

Asian Immigrant Women in Interracial Relationship

Asian Immigrant Women in Relationships with Caucasian Men:

Possible Risk Factors for Domestic Violence

by

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Abstract

Over the past ten years, the numbers of interracial relationships between immigrant women and Caucasian men have increased rapidly in Canada. According the National Household Survey, “4.6% of all married and common-law couples in Canada were in mixed unions. Of that number, 3.9% of all couples were composed of one person who was a member of a visible minority and one who was not” (National Household Survey, 2011). Furthermore, “most mixed unions are made up of persons born in two different countries. In 2011, nearly half of mixed unions (49.2%) were composed of a person born in Canada and a person born abroad (National Household Survey, 2013). With so many different visible minority groups to attend to, the writer/author of this paper is particularly interested in Asian population. So, this paper focuses solely on the relationship between Asian immigrant women and native-born Canadian men, particularly the White Canadian men who represent the dominate culture in Canada. This paper investigates the possible factors that might increase the occurrence of, and tolerance for, domestic violence against Asian immigrant women who are in interracial relationships with Caucasian men. It examines some of the cultural influences on interracial relationships, through assessing women’s immigration issues, by seeking to gain a better understanding of the racism, oppression, and discrimination against Asian immigrant women, and by determining how mental health professionals and counsellors could better help this vulnerable population in our society

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Chapter One:

Introduction:

In large cities, such as Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, interracial relationships or mixed unions between Asian and White Canadians have grown rapidly recently. The data from National Household Survey indicates that “couples in mixed unions accounted for 2.6% of all couples in 1991, 3.1% of couples in 2001, 3.9% in 2006, and 4.6% in 2011.” (Minister of Industry, 2014). Even though a mixed union refers to a couple in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and one does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups, but, the proportion of mixed unions in which one spouse or partner is a visible minority member and the other is not is much greater than the mixed unions in which the two spouses or partners are members of different visible minorities. According the National Household Survey, “4.6% of all married and common-law couples in Canada were in mixed unions. Of that number, 3.9% of all couples were composed of one person who was a member of a visible minority and one who was not” (NHS, 2011). So, this article is going to focus solely on the mixed unions in which one spouse or partner is a visible minority member and the other is not. Furthermore, according to Statistics Canada, “most mixed unions are made up of persons born in two different countries. In 2011, nearly half of mixed unions (49.2%) were composed of a person born in Canada and a person born abroad (National Household Survey, 2013). This data shows that there are many native born Canadians who have married immigrants. As a result, one might assume that there should have many studies focusing on the couple relationship between non-White immigrant women and

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White native-born Canadian men. Unfortunately, even though the number of mixed union couples in Canada is growing rapidly, not many studies have explored the interracial relationships between immigrant women and Canadian men.

In Canada, many people still see interracial couples as a “romantic union” representing an ideal of a tolerant and accepting symbol, one of a highly integrated culture of multiple cultures/races. Many people are more interested in the attraction between Asian women and Caucasian men, than the difficulties and conflicts in the interracial couple relationships. Kim (2011) had examined the dynamics that trigger attraction between Asian females and Caucasian males. But, in Britain, one study found evidence that “mixed-ethnic unions, between one White partner and an ethnic minority partner, have a higher risk of dissolution than co-ethnic unions” (Feng et al., 2012, 159). Furthermore, in the U.S., several studies have aimed to explore/understand the interracial/intercultural relationships between visible minority/immigrant women and Caucasian men. Fusco (2010) had explored intimate partner violence in interracial couples, and compared white and ethnic minority mono-racial couples. Fusco found that “interracial couples were more likely to have a history of prior IPV, engage in mutual assault, and result in perpetrator arrest” (2010). In their study, Martin et al. (2013) have discovered that interracial couples demonstrated a higher level of mutual IPV than mono-racial couples. Kim et al. (2012) had assessed the Asian –White American international couples relationships among Chinese, South Korean, and Japanese partners in relationships with White American partners, and discovered that these international couples may face more challenges in regard to their diverging cultural values and beliefs within their relationships. From the few U.S. literature reviews, one can understand more of the domestic violence in Asian interracial relationships with

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Caucasian men. So, far, it is disappointing to notice that domestic violence in Asian women-Canadian men relationships have been seriously neglected by Canadian mainstream society.

By examining peer reviewed journal articles, this paper shall explore the various aspects of interracial relationship between Asian immigrant women and Caucasian men, and to determine risk factors regarding domestic violence against Asian immigrant women who are in intimate relationship with White men. In this paper, Asian immigrant women include the following groups: South Asian, Southeast Asian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. And, domestic violence is defined as when one person involved in an intimate partner relationship uses violence to have power and control over the other person. The type of violence used could include physical abuse, threats of abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or psychological abuse, isolation, and economic abuse or financial abuse. In some literature reviews, “Domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as the experience or threat of physical or sexual violence or financial or psychological/emotional abuse or all of these by a current or former partner” (Hyman et al., 2006, 682). According to WHO (2002), intimate partner violence is violence committed by legally married, separated, divorced, opposite and same sex common-law, dating partners (current and previous) and other intimate partners. As defined within other research studies found in the literature, the term domestic violence is used as an umbrella term and can include partner violence, marital violence, spouse abuse, wife abuse, women abuse, intimate partner violence, and violence in relationships. For examples, Kristin Carbone-Lopez (2013) had investigated intimate violence within a national sample; Martin et al.(2013) had explored intimate partner violence (IPV) in interracial and mono-racial couples; and Kim-Goh and Baello (2008) had examined the attitudes toward domestic violence in Korean and Vietnamese immigrant communities.

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Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon which reaches across time, societies and cultures. Statistics Canada has warned the public that “violence against women in Canada is a serious, pervasive problem that crosses every social boundary and affects communities across the country” (Minister of Industry, 2013, 3). Generally speaking, women in Canada have higher rates of intimate partner violence than men. “In 2011, 8 in 10 victims of police-reported intimate partner violence were women. Overall, there were about 78,000 female victims of intimate partner violence, representing a rate of 542 victims per 100, 000 women aged 15 years and older” (Sinha, 2013, 20). As such, it could occur within any relationship, including in an interracial relationship in Canada between Asian immigrant women who are in relationships with Caucasian men.

Unfortunately, as a result of the low levels of reporting of domestic violence within Asian immigrant communities, the seriousness of the situation and vulnerability of Asian immigrant women who are in abusive relationships with Caucasian men is often underestimated. “There is some evidence to suggest that reported rates of IPV are lower among immigrant women in Canada compared with Canadian-born women” (Cohen & Maclean, 2003, 45). Based on the self-reported spousal violence survey, some people have just assumed that low reported rate is as same as low risk of spousal violence. Regrettably, in 2009, the General Social Survey (GSS) had declared that “immigrant women had a lower risk of spousal violence compared to Canadian-born women. Specifically, 4.9% of immigrant women self-reported being a victim of spousal violence, compared to 6.8% of non-immigrant women” (Hutchins, 2013, 61). From the statement above, people would often dismiss or overlook the fact that immigrant women were also in danger of spousal violence, if not more so.

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Sadly, Statistics Canada might not have a comprehensive picture of the extent of violence against immigrant women due to the limitation of measuring violence against women, which only based on police-reported surveys and self reported data. Hyman et al. (2006) had investigated the help-seeking rates for intimate partner violence (IPV) among Canadian immigrant women and found that “recent immigrant women who experienced abuse were less likely than non-recent migrant women to disclose IPV to family, friends or neighbours, or others” (682). Without culturally appropriate measurement or assessment, the national data of intimate partner violence might not appropriately represent the immigrant women population. Maire Sinha (2013), a Statistics Canada researcher and analyst, had admitted that “the possibility of undercounting can exist regardless of the survey instrument used. This is because women may be reluctant to disclose their victimization to anyone, including authorities or survey interviewers” (p.11). Other researchers had also addressed that “it is important to note that since the General Social Survey is conducted in English and French, some immigrants and visible minorities may be unable to participate due to language barriers and may be under-represented among spousal and non-spousal violence victims” (Sinha, 2012, 118).

Domestic violence has affected our society in a wide variety of ways, even though some immigrant women (or their families & their communities) have tried to hide it or brush it off.

Along with the immediate physical and emotional impacts of violence, women’s overall quality of life can be adversely affected over an entire lifetime, which can, in turn, impact their participation and engagement in various aspects of life and society. (Hutchins, H. & Sinha, M., 2013, p.90).

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With the high numbers of women who have experienced abuse, there are even more children who have witnessed the abuse. “For children, especially the very young, this exposure to violence can have long-term emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioural impacts, thereby, incurring costs to the social and criminal justice systems for years to come” (Hutchins & Sinha, 2013, 86; Holt et al., 2008; Kitzmann et al., 2003). Sometimes, witnessing abuse can perpetuate the cycle of violence, and teach children that violence is OK; for example, violence is a way to get what you want; violence is a way to solve problems; and that violence is normal part of relationships. Children who witness abuse might be at greater risk of becoming violent themselves or/and for getting involved in abusive relationships. Furthermore, incidences of domestic violence often necessitate medical attention, and lead to mental health issues, issues of legal rights, and financial problems. “Additional societal costs arise from helping victims and their families in terms of the delivery and maintenance of health care services, counselling, shelter services, and other social supports” (Hutchins & Sinha, 2013, 85). The Department of Justice had conducted a study, estimating the economic consequences or repercussion of spousal violence in Canada. “Overall, the cost of spousal violence to women and men was estimated at \$7.4 billion in 2009” (Zhang et al., 2013, 80). As domestic violence has a variety of negative impacts on present and subsequent generations within our society, it is important that we pay more attention to the issue, including with respect to domestic violence within interracial couples with Caucasian males and Asian immigrant females.

This paper aims to demonstrate how and why immigrant women who are in interracial relationships might be more vulnerable to domestic violence. Within the following chapters, several factors that might increase the occurrence and tolerance of domestic violence against Asian immigrant women who are in interracial relationships with Caucasian men will be

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presented. The possible risk factors of domestic violence against Asian immigrant women in relationships with Caucasian men are 1) the cultural influences on interracial relationships; 2) the immigration process and immigration status; and 3) racism, oppression, and discrimination against Asian immigrant women. At the end of the paper, several considerations for mental health professionals and counsellors who work with this vulnerable population will be discussed.

