Family Violence in Cultural Communities in Canada:

EXPERIENCES AND HELP-SEEKING PATHWAYS

RESOLVE
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Literature Review

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Introduction

The current literature review aims to understand family violence in Canada, focusing on the experiences of newcomers and immigrant communities and the cultural influences shaping these experiences. This includes examining the multifaceted challenges confronting immigrants who experience family violence, seek help, and become involved with formal systems. Intervention strategies for improving the work of service providers in Canada and the experience of immigrant families interacting with formal systems are also explored. The review identifies a critical gap in understanding the impact of racism on experiences of family violence, emphasizing the need for further research into systemic issues contributing to negative experiences among newcomer and immigrant families. To date, there is a scarcity of studies focusing on effective interventions tailored to cultural contexts among immigrants in Canada, indicating a pressing need for further research and policy development in this area.

The review involved an examination of articles, abstracts, and keywords within databases such as ERIC, PubMed, Sociological Abstracts, JSTOR, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using terms such as *'family violence'*, *'children'*, *'youth'*, *'immigrant communities'*, and *'Canada'*. The inclusion criteria prioritized relevance of the studies, focusing on articles that explored family violence against children and youth in immigrant communities in the Canadian context. For this review, relevant materials from 1984 until present day were examined and included. The review synthesizes findings from the selected articles, identifying common themes, trends, and gaps in the existing literature. The analysis considered the cultural nuances, prevalence, challenges, and help-seeking pathways related to family violence involving women, children and youth. The comprehensive nature of the review contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding this critical issue within the Canadian immigrant context.

Cultural Communities, Cultural Diversity, and Discrimination in Canada

The Canada Revenue Agency (2005) utilizes the phrase "ethnocultural communities" which refers to a group that shares characteristics such as "cultural traditions, ancestry, language, national identity, country of origin and/or physical traits" (Section C, para.1). However, the term "ethnocultural communities" is often used when referring to recent non-French and non-English immigrants in Canada (Falconer, 2018). Immigration is a significant source of Canada's cultural diversity and immigrant populations often organize their own groups and communities (Statistics Canada, 2013). The term "cultural communities" refers to immigrant communities who come together to support each other to settle, adjust, and adapt to life in Canada.

Immigration, defined as "the movement of people between nations," is one of the major drivers of population growth in Canada (Solinger et al., 2008 as cited in Lorenzetti et al., 2023, p. 1; Statistics Canada, 2022). Abu-Laban (2022) writes that from the very beginning of the Canadian settler project, immigration as it relates to "class, gender, race, and ability" was "central to the process of nation-building" (p. 33). For example, the 1869 *Act Respecting Immigration and Immigrants* restricted "the poor and the physically and mentally infirm" from immigrating to Canada (Abu-Laban, 2022, p. 33). Later on, restrictions and deportations were applied to criminals, racialized persons, "political radicals," working class people, women, and others (Abu-Laban, 2022, p. 33). In post-war Canada, with the development of the anti-racist human rights framework, international conflicts, political repressions, and the need for skilled workers, the immigration policies introduced a "points-based system" that was actualized in the 1970s (Avery, 1995 , as cited in Abu-Laban, 2022; Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018; Triadafilopoulos, 2013). Even though the present points-based system does not explicitly discriminate on the basis of race, class, ability, and gender, women, for example,

still face difficulties in achieving the required scores based on education and job experience because of the structural discrimination that persists against women around the world to this day. In addition, the existing points-based system contributes to "brain drain" in non-Western countries, which refers to the departure of educated or professional people from one country to another, usually for better pay or living conditions (Merriam-Webster, 2025). However, if credentials are not acknowledged, this brain drain often turns into "brain waste" because new immigrants cannot find jobs according to their qualifications in their host country (Reitz et al., 2013, as cited in Abu-Laban, 2022). Additionally, immigrants can experience racism and race-based violence in host countries such as Canada, where colonial ideologies reinforce ideas of racial superiority and justify the appropriation of Indigenous territory (Abu-Laban, 2022).

The 1976 *Immigration Act* recognized three types of immigrants: family class (spouses, dependent children, parents, and grandparents of a Canadian citizen or person with permanent resident status); humanitarian class (refugees and persecuted or displaced persons); and independent/economic class (immigrants selected on the basis of the points-based system) (Abu-Laban et al., 2023). The 1976 *Immigration Act* was replaced with the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* in 2002, but maintained the streams through which immigrants migrate and settle in Canada today (Foot & Ma, 2020).

Contemporary Canada is known and perceived as a country with high cultural and religious diversity. The 2021 Census indicated that there were over 450 "cultural origins" in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Close to 70% (or 25 million people) of the Canadian population reported being White or Caucasian, with the majority (57%) immigrating to Canada before the 1990s. Their cultural heritage was reported to be

Canadian (21.2%), from the British Isles (40.4%), French (14.8%), and Western European (15.8%). Despite the majority of the Canadian population being White or Caucasian, there is a growing population of racialized groups, such as South Asian (7.1%), Chinese (4.7%), Black (4.3%), Filipino (2.6%), Arab (1.9%), Latin American (1.6%), Southeast Asian (1.1%), West Asian (1%), Korean (0.6%) and Japanese (0.3%), due to immigration. It is also important to note that within these groups, there is great cultural diversity as well. For example, the South Asian group includes a variety of national groups, ethnic groups, languages, and religions. The majority of the White population reported being Christian (60.3%), along with 37.5% who reported no religion, and a minor percentage practicing other religions, including Judaism. Additionally, 4.9% of the total population reported as Muslim, 2.3% as Hindu, and 2.1% as Sikh, in addition to other spiritualities and denominations (Statistics Canada, 2022). Racialized populations predominantly reside in major urban centres of Canada, with the highest racial diversity being found in cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Ottawa. In the prairies, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Edmonton are the most racially diverse cities (Statistics Canada, 2022). Statistics Canada (2022) reports that racialized populations will continue to grow due to immigration from continents such as Africa and Asia.

- In 2021, the immigrant population constituted 23% of Canada's population, with 1.3 million people settling in Canada between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022). It is predicted that the immigrant population will continue to grow, and by 2036, will constitute up to 30% of the Canadian population (Morency et al., 2017). The visible minority population represents more than one-fifth (26.5%) of Canada's population and will also grow to 36% by 2036 (Morency et al., 2017). In Manitoba, immigrants constitute 18% of the total population – with recent immigrants, in particular, comprising 28% of the province's immigrant population. The majority of recent immigrants to Manitoba are economic immigrants (over 74%), followed by family class (over 14%), and refugees (over 11%) (Manitoba Immigration, n.d.)

Despite tremendous social changes that have resulted in greater numbers of immigrants and cultural communities, the social services in Canada remain defined by social and political structures established by the settler colonial state (Abu-Laban et al., 2023). The Canadian post-census Ethnic Diversity Survey revealed that approximately 14% of adult respondents believed they faced discrimination due to ethnicity, culture, race, skin color, language, accent, or religion (Statistics Canada, 2003). Experiences of racism and discrimination have also been echoed in various research studies. For instance, Beiser and colleagues (2001) discovered that 26% of research participants who belonged to Southeast Asian refugee communities in Canada encountered discrimination since arriving in the country. Klassen and colleagues (2022) also found that immigrants can experience racism from their neighbours, which is shown in various ways, including discriminatory reporting to child protective services when neighbours misunderstand culturally different parenting practices. Additionally, Ngo and colleagues (2018) conducted a study on racial profiling and found that members of cultural communities felt racially profiled when accessing various Canadian institutions and services, including the school system (37%), while shopping (29%), being denied certain employment opportunities (27%), and being treated differently when accessing social services (23%).

