Familial Abuse of South Asian Immigrant Women: Analysis of the Narratives of Victims

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the familial violence experiences of South Asian immigrant women in Toronto. An important focus of the investigation was the contribution of honour ideology toward these experiences. Ten South Asian women who had immigrated to Canada participated in the study. Eight of them had immigrated after getting married to Canadian men of South Asian ethnicity and two had sponsored their South Asian husbands after they had themselves immigrated to Canada. Unstructured interviews were conducted with the women. These interviews were analysed using the grounded theory method of qualitative research developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Following Rennie's (2000) exposition, grounded theory method was applied as an inductive approach to methodical hermeneutics.

The analysis produced three main themes representing immigrant women's experiences of familial violence: (1) *Lost in the Desert,* (2) *Navigating through the Desert,* and (3) *Complexities of Honour*. The participants' initial experiences of immigrating to Canada and starting their lives anew were akin to getting lost in the desert. They had very few if any resources to aid them in this new phase of their lives. Gradually, however, they started adjusting to the new realities and actively sought out resource and support to manage their situations. Honour ideology was important baggage that directed the women through their ordeals. I concluded that the role of honour ideology in the life of South Asian immigrant wives is multifaceted and has positive as well as negative dimensions. While honour scripts resigned women to their abusive marriages and burdened them as guardians of family honour, they also offered them personal strength, social support and safeguards against abuse. These findings are discussed in relation to the extant psychological, anthropological, and sociological literature. The need to broaden the current narrow understanding of honour, as primarily vested in female

sexuality, to a more complex ideology about right living is stressed. The implications of cultivating this more elaborate understanding of honour for domestic violence research and services, as well as for scholarly research and discourses are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The following qualitative research investigated the familial abuse experiences of South Asian immigrant women in the greater Toronto area. It focused on understanding how women from an honour culture understand and experience familial violence. The women in the study also shared their insights and understandings about the construct of honour and how it shaped their experiences as victims of familial abuse. In compliance with the standard procedures of grounded theory method (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988), I kept my review of the related literature to a minimum before and during the analysis. The discussion of the research literature that follows, although presented in the introduction section, was written after the analysis had been completed and the core theory had been conceptualized. This was done to ensure that my analysis was not shaped by the existing literature.

South Asians from India, Pakistan, and the surrounding countries of Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka constituted the largest visible minority groups in Canada in 2011. The majority of the South Asian community in Canada is foreign-born (69.3%), whereas, 30.7% were born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). Although South Asian communities represent multiple national and religious affiliations, they share a common cultural value system that is characterized by a strong family orientation, interdependence among family members (Assanand, Dias, Richardson, Waxler-Morrison, 1990) and honour norms (Baker, Gregware, & Cassidy, 1999; Ortner, 1978; Werbner, 2007). Abraham (2005) maintains that values regarding honour and shame in South Asian communities often persist even post-migration, making them relevant for study in Canada. Talabani and Hasanalli (2000) note that South Asian communities in Canada tend to uphold traditional gender roles through gender segregation, control over social activities of girls, and arranged marriages. Arranged marriages involve parents selecting mates

for their adult children, based on perceived cultural and socio-economic compatibility, family background, and education (Assanand et al., 1990; Kumar & Srivastava, 2005) among other factors. Because of a strong desire to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional family system, South Asian immigrant families tend to look for marriage partners for their sons from their home countries (Husaini, 2001). Generally after getting married in her homeland, the new bride is later sponsored by her Canadian husband to immigrate to Canada (Kumar & Srivastava, 2005). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005), India and Pakistan are the top source countries of brides sponsored from abroad. Bajpai (2013) notes that such transnational marriages tend to have a high risk of abuse, desertion, and violence as they can be based on false values, hopes, and desires.

Domestic violence is a significant problem in South Asian immigrant communities both in terms of prevalence and consequences, even though it has been difficult to estimate the extent of the problem precisely (Abraham, 2000a; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996). Sheehan, Javier, and Thanjan (2000) note that violence against South Asian immigrant women is gravely underreported because of the highly secretive nature of these communities. Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson (2013) estimate that domestic abuse prevalence rates among South Asian immigrant women in English speaking Westernized Countries range from 30% to 50%. Raj & Silverman (2002) found that 40.8% of a convenience sample of 160 South Asian women in Boston reported having experienced domestic violence. More recently, Mahapatra (2012) noted that 38% of women in a community sample of 215 women of South Asian origin in the U.S reported having experienced some form of domestic violence in the preceding year. Ahmad, Riaz, Barata, and Stewart (2004) used the Wife Abuse Screening Tool with South Asian immigrant women in Toronto. The authors reported that 67% of the participants screened positive for stress in intimate

relationships. Among these positively screened women, 34.5% reported emotional abuse, 24% reported physical abuse and 17% reported threats of physical abuse within the last five years.

Definition of Domestic Violence

There is considerable disagreement among researchers about how to define domestic violence (DeKeseredy, 2000) and this inconsistency has been a major limitation in domestic violence research (Hegarty, Sheehan & Schonfeld, 1999). Feldman and Ridley (1995) note that most definitions of spousal abuse and intimate partner violence include any one of the following three aspects: consistent victimization of one person by the other in a relationship (Geffner & Pagelow, 1990), a single incidence of violence against one's spouse (Rosenfeld, 1992), and repeated acts of physical aggression by a man toward his female intimate (Dutton, 1992). Thus, it appears that the two key defining features of domestic abuse are act(s) of aggression directed at an adult, and a close and interdependent relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Most often the victim is a spouse but may also be a cohabitating partner, former spouse or cohabitant, an adult sibling, a parent, or a same-sex roommate. This flexibility in defining the relationship between the perpetrator and victim is useful as it permits an expansion of the definition of domestic abuse to include abuse from extended family members. Fernandez (1997) notes that, in South Asian communities, domestic abuse is not just perpetrated by the intimate partner but the extended affinal family members are often involved too. Studies with South Asian abused women in North America suggest that in-laws not only support spousal abuse but may also perpetrate emotional and physical abuse against women (Abraham, 1999; Mehrotra, 1999; Rianon & Shelton, 2003; Supriya, 1996). Thus, for the present study I have used the term

familial abuse to highlight the abuse from in-laws and intimate partner abuse in South Asian communities. The term does not include abuse from natal family.[1]

Feldman and Ridley (1995) further note that acts of aggression, the second defining feature of domestic abuse include a wide range of behaviours along a continuum of severity and are most often grouped into three broad categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, and non-physical abuse. Non-physical abuse includes emotional, psychological, social, and economic abuse (Outlaw, 2009). Physical abuse has been defined as an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person. Such acts range from slapping and pushing and throwing things at the victim to kicking, punching and physical battery (Straus & Gelles, 1986). Sexual abuse has been defined as sexual behaviours used to exercise power and control over an individual. Such behaviours include forced sex, sexual assault, sexual control of reproductive rights and all types of sexual manipulation with the intention or perceived intention to cause emotional, sexual, and physical degradation to the other person (Abraham, 1999). Women may submit to sexual coercion to avoid adverse outcomes such as partner infidelity, and the break-up of the relationship (Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004), as well as because of feelings of obligation (Basile, 2002). Evidence indicates that physical and sexual abuse independently predict poor emotional well-being (Bennice, Resick, Mechanic, & Astin, 2003) and physical health symptoms (Campbell & Soeken, 1999).

Nonphysical abuse (emotional, psychological, social, and economic) is more common than physical abuse, and frequently coexists with physical abuse. Victims often report non-

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[1] Although I have used the term familial abuse to indicate intimate partner abuse and abuse committed by in-laws, it has been used interchangeably in the dissertation with other terms, such as intimate partner violence, domestic violence, and domestic abuse. This is because all these terms have been used in literature and reflecting the preference of researchers, which is, in part, based on their discipline.

physical forms of abuse as equally or even more damaging than physical abuse (Strauchler et al., 2004). Emotional abuse is aimed at undermining the victim's self-respect and sense of worth. This may be achieved through comments or actions. Examples of such behaviours include hurting another person's feelings by making cruel, unfair comments or through name-calling that includes cursing, swearing, screaming, and publicly embarrassing the person (Outlaw, 2009). Psychological abuse is geared toward attacking the woman's sense of control and safety and her belief in her own abilities to function effectively in life. The purpose is to render a woman helpless to escape abuse. Examples of psychologically abusive behaviours range from death threats to the woman, her children, or her loved ones, to behaviours that suggest to the woman that her needs, wishes, and feelings are unimportant (Walker, 1984).

Social abuse generally involves isolating the woman and cutting her off from family and friends. This may be achieved through threat, force, or persuasion (Outlaw, 2009). Isolating behaviours may also include not allowing the victim to leave the home, and denying access to information and/or resources, such as internet and community meeting places like temples and mosques (Agnew, 1998).

Economic abuse is aimed at controlling a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain economic resources, thereby undermining her potential for self-sufficiency and economic security. Three distinct ways to achieve these goals include preventing women's resource acquisition, preventing women's resource use and exploiting women's resources (Adams, Sullivan, Bybee, & Greeson, 2008). Research suggests that abusive men often prevent women's resource acquisition by discouraging and actively preventing them from seeking employment. Women are also likely to experience thwarting of their efforts for self-improvement such as obtaining education, and job skills training (Sable, Libbus, & Huneke, 1999; Shepard & Pence,

1988). Abusive men are also likely to prevent women from acquiring income and assets. For example, they may deny money to employed women by controlling their paycheques (Hofeller, 1982). They may also restrict other forms of support available to women, such as child support, public assistance, and disability payments (Moe & Bell, 2004; Ptacek, 1997). Women may also be denied resources by limiting their access to household funds. Women may not have money even for necessities such as food and medicine (Anderson et al., 2003; Coker, Smith, Bethea, King, McKeown, 2000). Further, men may lie about their finances and hide jointly earned income and shared assets (Coker et al., 2000). In addition, men may actively exploit the resources that women have through various means including stealing their money, creating costs, and generating debt (Adams et al., 2008).

Research consistently indicates that emotional, social, psychological and economic abuse is positively related to physical abuse (Outlaw, 2009). Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson (2013) noted that South Asian immigrant women are likely to experience many types and combinations of psychological and physical abuse. Some of the abuses reported in literature include domestic servitude, belittlement, and lack of privacy, social isolation, economic exploitation, physical battery, and lack of control over sexual and reproductive matters. Some women may even be deprived of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and comfortable/safe shelter (Abraham, 1999; Anitha, 2011; Mason et al., 2008; Merali, 2009).

Another facet of abuse specifically related to women who get married to South Asian men living in Western industrialized countries has been termed immigration abuse in the literature. Such transnational marriages with a supposed lavish lifestyle, in a land of opportunities are alluring for the prospective brides and their families. However, after the marriage that usually takes place in home countries, the husband leaves with promises to send for

his bride, but her immigration papers are never processed. Alternatively, an immigrant wife may be deceptively, and/or coercively, taken back to her native country and left there without her passport, and other documents required for her to re-enter her acquired homeland and join her husband (Bajpai, 2013; Stewart, 2013).

In the current study abuse is defined broadly to include all kinds of physical, sexual, and non-physical abuse from spouse and/or extended in-laws family. Physical violence is delineated as any act directed at causing pain and injury to the victim. Non-physical abuse is understood to include emotional, psychological, social, economic, and immigration abuse.

Theoretical Approaches

Psychological research on domestic violence can generally be characterized as reflecting two main theoretical perspectives: individual-oriented or exceptionalistic, and universalistic (Salazar & Cook, 2002). The exceptionalistic perspective focuses primarily on the individual as the unit of analysis and the resultant research emphasizes intrapersonal processes of victims and perpetrators to the exclusion of social and political factors (Yick & Oomen-Early, 2008). Conversely, the universalistic approach underscores the structural, political, and institutional factors that contribute toward violence against women (Salazar & Cook, 2002).

The prominent theoretical discourses on wife abuse that reflect the exceptionalistic perspectives include violence as: a) pathology; b) learned behaviour; c) expressive inner tension; and d) an instrumental power strategy (O'Neil, 1998). Theories within the pathology discourse understand domestic violence as a rare and abnormal occurrence and explain it through pathological causes of behaviour. The pathologies suggested in the aetiology of domestic abuse are diverse and point to deficiencies in the abuser, the victim, and faulty marital systems. Some of the pathologies associated with perpetrators of domestic abuse include personality disorders

such as passive-aggressive, narcissistic and antisocial personality, as well as depression, paranoia, dysfunctional families of origin (Gondolf, 1999) and substance abuse (Bennet & Williams, 2003). Victim precipitation theories, which suggest that abuse is the result of provocation by the wife, are also categorized under this discourse (O'Neill, 1998). Some of the victim's characteristics considered as triggers for the abuse are overbearing and nagging personalities of women, and 'provocative behaviours' that put the abusers under stress (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993). Similarly the Freudian masochistic model of abuse proposes that women provoke abuse to satisfy their unconscious need for pleasure (Deutsch, 1944). This model, however, had been strongly criticized in academic discourse (e.g., Caplan, 1984; Young & Gerson, 1991).

The learned behaviour perspective of domestic violence is also a reflection of the exceptionalistic approach. Learning theories explain domestic violence as behaviour learned through observation, trial and error, and reinforcement. Violence is transmitted to males through the family of origin as a learned response for conflict resolution and maintenance of power and control in intimate relationships. This maladaptive response is vicariously reinforced within the family system as well as within the broader cultural contexts (neighbourhood, mass media) predisposing them to using violence in their intimate relationships (O'Neill, 1998). The discourses that look at violence as an expression of inner tension define domestic violence as the release of impulsive forces from within the individual. For example, the frustration-aggression hypothesis of violence maintains that aggression is a natural and biological response to frustration and inner tension (Berkowitz, 1989). This approach interprets violence from a male intimate partner as the result of powerful forces within him over which he has little or no control (O'Neill, 1998). The social structure theory expands on this approach and maintains that the

frustration and stresses associated with poverty and lack of resources and skills to deal with these forces adequately explains the observation that violence is more common and more severe among groups of lower socio-economic status (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988).

Drawing upon a broader liberal humanist discourse, theories within the "violence as an instrumental power strategy" explain violence as a strategy to achieve a higher goal than immediate release of tension. Thus, violence is used broadly and in the context of family as an instrument to achieve goals, such as conflict resolution, asserting dominance and enhancing one's self-concept. The perpetrator is seen as a rational being who is goal directed and meets his needs through the most effective strategy available to him i.e., force (O'Neil, 1998). Within the "violence as an instrumental power strategy discourse," exchange theory has been used to explain domestic violence. The theory suggests that individuals are rational agents who behave according to a cost benefit analysis of their interactions. Applying it to domestic violence, it has been proposed that a man acts violently toward his spouse to get certain rewards such as tension release, and getting his way. He engages in such behaviour because he is not likely to incur too many costs, such as police intervention, retaliation from his spouse, and shame from the community for his behaviour (Ellis, 1989; Gelles, 1983).

The universalistic approach to domestic abuse is reflected in the theoretical discourse that explains violence as the consequence of normative social system (O'Neil, 1998). This perspective maintains that wife abuse is an extreme but logical extension of the socio-cultural norms and institutional practices of Western society. The prevailing social norms associate violence with masculinity, and violence against women reflects this normative social standard. Boys are socialized to be tough, competitive, and aggressive, while girls are encouraged to be passive, and nurturing homemakers (Birns, Cascardi, & Meyer, 1994). Dobash and Dobash

(1979) further argue that cultural norms tend to devalue women, assigning them a lower status than men, thus, making them susceptible to abuse by men. The culture of violence theory within this discourse postulates that people in Western society are socialized to accept, condone and to potentially engage in physical violence (Campbell, 1993). For example, Straus (1980) argues that cultural norms allow use of violence in child rearing and this cultural norm frequently extends beyond the parent-child relationship to the husband and wife relationship. Thus, this perspective understands domestic violence as the reflection of sociocultural context in which the victim and the perpetrator live.

The feminist socio-political perspective draws upon the universalistic approach and maintains that wife abuse is a controlling behaviour that maintains and promotes male dominance and an imbalance of power between husband and wife. The feminist approach further argues that husbands' violence against wives is nested within the large cultural and social context that has been fashioned by patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Abraham (1995) notes that, although feminist theorists understand domestic violence as a reflection of normative social structure and the inferior status of women in all spheres of social, economic, and political life (Dobash & Dobash, 1981), they have paid little attention to the experiences of ethnic minority women, particularly immigrant women. Abraham proposed an "ethno-gendered" approach to understanding domestic violence through the lenses of gender and ethnicity. Abraham (1995) maintains that this approach is particularly relevant to studying domestic abuse of South Asian immigrant wives. These women, she argues, face a double disadvantage in the new country. First, they are put in subservient positions because of the patriarchal values of both the immigrant and mainstream cultures. Second, as ethnic minority members, they are expected to assume a

subordinate role and internalize the norms and values of the dominant culture, while simultaneously being barred from total membership in the dominant culture.

There is increasing consensus among researchers that domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities is embedded in their socio-cultural milieu (Preisser, 1999) and is shaped by the intersection of patriarchy, culture, gender, race, and class (Abraham, 2000a; Ahmad et al., 2004; Guruge, Khanlou, & Gastaldo, 2010; Shirwadkar, 2004). It is argued that the greater economic, linguistic, and cultural challenges as well as the acculturation stress that immigrants face, result in increased conflict at home (Abraham, 2000a; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Gill (2004) argues that South Asian immigrant women are often doubly victimized, first by their partner, and then by the host society which often fails to provide them with much needed support and interventions.

Despite the increasing awareness of the role of contextual factors in domestic violence, psychological research has generally ignored this aspect. Salazar and Cook (2002) conducted a content analysis of psychological research on domestic violence from 1990 through 1999 and concluded that psychology tends to ignore the social, political, and historical context of the problem. Their analysis suggested that much of the research on domestic violence in American Psychological Association journals during this decade focused on an individual level of analysis, and examined violence against women as a phenomenon that resides within individuals representing the exceptionalistic approach. In a similar vein, Yick and Oomen-Early (2008) conducted a content analysis of articles on domestic violence in Asian communities that were published in five interdisciplinary journals from 1990 to 2005. These journals focused on interpersonal violence, family violence, and violence against women. Their findings revealed a dearth of research on domestic violence in Asian countries as well as in Asian immigrant

communities in America. Further, most of the published research on the issue was quantitative with an individualist focus. Yick and Oomen-Early reiterated Salazar and Cook's (2002) proposition that scholarship on domestic violence needs to incorporate social, institutional, historical, and political contexts of violence against women and broaden the traditional construction of domestic abuse beyond a "relational trouble " between wives and husbands (Loseke, 1987). The authors further argued that future research on domestic violence in immigrant communities must include the concept of intersectionality because ethnic minorities are located within the systems of power, socioeconomic class, prejudice and discrimination and all these factors contribute to the meaning and nature of domestic violence (Crenshaw, 1992). In a similar vein, Barnes (1999) noted that most of the extant theories of domestic violence are unidimensional and unicultural, and when applied to ethnic minority groups, they fail to address their historical, cultural, political, and economic milieus as well as intragroup differences. The author further suggested that future research on domestic violence should focus on developing multidimensional and culturally relevant theories to understand domestic violence.

Migration and Domestic Violence

South Asians in Canada often arrange marriages of their children across international borders and the family-chosen brides are then sponsored to immigrate by their husbands (Merali, 2009). Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2005) reported that the majority of family sponsorship applications by Canadian citizens or permanent residents are for spouses, and about 60% of such applications are for sponsoring wives. For parents of brides, marrying their daughters in South Asian families settled in North America is an attractive choice (Kallivayalil, 2010) and parents may offer a huge dowry to settle such marriages (Bajpai, 2013). However, such transnational marriages may be based on deceit resulting in abuse, desertion, and violence.

After joining her husband, an immigrant wife may find out that the husband had lied about many things such as his job, immigration status, wealth, and marital status (Bajpai, 2013). Even when such deception is not present, Raj and Silverman (2002) note that immigrant wives' financial dependence, and legal status increases their vulnerability for abuse. Finfgeld-Connett and Johnson (2013) note that after getting married South Asian immigrant women traditionally become part of their husbands' families. The strict gender role ideology fashioned by patriarchal norms in many South Asian immigrant marriages (Abraham, 2000a; Mehrotra, 1999), tends to accord the new bride the lowest position within the family hierarchy. She may be subjected to abuse by her husband as well as by male and female in-laws (Anitha, 2011; Gill, 2004; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Guruge et al., 2010; Mason et al., 2008). Moreover, the collectivistic nature of family in South Asian communities dictates that collective welfare surpasses that of the individual and women are expected to maintain family harmony over their individual welfare (Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009). The patriarchal and collective family structure promotes a gendered family hierarchy that assigns men higher status and power than women (Abraham, 2006; Das & Kemp, 1997). Dasgupta and Warrier (1996) noted that South Asian women from childhood are socialized to conform to the ideals of "good" wives and are expected to keep marriages together (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013). A failed marriage not only causes personal shame and blame (Ahmad et al., 2009; Anitha, 2011), but can also tarnish the reputation of both the bride's and groom's families (Adam, 2000; Ahmad et al., 2009; Gill, 2004; Raj &Silverman, 2007). Even disclosing abuse is likely to dishonour women and their families (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel, & Baig-Amin, 2003). Women who decide to leave an abusive relationship face multiple problems. In addition to rejection and

stigma, they risk losing their children and extended family, economic security, and deportation (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013).

In 2001, Status of Women Canada commissioned two studies on the experience of South Asian immigrant wives. Husaini (2001) in his study interviewed South Asian women from Alberta who had immigrated to Canada after contracting arranged marriages in their native countries. Women reported several problems that they faced in their marital relationships and in their integrating with Canadian society. These problems included their husbands' efforts to isolate them and to confine them to homes. Husbands also impeded their efforts to learn English and to seek employment. There were frequent threats to cut-off financial support or to deport them back to their home countries. Women had little information about their status as a sponsored spouse and lacked the resources to seek help and information. Some women also reported experiencing severe physical and emotional abuse. The second study was conducted in Ontario and Quebec by Côté, Kerisit and Côté (2001). South Asian immigrant wives were a subset of the sample in this study. Researchers identified a common experience among immigrant wives that they termed *sponsorship debt*. This was a debt that the wife supposedly owed to her husband and his family for bringing her to Canada. To repay the debt the wife was expected to do all the household chores and to hand over her income to her husband if she worked outside home. She was not allowed to socialize outside of the family and was expected to endure various types of abuse. The women reported that they lacked the resources and knowledge to escape their situations.