Chapter 2 will begin with an examination of 1) cultural differences in the relationships between Asian immigrant women and Caucasian men, 2) the cultural influences on the possible non-reporting or/and underreporting of domestic violence, and 3) cultural issues which might increase Asian immigrant women's vulnerability to prolonged abusive relationships. Such cultural issues include gender role, family-based community, expectations regarding marriage, consideration of children, and the myth of the Caucasian male-Asian female relationship. Following this, Chapter 3 will describe how immigration status, the process of resettlement, and acculturation levels might provide risk factors for domestic violence and unreported domestic violence. The immigration process and the situation of immigration status increase the vulnerability of Asian immigrant women in relationship with Caucasian men. This is particularly true for many immigrant women whose sponsorship for acquiring Canadian citizenship is dependent on their Canadian husbands. The threat of sponsorship cancellation and fear of deportation increases the risk of domestic violence. Finally, Chapter 4 will determine how racial oppression, racism, power imbalance, discrimination, and feelings of inferiority in intercultural relationships might increase and/or prolong the occurrence of domestic violence against Asian immigrant women.

After examining the factors which might increase Asian immigrant women's vulnerability and prolong their suffering from domestic violence, Chapter 5 will point out several

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considerations for mental health workers and counsellors, and will examine some of the things they could do to help Asian immigrant women who are/were in relationship with Caucasian men and who (have) suffer(ed) from domestic violence. This chapter aims to answer two main questions: “What should a mental health professional be aware of when they have clients in interracial relationships?” and “What intervention approaches might benefit this population?”

This thesis project aims to make people more aware of the vulnerabilities of Asian immigrant women who are involved in an interracial relationship. Such vulnerabilities include lack of social support, and lack of information and resources. Mental health professionals are more likely to be aware of Western-based approaches which might be more applicable to certain populations and in certain situations. Finally, a few suggestions will be made regarding intervention approaches which have a higher likelihood of success with Asian immigrant women who are/were in abusive relationships with Caucasian men.

Chapter 2:

Cultural influences as barriers to reporting domestic violence

Beliefs about marriage, gender roles, family, inter-racial marriage, myths about Caucasian men as barriers/risk factors

The existing cultural differences between an interracial couple that is made up of an Asian immigrant woman and a Caucasian Canadian man may have serious impacts on their relationship as a couple and their marriage. At times, Asian immigrant women's beliefs about marriage, gender roles, their family-centered values, and myths they have about Caucasian men might leave them in a vulnerable position, increase their tolerance of abusive relationships, and exacerbate the incidence of domestic violence. In the U.S.A., Carbone-Lopez (2013) used data from the National Violence Against Women Survey to explore the domestic violence phenomena among interracial couples. "Women in interracial relationships report higher rates of nonphysical violence, as compared with women in White monoracial relationships" (Carbone-Lopez, 2013, p. 3) In Canada, nonphysical violence is rarely reported to police. "Reporting to police was higher for female spousal victims who sustained physical injury, who reared for their lives, and who experienced the greatest number of spousal violence incidents" (Sinha, 2013, p.95). So, if women in interracial relationships suffer more from nonphysical violence, the police or/and public might often underestimate the prevalence of domestic violence among interracial couples.

Asian immigrant women come primarily from patriarchal and collectivist societies and their beliefs about marriage, gender roles, and family values are very different from those who were born into Canadian culture. Such cultural differences might place Asian immigrant women

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in a disadvantaged position with respect to being in a relationship with white Canadian men, who represent the dominate culture in Canada, while Asian immigrant women represent one of many minority cultures. Cultural influences have heavily shaped the awareness, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, approaches, responses, and relationships to domestic violence of immigrant Asian women. For example, “Many Korean women do not realize that domestic violence is a crime in America, and those who do often consider divorce to be immoral, and therefore will not divorce their husbands even if they are involved in abusive relationships” (Roy, 1995, p.269). Cultural factors such as concepts about marriage which are traditionally family centered, community oriented, as well as myths regarding the relationships between Asian women and Caucasian men, could serve to increase the occurrence of, and tolerance for domestic violence against Asian immigrant women. Biever et al. (1998) addressed “the ways in which differences such as gender roles, traditions, and values may be factors in marital distress, and how considerable emphasis can be laid on the interracial aspects of how intercultural couples often encounter negative reactions in their communities” (p.74). The following paragraphs discuss the cultural factors and /or cultural barriers which make it difficult for abused Asian Immigrant women to seek help and leave an abusive relationship.

Marriage

The perspectives held by Asian immigrant women regarding marriage and its meaning may increase their tolerance for domestic violence perpetrated against them, and also prevent them from seeking help. Marriage is considered very sacred and important for many Asian women. Most Asian women still believe in a couple relationship or marriage lasting a lifetime. For an Asian woman, having a good marriage represents living a successful life. “While a non-Asian may regard leaving the abuser as a means to maintaining self-respect, a Chinese immigrant

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victim may view staying in the home with the family as the means to save face and to maintain self-respect” (Mdlarsky et al., 2006, p.290; Yoshioka & Choi, 2005). Most Asian women identify themselves not as a person in their own right, but as someone’s wife or mother. As such, failure in marriage or the loss of their children through divorce would result in feelings of losing their self-identify. For Asian immigrant women, “It is through fulfilling the roles of good wife and mother that a woman can obtain praise and respect, not through self-expression” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.287; Goel, 2005). So, for some Asian immigrant women, with the influence from their own communities, living with a bad marriage would be considered better than being a divorced woman as divorce is still equated with failure in some cultures. “In an attempt to preserve cultural values, many communities encourage women not to leave violent relationship or to stay silent and deny abuse” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.325). Since reporting abuse can signify losing their marriage or husbands, and their communities’ support, many Asian immigrant women would rather suffer domestic violence silently.

Most Asian immigrant women grow up in patriarchal communities and gender inegalitarian societies, and as such they have learned obedience and compliance to male family members such as grandfathers, fathers, or/and brothers. When an Asian woman gets married, they likewise show obedience and compliance to their husband, father-in-law, brother-in-laws, or/and grown-up sons. In a patriarchal community and gender inegalitarian society, “the husband is culturally accepted as ruler of the family, regarded as the formal authority and permitted to use force to ensure the compliance of his wife and children” (Haj-Yahia, 1998, p.533). Having been brought up with this kind of culturally-ingrained compliance, many Asian immigrant women might feel that it is unacceptable to challenge family authority figures, even

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when a male figure such as their partner or husband is seen to abuse their power and assault their wife and/or children emotionally or/and physically.

In contrast to Asian immigrant women who grow up following collectivist ideals, Caucasian Canadian men are likely to grow up believing in individualism. Individualism “emphasizes personal autonomy and independence, whereas collectivism is associated with group loyalty and interdependence” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.321; Hui & Triandis, 1986). Having perspectives and world views which could be considered to be at odds with each other, interracial couples might experience more marital conflict than mono-racial couples. According to Carbone-Lopez (2013), “in interracial relationships reported more often than women in White mono-racial relationships that their partners had a ‘hard time seeing things’ from their point of view”(p. 3). It is often the case that Asian women make a greater effort to adapt to their white partner’s culture, religious practices, daily life, and western values, especially if, as an interracial couple, they live in Western societies or in North America.

In Canada, many Asian Immigrant women experience reminders that they are no longer in their own countries and that they should adapt to the dominant values and beliefs of their new home and give up their own daily practices and cultures.

According to Nemoto’s study in U.S.(2009):

The typical marriage and family generally called “interracial” or “multi-racial” by the couples (White-Asian couples) interviewed are imagined by these couples as solely the “white middle-class” normative family... So, intermarriage automatically moves the white man to a position of authority in a white middle-class household” (p.72).

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Some White men involved with Asian immigrant women emphasize their Canadian cultural ideals as being the “right” way of being, and encourage their partners that they should listen to them always and follow their guidance. These Canadian men risk making their partners feel inadequate, inferior, and uneducated through doing such things as laughing at their English accent, correcting their ‘faulty’ beliefs, and telling them what to do and what not to do in Canada. As such, many women eventually stop experiencing their own voices and accept whatever their husbands tells them to do without daring to challenge their demeaning attitudes and abusive behaviours.

Some white men are marrying Asian women because they prefer women who submit to patriarchal ideas, and who possesses traditional femininity. According to Nemoto (2009), “Feminism among white women, which has generated cultural anxiety among some American men, has interested these men in Asian American women” (p.20). Some white men, especially the older generations are still very into the so-called ‘good old day’, and the traditional gender roles, in which men are breadwinners and women are housewives. Most Asian countries still practice traditional gender roles, while Canadian society is more into gender equality. Hence, some white men complained that “American women are very egotistical. They think everything is revolving around them. They can’t put themselves in the shoes of Asian women” (Nemoto, 2009, p.48). Obviously, with some Asian immigrant women, these white men could still practice their taken-for-granted male privilege as husbands.

In comparison to western perspectives regarding abusive relationships, Asian women might have different interpretations of domestic violence. “Psychological, verbal, and controlling abuse is not generally viewed as abusive among Chinese” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.282), and as such, many Asian women only consider physical abuse as domestic violence, while they regard

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emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or financial abuse as simply being in the realm of marital conflict. As long as there are no visible bruises or wounds on left on women's bodies, most Asians don't consider behaviours as abusive.

According to Midlarsky et al.(2006):

If a Chinese woman is belittled by her husband, her earnings are taken from her, leaving her with no financial resources and she is locked in the home when she is not at work—then her community will not view her husband's behaviour as abusive" (p.289).

Additionally, Asian immigrant women believe that it is their duty to have sex with their husbands whenever they want it. A devoted wife is always expected to sacrifice her own wishes, see to her husband's physical comfort, and satisfy his sexual needs. As such, they are not necessarily aware that in Canada it is considered sexual abuse or domestic violence if their husband forces them to engage in sexual activities. If, on the whole, the Asian community doesn't see sexual abuse, financial abuse, or emotional abuse as domestic violence, Asian immigrant women are not likely to report incidences of domestic violence or to seek professional help. This phenomenon decreases reporting rates and help-seeking behaviours among Asian women who have been abused. Furthermore, in most Asian communities, people place great value on women acting as 'a good wife' and 'a good mother' and being loyal to their husbands and their families. It is considered their responsibility to hold family members together, and to function as the peace maker within the family. Therefore, they are considered responsible for providing their children with the 'perfect family' that is complete and intact, and which includes a father, a mother, and all the children living together. The woman's community might look upon the help-seeking

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behaviour of a woman who has been abused as a betrayal to her husband, her children, and to other family members. Within many Asian patriarchal communities, it is considered that ‘for better or for worse’, a family should always stay together. As such, many Asian immigrant women choose to tolerate domestic violence in order to keep the family together.