This reality prompts a critical examination of the systemic biases that continue to shape social service provision in ways that often marginalize Indigenous peoples and racialized immigrant communities. Drawing from decolonial perspectives within social work literature, scholars advocate for a paradigm shift towards decolonizing social services (Baines, 2019). This entails dismantling colonial ideologies embedded within existing frameworks and centering Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and self-determination in service delivery (Baines, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). In addition, this also involves recognizing the validity and relevance of diverse cultural knowledges and adopting collaborative approaches that prioritize partnership and reciprocity with Indigenous and racialized communities (Baines, 2019).

Policy of Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada

In 1971, the Canadian government introduced a policy of multiculturalism (Abu-Laban, 1991; Abu-Laban, 2015). The policy of multiculturalism emerged to re-define Canadian identity as more inclusive. The policy was enacted against the backdrop of Quebecois nationalism in the 1960s; a pushback from non-French and -British Europeans, such as Ukrainians, Italians, and others; the end of the World War II; and a turn towards equality, human rights, and decolonization (Banting, 2022). This policy was institutionalized in 1988 as the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act,* which aimed to help "ethnic groups to preserve their traditions, customs, folklore and languages to enforce the multicultural image of Canadian society" and not only its bicultural features as a British-French settler colonial country (Banting, 2022; Berry, 1997; Li, 2022). With greater immigration of racialized people from non-European countries in the 1980s, multiculturalism started to be understood as a promotion of equality and an eradication of racism. Despite political opposition within Canada in places like Quebec, which has moved to a so called policy of "interculturalism", multiculturalism remains an important political feature of Canada as a nation and a society (Banting, 2022). Ideologically, multiculturalism argues for the acceptance and retention of cultural diversity, equality of cultural groups and their equal participation in the Canadian society, "meaningful and constructive exchanges among these diverse cultural groups," and supporting the fluency of immigrants in one of the official languages (Ungerleider, 2006 as cited in Perry, 2015, p. 1641). Perry (2015) argues that a lot has been achieved as a result of this policy, but issues remain. There are still high levels of inequality within Canadian society despite the "rhetoric of inclusion" (p. 1642). However, Perry (2015) states that multicultural discourse has the capacity to politicize diversity in a way that "recognizes and empowers those who have long been excluded" through naming and challenging group difference, group privilege, and the relations of power that perpetuate and shape these (p. 1642).

Gendered Challenges of Immigration

Immigration is a significant life event that has "multiple and complex impacts on individuals, families, and communities" (Holtmann, 2022; Lorenzetti et al., 2023, p. 2). It is also an event, as the history of Canada demonstrates, enmeshed with dynamics of power that often "benefits Western nations" and contributes to the precarity of individuals and families in transition (Lorenzetti et al., 2023, p. 2).

Immigrant families face numerous structural challenges in the process of migration and settlement, such as "barriers to employability, credential accreditation, and affordable housing" (Holtmann, 2022; Lorenzetti et al., 2023, p. 2). Immigration is also experienced differently by men, women, and children (Holtmann, 2022; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018; Lorenzetti et al., 2023).

Immigrant women represented 21% of Canada's female population in 2011, and by 2031, may represent 27% of the country's female population (Hudon, 2015). Manitoba is the fifth province that receives the largest number of recent female immigrants (5%) – following Alberta (12%), British Columbia (16%), Quebec (19%), and Ontario (44%) (Hudon, 2015). Most immigrant women aged 15 and older live with a spouse (57%) or common-law partner (4%), and 38% were in a couple with children (Hudon, 2015). In 2013, over half of immigrant women (54%) came to Canada under the economic class; however, only 20% were principal applicants. Additionally, 35% came as a spouse or dependent of a principal applicant; 34% were admitted under the family class; and 9% as refugees (Hudon, 2015).

The current Canadian immigration system is based on the counting of points, which are allocated based on skills, experience, occupation, and language competency for the economic class stream (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). Men often arrive as principal applicants under the economic class stream, while women tend to arrive as dependents or sponsored spouses under the family class stream (Ahmad et al., 2009; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). This suggests that when women arrive in Canada, they are likely to be in a disadvantaged position and legally dependent on their male sponsors (Ahmad et al., 2009; Holtmann, 2022; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). These differences in application status as primary and dependent applicants can have an impact on one's access to social welfare, healthcare, language training programmes, and employment (Holtmann, 2022; Jayarusiya-Illesinghe, 2018). As a result, immigration often makes women more dependent on men (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018).

Immigrant women in Canada often represent a visible minority group and speak a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. According to Statistics Canada, the majority of immigrant women are able to converse in the official languages of Canada; however, the percentage of those unable to speak one of the official languages of Canada is slightly higher among recent female immigrants (10%) than recent male immigrants (9%) (Hudon, 2015). For unemployed immigrant women, especially those who may not be able to afford childcare, it may be more difficult to practice and improve the new language skills (Holtmann, 2022).

Immigrant communities often continue their cultural practices in Canada. Some of these cultural practices can be "traditionally patriarchal" and may have restricted women's access to education and work in their country of origin (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018, p. 340). Patriarchal practices can also contribute to the construction

of women's gender roles within their families and communities – which can either be a source of strength or challenge women (Holtmann, 2022; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018).

Visible minority immigrant women and men often experience discrimination based on their race, country of origin, religion, or other cultural identifiers (Ahmad et al., 2009; Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). For example, African men are less likely to be hired and earn less than other demographics of men, which can result in family conflicts, divorce, poor mental health, deskilling, and the accumulation of debt (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). Holtmann's (2022) research also demonstrates many examples of racism experienced by immigrant women. One instance included a Muslim woman who did not wear her veil in order to get hired at Tim Hortons (also see Alghamdi et al., 2022). Lorenzetti and colleagues (2023) argue that this leads to physical and mental health problems for many immigrants. Mental health services in Canada are not equipped to handle the various levels of trauma that recent immigrants or refugees experience across the pre-migration, migration, and post-migration stages (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). Language adds an additional barrier for this population when they access mental health care and poses a threat for re-traumatization (Giesbrecht et al., 2023).

Migration stress and acculturation are two interrelated factors that significantly impact immigrant families' experiences and well-being. Migration stress refers to the psychological, social, and environmental challenges that individuals and families face during the process of migration and resettlement in a new country (Bhuyian et al., 2016). These stressors include language barriers, cultural adjustment difficulties, discrimination, loss of social support networks, and economic hardships (Hassan et al., 2015). Acculturation refers to the process through which immigrants adapt to the customs,values, and norms of their new host society while retaining aspects of their cultural heritage. Migration produces instability in many ways. For men, struggling to secure employment or housing may produce feelings of inadequacy or loss of control within the family unit, which can increase the potential for experiencing family violence (Milaney et al., 2020). As such, many immigrant women experience family vio-

lence for the first time after arriving in Canada (Milaney et al., 2020). This phenomenon has been referred to as the "sponsorship effect," where the partner who controls the immigration process becomes abusive, and in turn, can use their power over the permanent residency or sponsorship process to control their partner (Milaney et al., 2020, p. 4). Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of immigrant and refugee women leaving their partners, and leads to a heightened probability of experiencing homelessness and spending time in shelters – despite the increased risk of women losing custody of their children should they turn to shelters or living unhoused. (Milaney et al., 2020).