The findings from these studies informed Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (2002) policy to review and reform family sponsorship policies through a gender-based analysis. The department introduced the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in 2002 (Citizenship

and Immigration Canada, 2002). Three new regulations were introduced to protect mistreatment of sponsored women: (1) men with a criminal record or history of domestic violence were barred from sponsoring foreign brides; (2) the time period of a sponsored wife's dependence on her husband was reduced to three years from ten years; and (3) information was provided on sponsorship documents to help women understand their rights and safeguards as sponsored persons in Canada. Information was added in the documents that reiterated that the sponsor does not have the power to remove the sponsored person from Canada. The sponsorship documents, however, are available only in English and about a third of sponsored women from South Asia have little to no proficiency in English (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). A number of studies have evaluated the impact of these changes on the experiences of South Asian sponsored women (e.g., Kang, 2006; Merali, 2009; Shirwadkar, 2004). These studies have highlighted that proficiency in English was a significant factor in determining women's vulnerability to maltreatment. English-proficient women were well aware of their rights and reported significant integration support. Conversely, non-English -proficient women reported multiple barriers to participation in Canadian life, along with severe abuse and neglect. For example, Merali (2009) reported that non-English -proficient women were more likely to be barred from interacting with people from outside the South Asian community, were not allowed to take English classes, and were prevented from seeking employment and education when compared to English proficient women. They were also were more likely to experience physical and emotional abuse from husbands and in-laws than English proficient women. Merali (2009) further noted that, even when South Asian women are well informed about their rights, many cultural values contributed toward their domestic violence experiences. Some of these values include collectivism and the importance of maintaining family ties, and an emphasis on women's

endurance of suffering with valour (Dasgupta, 2000, 2005; Husaini, 2001). In a similar vein, Dasgupta and Warrier (1996) note that in South Asian communities, women are considered the primary guardians of family honour. Therefore, despite severe abuse, they remain silent about it in order to maintain an unblemished façade of the family to the outside community.

In the next section I present a literature review examining the construct of honour culture and its relevance to South Asian communities. As social psychological research on honour cultures is fairly narrow, I have turned to research from the related social sciences of anthropology and sociology for much of this review.

Honour Cultures

The concept of honour is present in cultures around the world although there are variations in how honour is defined and valued in different regions (Vandello & Cohen 2003). Social psychological research on honour is fairly recent in origin and has focused primarily on the study of male aggression in the honour culture of the southern United States (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000). Rodriguez Masquera et al. contend that the South adheres to honour norms, which sanction the use of violence for protection of self, family, and honour. They further propose that these norms are likely to emerge in areas where the resource holdings of a man can be stolen by other men and the governing body is incapable of preventing or punishing such thefts. Under these conditions, the individual has to maintain a credible power of deterrence by signalling violent consequences toward any transgression that can be construed as disrespect toward him. In a culture of honour, when someone allows himself to be insulted or disrespected without violent retribution, he gives the impression that he is incapable of protecting his possessions, family and honour (Shackelford, 2005). Other cultures of honour identified by anthropologists include Middle Eastern and Arab cultures (Abou-Zeid, 1965), and South Asian

cultures (Werbner, 2007). Nisbett and Cohen (1996) argue that the culture of honour in the southern United States is distinct from cultures of honour in other societies, as honour in these societies extends beyond the self-defence concerns that characterize the southern United Sates.

Pitt-Rivers (1965) notes that, in honour cultures, honour refers to both a person's value in his or her own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. Although one's own honour is dependent on an internal sense of honour that guides the self to behave in honourable ways and to avoid dishonour, it is the social recognition of individual behaviour that legitimizes individual claims to honour in cultures of honour. Reputation is valued in honour cultures not only at an individual level but also at a collective level. Collective honour refers to the honour that is shared by a bounded group of individuals, including many different reference groups such as close friends or a political party. However, family is considered to be the fundamental group with which one shares collective honour. The family's collective reputation is a reflection of the reputation of its individual members, and all family members either contribute to or detract from the status of the family's honour. This strong interdependence between one's own and one's family's honour means that dishonourable behaviour from family members can lead to a loss of one's personal honour. Similarly, one's own dishonourable behaviour can lead to a loss in family honour. The task of maintaining and upholding family honour is considered to be of utmost importance for men and women and any transgression in this regard carries punitive consequences. Ortner (1978) argues that in honour cultures, honour focuses on two things: (a) control of female behaviour, and; (b) the shame that loss of control over female behaviour brings to the family. When a female member violates an honour norm, the entire family experiences shame and this shame can only be redressed by a strong punitive response, whereas a lack of such punishment can further damage family's honour (Baker et al., 1999). A man's honour in a culture of honour

is most closely tied to the reputation and sexual conduct of women in his family, particularly his mother, sister(s), wife (wives), and daughter(s). Any breach or suspected breach of sexual codes by these women brings shame and stains the family honour (Araji & Carlson, 2001).

Recent scholarship contests this restrictive understanding of honour as men's control of women's sexuality. Weidman (2003) notes that Pitt-Rivers (1965) and Peristiany's (1965) analyses of Mediterranean honour culture promotes a stereotypical understanding of honour as a problematic syndrome. Men are seen as obsessed with upholding family honour and women as silent, passive, and secluded within the four walls of home to ensure their sexual purity. While scholars agree that women's sexual behaviour is indeed an important honour code (Baxter, 2007), they have also demonstrated other powerful determinants of honour such as hospitality and generosity (Herzfeld, 1987), valour, strength, and emotional openness (Joseph, 1996). Drawing upon her anthropological studies in Palestine, Baxter (2007) notes that honour is a dynamic and multi-layered ideology about 'right living' rather than a restrictive code of rules and regulations. While acknowledging the relevance of the code of control over female sexual behaviour, she points to the occlusion of those discourses and practices of honour ideology that stress women's privileges, power, and claim over men. This occlusion, she argues, perpetuates the "honour as a problem for women and progress" paradigm in contemporary literature. She further argues that the limited understanding of honour as male control of female sexuality is inherently linked to the Western assumptions of male dominance and female submission in honour cultures. She notes that, because of these erroneous assumptions, honour related practices such as veiling, segregation, and arranged marriages are construed as controlling and belittling by Western scholarship (e.g., Bates & Rassam, 2001).

Similarly, Abu-Lughod (2011) notes that her anthropological studies with Egyptian Bedouin tribes contradict much of the current scholarship on honour, which understands women's status in honour ideology as property and objects, or body parts controlled by men. She maintains that, although sexual virtue is an important component of honour, limiting it to female sexuality is erroneous. Drawing upon her findings from years of living with the Bedouin tribes, she argues that honour is not bestowed naturally on any one gender but is something that everyone has to achieve individually. Being honourable requires ideal personal attributes such as valour, generosity, piety, honesty, trustworthiness, and self-respect. The expectations for women are not much different from men; they are expected to embody similar qualities of toughness and generosity, piety and honesty that are expected of men. In addition, much like younger or lower-status men, women are also required to show respect for those higher in the social hierarchy. A key element of such respect is modesty in behaviour and dress as well as being cautious and maintaining segregation with members of the opposite sex who are not relatives. It is important to note that public or non-marital sexuality is just as critical for men; respectable men are expected keep a proper distance from unrelated women, while treating them respectfully. They are expected to protect the reputations of their women through their own good behaviour.

Despite the growing emphasis on understanding honour as a multidimensional ideology, social psychological research on honour has primarily focused on male aggression in response to the need to defend their honour (Moritz, 2008). Honour in this discourse is largely understood as a masculine attribute primarily created and maintained by female fidelity (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). This is also apparent in the extant discourse on domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities in the West. Current scholarship on honour among South Asian immigrants in the West remains restrictive and unidimensional, focusing primarily on harsh and

restrictive honour codes for women (e.g., Ayyub, 2000; Choudhry, 2001; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Gill, 2004). Gill and Brah (2014) argue that the extant understanding of honour and violence among South Asian diasporic communities is deficient. For example, they note that Western research on Pakistani women presents a biased understanding by delineating family and community primarily as oppressive institutions. However, family and community norms vary depending on the geographical location, the regional culture and the socioeconomic status of the family. Thus, in many South Asian families, women's academic and professional achievements contribute to the family's honour, whereas in others, working women may be seen as a dishonour for the family. Gill and Brah further argue that the honour values associated with South Asian societies and diasporic communities are likely to be used to cast South Asian cultural practices as malicious and uncivilized, despite positive facets of honour. Such stereotypic representations of honour cultures as promoting violence against women are misleading and ignore the cultural practices that protect women in these societies (Baxter, 2007).

The Present Study

Humphreys, Sharps, and Campbell (2005) suggest that to fully understand domestic violence there is a need to focus not only on ethnic and cultural characteristics of victims or perpetrators but also on the cultural characteristics and practices that might be protective against the effects of violence in different cultural, racial, and ethnic communities. They further argue that to develop such an emic view of domestic violence, and to understand the strengths and resourcefulness of abused women and their communities, it is important to use qualitative research methods to study domestic abuse. Likewise, Barnes (1999) maintains that the prevailing approaches to domestic violence are unidimensional and unicultural, and there is a need to develop multidimensional and culturally relevant theories to comprehensively understand the

issue of domestic violence in ethnic minority groups. Similarly, Yick and Oomen-Early (2008) suggested that qualitative research, particularly grounded theory, can serve as a useful tool to develop culturally relevant theories for understanding domestic abuse. The current research answers this call. It was undertaken to understand domestic abuse in immigrant South Asian communities in the Greater Toronto Area by listening to the voices of abused women and paying close attention to their socio-cultural context. The grounded theory method was chosen for the analysis, because it is a system for inductively developing theory *from* the data rather than verification of an a priori theory. There were two primary research aims for the current research. The first was to understand the familial violence experiences of the South Asian immigrant women; the second was to analyse the contribution of the South Asian cultural ideology of honour toward these experiences. The main objective was to develop a theory grounded in the voices of the research participants that explains their experiences and reflects the nuances of the honour construct as understood by South Asian immigrant women.

CHAPTER 2 – METHOD

Participants

Research in the area of domestic violence is constrained by ethical and practical considerations (Strube, 1988), making data collection difficult and limiting sources of data (Abraham, 1995). For this study, a primary concern was the safety and psychological health of the participants. It was therefore determined that the more effective way to recruit participants would be through organizations offering support to victims of domestic violence in the Greater Toronto area (GTA). This ensured that the participants would already have disclosed their abuse and would have access to counselling services. I contacted 11 community-based agencies and shelter homes in the GTA through emails and phone. Along with support to women victims of domestic violence, some of these organizations also provided specialized services for immigrants such as settlement assistance, language and educational counselling, and employment assistance. I explained the study to the liaison staff and emailed them research information documents and copies of the informed consent form. Four of the agencies declined recruitment because of their ethics protocols. I visited the agencies that agreed to cooperate and attended support groups and other activities offered to domestic abuse victims.

The selection criteria were explained to the counsellors at the agencies: South Asian women who had experienced familial abuse and could speak English, Urdu, Hindi, or Punjabi. Familial abuse was defined as abuse by spouse and/or extended family members. The term abuse was used broadly and encompassed physical, non-physical and economic abuse. Counsellors did the initial screening and contacted the potential participants. Thirteen women who expressed interest in the study were then referred to me. A one-on-one meeting was arranged with the women who decided to participate, at a time of their convenience, where I further explained the

study and ethics protocol to them. After these meetings, all 13 women agreed to participate in the study. The interviews for 11 women were conducted shortly after the initial meeting. Two women set up a later date for the interview but did not follow through with it. Interviews were conducted on the premises of the referring agency. In total, 11 interviews were conducted, but one interview was not analysed. This was because the participant was unmarried and reported familial abuse and not spousal abuse.

Ten South Asian women were included in the study. Their ages ranged from 33 to 54 years, with an average age of 42 years. The average duration of marriage for these women was 10.5 years, with a range of 1.5 to 26 years. Five of the participants were Hindus, three were Muslims and two were Sikhs. Seven participants had emigrated from India, two from Pakistan, and one from Sri Lanka. For nine women, marriage was arranged by their family and one had chosen her husband through a matrimonial website. For two of the women, this was their second marriage, and they did not have any children from this marriage, although one had a daughter from her first marriage. For eight women, this was their first marriage and seven of them had children from this union. Two women had completed a Masters degree, one had a college degree, one had a diploma from a religious school, one had a secretarial training diploma, one was in college, one had completed high school, and three had not completed high school. At the time of the interview, one participant worked as a teacher in a religious school, one was self-employed, four were upgrading their job skills/education, and three were receiving government financial assistance. The average duration of the interview was 57 minutes with a range of 18 to 100 minutes. Women were presented with a $20 gift certificate from a grocery shop to thank them for their time and participation.

Researcher

In the interest of disclosed reflexivity, as suggested by Rennie (2012), I will share some personal information as well as my own assumptions about the issue of familial violence in South Asian immigrant communities. I am a South Asian woman who immigrated to North America from Pakistan 20 years ago. I come from a stable home and have been in a stable and happy marriage for 20 years and have two children. I worked as a clinical psychologist in Pakistan before moving to North America and worked with abused women in that capacity. My understanding of honour before immigrating to North America was primarily as that of a sacred value (Nordin, 2013) shared collectively by the family. Integrity and sexual modesty for both men and women were key values in my definition of honour. However, when I had started this research, my understanding had incorporated the current knowledge in Western psychological research and media. I related honour exclusively to the violent control of female sexuality, and subservience as it is primarily construed in Western scholarly literature (e.g., Baker et al., 1999; Pitt-Rivers, 1965; Vandello & Cohen, 2003; Werbner, 2007). My engagement with the literature on honour cultures during the course of my graduate studies had moulded my perspective on honour as an oppressive ideology designed primarily to further men's interest at the expense of women's rights and freedoms. This was duly reinforced by reports of honour-based violence among South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants in the Western world. To bracket off my existing understanding and biases about honour, I interviewed myself and audio-taped my responses to the probes that were developed to be used for interviews with South Asian community members. The responses were transcribed and discussed during a lab meeting with my supervisory committee member, Dr. Rennie, before proceeding with the data collection. This sensitized me to my *a priori* assumptions about the role of honour ideology in domestic violence

and enabled me to keep them under check during the interviews. My understanding of honour at this point was primarily that of a tool used cruelly to control women and their sexuality.

Before my first interview I was expecting that the themes of collective honour would come up during the interview spontaneously. This was the case in five out of 10 interviews; for the rest I subtly introduced it during the course of the interview. However, I was surprised by the manner in which the participants talked about honour. My expectations of them construing honour as an oppressive force that made them suffer were misguided. Many of the participants had expressed a certain degree of satisfaction and pride about being in the abusive relationship for the sake of honour. They also talked about honour codes that help ensure women's well-being. I translated and transcribed the first interview and then discussed it with Dr. Rennie before the next interview. Neither of us was expecting this and I became particularly attentive to my existing biases and newfound understandings from this interview while conducting the subsequent interviews. In accordance with expected practices for grounded theory research (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988), I also kept my literature review to a minimum during this stage, until the grounded theory analysis was complete.

Procedures

Patton (1990) notes that it is helpful to include researchers with similar cultural backgrounds when conducting research with culturally diverse groups. This helps prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations that can result from language differences and violations of group norms. I therefore conducted, translated, and transcribed all the interviews myself. Four interviews were conducted in English, two in Urdu, one in Punjabi, one in Hindi, and the remaining two participants switched between English and Punjabi or Hindi during the interviews. All non-English interviews or interview segments were translated into English for

analysis. The interviews were conducted over a period of 20 months. Before the start of the formal interview, I briefly chatted with the participant to build rapport and introduced the study in detail. I then requested they sign the informed consent (see Appendix A). All the participants read the form themselves but some sought assistance and clarification primarily because of their limited skills in reading English, before signing the form. I alerted them before turning on the recording device. Interviews were unstructured (see Appendix B) and I started by asking them about their experience of domestic violence. Five out of 10 participants brought up honour spontaneously during the interview. For the rest, I subtly probed by asking, "Is there anything else you would like to share?" When the participants indicated they did not have more to share, I then went on to say, "When people generally talk about domestic violence in South Asian communities, people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the concept of honour comes up, what are your thoughts about it?" I asked this question in a neutral tone and invariably, every participant responded to it in terms of their efforts to preserve the honour of their natal family. Interviews were audio taped and translated (when required) and transcribed. Field notes were taken during and after interviews to record my observations.

Because grounded theory analysis is iterative, data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Duhscher & Morgan, 2004). Thus, immediately after the interview, the interview was transcribed and analysed. During my bi-weekly lab meetings with Dr. Rennie, I shared my conceptualized categories and theoretical memos with him. We discussed the analysis and refined the conceptualized categories when required. For the first five interviews, each interview was conducted after I had transcribed, analysed, and discussed the analysis of the prior interview during the lab meetings. Interviews five and six were conducted on the same day. For the remaining four, I retained the practice of immediately transcribing and analysing the interviews.

However, I completed the analysis of the last four interviews and then discussed it with my all of my committee members.

Grounded Theory Method

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory method (GTM) as a systematic, inductive approach to theory building, in which theory is conceptualized from the data, rather than testing an existing theory with data (Rennie et al., 1988). GTM has been taken up by researchers in many social science disciplines, including psychology, as it allows theory building in areas that are difficult to examine with traditional research methods (Rennie, 2000). Although Glaser and Strauss now disagree about many procedural aspects of the method, they still agree on certain fundamental procedures, such as constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical memoing.

Rennie (1998) notes that the difference between Glaser and Straus is primarily about the logic of justification of methodology. Influenced by the experimental method, Strauss and Corbin (1990) put more emphasis on verification in GTM. They suggest using a combination of deduction and induction to achieve verification of categories during grounded theory analysis. They also allow room for introspection and permit the analysts to introduce hypotheses about relations that are not yet in the data and look for evidence for these relations in succeeding analysis. Glaser critiques this approach and maintains that by allowing to build and to import rational relationships the method is based more on subjectivity than groundedness in the data, and thus reflects positivistic rationality. He emphasizes that GTM is more about inductive theory building based on the data rather than verification of rationally constructed relations from the data, although he does note that the categories developed during a grounded theory analysis are validated because of the method itself (Rennie, 1998). Rennie contends that Strauss and Corbin's

(1990) emphasis on hypothetico-deductivisim and Glaser's stress on induction are both inadequate rationales for GTM, though he identifies more with Glaser's approach. In response to this problem, Rennie (2000, 2012) developed a logic of justification for grounded theory based on what he termed, 'methodical hermeneutics.'

Rennie (2000) further notes that Glaser and Strauss have not satisfactorily accounted for the realism-relativism dualism in GTM. Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain that a conceptualized grounded theory is relative to the perspective of the analyst and different analysts working with the same data may produce different theories. They further maintain that this is acceptable as long as these theories are supported by the data, thereby tacitly recognizing the realism-relativism dualism. Rennie argues that the realism-relativism dualism in GTM is best addressed when the method is understood to be an inductive approach to hermeneutics. Rennie (1998) argues that methodical hermeneutics as the logic of justification for grounded theory reconciles realism and relativism. Below I discuss this methodology and its application to the procedures of grounded theory.

Methodology

Grounded theory as methodical hermeneutics. The term hermeneutics means to "make something clear, to announce or unveil a message" (Thompson, 1996, pp. 360–361). Hermeneutics is the process of interpretation and was originally applied to the interpretation of legal documents and biblical scriptures. Gradually its application was extended to interpretation of all kinds of texts (Sandage, Cook, Hill, Strawn, & Reimer, 2008). Ricoeur (1981) notes that the structure of any given text has two characteristics: semantics and syntax. Syntactic features are related to the grammatical structure of the language, are easily discernible, and offer explanation of the text, whereas the semantic aspects focus on understanding the meaning of the

text and require interpretation. The activity/process of interpretation is termed hermeneutics (Rennie, 2000). Rennie contends that grounded theory analysis is an example of the application of the hermeneutic process. He further argues that what a grounded theorist deals with is doubly hermeneutic because the data source in GTM is reflexive and agentic. As agents, people can decide what and how much to share, and they share their interpretation of their experiences through a reflexive process. This is the first hermeneutical component of the data. The second hermeneutic element comes from the analyst's understanding of the data. The analyst's interpretation of the data is influenced by his or her own values, beliefs, and experiences. Thus, GTM calls for the interpretation of already interpreted data. This "double hermeneutic" (Rennie, 2000) makes the realism-relativism reconciliation difficult in grounded theory analysis. Analysts have to account for the double hermeneutics in the data and decide how deeply to interpret the text. They may decide to stay close to the text focusing on its manifest content in the name of maintaining objectivity. Conversely, they may pay attention to the latent meaning of a given text in order to derive a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated, even though it entails increased relativity. Rennie (2000) suggests that, "good interpretation involves living inside and outside the experience while monitoring the degree of fit between the two aspects" (p. 487).

Rennie (2000) notes that grounded theory is about interpreting the semantic aspects of the text; hence the conceptualized theory is about *understanding* rather than explaining causal associations. This understanding is reflected in the form of categories and relations among them. When the primary researcher personally conducts and transcribes the interviews (the preferred practice in GTM), they develop a sense of the meaning of the text as a whole. Thus, the 'hermeneutic circle' is entered, in which the meaning of the whole of a text is used to understand

the meaning of its parts, and the meanings of the parts help analysts to comprehend the meaning of the whole (Rennie, 2012). The earlier text can be revisited in light of new categories developed at later stages of analysis. This circling of part to whole, and whole to part, leads to progressive understanding, eventually allowing the researcher to conceptualize a core category that gathers the meaning of all the other categories (Rennie, 2000).

Hermeneutic circle and related processes. Drawing upon Peirce's (1965) theory of inference, Rennie proposed four processes that help the hermeneutic circle to progress until a stable understanding of the text is developed. The circle starts with eduction, which modifies and cycles with abduction, theorematic deduction, and induction. Eduction is the initial clarification of the text in which meaning from the text is drawn forth. This educed meaning is represented in the form of categories (Rennie, 2012). Rennie (2000) notes that the conceptualization of categories is a complex exercise that involves creativity and use of imagination. The analyst works with their own internal experiences and the experiences of the participants as expressed in the text. Being tied closely only to the manifest content of a particular unit of meaning in the interest of objectivity can result in missing the more abstract understanding. The result is the creation of more banal, descriptive categories. In the conceptualization of categories, Rennie and Fergus (2006) advocate for adopting an embodied categorization approach. This approach encourages analysts to draw upon their subjectivity and uses their embodied cognitive image schemata in the categorization process. The authors recommend that when the analyst is educing the meaning of the text, they should pay attention not only to how a given excerpt is affecting them at a cognitive and emotional level, but also at the level of their bodily, felt experience. This embodiment inspires memories, images, associations and word phrases that they can use to educe and articulate their understanding. Rennie (2012) maintains that, much like a poet, a

grounded analyst create strings of words (categories) while working with their embodied felt sense of meaning until they come up with a string that, in their judgment, best articulates their understanding.