According to Shiu-Thornton et al. (2005):

Some women expressed fear of saying anything that might result in the husband being sent to jail. They all pondered where they would live if they left and were concerned that their children would hate them for leaving the husband (p.970).

Being loyal to one’s husband and family is one of the reasons for low reporting rates and low help-seeking behaviours among Asian immigrant women.

Some Asian immigrant woman’s perspective:

Calling the police for help would only escalate violent behaviours and serve to further destroy their family. The fear of retaliation and shame were also cited as reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship” (Thornton et al., 2005, p.968).

Gender Roles

The rigid gender roles typical of Asian communities might serve to increase the occurrence of and tolerance for domestic violence against women. In traditional Asian society, a virtuous woman should be quiet, gentle, polite, submissive, obedient, compliant, and always take care of her family before meeting her own needs. A man’s masculinity is defined by his job, money, power, and having absolute control over his wife and children.

According to Midlarsky et al. (2006):

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In many Asian cultures, sons are more highly valued than daughters as sons carry the family name into the future. While money, power, and status have been handed down from father to son for centuries, daughters are seen as a financial burden by their family of origin as they will marry and become members of their husbands' families (p. 286).

As a result, Asian women often hold the rooted belief that they are secondary, inferior, lesser, lower, and unimportant in comparison to their male family members. This kind of gender role belief leaves Asian immigrant women in a disadvantaged position in a couple relationships or within their marital lives.

Many people in Asia, including the women themselves, often expect the wife to bear the responsibility for all forms of marital conflict, including domestic violence. People expect women to deal with conflicts through self-sacrifice and tolerance of aggressive behaviours, and if she cannot successfully do so, the blame that she has failed to be a 'good wife' and 'good mother' is put directly on her.

Cultural values expressed in gender roles reinforce the perspective that the woman is responsible for maintaining harmony in the family and/or household. If there is conflict, it is attributed to her failure to be a good wife. There is the larger perception that the wife bears responsibility for any marital conflict (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005, p.966).

Since the wife's role is to be obedient to her husband, some people might conclude that the wife's disobedience might be the cause of domestic violence against her. Furthermore, there also exists a cultural perception "that the wife could be held responsible for the husband's anger and,

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therefore, could be punished” (Thornton et al., 2005, 966). If Asian immigrant women presume that it is their fault that they have been abused, it stands to reason that they would not consider seeking help and reporting incidences of domestic violence.

Family Centered

Most Asian cultures hold a strong family-oriented and community-centered perspective. The family plays the most important role in the life of many Asian immigrant women. According to Midlarsky et al.(2006), “Greater value is attributed to the family than to the individual, and the individual’s behaviour is often seen as a reflection of the family’s worth in society” (p. 287). This traditional value of ‘putting family before self’ may also increase the occurrence and tolerance of domestic violence against Asian women, because self-sacrificing behaviours are so ingrained that they are taken on as second nature. Many Asian women would choose to protect the sanctity of marriage and maintain family peace and harmony, whatever the cost to themselves. As such, they believe that it is their responsibility to keep the family together and maintain family harmony, with the needs of the family always taking precedence over their personal needs.

If domestic violence has occurred, some people might blame the victim and consider the violence to have been the wife’s fault for provoking her husband because she was not capable of maintaining a harmonious relationship. Some, however, might blame the perpetrator, but ask the victim to keep it silent to protect the family’s honour and dignity, and save the man’s ‘face.’ As suggested by Milarsky et al.(2006), “Chinese Americans largely agree that disclosure of abuse issued outside the family is a violation of family privacy and fear bringing shame to the family” (p.288). Within this culture, the abused woman would likely be advised to accept the situation of

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a violent relationship as her fate and misfortune, and be encouraged to sacrifice herself for the sake of her children and the whole family.

In their attempt to preserve cultural values, many communities encourage women not to leave violent relationships or to stay silent and deny abuse. Many minority women have to choose between staying in a violent situation or leaving and being ostracized by their community (Campbell et al., 1997; Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.323).

Therefore, if an Asian woman would choose to leave an abusive relationship and seek help from her maternal family and her community, she would probably be discouraged from doing so. Furthermore, such traditional cultural attitudes towards marriage would eventually leave a battered Asian immigrant woman in great danger of suffering and continued and repeated acts of domestic violence.

Asian women may not be willing to disclose their experiences of domestic violence for fear of bringing shame to their families and emotionally harming their children. Generally, being a good mother remains the foremost consideration for an Asian woman who suffers from domestic violence. These women were taught that the intact family is the best for their children, and that they should put their children's needs before their own. Furthermore, domestic violence could become a big scandal for the family and for the community. By reporting incidences to police, these women might fear stigmatization or ostracism for themselves, and also for their children. "Mainstream professionals may be unaware that in many instances, influential community leaders (such as temple priests or church leaders) reinforce the prohibition against reporting the abuse to anyone outside the family" (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.296). Most

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importantly, Asian immigrant women might fear that by terminating their marriages, they may be forced to leave their children behind, thus not only having to deal with the unimaginable loss but also being criticized for being a 'bad mother.' Some scholars attesting that: "Women chose to stay because of worries about the economic or psychological effects on their children or chose to leave because the batterer might become violent toward the children" (Acevedo, 2000; Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.322). As such, children are often a determining factor regarding whether or not these women decide to stay in, or leave, an abusive relationship.

Myths and cultural images about Asian women & Caucasian men

Many inaccurate cultural images and myths have been developed about relationships between Asian women and White Canadian men. Some of these myths and images can be very misleading to those within the relationships themselves. At times, individuals within such a couple may feel cheated, tricked, or beguiled by these faulty ideas about the other that they have been led to believe. Feelings of disappointment, resentment, annoyance, and bitterness might trigger some even more powerful feelings such as animosity, anger, and hatred, and lead to domestic violence. The relationships between Asian women from third world countries and White Canadian males are often based on economic, political, class, and racial inequality. This phenomenon of cultural inequality might serve to increase the vulnerability of third world women from Asian countries, and prolong their experiences with domestic violence.

Most Asian women are first exposed to white men through representations from popular culture such as Hollywood movies or fashion magazines and, as such, they are led to believe that they live in big houses, have many resources & power, nice jobs, good incomes, behave like gentlemen, and are open-minded, civilized, romantic, tall, strong, good-looking, and respectful to

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women. For some Asian women, white men represent a better life. According to Kim(2010), “Asian women think Europeans are superior, that they have more money, more political power...so they are attracted to what is powerful—white man” (p.235). Some Asian women are blinded by what they see on the TV screen and begin to idealize the idea of the Caucasian male without realizing that there are people who are positive/negative; respectful/disrespectful; gentle/abusive; and etc. Politically, many Western countries have more power and are more dominant than third world countries and some developing countries in Asia. Economically, S. Korea, Japan, and Taiwan are significantly wealthier than South Asian countries, but these small countries had been, and some still are heavily depending on U.S.’s political and military supports, to protecting them from the war threat by their neighbouring countries, such as N. Korea and China. In S. Korea, “American soldiers remained the primary symbol for American material abundance and the luxurious life of plenty” (Nemoto, 2009, p.21). As such, some Asian women are attracted to the power and the superiority they believe exists in white men in general, but not to the men themselves. Particularly within developing countries, white men can come to represent ‘white-knights’ who are seen as potentially able to ‘rescue’ local people from poverty and hardship, and to lead them towards material prosperity, freedom, and salvation. As such, many women from third world countries in Asia might hope to gain the power and class privilege that they can’t achieve at home through marrying white men from abroad. Such a mindset elevates white men and puts them in the position of ‘saviours’, who enact a missionary position, thus endowing them with power and authority over women. This, in turn, leaves the women in a subordinate position, feeling that they have to repay the man’s kindness and generosity by marrying them. Unfortunately, this kind of belief system also leaves the women in a vulnerable position within their interracial relationship, and thus more susceptible to abuse.

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The way white men learn about Asian women is also through the media. According to Praso (2005), “Madame Butterfly” is the archetypal story of Western notions about the Asian mystique. The story, about a loyal and self-sacrificing Asian girl for the Westerner, has been rewritten several times and replayed in renditions such as ‘Miss Saigon’ and ‘Ms. Butterfly’”(Kim, 2010, p.240). This story provides a ‘traditional’ white man’s imago and fantasy about Asian women being submissive, loyal, and self-sacrificing. These qualities, in turn, may make the man feel a sense of masculinity, power, control, and dominance over women. According to Nemoto (2009), “Feminism among white women, which has generated cultural anxiety among American men, has interested these men in Asian American women, who still possess traditional femininity”(p.21). As such, it is understandable that the attraction many White men feel to Asian women is rooted in Asian women performing traditional gender roles, such as domesticity, being a good wife and good mother, loyalty, faithfulness, self-sacrifice, being family centered, subservient, conservative, and feminine – all of which allow these ‘traditional’ white men to preserve their male privileges of domination and control as had been the norm in Canadian and most western societies prior to the 1960s. As a matter of fact, some Caucasian men who married Asian immigrant women expressed little interest in their partners’ cultures, families, religions, talents, etc., and focused all their expectations on their expected submissiveness and domesticity. Interestingly, many such men choose to take advantage of their male and cultural privileges and impose their outdated (in terms of Canadian society) ideals regarding marriage and gender roles on their spouses. This is particularly possible for them to do as most immigrant women have little or no knowledge of current Canadian gender roles and Canadian culture.

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On the other hand, White men who are attracted to Asian women for these reasons often don't realize that, by bringing them to Canada, and with the influence of Canadian culture, some Asian immigrant women would choose not to remain in their docile, submissive and traditionally feminine roles. Once these women arrive in Canada, some of them begin to adapt and learn the 'Canadian way'— becoming more egalitarian, independent, strong-willed, opinionated, self-confident, social, out-going, self-reliant, open-minded, and importantly, more aware of social injustice and their rights in Canada.