- Research by Okeke-Ihejirika and colleagues (2019) among African immigrants indicates that families migrating to Canada face numerous challenges. This includes socioeconomic challenges that stem from the deskilling that happens as a result of immigration. Deskilling occurs when someone reduces the level of skill they need to do a particular job (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Women and men are more likely to deskill upon immigrating to Canada, which can have long-term impacts – sometimes effecting later generations (Jayarusiya-Illesinghe, 2018; Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018; Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018).

Immigrant women often earn less than immigrant men and Canadian-born women of similar educational attainment (Hudon 2015). For example, the employment rate for recent immigrant women between 25 to 54 years of age was 57%, compared to 79% for Canadian-born women in the same age group (Hudon, 2015). This structural inequality can make women "more dependent and vulnerable to exploitation" (Jayarusiya-Illesinghe, 2018, p. 342). Women tend to find employment in "menial jobs" and experience "ghettoization" within "temporary, unskilled, and precarious" work (Jayarusiya-Illesinghe, 2018, p. 342; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018, p. 438). They often commute far distances to their workplace and may have to rely on childcare centres for the care of their children, which can be costly (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018).

Men can find it more difficult to deskill because they consider it to be a "personal humiliation," which may lead to the re-negotiation of gendered responsibilities within the family unit (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019, p. 589). Research conducted by Okeke-Ihejirika and Salami (2018), found that men immigrating from Africa often cannot find suitable employment. The lack of the so-called "Canadian work experience", the non-recognition of their credentials, and racism in hiring practices and the workplace can lead to "unfulfilled dreams" and "poor economic prospects" for immigrant families (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018, p. 97). This affects family dynamics negatively, making relationships "more fragile," especially considering the high hopes that families may have prior to migration (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018, p. 100; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). In addition, families who migrate to Canada are often from privileged backgrounds and are highly educated in their home countries because Canadian immigration policy favours highly skilled immigrants (Holtmann, 2022;

Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). The willingness of women to more readily de-skill post-migration can lead to changes in gender roles and men may feel threatened by this change (Alghamdi et al., 2022; Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019; Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). Men may object to this by trying to assert traditional roles, refusing to take on household chores or even resorting to violence (Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). These dynamics also affect families' decision-making about remittances to be sent to the respective families of husbands and wives (Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). Gender role re-negotiation is part of the post-migration experience for many immigrant families (Holtmann, 2016).

Immigration also affects social networks greatly (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). Immigrant women tend to have fewer social connections locally, are less likely to participate in organizations and associations, and are less politically active (Hudon, 2015; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). This may be a reflection of traditional gender roles in the pre-migration period, which has been documented in African communities in Alberta, whereby men often have extended social networks that reinforce traditional gender roles (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). This may make it difficult for those women who would like to challenge these practices. Guruge and Humphreys (2009) found that women's social networks are smaller post-migration, which contributes to greater stress – particularly in the absence of assistance and support from their extended families. The loss of extended family and community networks also leads to greater domestic toil because there is no one to help with domestic labour such as childcare (Ahmad et al., 2009; Holtmann, 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). This can also contribute to greater social isolation compared to their home country, as women were likely involved in several networks and communities, both inside and outside of the home in their country of origin, including work and paid labour, friends, and family (Ahmad et al., 2009). Women who are unemployed or unable to find work are also vulnerable to social isolation. They not only become financially dependent on their partners, but may also be unable to learn official languages and develop skills to access employment or social services in the future (Ahmad et al., 2009). Women may also experience mental health problems due to loneliness and the absence of supportive structures.

Other factors such as family conflict or pre-migration experiences of war or mass violence can also contribute to feelings of isolation and impact mental and physical health post-migration (Alghamdi et al., 2022; Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018).

Childcare is often a challenge for immigrant families due to the absence of extended family and social networks, which may have assisted with childcare prior to immigrating. With the stressors of immigration and the high cost of childcare in Canada, immigrant families balancing work and family report not having enough time to spend together due to the economic demands of settlement (Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). This may lead to the alienation of children from their parents – an impact that can be gendered depending on which parent spends more time working outside of the home (Lorenzetti et al., 2023). Additionally, the financial and administrative challenges associated with sponsoring other family members through the family stream can add further stress to immigrant families, and can lead to greater social isolation and the loss of intergenerational connections (Lorenzetti et al., 2023). Immigrant families may also experience cultural differences in approaches to child-rearing. For instance, there may be contradictory social norms around disciplining children, such as the use of spanking. While spanking remains a common practice in many countries, there is growing sentiment in Canada that the practice is unacceptable – with many calling on Canada to join the growing number of countries that have repealed laws which enable parents and guardians to utilize spanking as a form of discipline (McLeod, 2023). In research conducted by Okeke-Ihejirika and colleagues (2019), African immigrants expressed the need for culturally appropriate tools to incorporate new ideas from their host country in their parenting practices. These tools and resources can help identify and mitigate cultural differences in parenting between host and home countries.

Immigrant families may also face housing insecurity and homelessness. There is a lack of affordable housing in Canada, which can contribute to heightened stress for families. This has been deemed "unseen homelessness" by Lorenzetti and colleagues (2023) due to the fact that other people within the community may be providing shelter to families in these precarious situations

(p. 8). A study on experiences of homelessness in rural communities across Alberta identified six impacted populations, which included victims of domestic violence, youth, newcomers, Indigenous persons, chronic substance (alcohol) users, and unhoused people (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016). Newcomer experiences of rural homelessness was often attributed to low income, leading to overcrowded living conditions (a form of "hidden" or "unseen" homelessness) (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016; also see Lorenzetti et al., 2023). For immigrant women at the intersection of immigration, homelessness and family violence, rurality was seen as a barrier to leaving their abusive relationships (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016). Opportunities to leave for larger urban centres were often rendered unattainable given language barriers, a lack of understanding of Canadian justice and support systems, as well as the potential precarity of their immigration status based on spousal sponsorship (Waegemakers Schiff et al., 2016). Newcomer women are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness, given the systemic connection of gender and race to homelessness (Milaney et al., 2020).
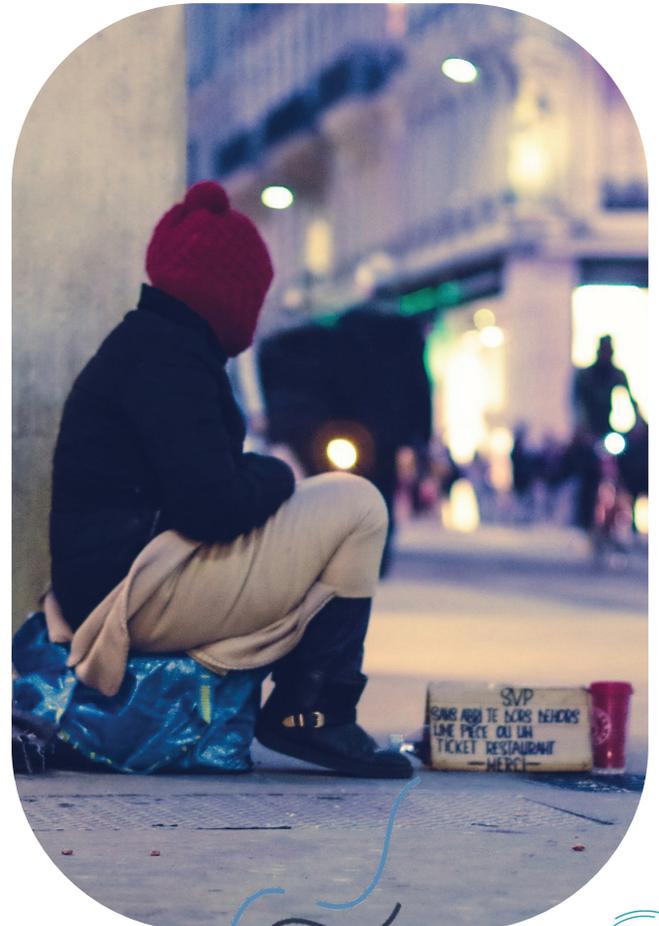
Family Violence in Immigrant Communities