Once a category has been conceptualized, it is a process of abduction (i.e., hypothesis testing) that allows each category to be tested through subsequent inductive analysis (Rennie, 2000). Theorematic deduction means that evidence relevant to the educed abduction should be present in either the text as a whole or in a part of it depending on how the hermeneutic circle was entered. If the circle was entered through the analysis of a part of the text, the deduction supporting this abduction should be produced through the study of the whole text ensuring its generalizability to the whole text. Conversely, if the circle was entered through the whole text, its accuracy should be tested through analysis of the parts of the text. Essentially asking, 'Does this category fit with what I know of the greater phenomenon?' and 'Does this broader formulation fit with the categories as they are currently emerging?' The subsequent inductive analysis of the text to search for this evidence is the fourth component of the hermeneutic circle. This induction, in turn, interacts with abduction (categories/ hypothesis) as they can be changed, discarded, or pooled with other categories in the light of this analysis. This cycling helps to ground the findings in the data (Rennie, 2012). This interplay between abduction and induction also supports assertions that the method is inherently validating in that each abduction (hypothesis) is tested through the subsequent inductive analyses of the text (Rennie, 2000).

Constant comparison method. The central process in grounded theory analysis that aids in the conceptualization of categories is the constant comparison method developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Some of the important techniques involved in this process include theoretical sampling, open categorizing, and theoretical memoing (Glaser, 1978). Rennie et al.

(1988) note that an important feature of data collection in GTM is that data collection and analysis are performed concurrently. The initial analysis helps to understand the emerging phenomena. Data collection is accordingly modified to increase the likelihood that all aspects of this phenomenon will be clearly represented by the data. This flexible approach to data collection is called theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical sampling helps in generating categories with properties that are strongly grounded in the data. The categorization process starts with the parsing of the text into "meaning units" (MU) (Giorgi, 2009). MUs are units of text that are interpreted to be about mainly one idea each, allowing for "fringe" meanings associated with the main idea. The length of a meaning unit can range from a few lines to two or three pages. Each meaning unit is interpreted and is assigned to a category. A meaning unit can be assigned to as many categories as is deemed appropriate reflecting the process of open categorization. As the analysis continues a list of categories develops and subsequent meaning units are constantly compared with this list. The MUs can be assigned to any number of categories from this list or new categories may be conceptualized and added to the list to capture their unique properties. The analyst may also decide to go back and modify earlier categories in light of the newly conceptualized categories. Close attention is paid to the relationship between categories and their properties. Categories that seem to share a common meaning are pooled together and a higher order category is conceptualized to represent their shared meanings. The higher order category subsumes the properties of all its constituent categories. The categories generated in earlier stages of analysis are typically more descriptive. This ensures that the researcher remains close to the data. The focus of analysis at later stages is to develop categories that entail higher levels of abstraction. The higher order, more abstract categories are more interpretive and are constructed by the researcher to help explain the descriptive categories and

the relationships among them (Rennie et al., 1988). Eventually, the analyst conceptualizes the core category that densely encapsulates the other categories and their properties. It is typically a constructed, abstract category that gathers together the meaning of all the other categories (Rennie, 2000). As the analysis proceeds, the categories saturate, which means that the analysis of further data is neither likely to yield new categories, nor any new significant relationships among the conceptualized categories. Saturation generally occurs after the analysis of five to ten protocols (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rennie et al., 1988). In their method, Glaser and Strauss (1967) also recommended that the analyst should put aside their pre-existing notions, expectations, and hypotheses about the phenomenon under study. This is likely to assist the "discovery-oriented" goal of the analysis. Rennie (2000) notes that, although Glaser and Strauss do not make the connection, this represents the phenomenological technique of bracketing.

Theoretical memoing is an important tool used by researchers to aid in the grounded theory analysis. The researcher keeps a detailed and systematic record of their thought processes and ideas as they move through the analysis. Rennie et al. (1988) maintain that these memos serve many valuable functions. They help the analyst develop insight into their own assumptions and thought processes during the analysis. They allow analysts to see the emerging patterns and relationships in the data. The researchers can memo about their hunches and insights about data patterns that might still be inchoate but may potentially be important to the analysis. The memos provide a record of the emerging analysis, and thus can be useful in tracking the conceptualization process of a particular category, which in turn, may help to fill potential gaps in the theory development process. Memos can also be very useful in the final write up of the theory. Theoretical memoing, bracketing, and disclosed reflexivity are techniques that can help the analyst objectify their subjectivity for themselves as well as for the reader.

Demonstrative rhetoric. Rennie (1998) notes that integrating hermeneutics, phenomenological bracketing, and the interplay of abduction and induction makes grounded theory analysis inherently valid. However, another important factor according credibility to a grounded theory is its persuasiveness (Rennie et al., 1998). The conceptualized theory should resonate with an audience of a similar cultural background as that of the analyst. The audience should be able to identify with, and be moved by, the analysis, judging it to have accurately reflected the subject matter (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). To achieve this important function of persuading the audience, the theory should be rhetorical in a demonstrative way (Rennie, 2012). Rennie (2000) recommends four steps to strengthen the rhetorical impact of the results from grounded theory. First, for the theory to be persuasive, it is important to let the reader know that the analysis was done in a comprehensive and systematic manner. It is therefore essential that the write up clearly outline the rigour of the analytic procedures. Second, quotes from the data are rhetorical tools that should be used to support conclusions drawn from the study (Elliot et al., 1999). Providing examples from the text therefore helps to ground the conceptualized categories. This not only helps the readers to fully grasp the meaning of the category but also allows them to appreciate the argument behind the abstraction of the data. Third, disclosed reflexivity (within reasonable limits) augments the rhetoric. GTM, like any human science, involves a double hermeneutic and it is impossible for the analyst to be completely objective. By sharing their perspective, analysts help the reader understand their understanding (Rennie, 2012). Fourth, the write-up should be lucid and vivid, as strong writing that resonates with the reader will contribute to the theory's persuasiveness.

Analysis

I analysed the interviews using the grounded theory methodology within the hermeneutic

circle framework (Rennie, 2000). Following the recommended procedures, I endeavoured to bracket off my biases and presuppositions about the role of honour in domestic violence among South Asian immigrants as discussed earlier. I collected, translated and transcribed the participants' interviews myself. This is the recommended practice for GTM but I think that, in addition to helping with the analysis, it also helped me mitigate some of the issues that arise when cross-cultural data are translated for qualitative analysis. Research suggests that the problems of translating the data from one language to another in qualitative research are multifarious and are particularly evident in cross-cultural research (c.f., Kapborg & Bertero, 2002; Temple & Young, 2004). Twinn (1997) conducted a study to examine the influence of translation on reliability and validity of qualitative research. In the study, six interviews were conducted in Chinese and then translated into English by two translators working independently of each other. Content analysis was conducted for all three data sets (two in English, one in Chinese). The author reported that, although there were no significant differences in the in the major categories conceptualized from the three data sets, there were some minor differences in the themes generated from the data. Twinn noted that the results of the study raise some important issues that should be addressed when translation is used in qualitative research. For example, translation can be problematic because of the lack of equivalent words in the target language and because of the differences in the grammatical style of the two languages. These problems are likely to threaten validity, particularly if the conceptual framework for analysis is phenomenological. However, the author noted that using only one translator helps to increase the reliability of the study. Research suggests that the validity of the qualitative study can be strengthened if the translator has the required linguistic abilities, is trained in the field of research, and shares the cultural background of the participants (Kapborg & Bertero, 2002). Likewise,

Temple and Young (2004) note that, when researchers are fluent in the participants' language, they can use the experience of translation to discuss points in the text where they can stop and reflect about meaning. Such discussions around translation can act as a validity check of interpretations (e.g., Young &Ackerman, 2001).

In addition to helping the reliability and validity of the findings, I found the process of translating and transcribing to be cognitively illuminating. Transcribing the interviews allowed me to connect with the participants and their narratives deeply. I found this connection very helpful when I engaged in embodied categorization. I used the computer programme ATLAS.ti for analysing the data. The use of the programme, however, was consciously restricted to the organizing of the data and indexing of categories. After entering an interview into ATLAS.ti, I read over the complete interview four to five times. This helped me look at the interview as a whole. I then proceeded to parse the interviews into meaning units. The meaning units for the initial interviews were small, ranging from a few lines to a paragraph in length. However, as the analysis progressed and I became more adept at the open categorization process, the length of meaning units increased with some as long as one and a half typed pages. I followed Rennie and Fergus' (2006) procedure of embodied categorization to develop categories for MUs. After an interview had been parsed into MUs, starting with the first, I read and re-read the MU and then closed my eyes and focused on conceptualizing a category. This helped me stay focused on the text and helped me draw upon memories, images, and word phrases to come up with the string of words that captured the meaning of the text most vividly. I would also visualize participants experiencing the activities and incidents and the thoughts that I felt they experienced during the MU under study. Initial categorization was more descriptive but with Dr. Rennie's encouragement and guidance, I was able to conceptualize at a more abstract level. I would also

closely examine the list of categories, as it was evolving, and my reading it intently enabled the relationships within the categories to become apparent. The flexibility of the method allowed me to go back and re-evaluate the already developed categories and I was amazed at the neatness with which the categories condensed and became organized, once the relationships between them became apparent. When such inductively developed relationships were duly supported by both the earlier as well as the later analysis, they were retained. However, I was also alert to the peril of forcing the categories on to the data and ensured that the data actually earned the categories and the relationships between them. This concern was also addressed during lab meetings in which the conceptualized categories and their relationships were discussed in depth with Dr. Rennie and, when needed, were revised. The categorization process quickened as the analysis progressed and for the tenth interview no new categories were conceptualized, as the ones already indexed in the list accounted for all the MUs in the interview. Data collection was stopped at this point and the analysis focused on taking the developed categories and their interrelationships to more abstract levels. The analysis and the core category that was conceptualized are presented in the results chapter.

Credibility checks. Elliot et al. (1999) recommended a number of procedures for checking the credibility of the conceptualized categories in GTM. These include checking the understandings with the participants, using an additional analytical auditor, and triangulation with external factors. I established three credibility checks in the current analysis. First, each participant was asked for feedback after the interview (e.g., "Is there anything else that you would like to discuss? ") to ensure that participants provided all the information they deemed necessary to fully convey their experience of the phenomenon. After the participants indicated that they had fully expressed themselves, I briefly shared my understanding of their narrative

with them and asked them if I had understood them correctly. After I had completed the analysis, I was able to share it with two of the participants and obtained their feedback. Second, my supervisory committee member, Dr. Rennie acted as the additional analytical auditor for the first six interviews, helping me review the data and providing a verification of the analysis. Third, I interviewed two South Asian men to understand their perspective on honour ideology and its role in familial violence. Further, I shared my analysis and categories with two domestic violence counsellors of South Asian origin. One of them worked exclusively with South Asian clients while the other worked with women from all ethnic backgrounds, including South Asian women. In all instances, the community members as well as the counsellors endorsed the analysis noting that it cogently reflects the phenomenon of familial abuse among South Asian immigrant communities.

CHAPTER 3: PARTICIPANTS' LIFE HISTORIES

In this chapter I present a brief life sketch of all the participants. I feel that it is important for readers to know each participant's particular characteristics, life circumstances, and socio-cultural milieu to understand their narratives. I have also included brief demographic information about the two South Asian men and the two women counsellors that I interviewed to triangulate the findings. The names used below are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

Asha. Asha is a 50 year old woman from India. She came to Canada 30 years ago after marrying her husband in an arranged marriage. Her husband and his family had concealed information about his previous marriage and children when the marriage was arranged in India. She has not completed high school. She is a charming woman who struggles while speaking in English but is able to communicate effectively. She is expressive and uses a lot of gestures and body language to express herself. She is well groomed and maintains all the adornment required of a married Hindu woman (e.g., necklace that has some element of black colour called mangalasutar, and red powder in her hair parting called sandoor). These artefacts carry a lot of prestige and can only be worn by married women. She adorns them despite having been divorced by her husband five years ago, after 25 years of marriage. She has four grown children and comes to the support groups offered by the women's support organization regularly. The interview was conducted in English and lasted for 63 minutes. In her words, her marriage was "twenty-five years of torture" with severe physical battery, psychological, economic, emotional and social abuse. She never had any money and did not have a bank account for as long as she was married. He was also physically abusive toward their children and would severely batter them. Women support services helped her to settle down after the divorce. She was denied any alimony by the court because she believes that her husband knew well how to beat the system.

Balwant. Balwant is a 35 year old woman from India. The interview was conducted in English and Punjabi and lasted for 63 minutes. She is university educated and worked in a bank before immigrating to Canada. This was an arranged marriage that took place in India. Information about her husband's first marriage and children was concealed from her family. She is from a well-established family and her parents gave her husband and in-laws expensive jewellery and cash for dowry. For about the first two years of marriage, while she was waiting for her immigration to process, things looked fine and she was happy with her marriage. However, her husband did not support her financially during this time. She joined him in Canada after about two years. He never really fulfilled his economic responsibilities toward his family and she worked odd jobs to support herself and her son. Abuse started around her second pregnancy. He abused her psychologically, emotionally, financially and physically. He was also physically abusive toward the children and was arrested by police on three different occasions. Each time they would continue to live together after his release. She did not have access to child benefit money provided by the government. After appropriating all their joint assets, he divorced her after six years of marriage. She was shocked to receive the papers and went to court for alimony and assets. She lost the case and she feels all of his family had colluded to help him misappropriate her share of the money and assets. She is now doing courses to upgrade her job skills and comes regularly to the women's support centre.

Preeti. Preeti is a 54 year old woman from Sri Lanka. Her interview was conducted in Hindi and lasted 46 minutes. This was the second marriage for her as well as for her husband. Her first marriage had lasted for seven years. Her family arranged her second marriage, with a wealthy Indo-Canadian man. She stayed in Sri Lanka after the marriage till her immigration was processed. She was satisfied with her marriage at this point and felt that the two had developed a

good relationship. She was looking forward to a good life in Canada. However, when she finally came to Canada with her children from first marriage her expectation were frustrated. Her husband was verbally abusive, yelling, and terrorizing them all the time. She was so terrified of him that she used to sleep in the living room with a knife under her bed. The psychological and emotional abuse continued for seven months and then her husband dissolved the marriage. She sought legal recourse but lost her case and did not get any alimony. She now regularly comes to the support sessions at the centre for abused women. She actively participates in the activities at the centre.

Fatima. Fatima is a 35 year old, well groomed, articulate woman from Pakistan. She worked in public relations in Pakistan. The interview was conducted in Urdu and lasted for 100 minutes. Fatima was very expressive and she frequently used gestures and body language to stress her words during the interview. Her three and a half year marriage had ended four years prior. This was her first marriage and she believes her husband had been married multiple times before. The marriage was arranged through a mutual acquaintance. Her husband went to Pakistan from Canada for the wedding but her family agreed to solemnize Nikah (the legal Muslim marriage contract) only. The situation is somewhat akin to engagement; though legally married, the bride still stays with her family until the official ceremony of Rukhsati is held. It is only then that the relationship is consummated and bride and groom start living together. During the marriage negotiations, her in-laws directly asked for cash in the dowry so that the new couple could set up their home in Canada. Her parents agreed to their demands. She joined them in Canada when the immigration process was completed after 18 months. After a few months in Canada she realized that it was her husband's business to go to Pakistan where he would get married, take money for dowry and then would come back to Canada. He would then mail the

divorce papers to his wife. Fatima believes that he had done this multiple times before, though this time he sponsored Fatima and she came to Canada. This was because he was expecting her to bring the negotiated dowry cash along with her. She spent the next three and a half years like a virtual slave. She was never left alone in the house and her every movement was controlled. She could not access the phone or internet, as everything was password protected. Her husband frequently and severely physically battered her. She also experienced emotional, psychological, social, sexual, and immigration abuse. She was denied food and medical care. Initially, while she was living with her husband, she had some contact with her family and had told them that everything was fine. After three years, her husband took her back to Pakistan and left her there. He did not give her the immigration documents and demanded $10,000 from her, to give her the documents. She believes that during his stay in Pakistan, her husband got married again. She was able to get travel documents issued by the Canadian embassy and came back to Canada. She filed a case against her husband but it was dismissed for lack of evidence. She is dejected and feels that the Canadian justice system has failed her miserably. She is now upgrading her education and job skills and is trying to establish herself in Canada.

Sabeeta. Sabeeta is a fifty-four year old woman from India. She has been married for twenty-six years and had separated two months prior to the interview. The interview was conducted in English and lasted 43 minutes. She had a slow reaction time, empty gaze and her voice was flat and monotone. Her affect was also flat. It was a difficult interview, as at times, I felt that I was not able to get through to her. Also posing a barrier was that the language of the interview was second language for each of us. Her language proficiency is fairly good and she was generally able to communicate well. She was on anti-depressant medication at the time of the interview.

She has been married for twenty-six years and has four children. She had come to Canada 13 years ago as a nurse aide and later was able to sponsor her family. Her husband and children joined her in Canada seven years later. Throughout her marriage, she persistently experienced physical abuse from her husband that started after the birth of their children. During the early years of marriage when she lived with her in-laws, she experienced psychological and emotional abuse by her mother-in-law and physical abuse from her sister-in-law. Her sons are now in their early twenties and they too have hit her. Her decision to leave the family home and move into the shelter was prompted by an incident in which her son hit her. She had called police on her husband on multiple occasions before and her husband has also been arrested once for domestic violence. She is currently staying at a shelter and is not sure what to do at this point. With respect to whether and when to return to her family, she wavered, saying at one point during the interview that she would go back in a few weeks and at another point, she said she would go back in a few years. She is in contact with her husband and daughter over the phone and they are pressuring her to come back.

Zara. Zara is from Pakistan and is in her mid-forties. The interview was conducted in Urdu and lasted for 40 minutes. Her husband divorced her three years ago after 12 years of marriage that had been arranged by her family. Her husband has three children from his first marriage and she believes that he needed someone to take care of his young children so he married her. They stayed in Pakistan for three years after getting married and them before moved to Canada. He divorced her nine years later and she feels that, once she did her job and raised the children, he divorced her. She has one biological son from the marriage. She experienced severe physical, psychological, emotional and economic abuse during twelve years of marriage. He was very violent and battered her badly. He was also physically abusive toward his children and his

first wife. Despite the severe abuse, Zara never wanted to end the marriage. Her husband initiated the divorce and she is now fighting for custody of her son. Meanwhile he has married again in Pakistan.

Amina. Amina is a thirty-four year old Indian woman. The interview was conducted in English and lasted for 55 minutes. She was very reflective, frequently closed her eyes, spending some time thinking about the experiences before talking about them. It seemed as if she was reliving the experiences. She got married at the age of 19 in a marriage arranged by her family. Her in-laws lived in Canada and she moved here after getting married. Her affinal family situation in Canada was joint and she shared the house with her parents-in-law, three brothers-in-law, and grand mother-in-law. Her marriage from the start was bumpy with frequent arguments with her spouse. However, the major issues in her marital life arose because of the extended family. She always felt that she was married to the family rather than her husband. He seemed to be very much dominated by his mother and followed her directions. She always felt lack of intimacy and nurturance in her marriage. She experienced psychological and emotional abuse from her husband and her extended family. There was occasional physical abuse (pushing and shoving, throwing objects at her) from her husband and she also reported one such incident from her brother-in-law. She was most concerned about the psychological and emotional abuse that she experienced from her husband and her in-laws. By the age of twenty-five, she had four children. Even with the children she felt that her husband was not fully shouldering his responsibilities and was aloof toward them. Her relationship with her husband worsened over time, arguments increased in frequency, as did the physical aggression. She finally decided to leave, and moved to a shelter. She is satisfied with her decision to walk out of her marriage and

feels relaxed and confident. She is upgrading her education. Her husband visits the children regularly and she is happy for them to have good relations.

Kiran. Kiran is from India. She is in her late thirties and immigrated to Canada after getting married about three years ago. The interview lasted for 59 minutes and was conducted in English. She was articulate and expressive during the interview. She had met her husband online. After two years of online contact they met in person and decided to get married. They got married in India and he came back to Canada while she waited for her immigration papers. It was the second marriage for both. She joined him a year later and almost immediately felt something was amiss. She did not experience any physical abuse, but endured psychological, emotional, and financial abuse in her marriage. In Canada, she lived in a joint family context with her parents-in-law living with them. Her husband did not support her financially and remained aloof from her, never spending much time with her. They did not even eat meals together and he spent much of his times at work and with friends outside of the home. She was expected to take care of the house, cooking, cleaning, and doing all the other household chores as well as looking after his parents. Her mother-in-law was very domineering and expected her to attend to her every need. Her husband sent her back to India accusing her of not adjusting to the demands of her new life. She did not have her immigration documents with her but got a travel document from Canadian embassy to travel back to Canada. Her husband refused to see or to talk to her and she moved to a shelter. She now has legal aid and is planning to take her husband to court.

Meena. Meena is a thirty-three year old charming woman from India. Her interview lasted for 65 minutes. She had adorned herself with all the symbols associated with married Hindu women. She is taking English classes and is not very fluent in English. However, she was very expressive and communicated effectively, switching comfortably between English and

Hindi. She immigrated to Canada four years ago after entering an arranged marriage. She comes from an underprivileged socioeconomic background and is not educated. This was her first marriage and she believes her husband's fourth. He had lied about his previous marriages as well as about his age. He has grown children from previous marriages but he concealed this information from her family. The marriage took place in India and she joined him in Canada a year later after immigration was processed. The abuse started almost immediately after her arrival in Canada. Her husband was very controlling and abusive and would hit her over little things. She found out about his multiple marriages and believes that her husband has made a business of getting married and receiving the dowry and committing financial frauds in unsuspecting wives' names. She stayed with her husband for about three years, despite all the abuse and deceit. At that point her husband moved out and stopped supporting her financially. She has no means of supporting herself and her son. She thinks that he is now ready to marry again and wants to get rid of her. Her divorce and alimony cases are in process.

