these houses would be designated solely for women leaving first-stage transition homes, and would not be open to people recovering from mental illnesses or drug addictions. Therefore, this option would not be very high on the province’s list of priorities.

**Implementation Complexity:** This option has low implementation complexity. There are some initial administrative considerations in terms of setting up two new homes and establishing which community-based service organizations will be responsible for operating them. Otherwise, creating connections with hospitals, police, transition homes and other services will not be complicated since the homes will be operated by established community-based organizations.

**Effectiveness:** This option would be highly effective, since it addresses three of the four goals of domestic violence intervention. Not only is women’s safety prioritized as they are removed from the situation, but this would also reduce the likelihood of further violence. As well, this option addresses the social context of the crime by addressing the structural needs that women fleeing abuse face in terms of safe, affordable housing and community support. Finally the services provided through

\(^{166}\) These estimates are based on consultations with an interview participant whose organization recently opened a 2\(^{nd}\) stage transition home in Surrey. This estimate also includes the cost of 2 multicultural outreach workers at each home, and would cover their wages and travel costs.
multicultural outreach staff would address the need for cultural competency within support services for women fleeing abuse.

**Community and Population Equity:** This option scores highly in terms of community and population equity. This is because the transition homes would be accessible to all women fleeing abuse; this fits into Rose’s model of population health by focusing on a particular need of women fleeing violence from both within the South Asian community as well as the population as a whole.

### 7.4. Community-focused outreach campaign

**Cost:** The cost of implementing the first part of this option would include staff time to liaise with religious organizations and to send a staff member to each location for two hours once a week. With around seven temples\(^{167}\) and eight gurudwaras\(^{168}\), the cost of outreach would approximately amount to the salary of a full-time non-profit program coordinator, estimated at $45,000\(^{169}\) per year. The second half of the option, wellness events for women similar to those currently held by SAFA, would cost approximately $20,000\(^{170}\) per event. The costs to individuals would be in the form of ticket and travel costs to attend events, and the cost of travelling to the temple or gurudwara.

**Stakeholder Acceptability:** In the recent past, very few of the temples and gurudwaras have been receptive to liaising with community agencies and talking about violence at more than a superficial level. However, agencies have identified these religious institutions as important venues for outreach, so if they have capacity, agencies

---

\(^{167}\) Temples in Canada: [http://www.garamchai.com/canada/temples.htm#BritishColumbia](http://www.garamchai.com/canada/temples.htm#BritishColumbia)


\(^{169}\) This cost would be divided amongst the agencies who send their staff to the religious institutions.

\(^{170}\) This includes: hall rental, cost of food for 400 people (at $25 per plate), staff planning time, entertainment, guest speakers, publicity and in-kind donations. The cost would be divided amongst the agencies holding the event, and some revenue from ticket sales ($20 per ticket for 400 people) would offset the costs.
would likely be willing to engage. Women-only events would serve to foster empowerment, and as such are considered to be a useful outreach tool. However, there is concern that such events are often more social than empowering, which undermines their purpose. Therefore this option would only receive a medium score for this criterion.

**Implementation Complexity:** The complexity of implementing this option is medium, as it as a multi-pronged option that requires engagement with several stakeholders. Planning events in co-ordination with multiple agencies could be time and resource intensive, as is engaging religious organizations and their congregations at more than a superficial level. Event planning requires outreach to corporations and businesses to solicit donations and support, as well as public outreach to promote the events. In terms of outreach to religious institutions, not all gurudwaras and temples will be receptive to engaging with agencies. As well, it is worth noting the differences in the ways gurudwaras and temples operate. Temples are usually open for certain periods of time for specific prayer periods, and for the most part do not foster the same sense of community as gurudwaras, which are open for longer periods of time and the concept of ‘seva’ is more broad. Gurudwaras place more emphasis on “drop in” prayer, which makes it easier for service providers to plan engagement activities. At temples more emphasis is placed on prayer services at specific times, making it more difficult for agency representatives to engage with congregation members.

**Effectiveness:** This option would receive a medium score in terms of effectiveness, since this type of outreach addresses two of the four goals of domestic violence intervention. First of all, this option would focus on making egalitarianism and peace the community standards for conduct within intimate relationships, and secondly, it addresses the social context within which domestic violence occurs. Implementing this option provides a culturally-specific manner in which to engage with the target population while addressing the structural barriers of community and culture that impacts violence. However, this option does not address the other intersections and fails to incorporate a culturally sensitive understanding regarding the diversity of experiences that women who flee abuse face.