Family violence refers to abuse (physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual) committed by spouses, parents, children, siblings, and extended family members. This can include intimate partner violence (IPV), child maltreatment, elder abuse, violence based on "honour" and forced marriage (Li, 2022). Family violence is a form of gender-based violence and is most commonly experienced by women. In this review, we define family violence as including both IPV (and exposure of children to IPV) and child maltreatment.

Even though some cultures do not have equivalent terms for intimate partner or family violence, many recognize gendered power dynamics within intimate relationships (Mason et al., 2008). Family violence can be found in all cultural contexts, including in immigrant communities (Holtmann, 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). The dynamics of family violence reflect the patriarchal nature of families found around the world, which are often socially and culturally justified through customs and traditions that give "males more social power than females", resulting in psychological, ideological, and material security and privilege for men (Holtmann, 2022, p. 166). As demonstrated by research around the world, men most often commit violent acts against women and other family members (Holtmann, 2022). Globally, approximately 30% of women have experienced IPV in their lifetime (Holtmann, 2022). In 2019, 26% of all police-reported violence in Canada was perpetrated by a family member and often, victims of family violence were female (67%). Among the Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba report the highest levels of family violence, including IPV (Statistics Canada, 2023).

According to Statistics Canada, three in ten visible minority women experience some form of IPV in their lifetime (Cotter, 2021). Among visible minority women, Arab, Black and Latin American women experience higher rates of IPV. Chinese and Filipino women, on the other hand, are less likely to experience IPV (Cotter, 2021). In 2014, approximately 3% of male and female immi-grants experienced spousal violence in Canada (Ibrahim, 2018). It is unclear why the quantitative data reports lower levels of family violence in immigrant communities, despite the fact that levels of violence in countries of origin are just as high and sometimes higher than in Canada (Ahmad et al., 2009). It is well-known that data on intimate partner and family violence is often underreported around the world (Fonteyne et al., 2024). In the case of recent immigrants, there could be, for example, language-related challenges (Cotter, 2021). Additionally, data collection strategies may exclude non-Canadian-born women who cannot speak English or French (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). Qualitative research reveals that immigrant families are affected by family violence and immigrant women are more vulnerable to IPV in the context of settlement and adjustment to a new country (Giesbrecht et al., 2021; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022).

Canadian-born women and immigrant women experience similar forms of abuse, though the nature and context of abuse may differ slighlty between the two groups. Scholars have studied the types of abuse experienced by immigrant women and found higher rates of psychological abuse among immigrant women compared to non-immigrant women (Du Mont & Forte, 2012). Psychological abuse may also be culturally contextualized because how one understands and defines psychological abuse may differ from culture to culture (Mason et al., 2008). Immigrant women can also experience social isolation and financial control (Baker & Tabibi, 2017). Additionally, immigrant women can experience immigration-related abuse (such as threats of deportation, withdrawal of sponsorship, not allowing English-language training, etc.) (Baker & Tabibi, 2017; Giesbrecht, 2023; Kardashevskaya et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2008). Scholars have also studied the types of abuse experienced by specific immigrant communities. For instance, research by Guruge and colleagues (2012) found that Iranian and Sri Lankan Tamil groups most often reported psychological abuse, as well as physical and sexual abuse. This abuse

included "insulting, criticizing, and intimidation by partner (psychological abuse), slapping, hitting, and shoving (physical abuse), and forced sexual inter course and being forced to partake in sexually degrading acts (sexual abuse)" (Guruge et al., 2012, p. 12). Child maltreatment can also co-occur with IPV. In Canada, exposure to IPV is considered a form of child maltreatment, and a large number of child welfare cases in the country involve claims of exposure (Giesbrecht et al. 2023).

Some studies show that family violence begins after arriving in Canada, while others show that experiences of abuse occur pre-migration but worsen in the post-migration period (Guruge et al., 2012; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). Research by Hyman and colleagues (2006) shows that the longer immigrants stay in Canada, the higher the likelihood of abuse becomes, due to the "isolation from traditional support systems, perceived discrimination, and acculturative stress" (Baker & Tabibi, 2017, p. 10). Unhealthy ways of coping with these challenges can result in family violence (Baker & Tabibi, 2017). Changing gender roles post-migration may constitute an additional source of strain and conflict in certain families as a result of shifts in perceived status, and changes in labor force participation, decision-making roles and processes within the relationship (Abraham, 2013; Cottrell et al., 2009; Hightower et al., 2000; Hyman et al., 2004; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2000). Immigrant families experiencing high levels of migration stress and barriers to acculturation may be at increased risk of family violence, including IPV, child maltreatment, and elder abuse (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2005). Research by Sabina and colleagues (2018) found that higher levels of migration stress were associated with increased risk of IPV among immigrant women. These risk factors are often exacerbated by social isolation, lack of access to culturally competent support services, and fears of deportation or legal repercussions.

Immigrant women may also experience abuse from other family members, such as in-laws (Baker & Tabibi, 2017). In-laws, for example, may criticize their daughter-in-law which can lead to violence from the husband's side. In these situations, women may be vulnerable, especially if they do not have their family in Canada. This kind of abuse can also happen in a woman's home country – however, women are more likely to have support networks and other family members who can interve (Hyman et al., 2011).

Family violence against children and youth in Canada includes exposure to IPV; physical, emotional, and sexual violence and abuse; neglect; discrimination; child labor; forced marriage; trafficking; and even rare instances of child soldiering (Mohamud et al., 2021; Ploeg et al., 2013; Zhang, 2019). Physical abuse can include shaking, pushing, grabbing, hitting, punching, kicking, biting, and choking, while sexual abuse can include penetration, attempted penetration, oral sex, fondling, sex talk or images, and voyeurism (Trocmé et al., 2010). Other forms of violence against children, such a neglect, can include "failure to supervise" leading to physical harm or sexual abuse, permitting criminal behaviour, and failure to provide basic needs such as medical or psychologial care (Trocmé et al., 2010, p. 30). Emotional abuse includes "terroririzing or threat of violence, verbal abuse or belittling, isolation or confinement, inadequate nurturing or affection, exploiting or corrupting behaviour, and exposure to non-partner physical violence" (Trocmé et al., 2010, p. 30). Finally, exposure to IPV includes "direct witness to physical violence, and exposure to emotional violence" (Trocmé et al., 2010, p. 30).