Sukhi. Suki is in her early forties. She immigrated to Canada almost 15 years ago with her family. The interview was conducted in Punjabi and lasted for eighteen minutes. This was a short interview as she said she was uncomfortable discussing her situation at length. She appeared distressed during the interview and tears rolled down her face a few times. I offered to stop the interview but she wanted to continue. A routinely scheduled support group for abused women was starting shortly after the interview at the women's support centre where the interview was conducted. Sukhi participated in the group after the interview. I alerted the counsellor to her distress and decided to attend the group. This helped me ensure that Sukhi was feeling better and the distress that she had experienced while discussing her history of abuse during the interview was visibly reduced during the support group.

Even before the interview had started Sukhi said, "Ask what ever you want to ask, all I was doing was upholding my parents' honour." She got married 13 years ago in an arranged marriage in India. Her husband joined her a year later when she sponsored him. The first year after her husband joined her was good and she had a son. However, after that her husband became abusive and started hitting her severely and also started controlling her every movement. She describes the beatings as particularly bad after he would get drunk over the weekends, which was fairly frequent. This continued for six years but she did not want to end the marriage. She believes that he had an affair with a woman in India even before the marriage. A year after immigrating to Canada he wanted to divorce her but she did not agree to divorce. He increased the abuse but she put up with it to save her marriage. However, he went back to India and married the other woman, while still being married to her in Canada. She is now divorced and is rebuilding her life. She regularly comes to the women's support centre and feels that she is now become a much stronger person and is able to effectively cope with her life.

Participants Interviewed for Triangulation of Results

Anand. Anand is from Sri Lanka and has been in Canada for over a decade. He works for a social welfare agency that provides services to South Asian communities. He has been a humanitarian worker for 15 years and worked with the Red Cross and the United Nations before immigrating to Canada. He volunteered for the interview and did not receive any monetary compensation. I had met him prior to the interview at a South Asian welfare agency where he works and had developed a good rapport with him. He readily agreed to do the interview when I requested. We met in his office at the South Asian welfare agency. After securing his written consent and permission to record, I asked him to share his views about familial violence in South Asian communities. The interview lasted for 17 minutes.

Murli. Murli is a retired civil servant from Sri Lanka, and had immigrated to Canada five years ago. Anand had introduced us via email and he consented to my request for an interview. We met at the office space provided by the South Asian welfare agency. His participation was voluntary and he did not receive any monetary compensation. He is a soft- spoken, personable man and the interview was conducted in a friendly and open manner. I asked for written informed consent and permission to record the interview. After securing consent, I asked him to share his thoughts about domestic violence in South Asian communities. The interview lasted for 21 minutes.

Safia. Safia works as a counsellor at a women's support centre for South Asian women. She is an immigrant from Pakistan and has been working in her current position for over fifteen years. She has also helped me recruit participants through her agency for my research. I interviewed her at her office and the interview lasted for about 50 minutes. I asked her to share her thoughts about violence against women in South Asian communities. I then shared my findings with her and explained to her the main categories that I had conceptualized. I then asked her to share her thoughts about the findings. She did not consent to the recording of the interview so I took detailed notes during the interview. I concluded the interview by sharing the main points that I had written. I then asked her if I had been able to capture everything she had shared and if there was anything else she wanted to add to the interview. She made a few clarification points and was satisfied with my notes.

Aliya. Aliya works for a women's support centre as a counsellor. She is of South Asian background and provides services to women from all ethnic backgrounds. I asked her for an interview after meeting her at a conference on violence and South Asian women. I interviewed her at her office and found her to be very welcoming and forthright. The interview lasted for 53

minutes and she consented to audio recording of the interview. After securing her informed

consent, I asked her to share her thoughts about familial abuse among South Asian communities.

I then shared my findings and higher-level categories with her. She found them to be insightful

and related them to her work with South Asian clients.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

The grounded theory analysis resulted in a five-tier hierarchical structure where the higher order categories subsumed the properties of the lower order categories that defined them. During the first stage of analysis, the interviews were parsed into meaning units. A total of 284 meaning units were derived from the complete set of ten interviews. These meaning units yielded 114 categories. These categories were then grouped into 34, second order categories based on their shared properties. During this stage, some of the categories that were too specific or thin were dropped from further classification. The 34, second order categories were further distilled into eight, third order categories based on their common characteristics. These eight categories were then organized into three themes, based on their content, *Lost in the Desert, Navigating through the Desert, and Complexities of Honour.*

Chasing a Mirage: The Quest to Preserve Marriage and Honour

The three fourth level categories defined the core category *Chasing a Mirage: The Quest to Preserve Marriage and Honour*. I used the metaphor of a mirage because it vividly captures participants' initial experiences of being trapped in a lonely place (the desert) that offers them few resources but keeps deluding them with the prospect of an oasis of marital happiness and honour. Women spend their marital life nurturing the *Illusion of hope* that their devotion and commitment to their spouses and marriage will one day bring them into the oasis of marital happiness, and in so doing, they will maintain their personal and family honour. This theory is presented schematically in Figure 1. Only the top three tiers are represented in the figure.

Figure 1:

Schematic representation of the grounded theory
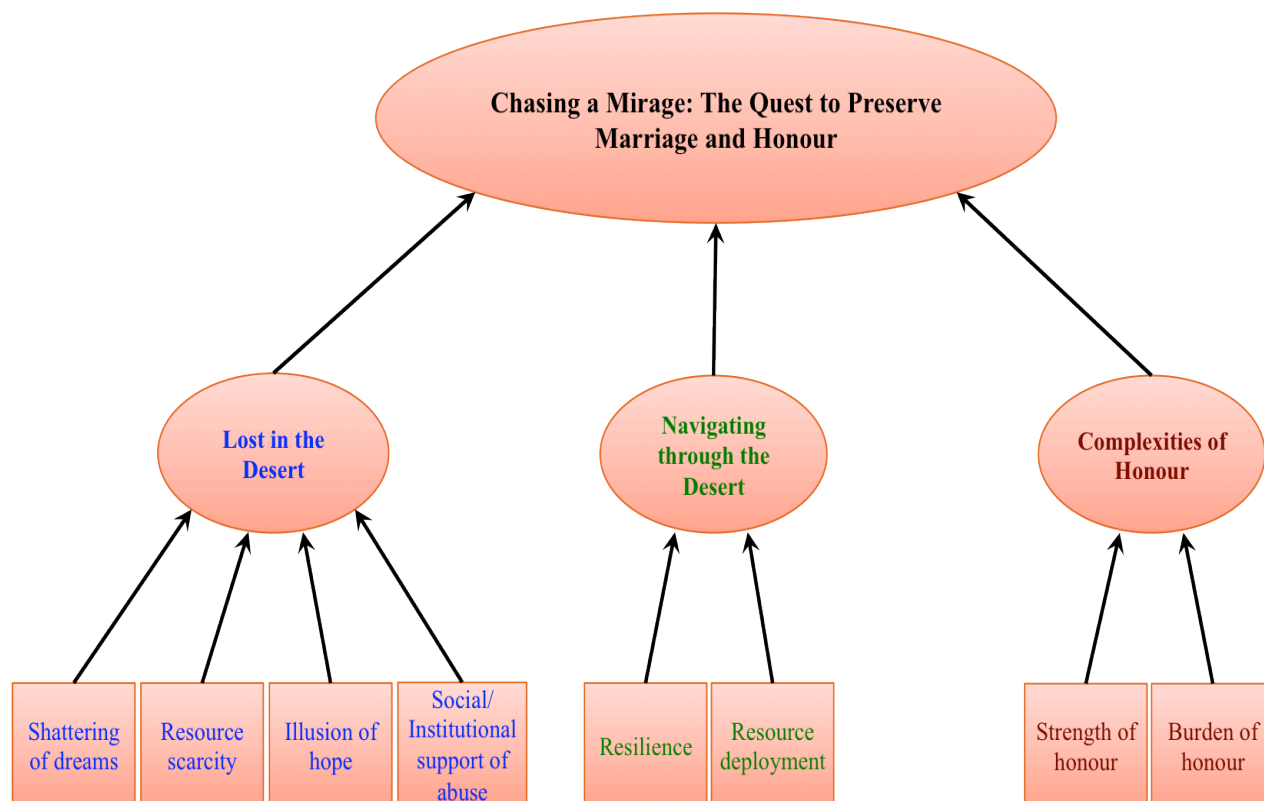
Eight of the ten women interviewed for the study had immigrated to Canada after getting

married. They had left their families and friends, and their entire way of living behind to join

their husbands. The remaining two had immigrated to Canada before their husbands and had

sponsored them. One of the women had moved to Canada as a nurse aide leaving her husband

and children behind and the other had moved with her natal family and later got married. All the

women had immigrated as adults and Canada was a new, unfamiliar terrain for them. They were

excited about their move and had dreams and hopes for their life in Canada. Most of them were

happy about joining their husbands and were looking forward to an emotionally fulfilling and comfortable life. However, after moving to Canada, the immigrant wives experienced a barren, sterile marriage, and a lonely life in an alien land that included extensive and varied forms of abuse. Most of them were not familiar with the system that governed life in this new land. They hardly knew anyone in their surroundings and many lacked language and other basic skills required to survive in the new environment. They came to their new homeland enticed by the mirage of a blissful marriage and a comfortable life; however, like a desert, the reality offered them few emotional, material, and social resources.

The women discovered that their husbands, the persons for whom they had completely uprooted their lives, were not what they had been led to believe. In addition to the deceit, they experienced several forms of abuse ranging from denial of basic provisions such as food and medicine to physical battery that required medical attention. Plunged into this extremely harsh environment, the women did not have any physical, emotional, and social resources to deal with the situation. These elements of the women's experience are represented in the domain *Lost in the Desert*.

Ideological, geographical, linguistic, and economic barriers prevented the women from leaving their abusive marriages and so they stayed in their unforgiving situations. Despite choosing not to leave these abusive marriages, these women started learning ways to navigate through this rough terrain. They looked for ways to empower themselves and gradually, developed personal, social and institutional resources. Cultivating friendships, learning language and job skills, and procuring employment were some of the ways that they were able to cope and ultimately, survive. Their efforts to adapt to life in Canada, and their resilience and tenacity were conceptualized under the domain *Navigating through the Desert*.

Despite the abuse, women retained the *Illusion of hope* that they would keep their marriages and honour intact. This, however, remained an illusion and eventually the marriages dissolved, usually at the behest of their husbands. The women showed remarkable strength and resilience in navigating this aspect of their situation as well, and fought back in order to continue to rebuild their lives in Canada. Some women also experienced immigration abuse where their husbands tried to keep them out of Canada by withholding their immigration documents. However, with the help of their social networks and social-legal services available to them in Canada, women redefined themselves and adapted to their new roles as divorced/single women.

Honour ideology was a crucial form of baggage that women carried with them through their journey. Consistent with Baxter's (2007) thesis that honour is a multi-layered ideology which prescribes restrictive behaviour codes for women as well as assigns them privileges, power, and claim over men, the participants reported being simultaneously burdened and strengthened by honour scripts. This intricate role of honour defines the third domain *Complexities of Honour.* It underscores the multidimensional properties of the honour ideology. Despite their ordeal, most of the women were unwilling to leave their marriage and continued to believe and hope that eventually everything would be fine. They felt that one day they would be able to build a good marriage and would have the honourable status of happily married women. Eventually, however, for eight participants their husbands dissolved their marriages. Two walked out of the relationship and were living in a shelter but had not expressed any intention to divorce their husbands.

The three main domains along with their constituent categories are discussed below.

Lost in the Desert

This domain subsumed the lower order categories that represented the cruel and harsh realities of life in Canada for immigrant wives. Eight out of the ten participants had come to Canada because their husbands had sponsored them while the other two had sponsored their husbands. The women were charmed by the allure of marrying someone from Canada and had come looking forward to a happy and prosperous life. Their hopes were dashed almost immediately after coming to Canada. In addition to abusive marriages, women who were immigrant wives, as well as those who had sponsored their husbands, faced the harsh realities of life in a new country without familial and social support. Sabeeta, for example, had moved by herself after securing employment and did not have any family or friends in Canada. Sukhi, in contrast, had moved to Canada along with her family and later got married and sponsored her husband. She had been educated in India and her English proficiency was poor, making it difficult for her to integrate into mainstream Canadian society.

Women's sufferings were multiplied because of the tacit socio-cultural support of abuse as well as the advantage and power men had because, for most of the women in the sample, the men were Canadian citizens and were well integrated in the social and employment arenas. All these facets of women's experiences are represented by four, third level categories subsumed by the *Lost in the Desert* category. The third level categories along with their constituent fourth level categories are presented in Table 1. In the following discussion of the categories, I have mostly presented two quotes to ground each category in text but occasionally have included more than two because each quote highlights a unique property of the category. I have endeavoured to include quotes from all participants evenly but some participants are represented more than others because they had contributed more to the interviews. The quotes from interviews

conducted in English are presented verbatim. For quotes from interviews that were translated in English, I identify them with the word translation in brackets at the end of the quote.

Table 1

Lost in the Desert: Lower order categories with defining properties

Shattering of dreams	Resource scarcity	Illusion of hope	Social/ institutional support of abuse
• *allure of the West* • *garbage husband* • *barren marriage* • *domestic servitude* • *phases of abuse* • *emotional depletion* • *marriage mafia*	• *language and information barriers* • *economic dependence* • *geographical barriers* • *immigration abuse* • *isolation*		• *patriarchy* • *in-laws' intrusion and abetment of abuse* • *powerful men beat the legal system*

Shattering of dreams. This category reflects the harsh realities that women faced after getting married and coming to Canada. Their dreams of marital happiness and material comfort were crushed and they found themselves in the throes of physical and/or psychological brutality. Before moving to Canada, most women had high expectations from their spouses and their life in Canada and were swayed by the *allure of the West.* Their expectation was that, because their husbands were educated and employed in Canada they would have liberal values and would be financially secure. Asha alluded to such an arrangement in her comment:

> He went over there, arranged marriage, and then choose me then marriage. We didn't know before marriage had another Lebanese women he married. Then after divorce, married me. I didn't know no, nothing, they are rich people then one year later I came here, because my husband sponsored me.

> Similarly, Preeti expressed the following expectations about the personality of her husband, primarily based on factors like his residence in the West, his Western education, and his high status

job: I thought that he is living here; your approach is very advanced.
Your thinking is very open. But when I came here I realized that
my husband's mentality is the same as of someone from 100-150
years ago in India......You have had your education from Europe.
You are working in a law firm, living in an advanced country so
you should not have this thinking. [Translation].

Their dreams were short lived and their expectations were crushed almost immediately upon immigrating to Canada when they realized that their husbands were not the 'man of their dreams' but, to the contrary, a *garbage husband.* The properties of this category represent the malevolent characteristics and behaviours of men. These behaviours included neglect, dismissiveness of spousal and parental responsibilities, lies and deception, exercising extreme control over women, and alcoholism. The following statement from Asha highlights many qualities of garbage husbands:

Morning to night drinking, drinking whiskey, beer mix, and that
time I find beater very bad things. Three bottles drink after that full
crazy. What he is doing, I didn't know, bad very bad. I am scared
you know, delivery pain one day, my husband went store to buy
another. I said don't go over there, I have problem. Then no, ok, no
problem no problem, came water coming. Then I said water
coming, said what yes, drunk husband called ambulance,
ambulance didn't come, taxi didn't come. I don't know, no didn't
call ambulance only taxi, taxi night, don't like to come. Then my
husband ride that time I had to watch where is hospital, health
centre you know raining too much raining that time. Then my
husband, when there garbage talk, they are asking this, this, this,
garbage talk. They thought oh my God he is drunk because smell.
Then after that gone day after I had born my son then my husband
didn't come because so many you know drunk.

The second quote by Balwant indicates her husband's evasion of his spousal as well as parental responsibilities. This was a very common experience reported by all women. Men rarely upheld their responsibilities toward them and their children, and the women were left to fend for themselves.

> So that was like I stayed for four days in the hospital with the C-section. My family doctor, my gynaecologist and my surgeon tried to call my husband, we need you to be [by the] side of your wife and he didn't even pick up the phone that day.

The women were experiencing a *barren marriage,* as there was a lack of intimacy and love. There were hardly any tender moments experienced by women and they missed that in their marriages. The first quote is from Meena. She has limited fluency in English but she expresses her desire for receiving love from her husband and for being in a marital relationship quite eloquently:

> If husband understand well, there is no fighting, because we get relaxation. Where do you get this relaxation from, love, all relaxation comes from our husband. If husband is not good but all other people are nice, what do you get, your life is destroyed……It feels very good to have a husband, but a husband like this, who harasses everyday.

The second quote representing the *barren marriage* category is from Amina and reflects her cold, aloof relationship with her husband. Her husband never responded to her overtures to improve the relationship. She notes that he even maintained a similar distant relationship with their children. She also alludes to the control of her mother-in-law over her husband and identifies it as a barrier in her relationship with her husband.

> He didn't fulfil, I don't feel he is fulfilling his responsibilities as a husband. We would never, I think, he was always fearing his mother like not going out together. We didn't have the special time we needed to nurture our relationship. I thought that it was I married to his family really rather than, you know. Even if I wanted to ask him for a walk it was basically, "I don't want to go, I don't want to go." Sometime, I needed some time, some air, "I don't want to go." Even with the kids with their school like parenting nights not there, activities not there, and I just felt something missing, something missing a lot missing.

Women's dreams were also shattered when they realized that their lives in Canada were defined by *domestic servitude.* This category represents the daily household chores and

responsibilities that were assigned to women. This was particularly applicable to women who

had moved in with their in-laws and lived in extended families. They were expected to tend to

the needs of everyone and their personal wants and comfort were never a priority. The first quote

from Kiran commenting about her in-laws' attitude as if they had bought her is very telling.

> Since I came she (*mother-in-law*) won't do anything. She would
> just sit there ok," coffee, tea, I need sandwich, you need to clean up,
> you do this", she would never ever help me. I don't know they
> thought they bought me or so. Seriously she would just command
> me around, I was not allowed to go to go into my room like over
> the day take a nap or relax or something. "No", she says "it doesn't
> happen here, we don't go into our rooms if you want to then lie
> down on the couch."

In Fatima's description of the start of her daily routine, she, like Kiran, refers to herself as a maid

in the household:

> I stayed with them as a maid. They would hit me and I was not
> allowed to cry….. My role was, she would come at four in the
> morning, wake me up by kicking me, "wake up, wake up, do this
> chore. Vacuum, hand wash the clothes, wash these dishes, here are
> our shoes, polish them." [Translation].

Women experienced various *phases of abuse* and differentiated between physical, verbal,

emotional and financial abuse during the interviews. This could reflect the fact that they had

been coming to the women's counselling centres and had been attending counselling sessions

and support groups. The experiences of women ranged from extreme physical battery to verbal,

emotional, psychological, social, and economic abuse. While all the women who reported

physical abuse also experienced psychological and emotional abuse, two reported only verbal

and emotional abuse without any physical violence. Five of the women experienced abuse from

their extended in-laws in addition to the abuse perpetrated by their husbands.[2]

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[2] I have included one meaning unit to represent each of the different types of abuse reported by
women. I did not categorize immigration abuse that has been identified in literature as a type of

Asha narrated the extent of economic abuse she had experienced during the twenty-five years of her marriage. She did not have any money to buy life-saving medicines and her husband refused to buy them for her. She eventually landed in hospital because of a diabetic coma.

> I went to their diabetes specialist; "she said you have to take insulin." My husband, "No I don't like to spend money because I have no money, no nothing," lying you know then problem, problem. One day I went hospital senseless for this. I stayed [hospital name] hospital.

Sukhi mentioned the physical, emotional, and psychological abuse that she experienced at the hands of her husband.

> [*He*] would get drunk and would hit me. If I would go out or go to gurdawara (*temple*) he would get angry with me, "why did you talk to someone, was he your boyfriend." I used to go to my parents' house, would get angry with me there also. [For work] he would be on the road for a week. On the day off he would go out in the morning, in the evening would drink alcohol for two days and would batter me so much. Once he pulled my hair so much, hit me so much that I in darkness, had torn my clothes, bare foot, I went to my uncle's house. It was two in the night (*2:00 am*). [Translation].

Preeti experienced verbal and emotional abuse in her marriage. The diatribe she mentions from her husband was directed at her daughter.

> [*He*] was very abusive verbally, I told you before, very bad words, as I told you before, "You are prostitute, go away, do this." I am saying that man had no control over his tongue........But even today that man wants that this women should fall on my feet and should express that I need you.[3] [Translation].

Women also experienced various kinds of abuse from their in-laws. Amina, for example, shares the physical and verbal abuse she was subjected to by her brother-in-law.

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abuse experienced by immigrant spouses in this category. I categorized it under the next third level category of *Resource scarcity* as it better reflected the properties of *immigration abuse.*
[3] A metaphor in Hindi implying that the woman should bow in utter humiliation.

> I was having problems with cable, technical issues and I was on the phone with the cable company. I was on the phone for two hours. And I had to go to the living room because they were in the living room and I was playing around with wires. He got really frustrated got mad at me, "Why are you poking and prodding?" Like why is she you know. He ends up throwing a vase at me he got really frustrated. He ends up throwing a vase and he was like you are invading my privacy. And the whole family came and was witnessing this but nobody told him to stop. He ends up leaving for the night and I ended up crying in my room. And my husband obviously had an argument with his family why he treated my wife this way.

The quote below from Fatima exemplifies the psychological abuse she experienced in her marriage. She was new to Canada. Not only did she not know anyone here, but she also had no knowledge about Canadian society. Her husband used this and instilled fear in her about being put into mental institution.

> As soon as I came [*to Canada*] they started to intimidate and dominate me. "You will do like this, if you scream then we will call them. They will come and take you and put you in mental institution." They brought me and imprisoned me in a room. I could not watch TV, read newspaper, talk to someone on the phone. Even prisoners are not treated this badly. [Translation].

In the quote below, Meena talks about the frivolous reasons that could trigger battery from her husband. She also talks about the terrorizing effect this abuse had on her.

> I am telling reasons for abuse and hitting, he is talking on the phone, I don't know, I am in the kitchen cutting onions. ….. I am cutting onions, it has cover (*peel*). He heard the sound and got disturbed, I don't know, this is not a reason, mentally, his behaviour is like this, came and hit me, "why did you hit me?" said, "you cut the onions and disturbed me." Therefore, when I hear the ring tone I get very scared, I go inside and even close the door.