According to Nemoto's (2009) research on relationships between Asian immigrant women and American men:

Foreign-born Asian American women are expected to successfully learn white norms of household maintenance and white disciplining styles, to repress their ethnic and cultural origins, and to strive for American individualism.

Intermarriage automatically moves the white man to a position of authority in a white middle-class household (p.72).

At the same time, some White men might not feel comfortable with the ideological changes, based on cultural adaptation, their partners would go through, and these adjustment might trigger marital conflict or even domestic violence. Women "reported that men blame women for the domestic violence problem because once in the United States, the women learn the American cultural way" (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005, p.967). Some white men believe that they have the right to power and control over their partners since by marrying and sponsoring the Asian women to come to Canada, they have 'saved' them from poverty or/and politically insecurity within a third world country or/and developing countries. As such, if these women don't live up

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to their expectations, some men feel they have the right to kick them out or to regain control, power and domination over them by engaging in acts of emotional or/and physical intimidation and abuse.

As with all love, the love between interracial couples can be beautiful. Interracial relationships between white Canadian men and Asian immigrant women do not necessarily lead to conflict or/and domestic violence. However, the cultural differences and power imbalances between a white Canadian man and an Asian immigrant woman might serve to aggravate or/and prolong an abusive relationship. This chapter has aimed to raise awareness about the cultural differences including religious practices, differing coping strategies, communication, mood expression styles, gender roles, involvement of extended family, migration history, acculturation issues, cultural values, stereotyped gender roles, the maintenance of 'face,' and the expectations regarding marriage that tend to give white men more advantages than it does to Asian immigrant women involved in interracial relationships within Canada.

Chapter 3:

Immigration status, process of resettlement, and acculturation level etc. as risk factors and barriers to reporting domestic violence

Asian immigrant women may tolerate more domestic violence during their resettlement, cultural adaptation, and the immigration process. A woman's immigration status might increase her vulnerability, as well as the occurrence and her tolerance of domestic violence. Some of the common challenges that immigrant women face when they leave their home countries to settle in Canada include social isolation, limited English language skills, lack of resources, social exclusion, language barriers, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, discrimination, prejudice, anti-immigrant attitudes, as well as some of the characteristics typical of Asian women which often exacerbate the incidence of domestic violence against them.

The incidence of domestic violence is not higher than it is in the native population but rather that the experiences of immigrant women in domestic violence situations are often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants, including limited host-language skills, lack of access to dignified jobs, uncertain legal status, and experiences in their home countries, and thus their alternatives to living with their abusers are very limited (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p. 898).

Immigration is a stressful process for Asian immigrant women who are adjusting to a new culture and society. Migration stressors such as under-employment, immigration status, and lack of community, language barriers, isolation, discrimination, and minority status, all have the potential to worsen marital conflicts between Caucasian men and Asian immigrant women.

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The language barrier is the foremost issue which has the potential to create a challenge for resettlement and successful navigation of the immigration process. The language barrier could also function to exacerbate abusive behaviours toward Asian immigrant women, since there are huge challenges for an immigrant woman with limited language skills in dealing alone with the criminal justice system, housing, family, social services, mental health, the school system, child protection, and the immigration process. As such, not feeling able to, or comfortable with accessing the culturally or linguistically appropriate services that are available, many abused Asian immigrant women feel an increased sense of isolation, and choose therefore not to approach the authorities who have been put in place to deal with domestic violence/abuse. A study of Vietnamese battered women's help-seeking behaviours revealed that "many women specifically avoided agencies that did not have Vietnamese staff because they felt more comfortable speaking with someone with a shared ethnic background" (Bui, 2003; Hyman et al., 2005, p.684). Most immigrant women believe that only service providers who share the same cultural and language background could understand their feelings, beliefs, experiences, and decisions.

Furthermore, many immigrant women have had some negative experiences with respect to the judgements, either real or perceived, of people from the dominant culture. For example, looking down on them for their strong accents, and judging them as uneducated or otherwise incapable. Even if the judgment is perceived and not necessarily real in every instance it can still reflect racist attitudes more broadly, attitudes that can cause the affected to view themselves as under suspect. Hence, racism can have pernicious effects and convey lower status and non-belonging. As such, they may decide not to seek help because they are afraid of further being judged, alienated, and discriminated against due, they contend, to their strong accent. During a

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study interview, an Asian immigrant woman talked about her experiences “I speak the way they speak, because otherwise, they look down on you as if you are an uneducated person” (Nemoto, 2009, p.57). Furthermore, some social service providers’ attitudes may be unfriendly or lack compassion if they make the assumption that the immigrant woman is choosing to take advantage of the Canadian social service system. Many Asian immigrant women would rather suffer an abusive relationship over being treated like a second class citizen by a social service worker or related professional. Such experiences are humiliating to often vulnerable women and can lead to further disenfranchisement and disempowerment.

Many Asian immigrant women leave their family and friends, who have functioned as their main social support system, behind in their country of origin, and move into a white dominated society which is unfamiliar, strange, and sometimes unfriendly to them. Because of their isolation and disconnection from mainstream Canadian culture, Asian immigrant women are forced to rely heavily on their Caucasian Canadian spouse for guidance and navigation through everyday life. Because of this dynamic, the men gain both physical, emotional, and economic power and control over their wives. As such, “Due to isolation, men are better able to gain sole control over resources that could offer legal, financial, and/or emotional support to the women” (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p. 904). Based on their experiences in their country of origin and their limited language skills, many Asian immigrant women might not even be aware that they have the option to seek help from a wide variety of social service organizations such as crisis lines, shelters, transition houses, counselling services, income assistance programs, food banks etc., if they are in an abusive relationship.

Some immigrant women may have obtained university degrees and had high levels of education and excellent jobs in their home countries. Once they arrive in Canada however, their

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working experiences and educational background often become devalued and underutilized. As such, they experience difficulty in entering the Canadian labour market and in securing jobs related to their previous professions. Partly due to the lack of language skills and/or a lack of connections, many recent immigrants find it hard to get anything but survival jobs that provide low-status, and for which only low level skills are needed. The loss of socioeconomic status resulting from the immigration process might severely affect these women's financial status and have strong impacts on their stability, independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency, and thus create a severe negative impact on their self-esteem.

The loss of financial control is likely to leave the woman feeling helpless and insecure. Since she has to depend on her husband for financial support, the abused woman may feel indebted or obligated to him (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.289).

As a result of their lack of confidence in their ability to earn enough money to support their children and to survive independently, some Asian immigrant women might choose to stay with their abusive husbands.

Immigration status often has the effect of aggravating domestic violence against Asian immigrant women and puts them in vulnerable situations, especially when the abuser is their immigration sponsor. According to Narayan (1995), "Empirical evidence suggests that women whose immigration status depends on their husbands are more at risk for battery than women in general" (p.104). There is no evidence to show that more Asian immigrant women suffer from domestic violence than do non-immigrant women. This is likely because the reporting rate among Asian immigrant women is lower than for Canadian-born women. However, as we have seen, the low reporting rate among Asian Immigrant women may not reflect actual levels of

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domestic violence against them, but only that they choose not to report the incidences. “Fear of engaging police and the legal system may also stem from concerns related to undocumented immigration status and deportation” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.323). As such, immigrant women may not want to report incidences of domestic violence because they don’t want to jeopardize their immigration status and their application for Canadian citizenship.

Furthermore, another reason for the lack of information regarding domestic violence against Asian immigrant women by their spouses is that few reliable and valid studies have been conducted on the issue. Yoshioka and Choi (2005) speculate the reason of the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample is that “the most susceptible groups such as illegal or new immigrants may be missing from studies because of their fear of detection and deportation” (p. 513). Due a variety of reasons including the language barrier, fear of authority, shame, family/community pressure, and etc., many immigrant women either choose not to participate in studies of domestic violence, or are forced by their husbands to not speak about such issues to strangers.

Information from the limited number of studies that have been conducted on abused immigrant women reveals why they may not be willing to speak out. “Many have documented situations where men have used the women’s immigrant condition to reinforce their control and abusive strategies” (Erez 2000; Jang et al., 1991; Mama 1993; Nayaran 1995; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.906). As such, in order to enforce their wife’s silence, husbands have been found to use coercion and threats including threatening to call the immigration office to report her, to stop processing her sponsorship, to kick her out without any financial resources, and/or to destroy her passport and legal papers. In this way, “Threats of deportation and consequent defamation and helplessness can only make women more vulnerable to the control of their

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husbands” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.291). Additionally, husbands might deny their abusive behaviours, make light of or shift the responsibility to their wives, or tell her that the Canadian legal system doesn’t favour women who are non-citizens. As in Canada, in the United States, “For immigrant women, the fear of reporting abuse can be exacerbated by their lack of knowledge about their rights within the United States combined with the increase of police insensitivity and ignorance toward immigrants” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.285). Although immigrant women are already vulnerable to domestic violence because of existing cultural differences, the unknowns related to their immigrant status also serve to increase their vulnerability, aggravate abusive situations, and prolong abusive relationships. In particular, “immigrant women can be in vulnerable situations because the legality of their stay in the receiving country often is linked to their spouses” (Bechtold & Dziewiecka-Bokun, 1999; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.908).

Many people argue that immigration law and the immigration law amendments created in 2012 were put in place to protect immigrant women who are being abused. However, the conditions of the immigration law amendments might have put immigrant women at even greater risk than they were before. The priority of the 2012 immigration amendment law was to prevent immigration and marriage fraud. The immigration law amendment demands that the sponsored spouses must live with their Canadian partners for at least two years before being able to attain permanent residency, and with the exception of proven abuse or neglect, the victim would not be deported. However, “Studies indicate that court authorities favour primary evidence (i.e., police or medical records) over a victim’s written account of the abuse” (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.909; Goldman, 1999). It may be easier to acquire evidence from police or a doctor regarding physical abuse, but emotional abuse can easily turn into a “he says, she says” phenomenon where

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one person's word is taken over another's. This situation is particularly biased in most cases as Asian immigrant women are newcomers with few, if any, family or friends, and where their Canadian spouses are often middle-class and from the dominant culture, and have resources and connections, and thus have a great deal more advantages in the process.