Child maltreatment in Canada remains a concern, with significant implications for the well-being of children and families nationwide. Child maltreatment not only inflicts immediate harm but also has long-term consequences on physical and mental health, educational attainment, and social functioning (Larkin et al., 2012). Approximately 299,171 child maltreatment investigations were conducted in 2019, representing a rate of 48.22 investigations per 1,000 children (Fallon et al., 2022). Additionally, data from Statistics Canada states that there were 69,691 child and youth victims of police-reported violence in 2019, with the highest numbers reported in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrardor, and Manitoba (Conroy, 2021). In 32% of cases, the perpetrators were either parents or other family members (Conroy, 2021). Child welfare agencies in Canada report that children often become involved with their agenices because of exposure to IPV (34%), neglect (34%), physical abuse (20%), emotional maltreatment (9%), and sexual abuse (3%) (Trocmé et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that the true prevalence of family violence against children is unknown because many of these instances are not reported to the police (Hamel et al., 2019).

Young girls are more likely to experience child maltreatment. According to data from Statistics Canada, girls accounted for 57% of victims of police-reported family violence against children (Conroy, 2021). Child welfare agencies' also report that the percentage of girls reported to them is higher amongst adolescent age children (Trocmé et al., 2010). Indigenous children, 2SLGBTQ+ children and street-involved youth also experience higher rates of violence compared to other children in Canada (Hamel et al., 2019). Indigenous children in particular have higher rates of representation within the child welfare system compared to other children (Blackstock et al., 2004; Trocmé et al., 2010). This is largely attributed to the intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities caused by the residential school system, Sixties Scoop, and other harmful colonial practices in Canada. A study by Lavergne and colleagues (2008) also found that Black children were overrepresented in the child welfare system in Ontario, with Black children constituting 5% of child welfare reports despite only representing 3% of the population.

The research also found high rates of physical abuse amongst Asian children (Lavergne et al., 2008).

- As mentioned previously, IPV is one of the primary reasons that immigrant families become involved with child protective services in Canada (Lefebvre et al., 2013). Exposure to IPV is the most commonly reported and substantiated type of child maltreatment in Canada, alongslide neglect (Lefebvre et al., 2013). Recognition of exposure to IPV as a form of child maltreatment marked a significant paradigm shift in the approach of child protection services, prompting increased attention from child welfare authorities towards the issue (Alaggia et al., 2007). Provincial and national studies indicate that up to 29% of child welfare investigations involve children referred due to IPV exposure (Alaggia et al., 2015). Additionally, IPV exposure was the primary concern in 41% of substantiated cases (Lefebvre et al., 2013). It is estimated that over half of IPV incidents in Canada involve children witnessing violence (Kaukinen et al., 2016; Olszowy et al., 2021). In some instances, children may suffer harm, or even death, due to IPV. This can happen unintentionally, by being caught in the middle of a violent episode, or intentionally, as a targeted act of revenge against the primary victim leaving the relationship (Jaffe et al., 2014; Skrypek et al., 2017). Even after surviving such incidents, children must grapple with the trauma of horrific deaths, losing one or both parents, and a complete disruption of their sense of stability and security (Alisic et al., 2015). Domestic homicides rarely occur unexpectedly (Reif & Jaffe, 2019).

Immigrant communities face numerous stressors that can contribute to family violence, such as unresolved pre-migration trauma; migration stress; lack of social support systems; isolation; changes in gender roles and responsibilities due to immigration; racism and racialization; caring for young children; lack of knowledge about rights, laws, and services; under-employment; and economic insecurity (Alaazi et al., 2022; Alghamdi et al., 2022; Baker, 2017; Du Mont & Fort, 2012; Holtmann, 2016; Tabibi et al., 2018). Research by Hyman and colleagues (2011)

found that women described stress and lack of social support as contributing to IPV. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that women worked both inside and outside their homes. However, women may also be dependent on their husbands without a right to work, knowledge of the languages, driver's license or friends, making them more vulnerable to IPV (Holtmann, 2016). Holtmann's (2016) research also demonstrates greater vulnerability to IPV for women from certain cultural groups, such as Orthodox Christians, Muslims, women with young children, women accompanying husbands who are international students, and women sponsored by Canadian husbands. Mental health is negatively affected by the above-mentioned challenges of immigration, which can affect the family environment and lead to IPV (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). The experience of racism intersecting with socio-economic challenges can also contribute to violence. For example, in research by Omoridion (2020), one participant explained that home may become the only place for a husband to feel powerful when dealing with immigration-related stressors such as racism.

Family violence, IPV and various forms of child maltreatment, can have serious physical, psychological, emotional, and economic impacts (Guruge et al., 2012; Larkin et al., 2012). Women often report mental and physical health symptoms, such as "headaches, difficulties with memory, breathing problems, dizzy spells and fainting," along with "recurrent nightmares, emotional detachment, hyper vigilance, difficulty concentrating and sleeping" (Guruge et al., 2012, p.12). Intimate partner and family violence can also lead to homelessness for women (Tabibi & Baker, 2017). Additionally, parenting challenges can also occur for women when abuse includes an intention to undermine their authority in the family, and disrespect from children or other family members is encouraged (Giesbrecht et al., 2023, p. 130). Similarly, violence against children can lead to health-related and other problems in the future (Fallon et al., 2013).

Help-Seeking Pathways for Addressing Family Violence

When women seek help for family violence in Canada, they seek help through formal or informal supports. Informal supports include friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, or religious leaders, while formal support services inclue domestic violence shelters, police, medical services, settlement agencies, and other types of social services (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). Approximately 70% of immigrant women seek help from informal supports such as religious leaders and other community members, rather than from formal support services (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2015 as cited in Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Very few immigrant women access help from formal support services, with Hyman and colleagues (2006) reporting that recent immigrant women are less likely to report to the police and less likely to access social services – this is in comparison to non-recent immigrants, who are less likely to contact the police but more likely to access social services (Hyman et al., 2006). Other research shows that immigrant women who seek help from formal services are likely to contact an immigrant-serving organization due to familiarity (Baker & Tabibi, 2017). If women do not receive the necessary support from their informal networks, they may harm themselves or try to endure in silence (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Other women may access social services when they hit "rock bottom" or when the abuse becomes unbearable and they have exhausted other options to save themselves and their children (Ahmad et al., 2009, p. 618). Many researchers connect this phenomenon to the numerous barriers that immigrant women face when attempting to access help from formal services, which can be both similar to the barriers faced by the Canadian-born women and unique to the context of immigration (Hyman et al., 2006).

Child and Family Services (CFS) in Canada is structured differently across provinces and territories, but generally operates under a mandate to protect children from harm and promote

their well-being. When a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is made to CFS, it undergoes an assessment process to determine its validity and severity. Reports may be classified as substantiated if there is evidence of abuse or neglect, leading to intervention measures such as removal from the home or provision of support services to the family. Conversely, reports may be deemed unsubstantiated if insufficient evidence supports the allegations (Smith and Johnson, 2023; Tocme, 2010). In Canada, children are increasingly aware of external support mechanisms beyond their family circle due to information from various sources. Thus, children are informed about contacting governmental authorities, such as calling 911 in emergencies (Jaffe & Wolfe, 2003). Sometimes children may resort to seeking government intervention for minor issues, inadvertently exacerbating familial tensions (Salami et al., 2020).