The abuse, lack of love, and unending household chores and responsibilities led to *emotional depletion* in women. This category reflects the psychological pain, suffering and depression that the women experienced after living through the harsh realities of abusive

marriages. The meaning units assigned to this category ranged from statements about falling into depression, to more existential expressions of cognitive and emotional exhaustion. This range probably reflects the diverse personalities and educational background of participants. The first quote from Amina reflects her emotional apathy and mechanistic execution of her daily routine. The emotional trauma had taken a heavy toll on her personality as she expresses her inability to forge loving, trusting relationships.

> I couldn't function, all I would do was like, I was a machine like do the cooking, cleaning, do the routine, my home work…….When I finished the cooking I ended up just going to bed. I didn't want my kids around me. I didn't want no one to talk to me. I just was exhausted. I was just mentally exhausted. They don't realize the trauma and how it affected my brain, it's very hard for me to trust anyone. I find it very hard to even socialize with anyone, put trust in any man, any woman because women were there too.

The next quote from Asha indicates the medical and psychological help she needs to heal from her abusive marriage.

> Then so many people depressed and psychiatrist and psychologist. You will so see many patients psychiatrist. I go over there I have psychiatrist and psychologist too. I went there, why I went there, why so many people went there because so many people depress and problem then we are going, we have to go. Four tablets everyday I have to take but doctor said 25 years memory not going away but you will feel little bit good.

Many women believed that their husbands had gotten married to secure financial gains and had done so multiple times before marrying them. This is reflected in the lower order category of *marriage mafia.* Two women noted that their husbands had contracted marriages in order to obtain dowry and one said the motive was insurance money. Once those benefits were procured, the women became expendable. Husbands were then willing to go to any lengths to get them out of their lives. The first quote is from Fatima. She does not know how many times her husband had married before and notes that he has married again after leaving her. She alleged

that her former husband usually does not sponsor the women he marries and the women remain

in Pakistan while he comes back to Canada with the dowry he receives as part of the marriage

arrangements. In her particular case, because her parents had made the marriage contingent on

her immigration, he sponsored her. She says:

> This was a business these people had made. They would go to
> Pakistan, get married, spend nights with women, would come back
> with money and jewellery and would not sponsor them…… This
> was because these people had committed many such frauds before
> and the person who had arranged this marriage was also their
> accomplice. [Translation].

Balwant does not believe that her husband was involved in multiple marriage frauds but he had

lied to her family about his previous marriage and married her for greed. Her family gave a lot of

dowry, and gold jewellery that her husband took from her, she says, "They are greedy about the

money. I find it mostly who is re-married or creating problems they get the money and went back

home and get married again like that." Meena alleges that her husband selects women from

remote parts of India who do not speak English. He then buys life insurance for them and

commits insurance fraud, either by leaving them in India or by killing them. She has filed a

criminal case and has a restraining order against him.

> My husband had married three women before. But we did not know.
> Every five years he changes a girl. Afterwards insurance got
> insurance. Dollars 500,000 thousand insurance in my name, got the
> insurance, did this to the first wife. I found out later….. I don't
> know how to read English, no nothing they select such girls to get
> married. That's why he chooses such a woman to marry.

Resource scarcity. While women were facing the harsh realities of married life in

Canada, their lives were further complicated by *Resource scarcity*. This category defines the

lack of resources and the barriers that limited their ability to generate resources to manage their

lives. Because of the *language and information barriers,* women were unable to access

resources that could help them to improve their lives. Their limited fluency in English and lack of everyday skills to function effectively in Canada were two of the barriers that prevented women from actively seeking help or integrating into Canadian society. Not all of the participants reported language problems and some had a good command of English. However, almost everyone mentioned their unfamiliarity with their new surroundings as an obstacle for them in everyday life, as well as in accessing services. The first quote is from Asha in which she talks about the time when she first came to Canada. She indicates that something as simple as mailing a letter can be a problem for women as they are not able to get help from their husbands even for such routine tasks.

> So many problems, that time I was homesick but what I have to do,
> I didn't say my family my parents, didn't say, how to? Because I
> don't understand English, I didn't then after that I was thinking I
> have to send one letter how to?

Similarly Meena shares her lack of simple everyday skills such as grocery shopping when she initially came to Canada. Taking advantage of her lack of knowledge of English, her husband made her sign legal documents about which she had no idea.

> But here, even Wal-Mart little, little things I don't know even about
> them…… I did not know a single word of English at that time.
> Now I have, after having all these problems I come to school and
> now I am learning English. That why I started to find a little about
> my signatures, in his files there are many signed papers. Once I
> looked at them, are all these are my signatures? How, what
> happened, so I showed them to someone, showed them to the
> counsellor, I found out what was in those papers what is this man
> doing to me.

Women with young children frequently reported their inability to utilize child support funding offered to them by the government. Husbands took advantage of women because of their limited grasp of English and unfamiliarity with Canadian regulations. They were either not informed or misinformed about child support benefits and were denied access to the money. Zara says:

I have no idea how much money was issued for the children, where
and how did he spent it. When I separated I had no knowledge
about Canadian laws and regulations. After I separated, I called the
child support services after two months and requested that my son's
account should be separated from those of the other (*step*) children.
He used to use my son's as well as his children's money. I do not
know when and how much money is awarded and where was it
being spent. When I came here, so when I came here and after two
months that the child support should now be separated for my child
from the other four children. I came here [women's support centre]
to get my son's support money separated from other siblings. Then
they called the child support services and they said that "money for
the older children was issued in my name, when did you separate
and when you split why didn't you tell us? You are telling us after
two months." So I said that I did not know these regulations and
my husband insulted me like this. So they said, " sorry, it's not
your fault but because the child support was issued in your name
we can not do anything about it with him." So they charged me
$5000 immediately because you did not tell us for that….. So $145
from my son's support money was deducted every month for three
years. [Translation].

Difficulties with the English language and lack of information contributed to the

economic dependence of women on their husbands and in-laws. This situation put women in a

precarious position and husbands fully exploited this to their advantage. For example, Asha talks

about how her husband blackmailed her with homelessness, "I didn't know Canadian rights, I

have to call police. 'Go and call you will sit on the street you know homeless people, like

homeless people,' then I scared." Similarly, Preeti says:

They are dependent. They are not strong and educated enough to
earn for themselves and raise their children. So they know that we
have to put up with this because if we leave we will not be able to
feed ourselves, where will we live? [Translation].

Geographical barriers further exacerbated the difficulties of women because of the

physical distances between Canada and their home countries in South Asia. These barriers

restricted the emotional, material, and social support women could access from friends and

family while in Canada. Meena notes how her location in Canada restricted her options to respond to the abuse, " Normally if hits, I say I am leaving with my suitcase, but this is not my village, how can I go from such far distant place, right…. That's why I tried to be patient." Similarly Amina shares how the social and familial support for women was constrained because of the physical distance. She did not share her decision to leave her husband and move to the shelter with her parents because of the distance.

> Actually the day I was leaving my father had called from [country name] to say, "Oh hi how are you?" I said yeah everything is fine. I remember climbing up the stairs and I had the phone in my hand, said everything is fine dad, yeah fine yeah, school is fine. Because I got a lot of resistance when they found out, "Why didn't you tell us?" And I said, "What were you going to do, you are all the way over there. You would have just told me to stay anyway, what would you have done?"

Geographical barriers were also used by husbands to their advantage in the way they were able to evade their responsibilities because of the distances. While women were in India waiting for the immigration process or were visiting family, their primary contact with their husbands was through the telephone, and the husbands often exploited this situation. Balwant was one participant who experienced this many times during her marriage. She had her first child while her immigration was still being processed. Her husband was visiting her in India but as her due date drew closer, he left her to go to Canada. After the baby was born, he rarely called her and never took any interest in the child. Balwant was left to manage all the expenses in relation to the birth of the child on her own, and was only able to do so with the help of her family. On another occasion, after Balwant had immigrated to Canada, she returned to India to visit her family. Her husband, who remained in Canada, tried to break all contact with her to the point of changing his phone number multiple times to avoid her calls.

> We tried to call him up he changed his phone. Three phone numbers he changed, he usually gives it to his brother who was in India and sisters but not to me. So I always call them there to get his number. My father used to call him, "When you are coming when you are coming?" "Next month, next month, New year, new year."

Geographical barriers also allowed the husbands to engage in *immigration abuse.* This type of abuse was defined by the different ways in which husbands blocked wives' access to their immigration documents even though they were permanent residents of Canada. Fatima notes that, when she went back to Pakistan with her husband, he made sure he was in possession of her immigration documents and later he left her at her parents' house and returned to Canada with her documents without informing her.

> When I came here, immediately my passport, ID card, whatever things, they were in his custody even my belongings, luggage, everything, my health card, everything was with them….. I talked to my brother, he said, "Come with me to the lawyer they have left you, they have taken everything of yours, they had come to throw you here,…..If this was not in their plans then they would have given you your passport and other things. And they had told you that we will go back together." I called (*the airline*) and asked where is the return ticket in the name of Fatima, they said it has been cancelled. [Translation].

Kiran had a similar experience and was left stranded in India as a result. Prior to leaving Canada for India, she was at the Toronto airport when she realized that she had forgotten her permanent resident card at home. She believes there was enough time for them to go back home and get the card, but her husband who was dropping her off at the airport, refused, assuring her that he would mail it to her. Later, her in-laws visited India but they never brought her card with them.

Obviously this was their plan. And my husband was ok, "Anyways I will, I will fed-ex you or so." Ok and the lady that lady told me, "Ok you know what, it's not that important right now but when you are coming back then you will need it. Otherwise you won't, they won't let you enter." She said, "Even if you don't get it, it's not a problem. You apply for a travel document," which I didn't know by then. So I am in India now, three months, two, two and a half months are gone you know. So I am like waiting hearing from him. So I thought ok let me go and apply for travel document, because they are not sending me and his parents they came over, they, they have no plan…… I called the airline now to book the ticket. Surprise, they cancelled my ticket and refunded it already.

Isolation was a well thought out strategy by husbands and their families to ensure

Resource scarcity for the women. Women described that husbands and in-laws purposely

isolated them to stifle their independence and empowerment. Balwant realized this when she

talked to her husband about child support benefits. She says:

I was not allowed to call anybody. I was not allowed to go out of home till I know, when I knew that children are provided child support money, my friend told me, I told him, he said, "Where did you go? Whom did you visit? Whom did you meet? Did you go somewhere?" He would come and stand outside my home for a long time to check whom is she calling, whom is she meeting, so I experienced this kind of atmosphere.

Preeti also shares similar views and talks about this mental outlook of men in general as well as

in specific reference to her husband.

When I came here [women support centre] many people come here who tell that Asian husbands think that if their wives go out and meet more people than she will get lots of knowledge about women's rights here. Because women do not have any rights back home. A woman suffers silently but here woman is very strong. But here when she goes out she is very strong. She is told about all her rights. So he probably also thought the same that if she goes out. [Translation].

I am including a third quote to illustrate the use of *isolation* by in-laws to keep women under

their control. Amina shared her analysis of why her in-laws responded the way they did when

she started school.

> I decided to apply to college. And when I got in, it was mother-in-law, father-in-law saying no response, no happiness, no nothing. All I wanted to do was to get an education and do something for my family…….. Independence that may be that I, I am able to stand up for myself, that they can't control my behaviour. I think for my mother-in-law it was basically she wanted us, the daughter-in-laws, to stay at home, have children and be at home with us.

Illusion of hope. Despite the suffering and abuse, women nurtured the *Illusion of hope* that one day everything would be fine. They remained convinced that one-day their prayers would be answered and everything that is wrong in their marriages would be fixed. This hope not only made them stay in abusive marriages but also motivated them to present the "all is well" impression to everyone and to not seek help. The first quote is from Sukhi and poignantly reflects this approach. The number of 'ifs' in her statement is suggestive of the multiplicity of problems in her marriage, but nonetheless she still was hopeful that one day things would improve:

> I used to think that he might get better today, get better today, if his affair back home had ended or if that had broken up, or he had a fight with her and if he did not have this in his heart that I am not going to marry her, in my husband's heart, his sense was not destroyed, did not consume alcohol, then perhaps times could have improved, good days could have come, after bad days, good days could also have come. [Translation].

Similarly Fatima, despite all the abuse she experienced, waited for a miracle and never thought about ending the marriage.

> I had accepted him as husband with all my heart, he had not accepted as wife. I kept thinking that God could show his miracle at any time. ….Never thought about leaving, after enduring so much cruelty. I thought that perhaps this is my destiny, when God puts someone on the right path, He does not take long. [Translation].

The quote from Asha below is particularly revealing as she expresses her confidence that her husband will come back despite the fact that he had divorced her. She expects that her devotion and suffering will eventually be fruitful and her husband will return to her. She states, "I know my husband will come, everyone know, my children know, everyone know. My friends say, "You did too much for your husband and he will come." That time I will see what I have to do." A particularly strong expression of the *Illusion of hope* was evidenced by Asha's and Meena's appearance. Asha is divorced, and Meena is separated with divorce proceedings in court but both still adorned themselves with symbols specifically associated with married Hindu women. They were wearing sandoor (vermilion) in their hair and the mangalasutra necklace that only married women wear. Perhaps they felt that they were married women because the Hindu religion does not recognize divorce even though it is permitted by Hindu civil code.

      Social/institutional support of abuse. Women also alluded to the institutional and socio-cultural norms that both directly and indirectly supported abuse, and made it difficult for them to leave abusive marriages. All women mentioned the patriarchal structure of South Asian communities as an important factor in their experiences. Most women identified the gender power imbalance arising out of patriarchal institutions as a contributory factor in familial violence. They insightfully analysed the pervasiveness of these values in their own outlook and how their parents passed these values to them. Women talked about *patriarchy* by referring to the structural and institutional privileges that enable men to treat women as the inferior sex and legitimize their abusive behaviours. Sabeeta summarized the patriarchal structure of South Asian families cogently, "In our communities men are the main members of the family, usually men in the family comparing husband wife and children, the husband is the most, biggest person in the family. That is our culture."

This patriarchal structure of society and family also shapes men's attitudes, as they feel entitled

to their privileges. Balwant elaborated upon this cultural norm:

> Their thinking is that if she is our wife, then she should work for us
> like a puppet. If the puppet goes out of their control then everything
> goes opposite of what they want and their violence starts over little
> things. They think that it is our ego; she is not listening to me. She
> is my wife and is not listening to me then this starts. Men think that
> we have all the power. We are powered physically, we are powered
> mentally, and we are powered financially. She does not have
> anything. We can do whatever we want. She is only to bear
> children. She has to clean the house. She does not need anything
> else. She should always follow directions and work. They do not
> want to go beyond their ego even if they ruin other lives.

Women not only pointed to the patriarchal structure of the family and its impact on men's

understanding of gender roles, but they also stressed how society's institutions support these

values. For example, Zara identified parents as treating sons differently from daughters and also

brought up the privileges granted to husbands in the marriage laws of Islam. She is herself

deeply religious and is a teacher in a religious school and subscribes to these norms.

> Because women are weak, men are strong, and they do whatever
> they want. I think even with their parents they are stubborn. Parents
> also indulge sons, they tell daughters that you have to get married
> and live with in-laws, but son can do anything……Men think that
> if one leaves another will come and it is in their hands to keep or to
> not keep the wife. In our Islam that's the way it is, if he says
> something then she is out of the Nikah[4]. [Translation].

Women were also subjected to *In-laws' intrusion and abetment of abuse*. Men had the

active support and collusion of their families in perpetrating the abuse. This collusion ranged

from condoning or inciting their abusive behaviour, to helping them evade the legal

repercussions of abuse. The physical abuse perpetuated by in-laws is not defined as *in-laws'*

intrusion and abetment of abuse; it was assigned to the category *phases of abuse*. Most women

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[4] Marriage contract; she is referring to the fact that Islam allows men to unilaterally divorce
women by simply saying I divorce you three times.

felt that their in-laws were complicit in the abuse for various reasons. Some suggested that

motives were financial, as they did not want men to spend and share their money with their

wives. In-laws' intrusion was more pronounced in extended family households where mundane

issues like division of household chores and sharing of common living space provoked an array

of abusive behaviours. Kiran mentioned how her mother-in-law controlled her and denied her

any time for herself. She also tried to make sure that the couple never got to spend any time

together. Even when the mother-in-law went out of town, she arranged to have her own mother

(Kiran's grandmother-in-law) stay with Kiran and her husband. This was a situation that once

again ensured that Kiran did not get any alone time with her husband:

> I was not suppose to watch TV. My own, you know even when she
> was not watching or nobody was watching I was not suppose to
> watch. Because she would watch her programmes and switch it off
> and would say, would turn the radio on. Kind of I was not suppose
> to do anything. I wasn't suppose to be on laptop. They and she, she,
> she would, I am thinking, oh I am chatting to somebody or talking
> to somebody and they were listening to my conversations……I was
> actually looking forward to it that finally we will be alone. We can
> spend sometime because we were never left alone. …..But first
> time when I came here to Canada, my in-laws they went to England.
> She left her mother with us, her mother is very old like 90 years old.
> So she needs somebody all the time. So we did not have time for
> each other then, we never had time for each other. And we could sit
> talk to each other nicely, openly, just relax or understand each other.

Preeti, who lived in a nuclear family, points to the role of her in-laws in her divorce and believes

that money, was the motivation behind their involvement in the break-up of the marriage:

> I think that his family is also fully responsible. Perhaps they did not
> also want, that's all I can say. …… I think perhaps his family
> thought that if she stays, then our son's house and earnings would
> go to her or her children. ……My husband is also guilty but now I
> think that if the responsibility is 60% his then 40% is that of his
> family. [Translation].

Balwant felt that her in-laws actively participated in her abuse by plotting against her. They

helped her husband misappropriate the couple's money including all the gifts that she had

received from her family as dowry and on other occasions after her marriage. Her in-laws made

sure that she did not receive anything from the couple's wealth by helping her husband transfer

the funds into their names.

> It's not like that only your husband is abusing. The whole family
> gets together and abuses you. Even the women against women, like
> my sister-in-laws they abused me. They cooked up so many stories
> and came to court. One of my sister-in-laws came from America
> she lied and said, "I had an accident, and the $250 thousand that
> my brother gave me were spent on my insurance. I do not have
> anything I cannot return him the money so he cannot give any
> money to his family," all lies.

Social/institutional support of abuse was also manifested in the manner by which

powerful men beat the legal system. The properties of this category reflect the privileged

position men enjoy by virtue of being able to beat society's safeguards against abuse, further

enabling them to control and exploit women. This position, however, does not strictly stem from

patriarchy, but rather from the fact that men have power and status that comes from economic

independence and control. Women indicated that their husbands were established and well-

versed in the Canadian social and legal systems so they knew exactly how to beat the system and

keep themselves clean. Women also felt that the legal system in Canada is lopsided and favours

men, allowing them to abuse women with impunity. Asha makes a very interesting connection

between the social services provided to abused women and the leniency of the law toward

abusers in her statement below:

> Canadian law don't give any punishment any man. ……Judge said,
> "Your money more," my money more, my husband money lower
> then how to decide but my husband left the job and sold the
> car……Don't have to give any money wife. But if punishment here

then not like that, but not punishment here no punishment here ……Canadian people helping us, any problem they are taking care. But they are not punishing the person who is beating. Only one day they take jail only one day but sometimes, no nothing because they thought, Canadian, I, my experience, they thought we are helping people, we are giving money, we are giving housing we are taking care, then don't need punishment. When it's that, man we will do another, and another and another [*marriage*] but who is suffering? …...have to give money, then problem, but government teach them no problem, you see, government teach them you did one time, no more, then they don't like to do, but they are playing with women. They are playing you know, men are playing with women.

Similarly Meena talked about the adeptness of men at covering their tracks and never getting

punished:

Looking at these people, how can they punishment, even court also wants all proofs, but these people are very smart. They do it very smartly then how can we show it to court, but once court should understand, should think about ladies, to give a strong, strong warning to men. Even after divorce happens, how many times he married, what did he do, should investigate this, and punish him then these people won't do this. My husband has readied another woman for marriage.

Both Meena and Asha's statements demonstrate the ways in which men evade justice and exploit

the legal system. Both emphasize that loopholes in the legal system allow men to continue their

abuse and exploitation of women. The other property that defined this category, namely the

advantage men have because of their privileged position over their victims, is expressed by Kiran

when she talks about her family's concern and fears for her.

My parents are scared that he might be doing something to me, can do something to me you know. So that if he knows where I am, and where I am……So he can do because he is in control, he has money, he has power, he has everything, can happen, we never know.

Navigating Through the Desert

The second domain *Navigating Through the Desert* subsumed the categories that

reflected women's efforts to adapt to their lives in Canada (see Table 2). This domain was

defined by two lower order categories *Resilience* and *Resource deployment*. Women displayed

remarkable strength in adjusting to their new lives. They rebuilt their lives in Canada with

resolve and rigour, taking the necessary steps to start anew. The category *Resource deployment*

highlights the legal, social, and familial resources and support that were available to women to

help them adjust to their lives in Canada. This was particularly relevant after their relationships

had ended as women actively sought these resources to redefine themselves.

Table 2

Navigating Through the Desert: Lower order categories with defining properties

Resilience	Resource deployment
• *redefining (them)selves*	• *legal/social services*
	• *familial/ social support*

Resilience. Women displayed remarkable *Resilience* and worked hard to improve their

lives during their abusive marriages as well as getting back on their feet and adjusting to the

divorce/separation. Their efforts included taking English language classes, updating their

employment skills, accessing social services, and initiating legal proceedings against their former

husbands. Amina experienced notable improvements in her mental and physical health after she

moved into the shelter. She says:

> I am getting better I am getting better. I haven't had one Advil
> since I have been here, not even one. I used to be having four
> Advils a day for the migraines, I don't have anything. I don't even
> have no antidepressant, no Meloxicam for the anxiety. I don't have
> anything, nothing, can you believe that. It's so amazing that I don't
> do, I don't have anything…..I am so peaceful inside.

 Asha, who had spent twenty-five years without much social contact, proudly talks about the

social networks that she developed after her divorce. She was not allowed to go to temple by her

husband and she joyfully describes her new found social and singing skills:

> Everyday I am coming here English class, and support group, and arthritis pool, and friend house. So many friends loves me very much, help me, cook for me everything. They helped me too much and now close friends. Two hundred, three hundred temple member, I am temple member now everyone say, "You smart lady" now. …. Always I like to forgot what I my story what I have to. I like to sing and I am a singer then I feel good you know.