Immigrant women often arrive in Canada as dependants of their spouses or as individuals sponsored by their family or spouse. Abusive spouses often use sponsorship obligations to assert power and control within the family (Jiwani, 2001; Mason & Hyman, 2008, p.285).

Under the circumstances, it would not be guaranteed that an immigrant woman who leaves her spouse due to domestic violence issues prior to having cohabitated legally with him as her sponsor for two years would still be eligible for permanent residency or Canadian citizenship. As such, even if an exception is made to the two year clause which binds the immigrant woman to her sponsor for at least two years, the uncertainty of the circumstances, and the woman's mistrust of Canadian authority might force them to tolerate abuse silently.

Additionally, if children are involved, the fear of deportation and the fear of having to leave their children with their abusive husbands would likely stop the woman from reaching out and reporting incidences of domestic violence. "Fear of deportation, of having children taken away, of jeopardizing potential applications for citizenship, and of not being able to sponsor extended family members deterred immigrant women from seeking help" (MacLeod & Shin, 1993; Mason & Hyman, 2006, p.285). Furthermore, language barriers could also hold women back from initiating the legal and immigration processes without any support. Even without a language barrier, it would be a major challenge for any woman together evidence of abuse, go to

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court, talk to legal advocates/lawyers, fill out a myriad of forms, explain the abusive incidences to police or/and immigration authorities several times over etc. Under the circumstances of having strong language barriers, these would seem like almost impossible tasks. Finally, for many immigrants, the ‘fear of authority’ is very real and ingrained because of their experiences with police/authorities from their home countries. Particularly, due to historical circumstances, many Asian immigrants grow up believing that ‘people often disappear after they talk to a police/authority’ or the ‘police would beat the “truth” out of you’. If keeping a large distance from police or/and authority figures is so culturally ingrained in their country of origin, it is unlikely that Asian immigrant women would approach police in Canada in hopes of getting help with domestic violence.

Sometimes, it is the very involvement of the police and the law that may keep immigrant women in an abusive relationship. For instance, the law mandates that the husband and wife be arrested if they have a physical confrontation at the time the police arrive, even if the wife’s actions were in self-defence (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.912)

As such, the ‘fear of authority’ could function to escalate the vulnerability of Asian immigrant women remaining in a situation of domestic violence.

Because of their immigration status, many Asian immigrant women constitute some of Canadian society’s most vulnerable citizens. The ‘two year clause,’ which demands that sponsored spouses cohabit for two years prior to becoming a permanent resident of Canada was put in place with the good intention of minimizing of marriage fraud, but it also keeps abused women in an abusive relationship for at least two years. When Asian immigrant women get

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involved in an abusive relationship, they often lose their voice, connections, and resources, and so must suffer domestic violence silently and enduringly. Unfortunately, without enough solid statistical evidence regarding this particular dynamic of suffering and abuse, it is hard to convince authorities and organizations to fund programs to help this vulnerable population.

Chapter 4:

Racism & Oppression (gender, race, culture, immigrant status)

This chapter aims to explore the experience of discrimination, oppression, and power imbalance as risk factors and barriers to reporting domestic violence; and the impact of racism against Asian immigrant women, due to their gender, race, cultural practice, and immigrant status. I will examine the discrimination, racism, and oppression perpetrated against Asian immigrant women from among those in the dominant culture, including from abusers (husbands or partners) and their families, as well as from the Asian immigrant woman's own culture group. Furthermore, I shall discuss how and why the oppression leaves Asian immigrant women in a vulnerable position with respect to getting out of a situation of domestic violence.

Oppression-gender

Many Asian immigrant women grew up with internalized gender stereotypes, such as being a good wife means being obedient, being submissive, being a peace-maker, having no or little opinion, being tolerant of a husband's infidelity, being responsible for their husband's temper, and so on. They have been taught not to challenge their husbands and male relatives. "People have lived in a society since birth that is filled with implicit cultural meta-messages telling them in 1001 ways that sex is- and ought to be- critically important in every domain of social life" (Bem, 1995, p.48). So, Asian immigrant women may still experience sexism from within their communities, based on their cultural values, practices, and beliefs. At the same time, they may experience racism from the dominant society, also because of their practices, values, and beliefs.

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In a white-privilege and male-privileged society, for Asian immigrant women, sexism and racism is part of their lives, a fact which often makes them more vulnerable to domestic violence. “The culture’s whole organization of gender and sexuality is a historical construction that aids and abets the social reproduction of male power” (Bem, 1995, p.47). Between a white man and an Asian woman, a white man often has more opportunity to gain a better job and secure a good income, which often gives him more power in an interracial relationship.

Oppression of race & immigrant status

On the level of social power, people who have white privilege and/or male privilege within Euro-Western Societies, and sometimes beyond, have difficulties understanding and accepting that they live in a society that is rife with racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression against Asian immigrant women and others racialised as non-white. They might, for example, just assume that visible minorities are exceedingly defensive and sensitive about racism and discrimination. “Individuals in the dominant European American group do not usually need to think about or be aware of their own racial and/or ethnic identity because of their dominant status, in which their Whiteness is taken for granted”(AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011, p. 62; Mahoney, 1997). Some people from the white dominant group are rarely aware of the colour of their skin because Whiteness is seen as the norm in Canada. Some Asian women’s white partners might not aware and understand how ones’ skin color influences/affects their lives in Canada. According to Philomena Essed (1991), “Racism is articulated as a color hierarchy. Whites feel less threatened when you are light” (p.112). Even among Asians, the light/fair skin color is much preferred than a darker skin colour. Unfortunately, the denial of racism among some white Canadians makes it harder for visible minority people to discuss it and talk about it, since many racialized people don’t want to be described as “oversensitive”, “exaggerating”, “jumping to

conclusion”, or/and “paranoid”. “The reduction of racism to misunderstanding and lack of information fits perfectly well into the dominant group framework of cultural pluralism”(Essed, 1991, p.109).

The denial of racism or/and downplay of discrimination among white Canadians seems like a common, normative practice. As an Asian immigrant woman, I have heard some mutter/murmur from strangers walking by on the streets of Downtown Vancouver that “Go back to where you come from”, “I hate Chinese...food”, “Fxxxing immigrants, stealing our jobs”, “Like I said, these Asian immigrants are everywhere”, and “Too much Asians in Vancouver now”, and etc. But, if I mentioned it to my friends, I was informed that, “Not everything is about racism”, “they are just some addicts or drunkards, ignore them”, “they are just rude, not racist”, and “This is a free country...” In Essed’s(1991) research, an interviewee explained their experience of rudeness, “They step in front of you and never say excuse me... that kind of stuff. There is an attitude, like people who think they are better than anybody else, and they are going to show you that by just being plain and rude” (p.253).

Some people believe that if one does not do certain things or say certain words, one cannot be accused of being racist. But, according to Essed, “Actions do not only consist of things people do, verbally or non-verbally, but also of things people do not do. Not doing something one would normally expect in a situation is an important mechanism or racism, called “passive racism” (Essed, 1991, p.134). Ignoring your opinions/comments, pretending you are not there, giving you the cold-shoulder, excluding you from a conversation, etc. are actually, in my view, much worse than hearing or/and seeing something racist. “Rejection, exclusion, problematization, and other inequities, and impediments are regularly infused into “normal” life, so that they appear unquestionable” (Essed, 1991, p.146).

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In an interracial relationship, Asian immigrant women tend not to mention racism, because some examples of racism are so minuscule that one feels embarrassed to mention them. Some Asian immigrant women don't want to be judged as being difficult or/and overly-sensitive. Some Asian immigrant women might feel not being understood by their white partners even though they have tried to explain the racist events or comments. "Women in interracial relationships reported more often than women in White mono-racial relationship that their partners had a 'hard time seeing things' from their point of view" (Carbone-Lopez, 2013). Everyday racism (involves repetitive practices) is like everyday stress. If one cannot share daily stress with one's partners, one might feel letdown and lonely in a relationship.

Oppression-culture

In Canada, "Euro-centrism forms the ideological essence of the culturalization of racism" (Essed, 1991, p.159). Asian immigrant women often feel pressure to assimilate to White-centric values and cultures, because they were often reminded by locals or their white partners, "Here we don't do that". In an interracial couple relationship, an Asian immigrant woman's beliefs, cultural practices, and personal values are often judged by her husband or/and his family, based on Canadian norms and standards. According to Essed (1991), "One of these forms of permanently felt racism is the pressure to assimilate culturally under conditions of Euro-centrism"(p.158).

Based on Euro-centrism & White-centric values, many Asian immigrant women in Canada feel they are not "good-enough" and they should try harder to adapt to dominant Canadian culture. "Euro-centrism has an explicitly normative basis in the belief that the Westernization of the world is the best recipe for non-European cultures"(Essed, 1991, p.159). In

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this multicultural society, many immigrant children's behaviours are labeled as "maladjusted" and "misbehaviours", because they don't behave "normally", according to Canadian dominant standards, norms, and values. "Pathologizing is in many respects worse than inferiorizing because pathological behaviour needs to be cured for one to become "normal" again." (Essed, 1991, p.163). When Asian or visible minority children in school cannot expect to open a book and see themselves in it, or some obvious value for them, or something that shows visible minority in a good light, how we could teach them to appreciate their skin colors, cultures, and values. Especially, "racial or ethnic difference is made salient when associated with negative traits and overlooked otherwise" (Essed, 1991, p.193).

Discrimination from partners

When Asian immigrant women share their experiences of racism or/and discrimination with their husbands, they are often ignored or criticized for 'being ridiculous' or 'over-sensitive'. "Euro-centrism is so much ingrained in the social cognitions of the dominant group that Whites are often incapable of understanding the world from the point of view of Colours" (Essed, 1991, p.194). Some men may also dismiss their partner's issues by suggesting that they 'toughen up,' 'deal with it,' 'stand up for yourself,' or 'get over it.' So, some Asian immigrant women feel that they are not understood, respected, and supported by their white husbands or partners. "This is most evident in how often race and oppression are identified as primary factors for intercultural couples. Race and any associated oppression are only two of the many possible factors in an intercultural relationship" (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p.224).