In Manitoba, Designated Intake Agencies (DIAs) are responsible for conducting initial intakes and brief investigations. Cases deemed to require ongoing services are then transferred to an agency chosen by the family, which operates under the authority of the family's preference. A distinguishing characteristic of CFS in Manitoba is the flexibility afforded to families in selecting the agency from which they wish to receive services, irrespective of their geographic location. Enshrined in *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act,* this provision, alongside the establishment of three Aboriginal Authorities, aims to ensure that families can access programs and services that align with their values, beliefs, customs, and various cultural factors. Families retain the right to request a change of Authority, except during ongoing abuse investigations or adoption proceedings (Milne et al., 2014). The Act also recognizes that children can be at risk from caregivers other than their parents, regardless of whether these caregivers are adults or minors (Milne et al., 2014). Tracia's Trust, established in 2008, focuses on addressing various forms of sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography, sex trafficking, sex tourism, and internet luring. Additionally, in 2013, *The Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act* was enacted (Milne et al., 2014). The Winnipeg Child Advocacy Centre adopts a multi-systemic, multi-disciplinary approach to investigating child abuse, offering coordinated, child-centric, and community-based services (Manitoba Minister of Family Services and Labour, 2013 as cited in Milne et al., 2014). The center's approach focuses on the well-being and needs of the child, ensuring that investigations and interventions are conducted in a sensitive and supportive manner. By bringing together professionals from various disciplines, including law enforcement, child welfare, healthcare, and mental health, the Winnipeg Child Advocacy Centre fosters collaboration and information-sharing to facilitate timely and effective responses to cases of child abuse (Milne et al., 2014).

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) in Canada play a critical role in assisting families involved with CFS, offering a wide array of support services and resources tailored to the complex needs of these families. CBOs serve as multitasking agents, including providing counselling, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, and financial support to strengthen families and prevent further child welfare involvement (Smith & Johnson, 2023). Additionally, CBOs advocate for the rights of families within the child welfare system, offering advocacy services to navigate CFS processes and access appropriate support (Jones et al., 2022). These organizations also emphasize prevention and early intervention, delivering programs to strengthen parenting skills, build support networks, and address risk factors for child maltreatment (Garcia et al., 2021). Moreover, CBOs specialize in providing culturally and linguistically sensitive services, ensuring accessibility and responsiveness to the diverse needs of families involved with CFS (Brown & Lee, 2024). By collaborating with CFS agencies, government departments, and community stakeholders, CBOs expedite coordination and service delivery to support family reunification and promote safety, permanency, and well-being (Robinson & Patel, 2023).

Cultural communities and immigrant-serving organizations in Canada play pivotal roles in assisting families involved with CFS, particularly by providing culturally sensitive support tailored to the unique needs of immigrant and minority families. These organizations act as vital bridges between CFS agencies and families from

diverse cultural backgrounds, offering a range of support services such as linguistic assistance, cultural interpretation, and culturally appropriate services to facilitate communication and understanding (Wong & Chan, 2023). Moreover, cultural communities and immigrant-serving organizations serve as advocates for families within the child welfare system, helping them navigate complex processes, understand rights, and access needed services (Li & Patel, 2022). They also play a crucial role in prevention and early intervention efforts by delivering community-based programs that address cultural barriers, promote positive parenting practices, and strengthen family resilience (Kim et al., 2021).

Immigrants often discover valuable resources and services through referrals from their family physicians or counsellors/therapists, with schools also serving as a source of information. These resources are not only appreciated for their problem-solving capabilities but also for fostering a sense of belonging and agency in their lives. Similarly, several other immigrant communities in Canada also play pivotal roles in fostering positive relationships and providing support to children and families within their respective cultural groups. Communities such as South Asian, African, Caribbean, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European, among others,

actively engage in supporting their members and addressing the unique needs of immigrant families. Like Asian-Canadian communities, these groups often establish ethno-specific agencies and community organizations that offer culturally relevant services and support to families navigating the child welfare system. By fostering collaborations and partnerships with child welfare organizations, these ethno-specific agencies can provide unified support to immigrant children and families, ensuring that their cultural backgrounds and perspectives are respected and integrated into service delivery (Smith et al., 2021).

Additionally, participation in parenting groups has proven beneficial for some parents, as they gain valuable insights by hearing and sharing similar experiences with others (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). Also, immigrant settlement workers impart the principles of persuasive discipline, which are integrated into the Canadian school system and endorsed by various stakeholders as the safest and most effective approach to child discipline (Alaazi et al., 2018). Some studies highlighted various ways they accessed resources for themselves. Actively seeking help from people around them proved successful, with several learning about useful resources and services through referrals from their family physician, counsellor, or therapist. (Maiter & Stalker, 2011).
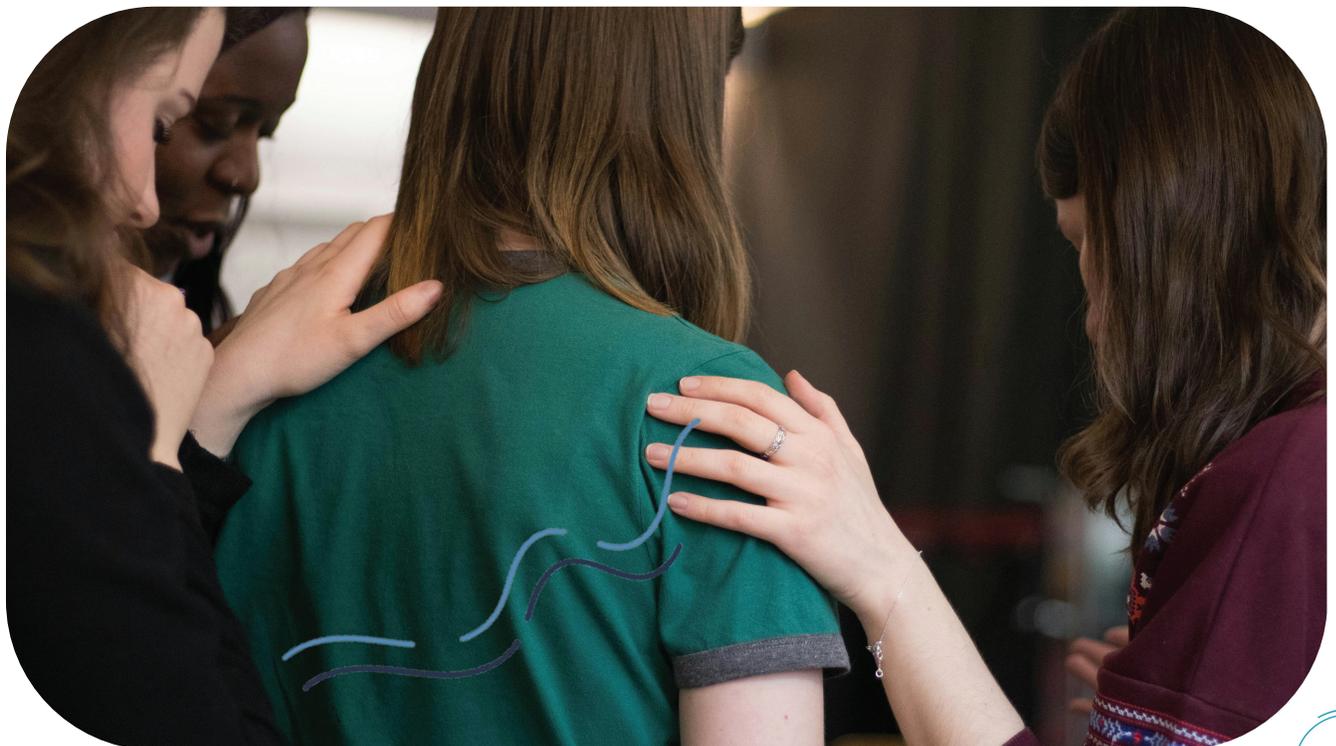
Challenges Encountered by Immigrant Families Seeking Help or Interacting with CFS