Next, I share Balwant's determination and industriousness to manage her arduous situation while she was married and living with her husband. Her husband had refused any financial support to her. She took control of the situation by working from home.

> I used to work till I admitted to the hospital for the second baby, for the C- section. I have a small parlour at home and till I have an appointment, tomorrow I am going whole night. I was doing facial, waxing so I can save little money for the two months so after my baby. When it was going to be operated he never asked me, "You wanted to go to hospital."

During their efforts to rebuild their lives women were also *redefining (them)selves* and were changing their outlook on life. They focussed on empowering themselves to deal effectively with their situations. Sukhi says:

> After that I got so sick mentally, I had gone mental, went into depression, stress, and now I am, I was so tormented, would spent the entire night crying. So much kept happening, then I divorced, lived separately, criminal case was in process. Then after coming here, day-by-day, day-by-day, I started becoming stronger and now I am fine… I became strong after coming here. There are different, different stories of everyone's home, different, different. Some are tormented by husbands about children, some about work, some for some other thing, there are no same stories about why woman experience pain and heartbreak these days….. But when I endured this heartache, I used to say all this is happening to me, but when I came here then I realized I am not alone, there are a lot people like this… now I am alone I am happy, I can work, now my mind is fine. After coming here I have become strong. I can do whatever I want to do. I can get education, I can do a job, I can do everything for my son, can do everything. [Translation].

Similarly Meena talked about her resolve and commitment to take charge of her life so that she is

better able to take care of her son and protect herself from her husband:

> I went into depression, but what happens after crying, I get sick or I
> die, right. Then who will look after my son, she has to be cared for
> right. So looking at him I thought, that I have to get strong, that's
> why I don't want to bother anyone. What's the point of bothering in
> India, telling them, what can they do here from there? Can't do
> anything right. That's why I think, that I have to get strong to get
> out of this situation, and from my husband.

Resource deployment. The next third level category, *Resource deployment*, refers to the

women's active exploration and utilization of resources that were available to them. They

utilized *legal/social services* offered to them in the GTA as well as *familial/social support* from

friends and families from within and from outside of Canada. *Legal/social services* represented

the formal resources available to women through government and welfare agencies. Amina

shares how she mobilized the legal and social resources available to her to walk out of her

extended family home:

> I was in the counselling service there and I told them the story and
> told them I can't live there anymore. I told them I don't [*care*]
> where it is, whatever it is, I can't go back there anymore. So after
> five hours of trying to find a shelter for me, I mean at this point I
> didn't even know what the shelter was, what it looked like. All I
> knew was they had found a safe place for me, somewhere where I
> can take my kids and I can be……Counsellor over there advised
> me to call the police beforehand so if there was any violence when
> I was leaving you know. So I did that I had called the police and let
> them know that I was leaving and I needed help and they said if
> there is any…. do call us. I was like very strong.

Similarly, Kiran talks about how she arranged for living quarters after coming back to Canada

from India. Her husband had stopped communicating with her while she was in India and had

cancelled her ticket for flight back to Canada. He was not responding to her phone calls and she

did not have a place to stay. She says:

> So I didn't know where to go, first I called here, I Googled, I knew that there must be some things but really didn't have any experience that kind of experience. ….So I called [*shelter*] I had the number they didn't have any place for me. They gave me GTA, whole GTA number, I was calling everywhere, nobody has a place. So I was gone to a shelter, homeless shelter. So I called and they had luckily a space for me so I came over here, since then I am here ……I met some organization over there,….. I mean they are so nice. They were like, they listened to me and the lady who works with them she got legal aid on phone after three hours she got me legal aid. Finally, so I have a lawyer now so it is not through yet you know. Lawyer is preparing the case but I do want to go after him. I don't want to be treated like this, because I did not do anything wrong.

Although initially women were reluctant and did not share the abuse with family and friends, once they shared their troubles and abuse they were able to access *familial/social support.* Almost all of them reported receiving material and moral support from family and friends once they found out about the abuse and divorce/separation. Some reported that initially their families were upset with them but eventually they came on board and were supportive of them. This support was instrumental in helping women get back on their feet and to fight back. Fatima says:

> My sister in US said, "I am with you, go and fight, we know that you had taken care of everyone in Pakistan before, and you have been treated like this. You have to get that person punished for what he did. I am with you, come on get up," I said no I don't want to go. She said, " No get up if you will let such a person go, today he has done this with you, tomorrow who knows he will do the same with daughters of so many more people." And he did exactly the same. He left me there got married again and came back. [Translation].

Balwant talks about the financial and moral support she received from her family. She was very expressive about the negative impact of divorce on the marriage prospects of her natal family members. Her family specifically allayed those concerns and advised her to get strong for her children.

> They helped me a lot with financially, with mentally......When I said that he has sent divorce papers then they said, " Don't think that our children will not be able to get married. These are small things now people in India and Pakistan divorce and remarry frequently. Why do you think like this, you will become mentally ill, your children will suffer so it's better that you divorce." And they are still helping me financially. I visited India they sent me the tickets I stayed with them. When I came, gave me gold, stuff for kids. They help as much as they can mentally and financially. [Translation].

Complexities of Honour

The third domain, *Complexities of Honour*, defines the construct of honour as shared by the participants. The analysis indicates that honour is a complex, multidimensional construct, encompassing negative as well as positive attributes. These two aspects of honour are represented by the two, third level categories, *Burden of honour* and *Strength of honour*. This was a counterintuitive and illuminating finding and these two categories, along with their constituent lower order categories, are presented in Table 3.

The category *Burden of honour* is defined by subcategories that reflected participants' entrapment in abusive marriages to maintain their personal and family honour, as well as honour scripts that legitimize abuse by men and endurance of abuse by women. The *Strength of honour* category reflects the support and resources prescribed for women by honour norms. This support is offered through different channels: through social norms and corrective forces for husbands' and in-laws' behaviour to treat wives well and to keep marriages intact and by providing them with support and informal counselling interventions through family and community.

Burden of Honour. As discussed earlier, honour ideology is mainly understood to be limiting and restrictive for women in the contemporary literature. This aspect of honour is adequately reflected in the category *Burden of honour*. This category captures the boundaries and hardships that are placed on women by socio-cultural institutions as well as by themselves for

maintaining their personal as well as natal and affinal family honour. Honour in this context

limits their choices and terminating the marriage, or acknowledging the abuse to family and

friends (as well as seeking any kind of help for it) is not considered a viable option. Such

behaviours are understood to violate their personal and family honour and hold serious social

consequences. A very strong concern for women was that if the abuse were revealed they

Table 3

Complexities of Honour: Lower order categories with defining properties

Burden of Honour	Strength of Honour
• *abuse is a blot on family honour* • *women's tolerance only increases abuse* • *divorce robs family honour* • *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive* ▪ *ideal docile women* ▪ *desire to save marriage* ▪ *husband is god*	• *wife is husband's honour* • *dishonourable men abuse* • *wise men/women uphold honour* • *honour keeps marriage together* • *honourable, enduring wife as power* ▪ *good women sacrifice* ▪ *enduring abuse garners social and self-respect*

would lose respect in the community and people would gossip. They believed that *abuse is a*

blot on family honour and therefore needs to remain secret. This was a particularly dense

category and was evident in the narratives of all the participants. Balwant shared her concerns

about people finding out about her abusive marriage.

> I used to think that when my father finds out about me then he will
> get into shock that this is happening to my daughter. So I was quiet,
> I felt that it is a huge izzat [*honour*] issue that if people find out that
> this is what is happening to his daughter then what would people
> say and how will my father suffer. This was a big honour issue for
> me that I am his daughter and …… so I should endure the abuse
> silently as much as I can. [Translation].

She is apprehensive about her abuse tarnishing the social status of her father and the impact that

being in an abusive marriage will have on her father personally. She therefore makes the choice

to silently endure the abuse to save her father from the heartache and loss of social status.

Similarly, Zara stressed the importance of keeping the abuse secret to protect her parents from

heartache as well as to protect herself from social scrutiny and gossip.

> In my case it was 90% because of this [*honour*]. I was very concerned with izzat [*honour*] that my parents should not experience this distress and I was overly concerned in my family with what will others say so because of this I never said anything to anyone. When someone would ask me, I would say that he is very nice, there are no problems. [Translation].

This proclivity to remain secretive about the abuse is an important factor that restricts

help seeking by women and keeps them stranded in abusive marriages. It also diminishes any

chance of improving the situation through professional and/or social interventions. The silent

enduring of the abuse further complicates life for women as *women's tolerance only increases*

abuse. Women were aware of how their silence aggravated the situation, but still remained

committed to keeping the abuse under covers and maintaining the façade of all is well. They

were cognizant of the fact that in so doing they were giving men the leverage to mistreat them

even more. Here, Balwant stresses that the woman endures abuse silently to save honour, and the

men take advantage of the situation, as they know they can get away with it. She says:

> If ladies endure it, it is because of respect, you may call it her parents' honour, or her in-laws' honour or her children's honour, or you may call it her own honour. She suffers to save these things and suffers badly. And men take simply advantage of this.

Zara's statement below elaborates upon Balwant's narration and suggests that men take their cue

from the woman's behaviour, and once they realize that she is going to keep his abusive

behaviour a secret, they increase the abuse.

> Men know that she will not talk to others about it. He gauges what is her approach and then behaves accordingly. This was the case with me; initially I used to say to him that, " I do not tell anyone. You behave like this, it is wrong but I cannot tell anyone because I

> care about honour, mine, children's, my family's." So this mindset
> is present and men abuse a lot because of this……. As I kept
> tolerating this and he misunderstood my intentions and kept
> increasing his abuse. [Translation].

An important reason for women to silently endure the abuse is because they want to keep their marriages and honour intact. They believe that *divorce robs family honour.* Honour is a cherished goal for women and the threat of losing their personal and familial honour discourages women from walking out of abusive marriages. Thus, it is another manifestation of the burdens placed on women by honour to stay in abusive marriages. They felt that terminating the marriage, even if it is abusive, would bring social ridicule and ostracism to them, to their children, and to their natal family. In her statement below, Sabeeta focuses on the disrespect that was brought to her husband, her children and herself by her decision to leave the house. The quote also suggests that her husband is trying to appeal to her sense of honour and is playing up the shame that her decision will bring to the family. This also consolidates the view expressed in the previous category that men take advantage of women's honour ideology. She says:

> We get hit even; we have to stay with the husband or children that
> is good for the culture. They used to say, now even my husband
> always calls me and tells me come back and live with them. Come
> back home and live with them he tells me, "Because I am staying
> outside, I am a woman alone. It is not nice for their culture, it's
> shame so you come back and live with them." Because in violence,
> even if we live together with the children and husband even if there
> is violence in the family even if we live together; that is that keeps
> respect, respect for the family, respect for the each member of the
> family, even husband, wife, children, that keeps respect for the
> family.

Similarly, Balwant stresses the negative impact of divorce on not just parents and siblings but also on nephews and nieces. It also exemplifies the concern about the community blaming the woman and then extending her perceived shortcomings to all the other women in family.

> Many times when their *(nephews and nieces)* marriages are being settled people ask, "How many aunts do they have? What do they do? She is divorced?" It affects the other kids also. That their aunt is divorced, she must be bad, their woman must be bad, she must have a loose tongue, her character must be loose.

I have generally limited myself to two quotes to illustrate each category but I include a third one here. I found this quote from Kiran particularly illustrative as she shares that her parents wanted her to lie about her situation in the community. They automatically assume that the community will blame and denigrate her because of the failed marriage. They consider their daughter's denigration as their own and feel the best way to deal with it is to keep the imminent dissolution of her marriage a secret. She says:

> My parents said, "No you cannot do that if somebody asks you, you have to be, you tell them lie that you are here just for vacation." Even I was like I had to pretend you know that I am happy. I just came here because you know this and that. I, I did not tell anybody in India because my parents said," If you will tell them, you talk to them openly and it's fine they won't tell anything to you but we have to live here. We have to listen what people talk about you and we can't have that. They talk bad about you what that means bad about us and we won't be able to answer anything because we are part of the community."

Honourable, enduring wife as oppressive. An important and particularly dense property of the *Burden of honour,* category is *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive.* This category reflects the traditionalism in gender roles in South Asian societies that prescribes a self-sacrificial and interdependent role for women (Goel, 2005). South Asian women are expected to take care of family members and matters at the cost of their own personal, psychological, emotional and physical well being. This societal construction of women as sacrificing, and a dutiful partner, wife and mother keeps women in complex and even dangerous marriages (Pinnewala, 2009) and this behaviour is condoned as women are seen as fulfilling their role as guardians of family honour (Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996). However,

Gallagher (2007) argues that theorists and researchers sometimes ignore women's agency and focus only on their compliance with patriarchal constraints, assuming that remaining in abusive families necessarily indicates passivity. Goel (2005) argues that, for a South Asian woman, devotion and self sacrifice are the route to fame and admiration and her self-sacrifice fits her model of a good wife. Women's ability and readiness to sacrifice are understood to be her strength and her silent suffering is valued. Compromise, forbearance, and silent suffering to maintain her family accord great dignity upon a South Asian woman and her fulfilling of this role is seen as the greatest triumph and honour for her.

My analysis captures both of these aspects of the *honourable, enduring wife* role: the oppression women endure because of their subservient role as wife and the personal strength and social recognition women derive from their endurance. To reflect these two distinct aspects, two separate fourth order categories were conceptualized: *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive*, and *honourable, enduring wife as power*. *Honourable, enduring wife as oppressive* was subsumed by the higher order category of *Burden of honour*.

The assignment of fourth level categories to *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive*, and *honourable, enduring wife as power* was made after very careful deliberation. Meaning units that focused on the husband's elevated status and seemed to limit women's choices because of their sanctified lower position in marriage were categorized as reflecting *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive*. Women described themselves as *ideal docile women* who were devoted to their husbands and children. They were obedient wives and conformed to the roles of 'good' wives, mothers, and daughters-in-laws. As Fatima says:

I as a wife did everything, thinking that if not today perhaps

> tomorrow he will realize that he is my husband. I bent my head [5]. I said God I accepted him in accordance with your will. They reached the extremes of cruelty and I the extremes of patience and endurance. [Translation].

Amina managed her large extended affinal family household for fifteen years, often sacrificing her own needs and well-being. She dutifully performed the prescribed roles of nurturing wife, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. Such behaviour is exalted among South Asian communities and is considered a hallmark of the ideal wife.

> I would take care of the family during all of my pregnancies. I had four children, and sometimes I would stay up till eleven, waiting for my brother-in-law to come home so I could cook him food……So over the years, it was just like you know, doing everything that was asked of me. I am wearing the clothes that were asked of me, cooking the meals, taking on the family even the social aspects you know having family gatherings, family parties. I was expected to cook for over a 100 people. Sometimes I was, I was sometimes I was up till 2:00 clock in the morning just making sure the house was clean and everything.

The devotion and loyalty of women was reinforced by their *desire to save their marriage.* This is a particularly dense category and women frequently expressed their commitment to marriage despite the abuse. They overlooked their husbands' lies and deceptions regarding their prior marriages and remained committed to keeping the marriages intact whatever the personal cost. These costs were heavy in terms of physical and mental health as well as economic and social wellbeing. Only two out of the ten women had taken the initiative to walk out of the relationship and in both cases the marriages were over fifteen years old. Divorce was still not being sought by either of them. For the rest, the relationship was terminated either through divorce or by separation by husbands. Preeti expressed her willingness to work on the marriage even though her husband had formally divorced her.

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[5] A metaphor meaning accepted everything without any resistance.

> I used to think that if he behaves well, we can stay together. Because you see we are not from a culture that if you get married and then you do like this…. Even today I am prepared to do everything, I am ready to sacrifice everything. Because I am not from a family, where these things happen and are taught. [Translation].

Similarly Fatima was so focused on building a good marital life that she was willing to overlook her husband's lies about his previous marriages.

> So I said to him, "Whatever your past was it's gone I am not interested in it. It's just that I want the two of us to spend a good life together." As a wife that's all I could say. If he says that I had marriages before, I could not change that. [Translation].

In both meaning units, there is the strong emphasis on sacrifice and on keeping the marriages intact. The tone of the meaning units in such categories was a sense of duty and compliance. Women were aware of the grave flaws in and deceptions of their husbands but they still remained loyal to them. The devotion and commitment of women to their husbands and marriages was so deep that women believed that *husband is god*. Women from all religious denominations elevated the position of the husband onto a sacrosanct pedestal, although not all of them used the word *god.*

This category is illustrated with the following two quotes. The first is from Meena, who is a Hindu from a remote village in India with very little formal education, who did not know any English when she first came to Canada. The second quote is from Fatima, a Muslim woman from a large urban city in Pakistan. She is well educated and worked in the field of public relations before immigrating to Canada. The two women come from very diverse backgrounds yet their views on the position of the husband in marriage are similar. Meena says, "We all respect god, later husband is god, because sustains us for whole life, therefore will have to respect him."

Fatima says, "It is written in our religion that after marriage your husband is your god, you have to listen to him, have to obey him."

Strength of Honour. This higher-level category subsumed the fourth order categories that highlight the privileges, protection and support provided to women by honour codes. They focus on the strength, and power that women draw from honour scripts.

Honourable, enduring wife as power. Dasgupta (2000) notes that in South Asian cultures a woman is judged as a failure if she can not maintain her marriage, and successfully keeping family together at all costs is rewarded by glorifying women's sufferings. Thus, women who endure violence for the sake of their families are extolled. Likewise, Goel (2005) notes that endurance of tribulations with decorum is valourized and revered among South Asian communities. The two lower order categories of *good women sacrifice* and *enduring abuse garners social and self-respect* capture these expectations and values among the participants. The properties of *good women sacrifice* define women not as passive recipients of mistreatment but rather as agentic women who decide to put their family's interests and well-being above their own well-being. They sacrifice their own welfare because they believe that this is what good women do and the goal of keeping their families intact is a source of personal satisfaction and strength for them. This was a dense category and all participants made frequent reference to this notion. Amina notes that she was raised with the value that women endure the hardships in marriage and sacrifice their own needs. She never expected her marriage to be very happy and was taught to face tough times and to sacrifice her own needs.

> I was brought up that women will have to sacrifice these little things you know with arguments and everything you know, its ok. This is how it's going to be for, this is your life for you because this is all I had seen prior to my marriage. My mother is the same you know with my father, or is trying to, trying to do the best she could.

> So I always in my in my mind I always thought when I was 18,19
> this is what marriage is, you are just supposed to sacrifice. There
> are good times and bad times and you just carry on with your life
> so that was so.

I find Asha's statement particularly revealing and a strong representation of the category. She says, my elder daughter always says that, "my husband like that I will divorce I am not liking I am not very good person like you." Asha's daughter was born in Canada and has been educated here but she still ascribes to the notion that *good women sacrifice*. Although she states that, if her husband does not treat her well she will divorce, she qualifies this by saying that this is not what good women like her mother do. These meaning units were characterized as connoting strength because they give a sense of the active cognitive deliberations behind the women's decision-making and their deriving personal satisfaction from the decision. The sacrifices women make in their lives are not in vain; rather, and *enduring abuse garners social and self-respect* for them. Sukhi expressed her desire to work on her marriage so that she upholds the values that she has been socialized with and asserts that she believes that her enduring of the abuse is the honourable thing to do, thereby, expressing her satisfaction with the choice she had made.

> I was prepared to work. What values my parents had passed on to
> me I adhered to them and endured battery for so many years that
> my parent's izzat [*honour*] should remain intact…… But I feel that
> I think it's honourable but I don't know about other women's minds.
> [Translation].

Sukhi's statement exemplifies the self-respect aspect of the category. The emphasis in the second quote by Sabeeta is on social and community respect. She points to the disrespect she will face in a variety of social situations, from religious to family celebrations, if she leaves her husband because of abuse. Her statement primarily focuses on social respect.

> If a woman live with her husband getting hit with by her husband
> even that is ok, that is ok. They respect the women who live with
> husband. If somebody leaves the husband and living alone they

> don't respect even........Because if I stay with my family, if I go out people will respect me. Then if I stay out, if I stay out or go on the street, go to the temple or if we go to any ceremony even wedding or any function, birthday parties if we go alone while community they disrespect us*,* disrespect us that is the main reason…… In our community if we get, get in violence even we have to stay with our family that is honour in our culture.

Honour norms advise that the *wife is husband's honour*. This prescription denotes the respect and status that is bestowed upon a wife. This category focuses on a wife's rights and claims on her husband. It highlights what a wife represents for her husband and his obligations towards her. A wife's status as husband's honour gives her authority and leverage in the relationship as she has the power either to embellish or ruin her husband's honour. By making the husband's honour dependent on his wife, honour norms give women control over it. The quote from Amina reflects this as it stresses that the *wife is husband's honour*. She points to the fact that her husband had lost his honour because she has left him:

> Your wife, that's your honour, isn't it? ……..Your family is your honour, your children is your honour, your family, your children but now he has lost that he is realizing I should have done more to protect her than his own family

She also suggests that her husband is regretting not having fulfilled his duties towards her. This facet of honour scripts exemplifies the status honour norms give a wife and also emphasizes a husband's duties and commitments toward his wife. Similarly Fatima notes that her husband told her that, "I will come back, will take you with me, do not worry, you are my wife, my izzat (honour)." Her statement reiterates the notion that *wife is husband's honour* and that puts her husband under obligation to take care of her. I am also presenting a third quote by Preeti to highlight the sanctification of such an approach by religious beliefs. Preeti notes about her

husband, "He does not know what Hindu religion is. How much is a wife respected in Hindu religion."

Because a wife needs to be treated with respect and honour, only *dishonourable men abuse.* The properties of this category reflect that abuse is a dishonourable act and when men engage in such behaviours they lose their honour and respect. Thus, honour codes denigrate men who abuse wives. This threat of social censure and shame is likely to act as deterrent against abusive behaviours. The first quote by Preeti exemplifies the deprecation of abusive men as well as the condemnation of their families.

> My approach even today is that I should not do any such thing that can bring a bad name to my background. Like my husband treated me so badly and I always say that his background was like this. He was brought up in this manner his beliefs were like this. If your background is good, your beliefs are good then I think you do not need to be taught anything, because that's what you bring with you. [Translation].

She is suggesting that when men mistreat women they bring a bad name to their family, and at the same time, their behaviour is a reflection of their menial family background. Extending the blame for abusive behaviour to the family background of the abuser highlights the potential defamation that such behaviours can bring to the entire family, thus increasing the costs of abusive behaviours for the family.