Sadly, some Asian immigrant women suffer emotional abuse as a result of discrimination and racism from their White Canadian partners and/or their partners' families. These abusive

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incidents can take the form of ridiculing her religious practices, putting her down, making fun of her accent, laughing at her 'weird' behaviours with friends and family, showing contempt or disdain for her culture, and mocking her beliefs and values. "The underlying currents of the dominant culture, that inherently reproduce inequality, demonstrated that the superior status of the dominant culture is taken for granted whereas "other" cultures are problematized" (Essed, 1991, p.186). Discrimination and racism can also take the form of making humiliating comments such as, "you're stupid, you cannot even read or write English," "you are hopeless, after one year in Canada and you still cannot communicate in English," and "you are lucky that I married you and brought you here," "you should be more Canadianized/westernized," "you are not trying hard enough to fit into the mainstream society" etc. Many white partners have unconsciously made such comments like these to Asian immigrant women. These kinds of attitudes and behaviours cause much tension between people in an interracial couple and eventually drive them apart. Some Asian immigrant women might take the blame on themselves for not speaking English fluently, and not adapting well into the dominant culture. Feelings of shame, guilt, and failure could erode or destroy an immigrant woman's self-confidence, and might leave her more vulnerable to being made the target of domestic violence.

Discrimination from partners' friends & family

Subtle forms of invisibility within a woman's white partners' family, and their attitudes toward her could be even more difficult to deal with than demeaning language aimed towards her. "Individuals involved in interracial relationships, although not prevented by law, may face disapproval and even ostracism from acquaintances, friends, and family members" (Carbone-Lopez, 2013, p.7). Some Asian women who are involved in an interracial relationship feel invisible, excluded, and unwelcome within their husband's White Canadian circles. In Schueths'

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(2013) study, one participant described her feelings of being invisible in her partner's family. "Sometimes, I feel like I'm not there. Like, I'm there but they don't make me feel like I'm there...I don't feel welcome"(p.7). Forms of discrimination can be subtle and include such things as negative glances, disapproving looks, and either subtle or overt comments that are put-downs of Asian immigrant women. Although the uncomfortable feelings are very real for Asian immigrant women, their partners often discount them by minimizing their experiences of intentional or unintentional rejection on the part of his friends and family. As such, "subtle and overt exclusion often takes place within the husbands' families, and also within their greater communities" (Schueths, 2013, p.7). Spurred on by a variety of cultural and personal influences, the husband may control, mistreat and minimize his wife, and even go so far as to deny her participation in her own traditional practices. Asian immigrant women don't often realize that such oppressive and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours can be considered emotional, psychological and verbal abuse. Interestingly, such abuse is often felt as being even more hurtful than physical abuse.

Discrimination from Canadian society

Many Asian immigrant women have suffered discrimination, racism, and oppression not only from their white partners but also from the community at large. "Racial and ethnic discrimination, anti-immigrant sentiment, and social class bias are forces that may affect the daily lives of minority women" (Campbell et al., 1997; Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.324). According to Lorde (1997), racism can be seen as "the beliefs in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied" (p.124). Canadian culture has been heavily influenced by European cultures with long histories of colonialism, which involved conquering other countries and territories and undermining or destroying non-

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Christian, particularly Aboriginal peoples' traditional religious practices. Colonialism has a long history of discounting other cultures as inferior and imposing religious, academic, political, economic and a wide variety of other beliefs as being the only proper and reasonable ones. Many people from colonized locales have come to internalize and believe these narratives that posit 'White ways' as superior and that their beliefs, religions, values, race, cultures, and daily practices were better.

In Canada, daily practices of racism are embedded within social and institutional systems, which tacitly yet powerfully justify and uphold white privilege. I believe that many Asian immigrants have been told by their White Canadian friends to aim towards characteristics such as directness, assertiveness, outgoingness, self-confidence and pride, which are considered positive values in Canadian society. Other characteristics such as humility, introversion, courteousness, modesty, respect and subservience that are valued in Asian culture are often undervalued within Canadian society. Peggy McIntosh (1988) has suggested that, "whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow 'them' to be more like 'us'" (p.94).

The discrimination against Asians from the dominant culture began with the colonization of eastern ('Oriental' hence 'Orientalism') countries in the past. Owing to this history of domination, western countries have distorted conceptions about Asia and Asians, who have generally been considered weak and inferior "others." Such distorted concepts have been passed down through generations, and have affected many Asians, who believe Caucasians to be the stronger, superior race.

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Orientalism is distorted knowledge completely by the history of the West's colonialism and political dominion over the East. It is the West's definitions of 'other' who are weak and irrational and hence need to be tamed by 'us' who are strong and rational and hence are able to control. (Kim, 2010, p.238)

This kind of mindset, which is still heavily imprinted on the citizens and 'others' of our cultures, continues to influence couple relationships such as those between a White Canadian man (who is seen as superior) and an Asian immigrant woman (who is seen as inferior). As such, on the macro level, "Colonialism and imperialism were the fundamental historical factors that formed Orientalism as an ideology to define the West as a superior civilization and power and East as an inferior" (Kim, 2010, p.239).

In general, Asian immigrants are not encouraged to criticize the Canadian government and critique its policies because Asian immigrants continue to be seen as cultural outsiders no matter how long they have been in Canada. Even though they pay taxes and participate in civic events such as elections, they are still often told that 'you have no right to complain, and you should just go back to where you come from.' This is an affront to the basic democratic right of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly since hidden and internalized barriers exist to diminish the agency and empowerment needed to speak out and protest. It therefore stereotypically reinforces the expected docility and passivity of the 'good Asian female'. "While systemic racism may be embedded in day-to-day functioning, norms and practices of social institutions, these norms and practices may not be perceived as expressions of racism" (Essed, 1991, p.37). As such, if Asian immigrants have negative experiences when dealing with the dominant culture, they begin to feel isolated, out-of-place, out-numbered, unheard, held at a distance, disempowered or even feared in many situations.

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With all this in mind, it becomes understandable that many Asian immigrant women would not trust mental health agencies and seek help from mental health service workers from the dominant society. Wortley & Owusu-Bempah (2009) have examined the attitudes towards the criminal justice system among residents from Toronto, Canada, and found that “Compared to whites, racial minority respondents are also much more likely to perceive various forms of discrimination within the justice system” (p.447). This is, in part, because they want to avoid facing another form of emotional abuse which could take the form of oppression, discrimination, and racism. Asian immigrant women who were/are in relationship with White Canadian men may be afraid that their race and their skin colour will have a negative impact in court. They might believe that since their husbands are white men, as often are the judge, the police, and the social service workers, they might not get a fair trial against their White husbands. Their worries are definitely not unfounded, according to McIntosh (1988), “A white skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us” (p.95).

Contrarily, unemployment or underemployment is often associated with Canada’s systemic discrimination against visible minority immigrants. In Vancouver, BC, people often joke about having high density of taxi drivers with foreign PhDs earned abroad, because Canada fails to have professional qualifications recognized in a quick and efficient manner. Racial inequities in the job market are prevalent in Canada, especially in higher status and professional jobs. Asian immigrants are consistently reminded of their immigrant status and their position as “others” when accents are noticed and they are passed up for job opportunities. If Asian immigrant women, who were considered highly competent in their own societies, are considered incompetent in the Canadian workplace, this situation makes it all the more difficult for them to

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maintain equal power and partnership within their interracial relationship. Because the partnership is rendered unequal, the partner in the subordinate role might fear being left behind. As such, they may react by surrendering themselves and abandoning their needs and operating from their wounded ego; repeatedly giving in, hiding in the shadow of their partner, not voicing their truth, doing anything they need to do to hang on and remain in the relationship and try to win or retain whatever vestiges of love and approval they can garner. At least, in this latter case, one has something in the face of systemic disempowerment. Regardless, this is most certainly an unsatisfactory state of affairs for Asian immigrant women and exposes the deep impacts of racism on her dignity and well-being.

Discrimination from immigrant women's communities

Asian immigrant women who are in relationship with Caucasians might additionally face discrimination from their own culture. Some might question her motives for marrying a Caucasian and accusingly suggest that it was done either as a way to obtain Canadian citizenship or as a way to 'white-wash' their status in Canadian society. Some Asian immigrant women believe that by marrying a white man, mainstream society might be more likely to accept her, and she might feel that she can become part of the dominant culture. Immigrants who have Asian last names may not get as many interview opportunities when looking for a job. Marrying a white man and taking his name can be the fastest way for an immigrant woman to transform herself into a 'real' Canadian, something that is desired by most immigrants. Many Asian immigrant women wish to gain power, approval, and acceptance through their white partner's racial and class privileges. In an example of internal racism, some Asian immigrant women who marry white men feel superiority as a result of their 'whitewashed' status. As they display this kind of internal racism or intra-discrimination, these women risk losing their status of acceptance

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within their ethnic Asian communities. On the other hand, people from her culture of origin might feel a sense of betrayal because she has turned away from her culture and associates herself instead with the dominant culture. This attitude results in those from her culture of origin losing their sympathy and empathy for her. While she may or may not want to associate herself with the people from her culture, she is nevertheless subject to, or threatened with, abandonment repudiation and other forms of exclusion by her Asian community. Some immigrant women have tried to avoid being cast out as a foreigner or judged as a racial other, for example they only developed relationships with properly Canadianized Asians, and expressed an aversion to those who did not act and talk like Canadians.

People in the Asian community also express prejudice against women who marry white men for their money and prestige. In the past, many Asian women married white men because they believed that white men were rich and had a lot of resources. “Members of interracial relationships are also more likely to differ in age, education level, and religion compared with those in monoracial relationship” (Carbone-Lopez, 2013, p.7). People from the woman’s community might see this circumstance as a business exchange, not a marriage of love. People tend to look down on young Asian women who are married to older, white men.

Furthermore, some of the negative feelings and emotions stirred-up through relationships between Caucasian men and Asian women are the result of a history of systematic oppression against Asian communities. Historical events might elicit some bad memories or suspicions toward white people, who have come to represent the experiences of oppression, power and dominance in many Asian countries. For example, “Japanese internment during World War II, hate crimes, and punitive immigration laws have coloured the experiences of Asian American” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.323; Yoshihama, 2000). Because of the experiences of

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discrimination, oppression, sexism, racism, and prejudice against Asians, some Asian parents oppose their daughters' marriages to Caucasian men. The history of systematic oppression against Asian immigrants has fostered a sense of mistrust towards dominant Western societies and white Canadians.