- There are numerous challenges to help-seeking for immigrant women and other members of immigrant communities. This includes language barriers, fears of child apprehension or immigration-related fears such as dependence on spousal sponsorship, limited knowledge of laws, socio-economic challenges, discrimination and racism within service provision, "cultural beliefs" and others (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019; Tabibi et al., 2018; also see Giesbrecht et al., 2020). Levels of vulnerability for immigrant women may be higher due to the previously mentioned factors, such as the gendered nature of immigration, lower levels of language comprehension and fluency, and lower levels of employment (Hudon, 2015; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). These can affect the possibility of newcomer women navigating the legal system, understanding rights, and accessing services and support (Tabibi et al., 2018). Immigrant families involved with CFS often encounter several challenges that also stem from language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of familiarity with these systems (Choi & Schechter, 2020; Trocmé & Chamberland, 2020). Hence, immigrant families often struggle to navigate a system that may not fully understand or cater to their unique needs, thus leading to misunderstandings about procedures and rights. Additionally, there are concerns about discrimination and bias from service providers, exacerbating the already stressful situation for these families (Choi & Schechter, 2020; Trocmé & Chamberland, 2020).

Language and other cultural barriers

Language can be one of the major barriers for those seeking help and removing themselves and their children from situations involving family violence (Runner et al., 2009). Even when victims are fluent in English, they may prefer speaking in their native language during crises. However, interpreters are often not readily available, leading to incomplete information being collected by the police and other services (Dasgupta, 2005; Erez & Hartley, 2003). It may also be difficult to ensure the availability of suitable interpreters for women (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). Interpreters can be difficult to find because they need to speak the language of the women but not have a personal connection to the families (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). This is important because many cultural communities are close-knit and women may not be willing to share their situation knowing that the interpreter belongs to their community (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). In many situations, women have gone without interpreters, which can be very difficult when women need to respond to child custody issues (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). Research by Giesbrecht and colleagues (2023), highlighted the story of a woman who became homeless and lost her children because she could not read the mail that was sent to her communicating these dangers (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). Children, sometimes acting as translators, may experience confusion and trauma, exposing them to sensitive information meant for adults. This situation can also increase the risk of violence for children, as the perpetrator may see them as colluding with the victim. Additionally, children might disapprove of their mother seeking help and compromising the family's safety by burdening them with assessing the level of risk or imminent danger when trying to address violence (Erez, 2000; Erez & Hartley,

2003). Language barriers can negatively impact the assessment of family situations and children's needs (Dufour, 2016). For example, research by Lee and colleagues (2017) found that language barriers hinder the full participation of Asian-Canadian caregivers in child welfare decision-making, causing increased nervousness and communication difficulties. Immigrant and refugee women may also face concerns about services not being able to adequately meet spiritual or cultural needs, providing limited or no culturally or religious-specific foods (e.g., halal and kosher meats, vegetarian options), and the absence of prayer or faith-based rooms (Baker & Tabibi, 2017).

Social isolation & lack of social support

Social isolation is one of the impacts of immigration, but it also poses a unique barrier for women when seeking help – especially when this is also enacted as a form of abuse in their family life. In their home country, this may not pose a threat for victims, as they would have the support of friends and family (Ahmad et al., 2009). If women can develop social networks upon arrival in the new country, this can help overcome social isolation. However, for some women this can be very difficult to achieve due to the low concentration of immigrants in a certain geographic area, the profession of their husband, the nature of the violence they experience, or cultural values (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2009). Women may experience social isolation from their communities if they separate from their husband and seek help. For example, calling the police can shame the family and impact their relationship with their families and friends (Omoridion, 2022). Some women, and their families, may also have pre-migration trauma that impacts their adjustment and compounds their experience of abuse, making it difficult to seek help (Giesbrecht, 2023).

Service approach in Canada

Family violence intervention in Canada aligns with an "individualist" approach. Under this approach, it is assumed that victims have *"an independent choice to stay or leave violent relationships"* and there is a lack of complex contextual and cultural analysis of why violence occurs in the first place (Holtmann, 2022, p. 172). The solutions suggested to resolve the issue of family violence are also "individualist," such as "mandated disclosure of suspected exposure of children to family violence,*"* removal of children from an unsafe home, and shelters that encourage women to leave violent relationships (Holtmann, 2022, p. 172). Holtmann (2022) argues that these methods may work in the short-term, but may worsen women's situation in the long-term because "they become disconnected from their networks of social support" (Holtmann, 2022, p. 172). Understanding this nature of services, immigrant women may choose not to contact formal services to protect their families or men from penalties (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). For instance, some women may prefer to mediate and keep working on their relationship instead of separating (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). When working with child protective services, families relocating to countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia often face a lack of cultural responsiveness from child welfare workers, leading to emotions of fear, powerlessness, and vulnerability during these interactions (Suleiman et al., 2023). Additionally, systemic challenges within the child welfare system include frequent turnover among workers, causing confusion and the disruption of services for immigrant families (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). The term "fragmented services" has been used to describe the lack of cohesive services for newcomers seeking support – in that practitioners may have experience in one respect but not all (for example, a counsellor who works with victims of IPV or deals with issues around mental health, but is not adequately knowledgeable on issues related to immigration trauma) (Giesbrecht et al., 2023).

Poverty and socio-economic challenges

Poverty and class biases are recognized as significant risk factors for involvement with child welfare services (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). Immigrant families may not be aware of the legal regulations in their host country and may also be unable to provide supervision to their children as required by law because they lack supportive social networks and may have differing norms about child supervision. These differing practices can be perceived as inadequate supervision by neighbours and child protection professionals (Brown, 1984; Doueck et al., 1993; Drake & Zuravin, 1998; Freisthler, 2004; Freisthler et al., 2006; Green, 1995; Hughes, 2013; Klassen et al., 2022; Levine et al., 1996).

Financial control can be part of the experience of violence, and financial concerns can be a barrier in seeking help. Immigrant women tend to have limited financial resources and experiencing IPV can also impact finances by making it difficult to work and sustain income (Alghamdi et al., 2022). However, many women may not be working and may be financially dependent on their spouse both before and after immigrating to Canada (Allagia et al., 2009). Factors such as poor physical and mental health, difficulties in affording health insurance, food, and rent, as well as safety concerns in the community contribute to the higher risk of child protective services contact among certain racial minority groups (Skrypek et al., 2017).