**Equity:** This option receives a medium score for community equity and low for population equity. In terms of community equity, the staff member would not necessarily
engage with all the members of the congregation at the temple or gurudwara they serve because not everyone in the congregation would attend during the time the staff member is available, or only a few people might engage and ask questions. As well, it is doubtful that all of the gurudwaras and temples will be receptive to working with community agencies. The same is true for events; at social events like these, not everyone listens to the speeches or accesses the resources available. Furthermore, if there is a cost to attend, that presents an additional barrier for a portion of the community in terms of attendance. For population equity, while this option would fulfill one of the ideals of public health by targeting a specific community, the fact is that this outreach mechanism doesn’t connect with the entire community in either of the outlined approaches and would have limited impact on the population as a whole. Therefore, this option scores medium-low for overall equity.

7.5. Media Campaign

Cost: The cost of this approach is determined to be low based on the scale provided. The costs of engagement could be estimated at approximately a month, or $4,500, but would be shared by the agencies engaging with the media. As the videos already exist, there would be no additional cost to MOSAIC or any other agency. Since television and radio stations operate based on advertising, the revenue would cover the costs of airing the videos on frequent rotation; the only cost to OMNI would relate to publicizing the airings. Finally, the only cost to the individual would be that of already owning a television with basic cable.

Stakeholder Acceptability: It is not clear at this point how open Omni or any other multicultural channel would be to airing the videos, so it is difficult to estimate their level of acceptability. However, media engagement to promote empowerment was presented as an important consideration during the interviews. As well, since most of the videos are on subjects relevant to the community (and not just on domestic violence), this option is would not encounter much resistance from the community, and if publicized effectively, would be extremely effective in terms of knowledge disbursement. With regards to media engagement, interviewees were concerned by male domination of South Asian media; this could continue to be a problem if the conversation about
violence is to be in-depth. Therefore, the level of acceptance for this option is estimated as medium.

**Implementation Complexity:** In light of the fact that this option requires the need to engage multiple stakeholders, the complexity of implementing this option is deemed to be medium. Engagement with the media by service providers will be necessary to get current information on air. The television shows are in Punjabi, but language barriers could potentially be dealt with by conducting follow-up conversations on radio or television in other languages.

**Effectiveness:** This option receives a high score in terms of effectiveness, since it meets three of the four goals of domestic violence intervention. Women’s safety and agency within the community structure is addressed through media education and the indirect engagement of family members and friends who may have the ability to support or assist with stopping the violence, as are the goals of making peace the community standards for conduct within intimate relationships. This also serves to address two of the social contexts of the crime, namely the approach of the community and the media of framing the issue, and the lack of cultural competency and awareness held by service providers. In the long-term, proper implementation of this option would also ideally meet the fourth goal of preventing further violence due to the culturally-specific form of community engagement, and the fact that it attempts to address the structural conditions of community, isolation and other factors that exacerbate violence.

**Equity:** If appropriately implemented, this option would score medium for community equity, but low for overall population equity. The television shows are in Punjabi, which would be a barrier for non-Punjabi speakers; however, encouraging follow-up conversations in other languages on radio and television would allow for more access by non-Punjabi speakers.

### 7.6. Cultural Competency Training for all Service Providers

**Cost:** Cultural competency workshops delivered thus far by South Fraser Legal and VLMFSS are free of cost to participants. However, for the purposes of evaluation,
the in-kind cost of planning for and delivering a 2 hour workshop is estimated at approximately $250. Multiplying this cost by the number of service providers (both government and community-based) in Metro Vancouver would still result in a comparatively low cost. Additionally, staff time to identify potential audiences for the toolkits- including doctors, beauticians, school administrators and others who regularly work with the South Asian community would be required- and then either connect with them via phone or email to alert them about the online presence of the toolkits, or send them a printed copy. Efforts should be made to engage electronically to reduce printing costs. The staff time estimated is approximately a month, or approximately $4,500. Printing costs are estimated at approximately $3000 for 100 copies of each handbook. In order to make this effort worthwhile, follow-up would be required; this, of course, would require additional staff time and effort.