It is sometimes believed that the existence of interracial relationships is an indicator of the assimilation of racial minorities into Canadian society, and that it indicates the success of Canadian multiculturalism. However, for some, it symbolizes the racial minorities' conformity to the dominant, mainstream society. "These immigrant-specific conditions are superimposed on other systems of oppression, such as class, race, and ethnicity, to further increase immigrant women's vulnerability to domestic violence" (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.902).

This chapter has demonstrated how racism, discrimination, and oppression can at times damage the interracial relationship between Caucasian Canadian men and Asian immigrant women, and how this situation can lead to prolonged, abusive relationships. I have discussed the social and internal psychological conditions that Asian immigrant women in interracial relationships contend with, or are at risk thereof. Clearly there are substantial racist dimensions that have been revealed in the discussion that warrant further investigation and amelioration.

Chapter 5: Implications and Conclusion

I. Considerations for clinical counsellors

In Canada, which is a multicultural society, counsellors and therapists have many opportunities to work with people from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. One might wonder whether the existing approaches to psychotherapy could be effective for people from Asian ethnic groups. Therefore, this concluding chapter will point out a few considerations and /or implications for clinical counsellors or therapists who work with Asian immigrant women who experience domestic violence in interracial relationships.

To begin, although Canada is a multicultural country with people coming from countries worldwide, the majority of existing counselling approaches that are used are rooted in western-based approaches. Western based approaches place a high value on individuals, derived from liberal individualism, with an emphasis on becoming autonomous and independent from their families. However, in many cultures, this degree of separation from one's family is neither sought nor desired. In Canada, the psychotherapy or counselling approaches that are taught in graduate schools originate from Psychoanalysis, Individual Psychology, Ego Psychology, Analytical Psychology, CBT, etc.; and most of these psychotherapeutic theories are focused on the individual and their self-awareness, self-exploration, self-actualization, maximizing individual agency, and self-empowerment. According to Bankart (1997), in many clinical counselling textbooks, "chapter after chapter, you have seen how Western psychotherapies strive to empower the individual to actualize her or his unique potential, to break free from instinctual and experiential bonds with the past, to be released into an autonomous present"(p.5). Self-

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empowerment and self-actualization have become the most important parts of the psychotherapeutic intervention process in Canada, especially when working with abused women.

Many agencies that work with women who are suffering from domestic violence apply interventions based on a feminist philosophy. For example, a Vancouver-based organization, Battered Women Support Service (BWSS), has claimed that “we contribute to the freedom and liberation of girls and women from violence...and to help women build strength and resiliency” (Battered Women Support Services, n.d., para 1). “Feminist-based interventions seek to empower women to step out of their presocialized roles, to teach women that they have a choice, and to provide them with adequate resources and viable pathways to overcome economic barriers” (Yick, 2001, p. 548). Feminist-based interventions, that include self-care and self-empowerment, provide very powerful therapeutic approaches for many people. However, they may be dissonant with the values and beliefs of some Asian immigrant women, as their traditional values focus on family, relationship, and collectivism rather than the individual self. “Feminist theories on domestic violence emphasize values of empowerment and self-determination; however, these values may not be culturally congruent with Chinese values” (Rimonte, 1991; Yick, 2001, p.552).

In contrast to the Western psychotherapeutic goals/ideologies of autonomy, self-determination, and individualism, Asian cultural values focus more on protecting the family and keeping it intact at all costs. “Studies that compare the behaviours of minority women in abusive relationships to behavioural norms based on the experiences of White women may imply that minority group members are deviant” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.318). Mental health professionals and police officers, who often work according to a Western cultural paradigm

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might consider Asian immigrant women's attitudes toward domestic violence to be weak, bleak, dependent, and pathetic.

Since the great majority of counselling and mental health practices are based on the experiences and values of western Europeans, people from Asian ethnic groups might feel that their beliefs are dissonant with the goals and approaches of mainstream therapy as practiced in Canada. "Social services, psychology, and the social sciences in general may reflect a narrow understanding of the world that is based on the experiences of white, European American middle-class people" (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.324; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994). In Canada, when a woman is involved in an abusive relationship, mental health service providers expect her to leave her home and stay in a shelter. According to Midlarsky et al. (2006), "The mainstream approach assumes the Western value that it is better to live single and divorced than to live in an abusive marriage" (p.297). However, some Asian women are hesitant to leave abusive partners for fear of being ostracized by their family and/or community, and also due to their deep-seated belief that they must put family before themselves. As such, "Models of intervention that are designed to help a woman leave her abuser and thrive independently may not appeal to an abused Asian woman" (Yoshioka & Choi, 2005; Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.297).

Counsellors and therapists have to maintain the awareness that many intervention strategies for women who experience domestic violence stem from Western values of self-empowerment and self-determination and that these Western values might conflict with Asian values of putting the needs of the family before those of the individual. "Clinical theories, influenced by Euro-American values, need to be deconstructed and reconstructed to better reflect the diversity of client populations who may adhere to drastically different worldviews and behavioural norms" (Chung, 2013, p.3).

II. Implication for clinical counsellors:

If self-empowerment, self-actualization, self-awareness, and/or self-determination are incongruent with Asian immigrant women's values and beliefs, counsellors and therapists should take into account the social needs that are critically important to many Asian immigrants. These include the high value placed on the intact family, relationship, a sense of belonging, and acceptance from their own cultural group. "We need to be able to distill the inherent Western cultural values that are embedded in theories and redefine them in an Asiatic context" (Chung, 2013, p.3; Nagai, 2007). To various degrees, many Asian countries/cultures have been influenced by the values of Confucianism and Hinduism.

Confucianism and Hinduism emphasize the virtues of maintaining harmony with others, loyalty to a hierarchical structure within familial and social institutions, fulfillment of responsibilities and obligations defined by one's roles, the pursuit of prosperity and of collective welfare through self-sacrifice and discipline (Chung, 2013, p.5).

It would be harder for a counsellor to build rapport with some Asian clients, if that counsellor does not believe in the power and influence of one's culture on peoples' values, behaviours, beliefs, and daily practices. Human beings are not shaped solely by nature (biology), but also by nurture (social system). "American and Asian values and norms are examples of cultural organizing principles that shape individuals' perceptions of events in their lives, emotional reactions, coping mechanism, and behaviours" (Chung, 2013, p.5). As such, if counsellors and therapists adhere to one particular culturally-based theory and intervention approach (eg. western) without having any understanding of their clients' values and belief systems, they might have difficulty building rapport with their clients. According to Chung

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(2013), “There are no absolute truths in any clinical theory, and no single theory can afford sufficient insights in understanding the complexities of human emotions and behaviours” (p.4).

As counsellors/therapists, we might have preferences for certain theories and intervention approaches as a result of our professional training and personal experiences. It is not wrong to be drawn to certain therapeutic methods, but it is also not right to be ignorant of our own biases and limits in counselling practices.

I believe that our clients’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviours should be what determines the most appropriate approach to intervention, which should not simply be based on one specific theory or approach that may hold a strong bias for certain races, cultures, and populations. For example, if a client is very focused on their culture, community, and family issues, therapists might consider applying a community-based approach through which to strengthen their social support networks, as well as family therapy for empowering family relationships, and/or culturally-based therapy to explore and validate the clients’ cultural values and identities.

Family Therapy

Many Asian immigrant women stem from family-centered communities. Keeping the family together is often more important than individual achievement. When counsellors or therapists enter into a therapeutic relationship with people from the Asian community, they need to be aware of their clients’ values and beliefs surrounding family and the self. Therapists and Asian immigrant women who have been abused are likely to have different opinions and perspectives regarding leaving abusers and staying within the family. “While a non-Asian may regard leaving the abuser as a means to maintaining self-respect, a Chinese immigrant victim may view staying in the home with the family as the means to save face and to maintain self-

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respect” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.290). If, despite having been abused, women decide to stay with their abusers, no matter what their reasons are, therapists should respect their decisions. However, it doesn't mean that therapists should abandon them to their own fates. To the contrary, therapists should collaborate with the women to come up with a safety plan, both in terms of their emotional and physical safety. “There was a paradigm shift wherein interventions for Asian American victims should focus on helping a woman be safe in her own home rather ‘free’ and ‘independent’” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.290). Some Asian immigrant women visit counsellors, not for themselves but for their families. As such, family therapy might be useful for Asian immigrant women who have been abused. “Emphasizing family strength rather than individual actions may be appropriate in communities that are interdependent” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.322). Focusing on family goals and family strengths would ultimately be more congruent with the values and beliefs of Asian women.

A therapist's role is to help their client understand family dynamics, family behaviour, family history, and the dynamics of concepts such as loss and unfinished business, etc. In therapy sessions with Asian immigrant women, the client should be encouraged to discuss family history and family dynamics. The therapist could help their client examine her family from different perspectives, be curious about family members' behaviours, and reconnect with various family members through different positions/roles. Many Asian immigrant women would be more willing to see a counsellor if they believed that it was for their family's benefit instead of for their own personal benefit. Most importantly, they would not feel like a failure because they fail to leave their families.

Culture-based approach

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According to Chung & Shibusawa (2013), counselling interventions for Asian immigrant women should be culturally appropriate or culture-based, because:

1. of cultural expectations regarding Asian women about their obligations to the family;
2. the cultural values that stigmatize separation and divorce;
3. the lack of resources for women to survive on their own and to become financially independent; and
4. As with women of other ethnicities, most Asian immigrant women's roles and identities are embedded in their relationships with their families" (p.138).

In interracial couples counselling, counsellors should be aware of the cultural differences that might have great impact, either negative or positive, on the couples' daily life and/or their marital conflict. Culturally based counselling approaches such as couple counselling or individual counselling, should focus on making clients more aware of their cultural differences and/or similarities, and their cultural identities. Through culturally based counselling, an interracial couple might learn how cultural values, beliefs, and norms influence the way they see each other's behaviours and how they interpret their partners' words and attitudes.

