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CULTURE OF SILENCE AND MOBILIZING ETHNO-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES TO ACKNOWLEDGING PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Priya Kharat, PhD, RSW

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*** Reasons to continue to work with ethno-cultural communities:**

- Few efforts have been undertaken
- Results in lack of statistical data on incidents of intimate partner violence
- Cumulatively results in limited literature
- Available data suggests that the occurrence of severe and lethal violence is higher (e.g. among South Asian women).
- Some studies found a lifetime incidence of intimate partner violence among South Asian immigrant women

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Immigrant women: A few facts

- * Almost half of migrants around the world are women.
- * Statistics Canada (2011) projects that, by 2031, women immigrants will exceed male immigrants relocating to Canada.
- * Arrive more frequently as dependents under the family or the economic class categories.
- * Are more likely to have completed a university degree compared to their Canadian counterparts.

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Immigrant women: A few facts continued...

- * Visible-minority immigrant women are more highly educated in mathematics, engineering, computer and information sciences, management, law, and architecture.
- * 95% of all immigrant women belong in the core working-age group of 25–54 years old; however, only 55.8% were actually in the labour force.
- * Yet, studies indicate that many immigrant women are more susceptible to higher resettlement stress.

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Influences to the culture of silence
 Pre-migration

Impact of societal norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaning of family ▪ Understanding community ▪ Meaning of “freedom” and “choices” ▪ Concept of arranged marriages ▪ Underlying nuances of subtle force and coercion
Family honour and shame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practices of dowry ▪ Restrictions of gender and community shame

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Dynamics of immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shift in power structure ▪ Implications of delays ▪ Implications of sponsorships and dilemmas created by dependence ▪ Nuances of family honour
Lack of infrastructure to address intimate violence in country of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implications of community attitudes ▪ Internalized ideas and family shame ▪ Incompetent emergency response system ▪ Interrelatedness of a better and violence-free future ▪ Nonexistent services ▪ Gendered power imbalances

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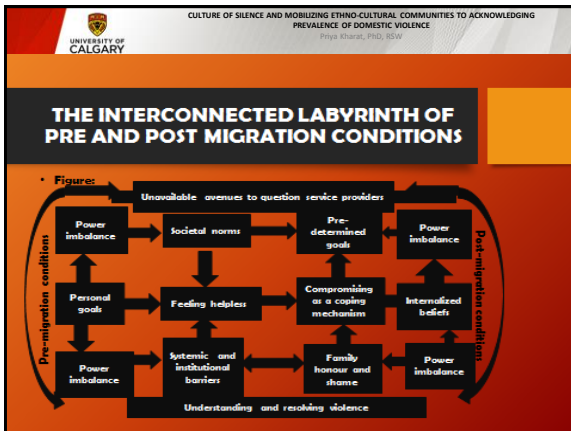
Post-migration influences:

Internalized beliefs about women's role and status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idealized identity Stigma of divorce Impact of separation and discriminatory societal attitudes
Fear of isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created dependencies and shifts in societal norms Created dependencies and restrictions of resources Created dependencies due to differences of gender Impact on children's future Fear of social stigma Continued abuse
Community ostracism	

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Inappropriateness of current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limitations of current counselling approaches Aversion to involving police
Ineffective available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate immigrant-centric residential services Lack of knowledge of resources Nuances of community ostracism Implications of information at port of entry or departure Need for appropriate language interpreters
Unavailable avenues to clarify doubts and question service providers	
Understanding and resolving violence	

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CURRENT BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- strange to talk about DV in new country
- difficult to explain dynamics of multigenerational conflict
- fear of community ostracism
- fear of losing extended family
- confusion on meaning of parenting in Canada
- fear of the system
- fear of deportation
- fear of a system that supports breaching family
- lack of open dialogue in the community
- fear of being abandoned
- fear of security to self and children
- fear of misinterpretation

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Along with the above are some of the prevailing stereotypes that perhaps are barriers to collaborations:

- * immigrant communities accept intimate violence as an integral part of their cultural heritage- culturally sanctioned.
- * perception of many immigrant women as passive
- * complexities of culture, and traditions

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An example...

Impact of colonisation,

- Through the history of South Asia, women became the objects of oppression. The result of thousands of years of subjugation, including the recent colonization was that the South Asian woman was portrayed as dependent, powerless, and in need of saving from her own people

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An example continued...Colonization and the associations of Gender, Honour, and Patriarchy ...

the family unit was deemed to be a space to maintain identity against the threatening, modern, outer world. The goal of locals was to be identified as culturally superior and distinct from Western ideologies. And the burden of carrying the traditional, cultural identity was given to women

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Culture of silence

- *Afraid of losing the trust of the community
- *Fears and confidentiality issues
- *Lack of open discussions addressing intimate partner violence in the community
- *Upholding the image of the community

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PRO-ACTIVE MODEL TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (community collaboration)

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    graph TD
      A[Identify community champions] --- B[Ongoing community dialogues]
      B --- C[Creative ways to build momentum]
      D[Form core group of community members] --- E[Organize train the trainer/workshops for local leaders]
      E --- F["E.g., Male domination, patriarchy, culture"]
      G[Information sessions for schools] --- H[Awareness of what is domestic violence]
      H --- I[Create advocacy groups]
      A --- D
      D --- G
      G --- I
      I --- H
      H --- A
  
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Thank you!

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