Stakeholder Acceptability: Although some interviewees expressed concerns, this option was identified by most participants as a tool to understand and meet the needs of people with urgent and complex needs such as women fleeing abuse. As well, the VAWIR policy acknowledges the importance of appreciating individual circumstances when responding to domestic violence cases; his could be interpreted as a reference to include the victim’s background (and therefore culture). Interviewees currently employed by the provincial public service alluded to similar efforts being conducted within the judicial system. This is also the case with non-profit agencies. As well, supporting multiculturalism is a key objective at all levels, and this method was identified by both government and community service representatives as one way to fulfill that objective. Therefore, despite the legitimate concerns regarding the potential for this type of training to stigmatize certain aspects of various communities, the feasibility of this option is considered to be high.

171 This includes staff time as being $150 per session (2 hours at $30/hour for workshop delivery, 3 hours for travel, preparation and administrative costs), and content development and distribution costs ($100 for material costs, printing, etc).

172 Cultural Competency Toolkit printing cost is estimated at $20/kit (at 10c per page). The cost for printing the physicians’ guide is $5, and the cost for printing the beauticians’ toolkit is $2 (all estimates are for 10c per page.)
**Implementation Complexity:** The level of complexity associated with implementing this option is estimated to be ‘medium’, as this option suggests implementing cultural competency training at all levels of service provision. To ensure quality and streamlined content, organizations such as VLMFSS and South Fraser Legal who have already delivered effective cultural competency workshops are encouraged to connect with other community-based and government service providers to share their content and deliver workshops. Although this would initially strain resources, capacity could be enhanced through financial support from the government or community foundations. In addition, significant effort will be required to ensure that engagement with doctors, school administrators and beauticians and community members is substantive and worthwhile.

**Effectiveness:** This option would receive a medium score in terms of effectiveness, as it prioritizes victim’s safety and agency through the provision of cultural competency workshops incorporating the understanding that women’s experiences of violence are unique. As well, it also indirectly addresses the social contexts of the crime by focusing on the structural barrier of services being of a ‘one size fits all’ model through the implementation of cultural competency training for all service providers.

**Equity:** This option would score highly in terms of both community and population equity. This is because the training and toolkits would benefit both South Asian women fleeing abuse, as well as women from other communities accessing similar services. As well, cultural competency training across the board would benefit people from all backgrounds and communities who access any type of government and community service.
8. Recommendation and Discussion

8.1. Recommendations

Based on the interviews and evaluation, it is evident that no single option will adequately and immediately address the problem. There is a clear need for mechanisms that focus on the role of the community and the government, promote both prevention and intervention, and foster cultural understanding. Therefore, the short-term recommendation is that of a ‘policy suite’, or a combination of the media outreach, increase in second-stage transition homes, and cultural competency training options.

Media outreach would address the need for community-based prevention and empowerment in a cost-effective manner. Airing already-created videos on a variety of subjects (including domestic violence) would inform the community and encourage conversation on the subject. If implemented correctly, this type of engagement could eventually alleviate the problem of the discussion being both male-dominated and culturally stigmatizing.

Increasing the number of second-stage transition homes and multicultural outreach services directly and positively impacts some of the barriers for women attempting to flee violence. This option addresses these needs by creating accessible housing and support systems that would enable them to navigate community and government services at a traumatizing time in their life.

Finally, cultural competency training addresses the need for both prevention and intervention by facilitating an understanding of different communities and their needs amongst service providers at all levels. Ideally, this would positively impact the future creation of policies that focus on multicultural implementation strategies. In the meantime, it would enable service providers to become more culturally sensitive in their approach and delivery with clients from all communities by focusing on their needs.
As a combined effort, these three options serve to meet the some of the more immediate needs. However, a long-term focus to address violence within the community at both the provincial and community levels is required for change to occur. Implementing all the outlined options in the longer term would serve to mitigate violence in the South Asian community by changing the both the provincial and community response to violence. As well, implementing these options would benefit all women experiencing or fleeing violence.

8.2. Further Considerations

 Appropriately and effectively addressing violence against women in the South Asian community is a long-term process. In the long-term, the province needs to place a stronger focus on violence against women prevention strategies as well as redirect funding to support community-based programs, victims' and outreach services, legal aid, accessible housing and adequate welfare. In addition, there needs to be a shift in focus that prioritizes supporting women experiencing abuse. Furthermore, this needs to be considered as a community problem with adequate structural support, as opposed to an individual, self-help problem.