Balwant describes the social costs of abusive behaviour for men particularly in reference to her husband. She suggests that her husband has lost his social standing and the community looks down upon him as a loser. She also implicitly refers to the psychological and emotional costs her husband has suffered because of the abuse and the break-up of their marriage.

> Because what respect does he have, when someone has no respect then what can he say to another person. Suppose he says something to a third person, not someone from his family they will say who the hell are you go look at yourself what you did, you are going to

> advise us. So people like this lose their respect and their ego, when I look at my husband, I look at his living we see everything. People talk about him, he is living like a dead human being……. Such people are useless, they have no respect, their own ego from the inside, his sense is finished what is he going to advise anyone. [Translation].

The characterization of abusive men as dishonourable is parsimoniously reflected in Zara's statement presented below. She classifies men into two categories, the bad ones who abuse women and the good ones who respect women. I find that the simplicity and finality of the thought represented by this statement cogently reflects the properties of the category *dishonourable men abuse*. She says, "There are many good people who respect women but there are also some who think of women as a nobody and batter her. …..Some are good also and some are bad."

Men who abuse are considered lowly and bring a bad name to their family, therefore, *wise men/women uphold honour.* This category characterizes the preservation of family honour as a wise decision. Therefore, men and women who endure abuse are not passive victims but are wise persons who make the decision to endure abuse for the valuable objective of preserving family honour. Although there is some overlap between this category and the category *good women sacrifice,* I kept it as a separate category for two reasons. First, in the meaning units assigned to this category, women expressed that enduring abuse was not only honourable but was also the wise thing to do. Thus the meaning units that entailed a deliberate choice to sacrifice and endure abuse in order to protect family honour were assigned to the category *good women sacrifice* but meaning units that focused on upholding honour because it reflects wisdom and is sagacious were assigned to the category *wise men/women uphold honour.* Second, the wisdom and conscious decision to protect family honour were expected from men also. Thus, the decision to uphold honour was not only characteristic of wise wives but was also expected from

wise husbands. Sukhi below shares that she, in fact, went against her parents' wishes and stayed

in her abusive marriage. She then talks about the desire of women to protect their home and

notes that this is what wise men also want, thus, alluding that wise men and women are

committed to saving their homes. She differentiates between weak and wise men and notes that

wise men give priority to their marriage and ensure that their household runs smoothly.

> My parents used to say that work, leave him, get rid of him, but I
> would say no, this should not happen. …….Women think that we,
> our parents' honour should be maintained, our home should stay
> intact…… Men are of different, different types, some are easily
> manipulated, some are wise, those who are wise set everything
> right. When they feel that my house is going to get destroyed, they
> use their minds and set everything right. [Translation]

Sabeeta, in her statement below, focuses on honour and respect that comes from enduring

abuse, but her emphasis is on men. She illustrates that expectations from men and women are

essentially the same. So when the situation is reversed and the husband is being abused, men also

decide to stay in abusive marriages to maintain their respect in the community.

> Men also they think about this violence the same way, the same
> way...... that is also the same way like women, doing like that. If
> the men want to leave the wife and go and stay alone, our
> community people they won't respect the men also. Because of this
> reason some men also still struggling with their wives even they
> stay with their wives. They stay with the family, they don't want to
> go out and live alone because of the respect. In some families
> women also hit husband but even then husbands they still stay with
> the family because of the respect, community respect.

Similarly Zara maintains that wise men love their wives and care about her honour, endure abuse

and keep it secret.

> Some men are also wise and some women are the type who do not
> care about izzat [*honour*] and talk to others, but men are concerned
> about it and feel embarrassed. Some men are like this, they are
> good they put up with wife's abuse because if others find out about
> it, in her family, in my family, are concerned about children, loves
> his wife and if she lacks wisdom he puts up with it. So it is so in
> both men and women, some are wise, some are not……Some men
> like my husband's brother his wife talks around but he has shame,
> they are brothers but he is very different, he protects her honour. I
> have children, the word would spread, so he keeps to himself and
> cares about her honour. This was the difference between the two. I
> cared but my husband did not. So there are men who care about
> their honour, their family's honour. [Translation].

The emphasis here is that good and wise men care about their family honour and strive to preserve their marriages. It seems that the same standards are applied to men and women and the same rewards, i.e., honour and respect, are bestowed upon both if they silently endure their spouses' abuse. It can be argued that this honour code offers privileges and favours to women as wise and honourable men are expected to not only endure abuse from wives but are also expected to endure it silently. Thus, it seems that the expectations of 'honourable' men and women are not much different. The category *honour keeps marriage together* reflects the social support and community resources directed at ensuring smooth functioning of marriages. These scripts define the checks and balances that are placed on husbands as well as the resources offered to wives to censure the husbands who mistreat them. Preeti blames her geographic location for the dissolution of her marriage. Because of her being in Canada, the social forces designed to help women in such situations were not available to her. These resources she further explains are secured by honour codes and norms and are responsible for ensuring the preservation of marriages in India:

> Now what my husband has done, if it was done in my hometown or
> if his family was living there then no one would have allowed the
> break-up of this relationship. Everybody would have tried to patch
> it up. This is not on, both parties have to make an effort, you should

> adjust a little and she would also adjust. But now here, he also feels
> that its fine nobody is here to question me I can do whatever. So
> there is no concern about izzat [*honour*]…... If izzat is important
> and people care about it then they try to stay together otherwise you
> just let go….. Izzat [*honour*] is a very important factor. I think if
> perhaps the element of izzat is not present then no marriage would
> last. In our countries probably no marriage would last.
> [Translation].

The next quote from Balwant provides a concrete example of what Preeti suggests in the previous quote. She indicates that her father is the council head of his village and people seek his mediation when women face abuse. It also alludes to the concept of shared responsibility of the community to ensure the well-being of daughters.

> My father is the council head of many villages. Daughters of so
> many people come to him and he says, "No, no, no, it's bad, your
> [*husband's*] behaviour is wrong, this cannot happen. Your daughter
> is my daughter and my daughter is your daughter.[6]" [Translation].

The proverb mentioned in this meaning unit highlights the collective sense of obligation that the community holds toward its daughters, and notes that the whole community is expected to take care of young women. The meaning units presented above also describe the community resources and support available to women. The emphasis here is on the mediation by extended family members and community elders, should the women decide to seek their help. However, to get this help, women have to share the abuse and make it public, an act that is not considered honourable. In addition to the larger community, women are also entitled to support from the immediate family and their mediation efforts to keep marriages intact and to reform the abuser. Amina reveals the emotional and concrete support offered to her by her father-in-law and states:

> I was crying, I told my father-in-law I don't want to be here
> anymore. And I told him I am going to leave and he my father-in-
> law grabbed my hand really hard and said, "No you are not going
> anywhere." He started hugging me, being very nice and at that

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[6] A common proverb in Punjabi.

> point I thought he cares about me but really I didn't understand he was trying to protect his own family name and honour and everything. So I ended up staying again.

Thus if Amina had walked out of the marriage this would have tarnished the family honour of her in-laws. So to uphold their honour, her father-in-law pacifies her and ensures that their son's marriage remains intact. Similarly Zara talks about how she could have used family intervention to reform her husband. She says, "I never complained to my parents and my siblings, if I had complained then perhaps they would have talked to him and his family, and he would have gotten a chance to reform." [Translation].

Summary

I have presented the hierarchical structure of the conceptualized theory yielding the core category, *Chasing a Mirage: The Quest to Preserve Marriage and Honour*. I have presented the experiences of South Asian immigrant wives who come to Canada in hopes of a comfortable and honourable life. Their experiences are summarized in three main categories*: Lost in the Desert, Navigating through the Desert, and Complexities of Honour.* While the first two categories focus on the journey of women in their new homeland, complexities of honour highlights the ideological scripts that simultaneously complicate and help them through their voyage.

Triangulation of Findings

To triangulate the findings of the study, I took three steps. First, I contacted the various support centres to get in touch with the study participants. I was able to meet with Asha and Sabeeta and discussed my analysis of their interviews with them. Second, I interviewed two South Asian men to get their thoughts about honour and how it contributes toward familial violence in South Asian communities. Third, I interviewed two women counsellors working in different women's support centres in the GTA.

Follow-up interviews with participants. I met with the Asha and Sabeeta to discuss my analysis of their interviews at the weekly support groups at the women's support centre. The meeting was one-on-one and, after securing their permission to record our conversation, I shared my analysis of their interviews. I had prepared notes for these interviews and discussed my understanding and interpretation specifically of their interviews but not the general analysis. In my notes I had summarized the main points and categories of their interviews. I did not talk about the more abstract categories like *Lost in the Desert* but rather focused on lower order categories. In my interview with Asha, I focused on categories that were relevant to her story including, *ideal docile woman, economic dependence, good women sacrifice, language and information barriers, powerful men beat the legal system,* all of which were dense in her interview. I asked her to give me her opinion of my analysis and if she thought that I had interpreted her narrative accurately. Asha found my analysis to be an accurate reflection of what she had expressed in the interview. With Sabeeta I discussed the categories that were salient in her interview*, divorce robs family honour, enduring abuse garners respect and self-respect*, *wise men/women uphold honour,* and *language and information barriers*. I requested her feedback on my analysis and asked her if I had understood her interview accurately. She concurred with the findings and noted, "Things you are telling me, those are correct, correct things."

Interviews with South Asian men. Anand in his interview identified patriarchy, economic dependence of wives, and intrusion and incitement of in-laws particularly in extended families and alcohol as major factors that contribute toward familial abuse of women. Alcoholism was seen as leading to financial crises that, in turn, exacerbated abusive behaviours. Responding to the probe on the contribution of honour towards domestic violence, he emphasized that the low divorce rate among South Asians compared to the Western world is

because South Asian women endure all kinds of hardships and abuse silently to maintain their

family honour. He pointed to the dishonour and shame a woman, a man and their families will

experience if they failed to conform to the community's standards. He says:

> So if any one violates in a small margin, so then they are failing.
> The entire family would be in a shame, so ashamed by others, or
> they first of all they feel ashamed themselves…. And from the
> community's point of view, "Oh this family did something wrong."

Murli in his interview suggested that patriarchy, economic dependence of wives, and instigation

of in-laws particularly in extended families are major factors that contribute toward familial

abuse. In response to the role of honour in domestic violence he said:

> I think so many families where the same situation prevails in the
> Western society they will be divorced and living separately but
> here because of honour, family honour, children's honour,
> children's future that kind of a thing. For fear of being persecuted,
> or fear of children being may not be accepted. In the sense that if
> the husband and wife are separated, the children will be always
> looked down. So because of that one, they want to maintain the
> honour at any cost. Basically whether they like or not, whether
> there is violence or not they accept it and they stay together. It
> applies to both men as well as to women. Men also want, whatever
> is it, now I have got married to this woman, now for the sake of the
> children let me remain.

Interviews with counsellors. Safia noted that the categories, *Shattering of dreams* and

Complexities of Honour are particularly germane to understanding domestic abuse in South

Asian communities. She strongly endorsed the understanding of honour as a complex

multidimensional construct and emphasized that honour has both negative and positive impacts

on the lives of South Asian women and transcends religion. She shared that, in her experience,

honour is relevant for South Asian women regardless of their religious denomination. She also

mentioned poor employment opportunities, economic difficulties and poor access to counselling

and mental health services among immigrants, and abetment of in-laws as important contributory

factors in domestic violence among South Asian communities.

Aliya emphasized the role of patriarchy and the novice status of the daughter-in-law upon joining their in-laws' patriarchal family hierarchy as contributing factors toward her abuse and mistreatment. She also stressed that women choose to stay in abusive marriages because of their collectivistic values. They make the decision to hide their circumstances from their natal families because they do not want to burden them with their problems. She found the categories, *Shattering of dreams, Complexities of Honour, Resource scarcity* and *Resilience* particularly relevant and commented that these describe the life story of two of her South Asian clients. She further noted that counselling services for South Asian women have to understand the complexities of honour. Honour is a hugely important concept and a cherished goal in the lives of the clients. Therefore it is paramount that counsellors address this during counselling. Overlooking it or characterizing it primarily as a barrier for clients can be counterproductive and likely to impede the counselling process.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

This study analysed South Asian immigrant women's narratives about their experiences of familial violence. It focused on understanding how women from an honour culture understand honour and the role they believe it plays in their lives. The study is unique in that, instead of reaffirming or refuting the extant theoretical formulations about honour and violence, it provides a new understanding of the construct of honour and the role it plays in the familial violence experiences of women belonging to an honour culture. This understanding is rooted in the narratives and thoughts of women who live and breathe honour every day and is represented in the conceptualized theory, *Chasing a Mirage: The Quest to Preserve Marriage and Honour*. The power of the theory lies in the fact that it comprehensively captures the experiences of familial violence in the lives of South Asian immigrant wives in Canada and highlights the complexity and multidimensional properties of the concept of honour. The theory is defined by three domains, *Lost in the Desert, Navigating the Desert and Complexities of Honour*. These three categories are discussed and illustrated in reference to the existing literature.

Lost in the Desert. This domain captures the harsh and dismal experiences of the participants as immigrant wives in Canada. Their experiences were illustrated by four, third level categories. The category *Shattering of dreams* highlights the deceit, abuse and maltreatment that women experienced from their husbands and in-laws. It also underscores the findings that, while women and their families may consider getting married to a man residing in the Western world a prize, such marriages are often based on false values, hopes, and desires (Bajpai, 2013). Once women joined their husbands, they found that they had been cheated. They were lied to about the marital status, education, job, and wealth of their husbands. They also found that their husbands were not the 'charming princes' they had presented themselves to be; rather they were extremely

controlling, greedy, and negligent of their spousal and paternal responsibilities and were alcohol abusers. Another important feature of domestic abuse in South Asian communities highlighted by the current study is the abetment as well as perpetration of abuse by in-laws. Eight women reported that their in-laws were abetting and inciting the abuse and five reported directly experiencing physical, emotional and/or economic abuse from their in-laws. In-law abuse is an accepted cultural aspect of violence against South Asian women. A number of studies with South Asian immigrant women in North America have noted that in-laws not only tolerate and support their abusive sons but also may directly perpetrate emotional and physical abuse against these women (Abraham, 1999; Mehrotra, 1999; Rianon & Shelton, 2003; Supriya, 1996). Mehrotra (1999) notes that South Asian women often live with or in close proximity to their husbands' families, and away from their natal families. This patri-locality is particularly applicable to South Asian immigrant women and is likely to increase support for and thus perpetration of abuse while, at the same time, depriving them of potential support and help from their natal families. Another important finding from the study is represented by the subcategory of *marriage mafia.* This category reflects the emerging recognition in the literature around deceitful marriages where South Asian men from Western countries contract marriages for receiving a dowry in their native countries and later abandon their wives (Anitha, 2011; Bajpai, 2013; Dasgupta & Rudra, 2009). The oppression, abuse, and deceit that were described by the participants in the *Shattering of dreams* category are consistent with existing research on the domestic abuse of South Asian immigrant women. For example, Merchant (2000) noted that majority of South Asian immigrant women in North America are sponsored by their husbands and are often financially dependent on them. They are likely to stay at home and this limits their opportunities to socialize, learn English and develop skills to access available services. They experience physical, psychological,

economic, and sexual abuse (e.g., Kallivayalil, 2010; Mahapatra, 2012). While the properties of *Shattering of dreams* category represent the deceit and the oppression that resulted primarily from participants' subservient status because of their gender, the lower order categories of *Resource scarcity*, and *Social/institutional support of abuse* stressed those aspects of women's subjugation that resulted mostly from their ethnicity and immigrant status. All the participants were first generation immigrants to Canada and nine women had left their families behind when they immigrated to Canada. They identified social isolation as a significant factor contributing toward their abuse. They noted that their husbands and in-laws purposefully used *isolation* to stifle their independence and empowerment. Because women were emotionally, socially, and economically dependent on their husbands, these men used *isolation* as a strategy to increase their power and control. These findings are consistent with the existing literature; for example, Raj and Silverman (2007) found that more than 50% of abused South Asian women in the US reported high levels of social isolation as they did not have their family in the US. Immigration itself can be an isolating experience (Huisman, 1996; Merali, 2009) and deliberate social, cultural, and economic isolation imposed by husbands deprives women of any sources of support in the new as well as in their native country (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Mehrotra, 1999; Preisser, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Abraham (2000b) notes that cultural, structural, linguistic and economic barriers along with lack of social and economic resources stemming from isolation are likely to keep South Asian immigrant women trapped in abusive marriages.

The findings from the current study indicate that the participants were not only embroiled in abusive relationships, but they also lacked the structural resources to deal with them effectively because of their immigrant status. Their situations were further aggravated because of the *Social and institutional support of abuse*. Participants described the oppressive patriarchal

family structures and gender roles that they had to conform to in their marriages. Family

hierarchies were particularly harsh for women who had moved into extended affinal families.

Moreover, their immigrant status posed multiple challenges; Ahmad, et al., (2009) noted that

South Asian immigrant women in Canada were subjected to gender and class based oppressions

from their own community as well as to hostile attitudes from the dominant society. Research on

social and institutional factors in domestic violence among South Asian immigrants in North

America has highlighted the contribution of patriarchy toward abuse (Abraham, 2002a; Ahmad

et al., 2004). Cultural scripts around gender roles and patriarchy are likely to increase South

Asian women's vulnerability to domestic abuse, and South Asian immigrant women often

struggle with rigid gender roles and patriarchal norms after migration (Chaudhuri, Morash, &

Yingling, 2014; Fikree & Pasha, 2005; Gerwal, Bottorff, & Hilton, 2005). Likewise, immigrant

women's trauma of domestic abuse is multiplied because of their vulnerable status in the new

country and their lack of knowledge of the laws and services that are available to them (Menjivar

& Salcido, 2002).

Almost all the participants shared their initial unfamiliarity with Canadian life as

contributing toward their abuse and sufferings. For example, participants reported a lack of skills

even when doing small chores such as mailing letters and grocery shopping. Almost all the

participants who had children had no knowledge of child tax benefit programmes and hence

could not access this money. This lack of knowledge and skills in negotiating everyday tasks

contributed significantly toward the inability of the participants to access available help and

support.

The overall picture that emerges from the *Lost in the Desert* domain highlights and

supports the emerging awareness among researchers that domestic violence in South Asian

immigrant communities needs to be examined with an intersectional approach (Abraham, 1995; Anitha, 2011; Sokoloff, 2008). For example, Anitha (2011) argues that culture does not exist in a vacuum; rather it exists within structural inequalities and interacts with them. The structural barriers that minorities confront are likely to intensify patriarchal norms within their communities. The overlapping dimensions of gender, culture, and class, and state policies on immigration and welfare along with racist attitudes of service providers shape immigrant women's experiences of oppression (Dasgupta, 2005; Kallivayalil, 2007). The participants in the current study had come to Canada with dreams of a happy and prosperous life. However, their dreams were crushed swiftly. They found out that they were married to *garbage husbands* and had little familial and social support. In addition, they lacked the language and/or job skills to integrate well in Canada. Immigrant women experience multiple levels of oppressions and hierarchy (Sokoloff, 2008). For example, highly educated immigrant women may be unable to work because of immigration laws or be forced to work in jobs below their skill level (Dasgupta & Warrier 1996). This may keep them economically dependent on their husbands and consequently affect their decision to stay in the abusive marriage. A particularly instructive example highlighting such intersectionalities is the limited effect of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002) in improving the life of South Asian immigrant wives in Canada. Under this legislation, changes were introduced that awarded sponsored spouses permanent resident status on arrival. This made them eligible for government assistance if their marriages dissolved because of domestic violence. However, these changes were specified on immigration documents in English and approximately one third of sponsored women from South Asia have little or no proficiency in English (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003). Subsequent studies reported that this language barrier prevented

immigrant South Asian women from understanding and exercising the rights granted to them under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002) (Kang, 2006; Merali, 2009; Shirwadkar, 2004). Limited proficiency in English also accentuates problems for immigrant wives in financial matters such as banking, taxes, and government assistance programmes like child tax benefits as was evident in the narratives of many of the participants in this study. Zara, for example, had no knowledge of child tax benefits prior to her divorce and after the divorce found out that she owed thousands of dollars to the child welfare agency. Similarly, Balwant never had any access to child tax benefits and her husband also deprived her of her personal money and assets. Economic dependency of immigrant wives may also be perpetuated through cultural scripts. Gill and Rehman (2004), for example, report that many South Asian immigrant women seeking help for domestic abuse noted that the cultural emphasis on their roles as mothers and care givers had restrained their access to education and work outside of home. Further, Shirwadkar (2004) notes that even working immigrant wives are likely remain economically dependent on their husbands. They may still be expected to do all the household work, and to let husbands to control their pay and spending. Many immigrant wives rarely have separate bank accounts and are not permitted to handle financial issues like taxes. Asha, for example, did not have any bank account during 25 years of marriage. Women tend to accept such arrangements to avoid conflicts with family members and to conform to their roles of good wives and daughters-in-law. Dasgupta (2000) further argues that many times such compliance to restrictive gender roles and restraint from speaking out about domestic abuse by South Asian immigrant women results from the threat of being labelled as a traitor to their culture and communities and maligning their communities. Some participants also pointed to the apathy of legal system. Fatima, Asha and Meena shared their frustrations with the judicial system for

allowing men to get away with their abusive behaviours. The insensitivity and apathy of legal professionals toward ethnic minority domestic violence victims has been reported in literature (e.g., Abraham, 2000; Dasgupta, 2007; Preisser, 1999). Roy (2012) for example found that limited proficiency in English language of South Asian domestic abuse victims resulted in the arrests and/or the issuance of temporary restraining orders against the battered women. Thus, it is evident that personal, cultural, and structural barriers intersected in unique ways to shape the domestic violence experiences of the participants.

In summary, findings from the *Lost in the Desert* domain suggest that the domestic violence experiences of South Asian immigrant women are a product of intersecting patterns of personal, cultural and structural inequalities (Anitha, 2011) and are represented by both exceptionalistic and the universalistic perspectives on domestic violence. Hence, an intersectional analysis lens is most useful to comprehensively understand and address domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities.