Culturally based counselling could make Asian immigrant women more aware how their culture has influenced the ways they behave, think, and react to domestic violence. As mentioned, many Asian cultures value family solidarity over individual achievement. Through culturally based counselling, Asian immigrant women would begin to understand the reasons that they are always the ones who are expected to sacrifice and surrender their needs to maintain family harmony. According to Yick (2001), "Chinese cultural values emphasizing the collective identity

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over individualism can impede domestic violence victims from putting their own needs first and prevent them from terminating abusive relationships” (p.556). Furthermore, through culturally based counselling, Asian immigrant women would learn the reasons behind why they hesitate to get a divorce even though they suffer in abusive relationships, and also to understand that it is definitely not because they are weak or pathetic. “A divorced woman and/or single mother is perceived as having failed in the role of wife and mother, regardless of the conduct of her partner” (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.279). Often times it is their cultural values, beliefs, and norms that bind Asian immigrant women in abusive relationships.

The alliance between the counsellor and their client could also be influenced by the cultural differences between them. Sometimes, it is necessary to address these types of cultural differences at the very beginning of the therapeutic relationship, especially between a white counsellor and a non-white client who is in an abusive relationship with a white individual. In such as situation, the white counsellor should learn to validate the clients’ self-reported experiences of oppression, discrimination, white supremacy, and/or racism, and not feel awkward or offended by the topic. When a client reports an incident of discrimination or oppression, therapists are cautioned to avoid automatically minimizing or looking for alternative explanations (e.g. “Could it be that he meant something else by that?” or “Maybe he was angry about something when he said that”). I would also highly advise counsellors never to tell their non-white clients that they are over-sensitive about racial issues and discrimination; it is not wise to challenge clients’ core cultural beliefs or to belittle their experiences and feelings of being discriminated against. A therapist with an individualistic, dominant cultural orientation might be inclined to encourage clients to leave an ‘unhealthy’ relationship when they begin therapy. Such

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an approach would likely fail because it would run counter to some of their client's core beliefs about the importance of family relationships.

Counsellors should be able to identify culturally related strengths and resources. Many Asian immigrant women living in Western society struggle between their allegiances to Asian and Western cultures. On the one hand, their traditional cultural beliefs are so ingrained that they don't know other ways to behave. On the other hand, they have tried to adapt the Western cultural beliefs, and this sometimes results in suppressing their own cultural values because some Asians believe that western culture is superior, preferable, and more advanced. However, if these immigrant women want to maintain their self-esteem and self-confidence, they also need to develop acceptance of their own cultures and their cultural identities. If counsellors acknowledge and validate their clients' cultural strengths, the clients might feel more empowered and proud of their own cultures. For example, family-centered or community-centered cultures tend to bring family and friends together, especially during times of crisis.

Counsellors should never make decisions for their clients even though, from a counsellor's perspective, clients often make "wrong" choices. Counsellors should be aware of the dominant western cultural values they may have adopted, and that these values might not be congruent with their clients' cultural beliefs. Many Asian immigrant women experiencing abuse might make decisions that could be contrary to the therapists' personal beliefs/values. For example, they might choose to stay with their abusive husbands. When these women choose to stay, they will need someone listen and be supportive without judging them.

Women may have multiple concerns that will affect the decisions they make. A woman should not be forced to choose one issue over the other—for instance, fear of isolation

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from her community versus fear of her abuser. Culturally appropriate intervention can work according to cultural values or practices that Asian women could identify as empowering. (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p.327)

If their cultural values or personal beliefs are such that women decide to stay in a relationship, safe or not, the counsellor should respect their decisions. As such, counsellors should take up the challenge of broadening their own perceptions of world, expanding their comfort zone, and their knowledge of cultural influences and differences.

Some interracial couples experience marital conflict and animosity due to cultural differences. As such, culturally based therapeutic goals would be to increase couples' understanding of their partners' thoughts and behaviours so that they would not continue to misinterpret their partners' behaviours, attitudes, and feelings. "Therapeutic strategies and considerations for intercultural couples generally promoted cultural awareness and knowledge on the part of both the therapist and the clients" (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p.223). For this reason, it would be ideal for counsellors to acquire some cultural knowledge and sensitivity towards their clients' cultures and to set the goal of promoting cultural awareness, both for themselves and for the couples.

Although the therapist's primary goal is to promote cultural curiosity, knowledge, understanding and increased tolerance for the other's culture, it is important for the therapist also to serve as a cultural referee, helping the couple clarify which behaviours are rooted in culture, and which are better seen as manifestations of the person or relationship. (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p.223)

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However, the counsellor should not be making assumptions based on stereotypical cultural patterns. People who come from the same country, same community, and same culture might not have similar cultural values and identities.

During interracial couples counselling, it is very important that counsellors do not take sides with one particular culture, and that they should be neutral, open, and respectful of various cultural values and traditions. “A therapist’s attitude of cultural superiority, can be one of the pitfalls associated with intercultural counselling and how vitally important it is not to identify all issues as culturally based” (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p.224). Counsellors could collaborate with interracial couples to help them build their own unique culture, a third culture, or an integrated culture.

Therapy should be characterized by a collaborative and curious stance that is open, accepting, and inclusive of a variety of different understandings that acknowledge the couple’s strength as well as any liberating traditions found in their respective cultures. (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p. 224)

Interracial couples often only see the negative ways in which their cultural differences impact their relationships. As such, therapists could challenge the couples with respect to their notions and beliefs, and make them see the uniqueness and strengths of their relationship, as well as discover their similarities and compatibilities. Particularly, the therapist could help the couples to challenge the values of the dominant culture, such as its beliefs regarding what a marriage / couple relationship should look like. These ideas are often related to oppression and power differences.

Community Based Approach (Social Support)

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Many Asian immigrant women have left most, if not all, of their friends and family behind in their countries of origin when they came to Canada to join their Caucasian partners. The ensuing lack of social support increases the vulnerability of these women. “The bride is often on her own for the first time, in a foreign land where her support base is nonexistent, which increases her vulnerability and isolation” (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p.898). In their own countries, these women would approach their family and friends for emotional support if they were being assaulted by their husbands/partners. “Women recalled that in Vietnam they could at least talk to their neighbours and friends if they were being abused, whereas in the United States they have no one with whom to confide because of their isolation” (Thornton et al., 2005, p.967). Without anyone to talk to and without community support, the conflict between interracial couples might be worsened. Therefore, a focus on building a social and community support network should be a key therapeutic goal. “Long-term services for minority women could include support groups for women who share the same cultural backgrounds and involve the entire family” (Kasturirangan et al., 2004, p. 328).

To date, most interventions for domestic violence have focused largely on the victims of abuse. Some Asian immigrant women believe that social services and/or therapeutic counselling should provide interventions for the abusers, their families, friends, and the communities as a whole. “To combat domestic violence in these immigrant communities, we need to reach the abusers as well as the abused, the community leaders, and both the formal and informal helpers” (Midlarsky et al., 2006, p.296). Many women just want the abusers to stop hurting them and destroying their families. They further believe that if intervention can be offered to abusers, possibly their relationship & the intactness of their family could be salvaged, or further domestic violence could be prevented. Furthermore, most men who abuse women have also been victims

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of childhood abuse or trauma. Sometimes, they are not capable of stopping themselves from inflicting violence and would appreciate professional help. “Many felt that required classes for men should be available at places of employment. Others suggested that there should be a law that requires men to receive education about domestic violence” (Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005, p.973). Therapeutic intervention approaches could increase the abusers’ awareness of the impact of their behaviours, emotions, and childhood trauma, and how domestic violence could have damaging consequences for their life, relationships, family, and work. Particularly in immigrant communities, both men and women would benefit from further education, information, and intervention to increase awareness about domestic violence, and particularly the emotional and financial abuse that are often unacknowledged in most immigrant societies.

Thus, preventive interventions should be provided to immigrant community. Such interventions might include pre-marriage couple counselling on healthy relationships, domestic violence, gender roles, marital roles, and strengthening the couples’ connections to the community in order to ensure that there is adequate social support and to minimize the risk of women’s isolation. Furthermore, counsellors should be aware of the most appropriate and effective ways to approach immigrant women and how to deliver the information and resources about group counselling or marital counselling to them.

An Australian study found that in contrast to the images frequently used in violence prevention campaigns, racialized women did not want to see negative images of battered women; rather, they wanted an increased emphasis on positive values and to see images of happy families demonstrating strong family units, community, and social ownership of the issues. (Moore et al., 2002; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005, p.227)

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If people are not comfortable with some sensitive words, such as domestic violence, abuse, battered women, and/or intimate partner violence, they might avoid attending these kind of workshops or counselling sessions. People from Asia often feel more comfortable with positive-focused wording such as healthy family, healthy relationship, happy relationship etc. At the community level, the approach to prevention might be to establish and strengthen strong socially supportive and safe communities.

III. Conclusion

Domestic violence affects every culture, race, society, community, class, gender, age and ethnic group. It also has a serious impact on the children of abused women, their entire family, society, and community. This paper had focused on the domestic violence between interracial couples, and particularly between Asian immigrant women and white Canadian men. It has discussed the possible factors, such as cultural influences, immigration status, and factors related to racism & discrimination that might increase the vulnerability of Asian immigrant women who are in interracial relationships with white men. Finally, this article has briefly discussed how mental health professionals and counsellors could better help and support this vulnerable population.

While I conducted my research, I found many articles on domestic violence in black & white interracial couples. Unfortunately, due to the lack of IPV screening tools referring to Asian immigrant women, I found few studies that examined the issue of domestic violence between such interracial couples. The screening tools for domestic violence often involve the posing of direct questions such as “Have you ever been hurt, physically or emotionally, by your partner?” or “How do you and your partner resolve arguments?” by strangers (researchers) which, from the

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perspective of immigrant women could make them very apprehensive to answer. The development of screening tools in other languages for non-English-speaking populations is critical. As well, screening methods should be conducted according to immigrant women's preferences, such as through the story-telling method or through indirect inquiry by someone they trust. As such, we might learn more about domestic violence among immigrant populations. We could also possibly determine the cultural factors that aggravate the violence, and as such, establish more appropriate approaches to intervention.

Marriage involves effort and hard work. This situation is further intensified in interracial marriage as a result of cultural differences. Love is beautiful. Love can be even more beautiful between interracial couples because they love each other despite the significant differences between them. Furthermore, the interracial couples are constantly being challenged by our society's prejudices, animosity, bias, racism, and discrimination. Given this situation, a supportive social network and compassionate counselling service for interracial couples would be both valuable and beneficial.

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