 Stronger effort is required to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse population. Translation efforts for all public information should be continued, but need to take into account the level and tone of the language in which the translation occurs. As well, hiring practices\textsuperscript{173} must be improved to reflect BC’s changing demographics. Finally, while the focus must remain on serving women experiencing violence, a larger awareness of the importance of looking at women as members of a family and society is necessary to adequately address their needs.

\textsuperscript{173} This does not imply hiring more South Asians; rather, it refers to hiring people with a variety of backgrounds, or providing extra training to appreciate the breadth of diversity in BC.
A long-term community-level focus on empowerment and outreach would address the gap between awareness and access. As interviewees suggested, it is important for victims to feel comfortable in accessing services. This comfort can only be achieved if women feel that there are enough supports in place for them to leave an abusive situation, both in terms of government and community support. The stigmatization and isolation faced by abused women will only be alleviated through intensive, long-term awareness efforts at multiple levels that address the ways in which patriarchy, abuse and victimization manifest itself within the community. A long-term concerted effort at increasing dialogue and awareness is the best way to encourage empowerment and therefore access.

8.3. Contributions to other research

There have been multiple studies in recent years to understand violence within the South Asian community in BC and Canada. This research advances available knowledge by utilizing in-depth qualitative research and analysis to reinforce the understanding of the community and their needs within the context of violence. However, this study also contributes additional information to available research.

First, as is evident in the analysis, this is a complex issue with a variety of considerations. These are presented based on their impact or association with both community-based and government services. This understanding is integrated into the policy options and recommendations by reinforcing the fact that any intervention must be multi-pronged and multi-faced to be effective. This was further supported by approaching the problem within an intersectional framework.

Second, the costing criterion incorporates the idea of the public and private costs to society. The cost of implementing each option is compared to the identified cost to society, highlighting the fact that violence is more expensive to the individual, the community and society than any prevention or intervention efforts.

Third, this study identified the difficulty of evaluating effectiveness within the context of this subject and the research. Effectiveness could be defined in two separate ways, in terms of a decrease in numbers of women accessing services, or an increase in
the numbers of women accessing services. The issue with quantifying either of these is
the fact that any change is attributable to a number of factors, including increased
awareness, increased incidences of violence, an increase in immigration, or so forth. As
such, ‘effectiveness’ was not included as a criterion for evaluation.

Finally, Geoffrey Rose’s strategy of targeted and population-wide intervention
was incorporated into the ‘Equity’ criterion to evaluate how each option would affect both
individuals within the community as well as the population as a whole. Doing so
reinforced the importance of strategies that considered both intervention as well as
prevention for all women experiencing abuse, as well as the fact that adapting
approaches to abuse would benefit both South Asian women experiencing abuse and all
women experiencing abuse.

8.4. Limitations and Constraints

A few gaps were evident during the research process. Although VAW within the
South Asian community is widely acknowledged to be a problem, there is a dearth of
precise data regarding the incidence of violence. This is positive, as interviewees stated
that neither the government nor non-profits collect ethnicity-specific data to avoid
stigmatizing the community or problematizing the issue. However, this also impedes the
creation of community-specific programs. This problem was somewhat circumvented
through unofficial numbers provided by interviewees.

Another issue was the fact that interview participants consisted of government
and community service providers as opposed to women who had experienced violence.
The input of women who experienced and fled abuse is critical to any study on the
subject. However, constraints due to ethics and access to the target audience
redirected the focus of this research. Study participants all had direct interactions with
the audience in question during their careers, and had experience and/or understanding
of the provincial and community framework within which this issue is situated. As such,
they served as effective advocates for their clients. In addition, they were able to convey
the ideological and structural gaps clearly, as well as provide ideas to address the gaps.
Other constraints included the fact that, due to the limitations of the research project itself, the breadth of the problem could not adequately be highlighted. Future research may build upon the necessity to review current policing systems and the police’s response to responding to violence. As well, the impact on children could not be appropriately addressed within this research, even though that emerged as a key issue from the interviews. The impact of violence on children, as well as the potential impact of further education and the use of new media and technology, is worth considering. The potential for domestic violence courts and the perceived need for ‘family’ counseling, or counseling for abusive men are additional subjects for further research. Most importantly, more research on the impact of the current immigration system on supporting violence is of value.