Navigating through the Desert. The second domain *Navigating through the Desert* was defined by categories that represented women's efforts to adapt to their lives in Canada. The two lower order categories *Resilience*, and *Resource deployment* captured two distinct aspects of their experiences. The properties of *Resilience* reflect women's strength and perseverance in adjusting to tribulations in their lives. They cultivated their mental and physical strengths to take charge of their situations. In doing so they redefined themselves to move from victims to survivors. The lower order category of *Resource deployment* highlighted women's successful utilization of the formal and informal resources available to them. These included help from social and legal welfare agencies, and *familial and social support*. Women shared their abuse with family and friends and were invariably offered material and social support albeit with some

initial resistance for a few women. Many women developed strong social networks and became regular members of the support groups offered by welfare agencies. This was particularly relevant after the relationship had ended as women actively sought these resources to take control of their lives and in doing so also *redefined (them)selves*. These findings support Ahmad, Rai, Petrovic, Erickson, & Stewart's (2013) qualitative study that explored resilience among South Asian immigrant women in Canada with experiences of domestic abuse. They found that the women actively used their cognitive abilities and other psychological resources, social support, and professional assistance to move forward and transform themselves positively. They developed an increased sense of autonomy, confidence and positive outlook. Women were aware of the increased challenges because of their immigrant status but were also appreciative of the resources that Canada offered. The authors further noted that social services such as housing and financial assistance and legal aid played an important role in the resilience process for women. Consistent with Ahmad and her colleagues' (2013) finding, the categories of *Resilience* and *Resource deployment* in the current study highlight the strength and resourcefulness of the participants. Women drew upon the formal and informal available resources and successfully utilized them to navigate through the rough terrain in their lives. Similarly, the lower order category of *re-defining (them)selves* seems to reiterate Ahmad et al.'s (2013) findings that the women participants transformed from feeling trapped and disillusioned into a more positive psychological state exhibiting increased confidence and a more optimistic future outlook. These findings are particularly relevant, as Mehrotra (1999) argues that the representation of abused women primarily as passive victims is problematic and misleading because it disempowers women. The current findings challenge this stereotype and suggest that women actively seek resources at individual, familial, and community levels in order to improve their lives. They also

highlight the positive impact of government policy interventions for domestic violence. These policies include support services, such as housing facilities and shelters for abused women, language and job training as well as criminal justice programmes (Shirwadkar, 2004). However, it is also apparent that policies need to address the complex needs of South Asian immigrant women, such as socio-cultural constraints that delay help seeking, and misinformation about and lack of access to available services and rights (Ahmad et al., 2009).

Singh, Hays, Chung and Watson (2010) note that the current resilience literature focuses primarily on Western values and mainly examines individual factors of resilience. This has obscured the complex, multifaceted, interpersonal and cultural factors that shape resilience (Hartling, 2005). Consequently, the current models of resilience are not very helpful in understanding the resilience experiences of ethnic minority groups such as those of South Asian women (Singh et al., 2010). Singh (2009) notes that the emphasis on family cohesion in South Asian culture is likely to promote relational resilience (one's ability to connect interpersonally) among South Asian women. Despite this, relational resilience has largely been ignored in resilience research (Hartling, 2005). The lower order category of *familial/social support* represents facets of relational resilience and supports Singh's (2009) observations that relational resilience is likely to be an important resilience strategy for South Asian women. The findings from the current study add to the under researched area of resilience among South Asian immigrant women with histories of domestic abuse and echo Singh's (2009) assertion that a culturally relevant model needs to be developed to understand resilience among South Asian immigrant women.

Complexities of Honour. The properties of the third domain Complexities of Honour, explain the construct of honour as described by the participants. The findings suggest that honour

is a complex, multidimensional construct, and embodies positive as well as negative aspects. The two, third level categories, *Burden of honour* and *Strength of honour* reflected these two facets of honour. The *Burden of honour* subcategory represents the restrictive and harsh honour scripts that define women's subservient roles as wives and kept them trapped in abusive relationships. This oppressive aspect of honour norms that legitimizes male authority and suppresses women is the subject of much of the current scholarly understanding of honour. However, the *Strength of honour* category that reflects the strength and resources prescribed for women by honour norms has largely been ignored in Western scholarship. Researchers are recognizing this bias; Merry (2003) notes that Western discourses on women's rights in traditional cultures have focused primarily on cultural practices that harm women, while paying little attention to cultural practices that protect women.

    Burden of honour. South Asian culture has been characterized as an honour culture (Baker et al., 1999; Ortner, 1978; Werbner, 2007) and, despite linguistic, nationalistic, and religious differences, South Asian communities generally share certain values. These values include honour norms, collectivism, and strict gender roles based on a patriarchal family structure that promotes a gendered family hierarchy where men have higher status and power than women. Moreover, South Asian women from childhood are socialized to conform to the ideals of "good" wives and are expected to keep marriages together and be guardians of family honour (Abraham, 2006; Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Merchant, 2000). Abraham (2005) maintains that values regarding honour and shame in South Asian communities often persist even after migration. These values and scripts are strongly reflected in the lower order categories of *abuse is a blot on family honour, divorce robs family honour,* and *women's tolerance only increases abuse.* The properties of these categories emphasize the

burden that is placed on South Asian women by honour scripts. The collective honour of the family superseded their own well-being and happiness, and they chose to endure abuse to uphold family honour. The desire to keep family problems secret further aggravated their situations by barring them from accessing formal and informal help and support. These findings are consistent with the observations that, in honour cultures, maintaining and upholding family honour is of utmost importance for both women and men (Baker et al., 1999). Ahmad et al. (2009) in their study with South Asian immigrant wives experiencing partner abuse reported that women were concerned about family honour and the negative impact that their disclosure of abuse and/or divorce might have on their significant others including children, parents, and siblings. Divorce for South Asian women carries intergenerational stigma that can extend to their parents, siblings, nephews, nieces, and children and can interfere with their chances of finding a good marriage match (Chaudhri et al., 2014; Goel, 2005). Participants in the current study echoed this sentiment and noted that they endured personal hardships because they did not want the stigma of divorce to hurt their loved ones.

The other lower order category within this domain, *honourable, enduring wife as oppressive*, subsumed the categories that represented the oppressive cultural beliefs and ideals set for "good women." These categories, *ideal docile women, husband is god,* and *desire to save marriage,* encompass the ideals and beliefs that women had internalized as standards for their marital relationship and roles as wives. The ideal wife maintains unwavering devotion to her husband. She not only endures adversity throughout her life at the hands of her husband but she suffers it silently. She is patient, self-sacrificing and accepts and preserves family hierarchy. The participants, regardless of their religious denomination, shared a commitment to these qualities and ideals of the perfect wife. They remained devoted to their marriages and abusive husbands

and only two out of ten women made the decision to separate from their husbands on their own initiative.

Overall, the *Burden of honour* category reflected the oppressive and restrictive honour codes and values as expressed by the participants. These values significantly and adversely affected their experiences of domestic abuse. Pursuing the ideals of good women, wives, and mothers, the participants remained devoted to their husbands and marriages and endured their hardships with silence. Their fear of stigma and social ostracism further prevented them from sharing their ordeal and seeking help for it. The participants upheld their roles prescribed to them by honour norms and accepted the burden placed on them as guardians of family honour. While the findings of the current study strongly suggest that women carry a disproportionately higher burden than men as protectors of family honour, there is little evidence for the thesis that, in honour cultures, male and family honour is most closely tied to the reputations and sexual conduct of women in the family. Participants in the study did not make any explicit connection between sexuality and honour. Rather, similar to Baxter's (2007) understanding of honour, they explained honour as a multi-layered ideology about "right living." Some of the determinants of honour identified by participants included self-sacrifice, patience, strength, forbearance, nurturance, and being "good" wives and mothers.

Strength of honour. The lower order categories that defined this domain can be broadly delineated into two facets. The categories, *wife is husband's honour, dishonourable men abuse, wise men/women uphold honour,* and *honour keeps marriages intact,* highlight the privileges, protection and support provided to women by honour codes, whereas the *honourable, enduring wife as power* category outlines the strength, and power that women draw from honour scripts. Participants shared the satisfaction and strength that they drew from their convictions that their

valiant and silent endurance of sufferings achieved greater goods such as ensuring the well-being of their children and families. It also provided them with pride and esteem for living up to their roles of devoted daughters, mothers, and wives. These roles are very important to them and are highly revered by them and their communities. They were simultaneously reeling under the burden placed on them by these scripts and drawing pride and strength from them. Researchers are increasingly recognizing the agency of abused women in traditional cultures (Abraham, 2002; Gallagher, 2007). Although women's decisions to stay in abusive marriages are stereotypically interpreted as reflecting their passivity and submission, there is a growing realization that women tend to develop strategies to handle their abusive situations (Chaudhuri et al., 2014). For example, Chong (2006) argues that women may make a conscious decision to conform to conservative norms to improve and negotiate gender relations. I suggest that the findings from the current study indicate that deriving strength and social and self-esteem from honour scripts is a strategy women use to navigate through their abusive marriages. The honour scripts women followed can be interpreted as internalized oppression; nonetheless, they do provide them with strength and are a part of their self-concept that they consciously mobilize to manage their lives. The significance of these norms in the lives of the women needs to be fully understood and appreciated. Any re-interpretation and reformulation of these norms needs to be managed in a culturally sensitive and empathic manner.

The other subcategories of the *Strength of honour* category, *wife is husband's honour, dishonourable men abuse, wise men/women uphold honour* and *honour keeps marriages intact* represent the support and resources that women are provided by honour norms at the familial and community level. Participants narrated a number of means through which this support can be garnered. These included social pressures and corrective forces directed at husbands and in-laws

to treat wives well and to keep marriages intact. Women also shared the support and informal counselling interventions that were available to them from family and community. Sokoloff (2008) maintains that rather than focussing on the cultural disadvantages for women, it is important to understand and utilize the unique solutions that a culture offers against domestic violence. For example, she notes that among some orthodox Jewish and Muslim communities, rabbis and imams bar abusive husbands from entering into their places of worship until they stop the abuse (Kay 2006; Holmes 2005). Only after the abuse is stopped are men reintegrated into the communities. Although there is limited research on culturally specific domestic violence management strategies for South Asian immigrant women (Shirwadkar, 2004), the findings from the current study suggest that interventions utilizing culturally specific interventions integrating recourses provided by honour codes for South Asian communities may be helpful. For example Dasgupta (as cited in Sokoloff, 2008) notes that, among South Asian communities, "shaming" the abuser has been used with some degree of success when abusive men are named and shamed, they risk losing their honour and are forced to change their abusive behaviours to protect their personal and family honour (Gill, 2004). Likewise, in their study of help seeking behaviours among South Asian immigrant women in Toronto with experiences of domestic abuse, Ahmad et al. (2009) noted that women mobilized the resources within the community to improve family relationships and reduce domestic abuse. For example, a participant in that study shared her husband's abusive behaviour with a South Asian doctor and this loss of face made her husband improve his behaviour with her. Similarly, temporary separation where South Asian women usually stay with their parents because of their husband's behaviour is another way of shaming husbands into improving their behaviour. This uses the abusive husband's concerns about his ''good'' public image effectively serve to control his aggressive behaviour. Such strategies of

managing abusive marriages reflect the utilization of *familial and social support* and the

provision of family elders' intervention provided to women by honour values.

In summary, the Complexities of Honour domain is a counterintuitive and illuminating

finding. The honour scripts shared by women indicate that they accept their subservient status as

wives. They are stranded in abusive marriages to preserve their family honour. The aspect of

honour norms that legitimizes male authority is discussed frequently in the existing literature.

While honour scripts legitimize male authority and dominance, the findings of the current study

suggest that they do not simply reduce women to passive, helpless recipients of male aggression.

Rather women derive personal strength, social support, and ironically, are awarded safeguards

against abuse, through honour norms. This facet of honour ideology has largely been ignored in

research. However, the current study clearly indicates that the role of honour ideology in the life

of South Asian immigrant wives is multifaceted and has positive as well as negative dimensions.

Because the extant social psychological research on honour cultures is provincial in its

understanding of honour cultures I have mostly turned to recent anthropological findings (e.g.,

Abu-Lughod, 2011; Baxter, 2007) to explain my findings regarding complexity and strength of

honour. However, it is important to note that South Asian feminists are also voicing similar

discourses. Grewal (2013) notes that the construct of honour in reference to South Asian

societies has primarily been seen as masculine power, based on reputation, and has been used to

contrast South Asian societies as 'backward' relative to and different from 'modern' ones. She

further argues that honour exists as a cultural ideology and by associating it with oppression of

women, honour has been moved from a cultural ideology that exists across a society to a crime.

In a similar vein, Virdi (2013) notes that there is heightened interest in Canada in understanding

the concept of honour. However, much of this debate has produced an overly simplistic

understanding of honour, limiting it to a motivator to use violence, and as a tool to make women suffer violence silently. In her qualitative research with Sikh women in Canada, Virdi notes that honour was a governing normative order for participants, but there were constant negotiations, fluidity of values, life styles, and gender roles. Honour was transplanted into Canadian context adjusted and re-adjusted according to immigration and settlement experience. These findings support my understanding of honour as a complex construct that restrains women but also allows them to negotiate patriarchal constraints.

Limitations of the Study

While the use of qualitative methodology in the study allowed a deep and emic understanding of the familial violence experiences of South Asian immigrant women in the greater Toronto area, it limits the generalizability of findings to the larger population. The small sample size permitted an in-depth analysis of the role of honour ideology in familial abuse experiences of South Asian women but it also qualifies the relevance of this analysis to a limited group. Another limitation of the study is the sample composition. Because of ethical and practical concerns, the participants were recruited from shelters and women's support centres. This meant that the participant pool was limited to women who had already disclosed the abuse and had accessed available support. Further, all of the participants were either divorced or separated from their husbands. Thus, their narratives and experiences come from this specific location in their lives, and may not be applicable to, for example, women who stay or are still in abusive marriages. Lastly, the translation and subsequent analysis of interviews into English language may have resulted in the loss of some cultural subtleties in the meanings of the words. Cultural assumptions are embedded in language, and different languages create, express, and organize realities in different ways (Kapborg &

Berterö, 2002). Although I shared and understood the cultural worldview of the participants, the translation of their realities into English was a difficult and at times an incomplete task. Some words could not be translated into English because of cultural differences and the absence of equivalent words in English. This is likely to have had some impact on the findings.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study support the growing recognition among domestic violence researchers that there is a need to adopt an intersectional approach to fully understand experiences and barriers of immigrant women who undergo familial violence. The current theoretical approaches in the domestic violence literature, including the feminist approach, have a narrow scope and are insufficient for a complete understanding of domestic violence in the South Asian immigrant community in Canada. Intersectional analysis allows the flexibility to examine how oppressive forces in battered immigrant women's lives are multiplied by virtue of their location at the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and immigrant systems of oppression and discrimination (Abraham 2000b; Crenshaw 1994; Sokoloff & Dupont 2005; Sokoloff & Pratt 2005; Sokoloff 2008). While it is true that domestic violence cuts across all classes, races, and ethnic groups, it is important to note that the domestic violence experiences of a poor, immigrant women would be different from that of a woman who is educated and belongs to a wealthy, dominant social group (Richie, 2000). Thus, for any domestic violence support and prevention programmes for South Asian immigrant women, it is critical that service providers are cognizant of multiple oppressive discourses at play that help to perpetuate the violence such as gender, poverty, language barriers, family hierarchies, immigration status in the lives of their clients. For example, participants of the current study particularly pointed to the ineffective

responses of the legal and health systems to their abuse. As immigrants, they had little knowledge about the systems and most of them were unable to successfully prosecute their abusers. Participants who had been victimized by *marriage mafia* expressed their disappointment with the legal system for allowing men to engage in such blatant abuse of the system and women. Similarly, participants felt betrayed when family doctors failed to notice the abuse, as one of the participant noted that she had lost at least thirty pounds but the family doctor never tried to understand the cause. Because her husband always accompanied her to the doctor's office she could not share it with him, however, she felt that doctor should have taken the initiative and could have asked her husband to leave the office so that he could talk to her.

An understanding of the multiple oppressors that contribute toward the familial violence experiences of South Asian immigrant women is not meant to minimize the role and responsibility of male perpetrators; rather, it is aimed at contextualizing the abuse within women's economic, social, cultural, and political environments. Domestic violence research and services that do not address the intersecting structural and cultural inequalities faced by South Asian immigrant women are unlikely to offer effective and long term solutions to the problem of abuse.

The most significant and important contribution of the current study is that it expands the understanding of the construct of honour and its role in domestic violence in honour cultures. Two particularly important aspects of honour that were reflected in participants' narrative are as follows. First, honour is a multidimensional ideology about right living and equating it with the sexual behaviour of women is restraining and erroneous. Being honourable requires possessing good personal attributes such as strength, integrity, piety, patience, sincerity, and humility for both genders. Second, honour ideology assigns women privileges, power, and claim over men. In

their roles as mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters, women are accorded privileges and rights over men. Men who do not measure up to these expectations run the risk of dishonouring themselves and their families.

Virdi (2013) notes that the extensive and sensational media coverage of 'honour killings' in recent years has left media, legal officials and Canadians struggling to understand the concept of honour. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of honour in order to insightfully inform the current debate on honour and violence against women. Although much attention has been paid to the gendered violence of 'honour' and 'honour killings,' researchers have largely ignored the specific concept of honour and its application in private and public spaces. Existing social psychological research on honour is narrow and erroneously limits honour in honour cultures to control of female sexuality. This restrictive understanding of the South Asian cultures of honour has harmed the cause of women who experience domestic violence. For example, Korteweg, Abji, Barnoff, and Mattoo (2013) studied the impact of race and culture on the services offered by organizations servicing South Asian women victims of violence in the greater Toronto area. They interviewed fifteen service providers, who identified the monolithic and stigmatizing understanding of violence against women in South Asian communities by funders, state agencies, and media as a major obstacle to their work. The participants referred to the media debate on forced marriage and the resulting legislation on fraudulent marriages introduced by the federal government in 2012 as an illustration of the impact of such stigmatization. Service providers described this legislation as a form of state violence that places new restrictions on sponsoring spouses. These restrictions according to the participants of the study are likely to increase violence against women rather than provide them with protection. They attributed the promulgation of this legislation to the

prevailing misinformation about arranged marriages and the obfuscation of the distinction between forced and arranged marriages. This example reiterates the need to develop a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of South Asian cultural practices in the context of domestic violence. A unidimensional understanding of South Asian honour culture and its traditions, such as arranged marriage, likely played a role in the biased and restrictive legislation that may well add to the problems of domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities rather than ameliorating them. Thus, to effectively address the issue of familial violence in South Asian immigrant communities, it is imperative to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the honour construct.

The current study addresses this gap in literature and presents an emic understanding of honour. The findings highlight the multidimensional properties of the construct and its importance in the lives of South Asian immigrant women. The study also illuminates the honour culture's practices that are aimed at helping women in abusive marriages. It adds significantly to the existing literature as much of the current research on domestic violence among immigrants in Western societies focuses on the harmful practices of their cultures and ignores the positives that help women fight violence in their lives (Sokoloff, 2008). Future research should further this focus on supportive practices for women in honour cultures. It should also be directed at developing a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of 'honour.' Such an understanding will be crucial for not only fostering effective domestic violence intervention programmes for South Asian women, but also for helping to illustrate the multidimensional facets of honour. A comprehensive understanding of honour is also essential to dispel the rising derogation of honour cultural practices that is likely to interfere with the fight against domestic abuse by South Asian immigrant women. Moreover, a thorough understanding of honour will

also be helpful in understanding the intersectionalities in the lives of South Asian immigrant women because of their unique locations on structural and cultural barriers.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Study Name: Familial abuse of South Asian women: Analyses of their narratives of victimization.

Researcher: Sadia Zafar, Graduate student (PhD 2) Department of Psychology York University.

Sponsors: York University

Purpose of the research: To understand women's' perceptions of their suffering and victimization of familial violence as well as the contribution of cultural ideologies toward the abuse and the experiences of victims.

What you will be asked to do in the research: Should you agree to take part in the study you will be interviewed by me, the researcher. You will be asked to share your experience of victimization and your sense of what gave rise to it. You are free to stop at any point and do not have to answer any questions that you find uncomfortable. The amount of time required to complete the interview tends to vary, and may approximately last for about an hour. You can withdraw from participating in the interview at any time during the interview. You may refuse to answer any particular question if you so decide. The interview will be tape recorded so that it can be transcribed and analysed at a later date.

Risks and discomforts: We do not foresee any risks from your participation in the research. You may however feel some discomfort talking about your experiences of abuse, and should that happen, and should you feel that it would be a good thing to do, we will provide you with a list of resources where you can seek help to address this discomfort.

Benefits of the research: Your participation will help increase understanding of the victimization experiences of South Asian abused women. I will be offering you a $20 grocery store gift certificate to thank you for your participation. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will still be eligible to receive the $20 grocery store gift certificate.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is voluntary.

Withdrawal from the study: You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with me, my supervisors, York University, or any other group associated with this project. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any information collected till that point would be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: If you consent to an interview, it will be tape-recorded. All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be made anonymous to protect your identity. The interview tape-recording will be transcribed to provide a written record of the interview, which will then be studied. After ensuring that your identity is removed, either the interview as a whole or parts of it will be listened to by my supervisors, which mean that the interview will be anonymous but not confidential. Brief excerpts drawn from the transcript of

your interview may be used in my dissertation and, possibly, papers presented at professional meetings as well as publications. The tapes and the transcribed interviews will be stored in a locked facility for five years and only the research staff will have access to them. When the five years have transpired, the data will be archived.

Questions about the research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me, Sadia Zafar, 038G Atkinson Building York University (telephone 416 736-2100 Ext 88623 or e-mail: sadiaz@yorku.ca. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants in Research Committee; York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact MS Alison Collins-Mrakas, Manager, Research Ethics, Office of Research Ethics, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail acollins@yorku.ca).

I confirm that I have read and understood the information consent sheet for the study, Familial abuse of South Asian women: Analyses of their narratives of victimization, conducted by Sadia Zafar. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw from the interview at any point. I am aware that the interview is going to be tape recorded, and I give permission that it can be used for the purpose of this research.

I give my consent for the possibility that the researcher in the compilation of the final report may use excerpts of what I say in the interview. I give full consent to take part in this study.

Name of participant:………………….. Date:……………..……..…...Signature…………………

Name of researcher:………………….. Date:……………..……..……Signature…………………

Appendix B

Proposed questions for interviews with women:

1. What has been your experience of violence?

2. What is your sense of why (the perpetrator) uses violence?

If needed to explore the themes of honour and shame, the following questions may be introduced in the interview.

1. What does honour mean to you?

2. What is your sense of what does honour mean to other women in your community

3. What is your sense of what does honour mean to the men in your community?

4. What is your sense of how might honour contribute to violence toward women?