Many other questions still remain. There are also several considerations to the argument of awareness leading to empowerment and service access, including the question of whether women experiencing violence actually have more of a choice when educated about available services, and that ‘knowing’ does not always result in ‘doing’. There is also the fact that most available information is based on the knowledge of identified abuse victims and survivors- there is still a gap in terms of understanding the experiences of unidentified abuse victims. Finally, the relationship between awareness and service access is strengthened by the existence of social networks, the importance of which cannot be understated.

A final consideration is that most research on violence within the South Asian community looks at the community as a whole. Scholars such as Sandeep Agarwal and Sutama Ghosh have recently advocated for a more dissected approach. While this may exacerbate existing fears about stigmatization, their approach is worth attention. Bent-Goodly argues that there is diversity within racial and ethnic groups, so culture, and by extension, violence, is experienced in different ways. The subcontinent and its

174 This discussion occurred during a workshop presentation at the 2012 Metropolis conference on Immigration and Diversity.
175 Bent-Goodly, p 93
diaspora is home to a large number of religious, cultural and linguistic groups, all of whom face both similar and unique challenges, and all of which should be taken into consideration in future studies. However, this also raises an important question regarding the challenges of creating and implementing policies concerning both individual minority groups and the community as a whole, particularly in a province as diverse as BC. Intersectionality advocates for the incorporation of a variety of perspectives that challenge the universality and risk of abuse presented by the current models of violence mitigation. Ignoring the challenges faced by different groups “denies and invalidates” their experiences, and can result in higher levels of withdrawal from services and less effective treatment experienced among vulnerable populations. Understanding the impact of gender and culture as two of many contributing factors within a larger structural framework, as well as promoting the importance of understanding culture to combat violence, is vital to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations are adequately met through available services.

This is potentially where strategic coalition focusing on alleviating poverty, social exclusion, marginalization, and subordination within the context of VAW could be of use. Specifically, these coalitions would involve both community groups and scholars with a justice agenda and different disciplinary approaches to “sharpen the critique of the status quo, to improve scholarship, and to identify paths to effective activism and change.”

176 Solokoff and Dupont, P 50  
177 Bent-Goody, P 96  
178 Hankivsky and Cormier, P3  
179 Ibid.
9. Conclusion

Available research proves that the needs of abused women from within the South Asian community are not being met by available services. This study enhances current knowledge of the systemic gaps, both government and community-based, that fail to meet the needs of vulnerable women experiencing abuse. As well, this study provides practical, short-term recommendations to mitigate violence within the community on multiple levels.

For any real change to occur, however, there needs to be a long-term shift in priorities at the provincial level, and community-level mobilization that is in-depth and focused on support and empowerment. Additionally, all preventive and intervention efforts must incorporate intersectionality by taking into account both the challenges in mitigating violence created by one’s background, culture and community, as well as the ways in which these factors influence women’s experiences of violence and oppression. Culture and community are not the problem, but need to be considered as part of the solution.

Violence against women has long-term, intergenerational implications and also impedes women’s short term involvement in society in a variety of ways. Fostering a healthy, inclusive community in Metro Vancouver requires a commitment at every single level for violence to stop – and it must stop.
References


Canadian Gurudwaras www.punjabionline.com/directory/gurudwara/canada


Culturally Competent Training Manual, (2009). *South Fraser Legal Resources Centre*


Government of BC, Victim’s Services: Multicultural Outreach Services Contact List. *Ministry of Public Safety*


Hankivsky, O., & Varcoe, C., *et al.* (2011). Attributing selected costs to intimate partner violence in a sample of women who have left abusive partners: A social determinants of health approach. *Canadian Public Policy*
Hindu Temples in British Columbia,  
http://www.garamchai.com/canada/temples.htm#BritishColumbia

How to Access Women’s Transition Housing, BC Housing


Indian held for killing teenage stepsons, wife serious. (2009, June 29). The Hindu


Police Reported crime for selected offences, by province or territory, (201010). *Statistics Canada*


Public Sector Salaries. (2012). *Vancouver Sun*


Thandi, G. & Lloyd, B., (2011). “This is a man’s problem”: Strategies for working with South Asian male perpetrators of intimate partner violence, *Justice Institute of British Columbia*

Violence Against Women: A Guide for Beauticians. *South Fraser Women’s Services Society*

Violence Against Women: A Handbook for Physicians. *South Fraser Women’s Services Society*

Visible Minority Population Soars. (2008, April 2). *Vancouver Sun*

Visible Minority Groups Percentage Distribution for Census Metropolitan Areas, (2010). *Statistics Canada*


World Health Organization, (2011). Violence Against Women (Fact Sheet No. 239)

http://www.competenceconsultants.com/workshops.html
Appendices
Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Questions/Themes:

1. What is your role in this organization?
2. How long have you been involved in this organization/position?
3. What drew or inspired you to work in this field? (Personal reasons, etc)
4. What services does your organization provide?
5. How do you reach out to survivors, or how do they end up contacting you?
6. How long do victim/client files stay open? (i.e. how long do you work with them?)
7. How involved are husbands and families in the services provided? Are the services for victims only, or are there any services geared towards the entire family?
8. What changes have been made to the organization and programs delivered over the last few years, in terms of priorities or strategic directions?
9. What evidence has been used to develop programs that are currently driven by your organization?
10. What has been working well? What do you currently perceive as challenges in decreasing the prevalence of violence against women in the East Indian community?
11. What challenges do you anticipate moving forward?
12. What do you think are some ways to deal with this issue?
**Appendix B: List of Interview Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allison Presgrave</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Chahal</td>
<td>OPTIONS BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athena Affan</td>
<td>Battered Women’s Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balbir Gurm</td>
<td>Kwantlen University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Estiverne and Nasreen Gafoor</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy Kler</td>
<td>South Asian Women Against Male Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearly Dirk</td>
<td>OPTIONS BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Thandi</td>
<td>Justice Institute of BC/DiverseCity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harjit Kaur</td>
<td>Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lali Pawa</td>
<td>Justice Education Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryam Majedi</td>
<td>Surrey Women’s Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardeep Sahota</td>
<td>PICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parminder Nizher</td>
<td>BWSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perminder Flora and Rubina Mudhar</td>
<td>MOSAIC BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram Sidhu</td>
<td>(Organization name withheld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranjeet Kanda</td>
<td>Vancouver &amp; Lower Mainland Family Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhiannon Wong</td>
<td>BC Society of Transition Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadia Sameeullah</td>
<td>DiverseCity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahnaz Rahman</td>
<td>West Coast Legal Education and action Fund (West Coast LEAF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shashi Assanand</td>
<td>VLMFSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukhi Grewal</td>
<td>South Asian Family Association (SAFA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veenu Saini</td>
<td>Law Foundation of BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Joey Chopra
Research Project: “Mitigating Violence Against women in Metro Vancouver’s South Asian Community: A Service Provider Perspective”
School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University
Ethics Application No: 2011s0650

Informed Consent Form

This study explores the issue of violence against women in the Metro Vancouver’s South Asian community, with a specific focus on the role of service providers and non-profit organizations in addressing this issue.

The purpose of your participation in an in-person or phone semi-structured interview with the researcher, Joey Chopra, is to inform this project’s understanding of the causes behind the prevalence of violence against women in this particular community, and the role that non-government service providers have played and should play in resolving this issue.

By signing or verbally consenting to this form, I, the interviewee, agree to be interviewed for the purposes of this research project.

I, the interviewee, understand that:

- The research is being conducted by a Masters candidate at the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, Canada. The information provided in my interview will be used to inform the researcher’s Master’s thesis and is being conducted according to the research ethics protocol at Simon Fraser University.

- I am being requested to engage in this interview to share my knowledge on and experience with the issue of violence against women in Metro Vancouver’s South Asian community.

- The information from my interview will be used in the researcher’s Master’s thesis project.

- Participation in this interview is completely voluntary. I can decide not to answer any question that the researcher may pose, and can withdraw from the interview at any given time without any adverse effects. Once the interview is complete, I understand that I have until Friday, December 30 to withdraw full participation from this research project.

- My interview will be recorded in notes or on a digital recorder and will be transcribed by the researcher. Direct quotations from my interview conversation may be included in the research report. The digital recording of my interview will be destroyed and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet for 2 years. After 2 years, the transcriptions will be deleted and/or destroyed.

- I have the right to refuse to be identified by name in the reporting of my interview. Rather, my sector of employment will be identified. Should I choose to maintain full anonymity, both my name and my place of work will not be reported by the researcher.
• I understand that the researcher has not obtained permission from my organization and/or employer, and that I have been contacted personally to engage in this interview.

• There are no risks or benefits associated with involvement in this study beyond those encountered in my daily life.

Do you consent to having your name used when referencing your comments on the issues surrounding violence against women in Metro Vancouver’s South Asian community, and the policy options discussed with you (please check one)?
Yes _______ No _______

Do you consent to having your organization’s name used when referencing your comments on the issues surrounding violence against women in Metro Vancouver’s South Asian community, and the policy options discussed with you (please check one)?
Yes _______ No _______

If you have any concerns or questions about this study, please contact Simon Fraser University’s principal ethics supervisor:

Dr. Olena Hankvisky,
School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University
Email: oah@sfu.ca

Or:
Dr. Hal Weinberg
Director, Office of Research Ethics, Simon Fraser University
Email: hal_weinberg@sfu.ca

If you would like to receive the results of the research, please contact myself, the principal investigator:

Geetanjali (Joey) Chopra
Master’s Candidate, School of Public Policy, Simon Fraser University
Email: jchopra@sfu.ca

As a demonstration of your agreement to participate in the study, upon reading this informed consent document, please provide the following information:

Name of Interviewee:___________________________________________________
Institution:____________________________________________________________
Employment Position:___________________________________________________
Signature:_____________________________________________________________
Date: ________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Types of Violence

British Columbia’s ‘Violence against Women in Relationships’ Policy defines “violence against women in relationships” and alternative terms used when referring to “domestic violence” (including “spousal violence”, “spousal abuse”, “spouse assault”, “intimate partner violence” and “relationship violence”) as physical or sexual assault, or the threat of physical or sexual assault against a current or former intimate partner whether or not they are legally married or living together at the time of the assault or threat.” Additionally, “domestic violence includes offences other than physical or sexual assault, such as criminal harassment, threatening, or mischief, where there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the act was done to cause, or did in fact cause, fear, trauma, suffering or loss to the intimate partner. Intimate partner relationships include heterosexual and same-sex relationships.”

The 2002 “WHO Report on Violence and Health” further develops the understanding of violence against women by categorizing violence according to the perpetrator of the act. These divisions are detailed in Figure 1 below. The categories include self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. Of these, interpersonal violence, or the violence inflicted by an individual or a small group of people on a woman, is the most prevalent. This category is further subdivided into family/intimate partner violence (between family members, generally at home), while community violence refers to violence generally outside the home and between unrelated individuals.

---

180 BC Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy Page 1
Violence can take several forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional or psychological. Physical violence is instigated through “physically aggressive acts”\textsuperscript{182} such as slapping or beating, and can result in serious injuries or death. Emotional or psychological violence is difficult to describe or capture due to differences in culture, however it can take the form of threats of violence, controlling behaviours, economic restrictions and ongoing humiliation or restrictions in daily activities.\textsuperscript{183} Sexual violence refers to forced sexual activity, denial of the right to use contraceptives, and even forced prostitution.\textsuperscript{184} All these forms of violence typically occur within an intimate partner or family context; however, sexual violence can occur in other non-family settings as well, through a dating partner or a stranger.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{182} Krantz and Garcia-Moreno, p. 819
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
### Appendix E: BC’s Report Card

#### Table 3: BC’s Report Card, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and Access to Justice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Recommendations from a Public Commission have not resulted in adequate funding for legal aid, with disproportionate impacts on women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Poverty and Assistance</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>The minimum wage went up, but remains below the poverty line, further entrenching high rates of poverty in BC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Housing</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>More emergency shelters exist, but long-term solutions to BC’s housing crisis have not been forthcoming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against Women and Girls</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Government agencies have altered their domestic violence policies, but women’s centers and shelters are closing at an alarming rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Childcare</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>BC’s public spending on childcare and pre-school is the lowest in Canada, and the government contributes less now than it did in 2001.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

186 West Coast Leaf: CEDAW Report Card 2011