Racism and racialization

When looking at social problems such as family violence, there is a common tendency to view the issue as a cultural problem. This can result in the "othering" of racialized communities, which can exacerbate challenges faced by racialized persons, such as impeding help-seeking and increasing isolation. This is further compounded by the fact that many agencies supporting those facing family violence are often run by Canadians of European heritage (Baobaid & Hamed, 2010; Tabibi et al., 2018). Responses to family violence in racialized communities can be structured by service providers' stereotypical beliefs or assumptions about cultural differences and may result in the demonization of racialized men/communities (Ahmadzai et al., 2015; Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). Additionally, women may not be believed because their experience of victimization may look different from the dominant Canadian women's experience (Wilde, 2022). When the blame for family violence is put on group membership, rather than on an individual's unacceptable behaviour, this can alienate immigrants from

seeking help and justify inaction (Erez et al., 2009 as cited in Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019).

The lack of culturally appropriate services for immigrant families experiencing family violence in Canada has been deemed as racist by immigrant families and advocates – with many noting that social services primarily serve English speaking families. Further, research shows those who do seek help may experience discriminatory remarks or feel that they are treated differently than White Canadians (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). However, many women may be afraid to seek help from formal services – particualry police – because they would like to protect themselves and their partners from the possibility of race-based violence and discrimination (Lorenzetti et al., 2023; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). This, however, may differ from group to group, as Hyman and colleagues (2009) found that racism did not play a role in help-seeking among a heterogeneous group of immigrant women.

Concern for children

Ahmad and colleagues (2009) report that one of the main concerns for not seeking help is the concern for children. Women may be concerned about raising children in a single-parent household or feel it is best that the child grows up in a two-parent family due to beliefs that "children's emotional well-being is compromised in single-parent families" (Ahmad et al., 2009, p. 617). Additionally, women also may be concerned about the financial aspect of providing for children in a single-income household. These concerns are justifiable, as single mothers may find it difficult to find suitable employment with flexible hours or the ability to combine work with child-caring responsibilities, especially if they have young children (Ahmad et al., 2009). However, women who participated in research by Ahmad and colleagues (2009) also agreed that it is better for children to grow up in an environment free from violence. Some women may also be afraid of child apprehension and may keep quiet because they are afraid of child welfare intervention (Allaggia et al., 2009; Allaggai et al., 2017; Salami et al., 2020). Finally, newcomer parents may spend less time with their children and may have concerns about child welfare institutions, police, and schools undermining their role (Roer-Strier et al., 2005; Waldegrave, 2009).

Confidentiality, stigma, and mistrust

Confidentiality is a common barrier for all women when seeking help for family violence. However, for immigrant women, confidentiality can have unique dimensions. For example, in research by Guruge and Humphreys (2009), Tamil women expressed that confidentiality was important for them because of the negative attitude of community members towards separation and divorce, as well as the negative impact of gossip on one's reputation (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; also see Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016). Women in research by Allaggia and colleagues (2009) expressed that they were unwilling to contact police because they did not want everyone to know about the family violence. Women may be afraid to disclose or seek help because of social stigma or fears about how their "unsuccessful marriage" would affect their parents (Ahmad et al., 2009). South Asian women in research by Allaggia and colleagues (2009) were not comfortable disclosing abuse because of the importance of family unity and taboos on separation and divorce. Victim-blaming attitudes can also keep women from disclosing their experience of violence (Omoridion, 2020). Additionally, women may be coming from countries where formal support services, such as police, do not respect confidentially and even resort to violence themselves (Allagia et al., 2009). Abusers can also lie to their victims about social services in their new country or threaten their partners if they report to the police (Giesbrecht, 2023).
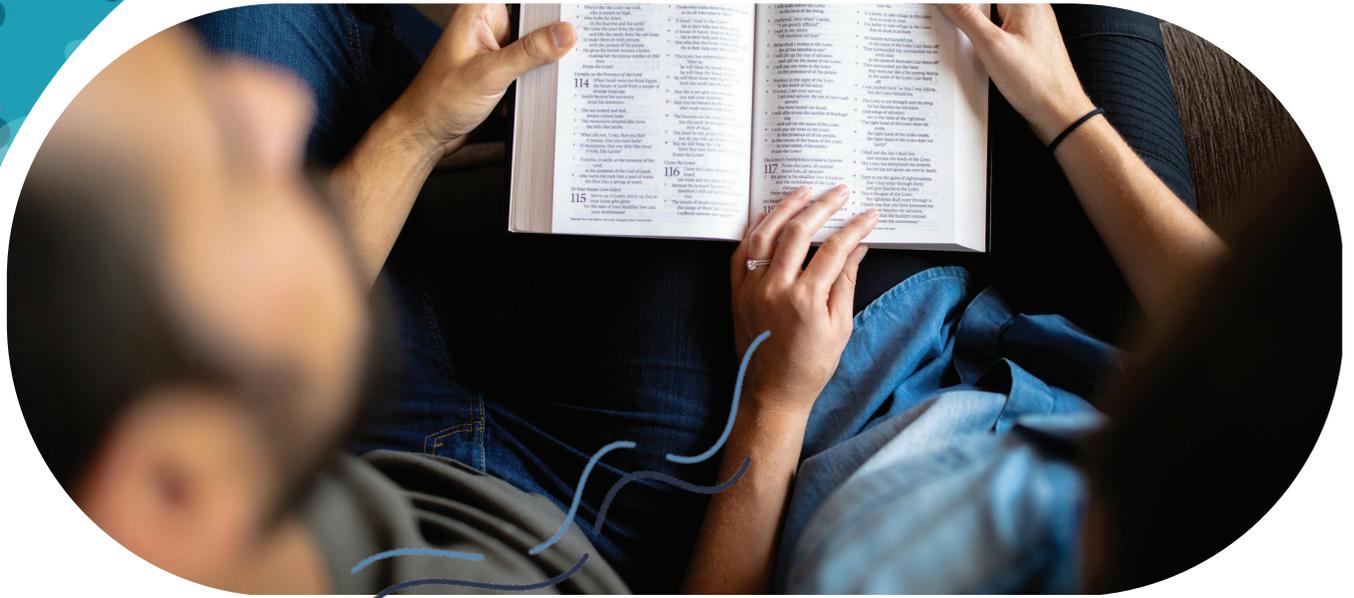
Religion

Religion plays an important role in many cultural communities. Many religions around the world maintain that families should be kept together and propagate highly patriarchal ideas that limit the options of women seeking help (Holtmann, 2016). Women are thus encouraged to stay in the abusive relationship and pray for change in their partner and family dynamics. These religious beliefs are also supported by cultural practices such as dowries, making it very difficult for women to leave abusive relationships (Holtmann, 2016). If women seek help, they may be seen as violating the cultural norms (Holtmann, 2022). Existing research demonstrates that religious women often rely on prayers, faith in God, or informal supports in religious communities, before deciding to seek help from other support services (Ozturka et al., 2019).

Immigration-related concerns

There are several concerns in relation to the process of immigration. First of all, women may be unwilling to seek help because they are concerned about their immigration status, as many women come to Canada as dependents under the family class (Allaggia et al., 2009; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). The women who were sponsored through family class may need to provide proof of abuse, including police reports or medical records, in order to separate themselves from their husbands' application (Allagia et al., 2009; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Immigration regulations also require by law the cohabitation of the sponsored spouse with the sponsor for two years before they receive permanent resident status in Canada, which can keep many women in abusive relationships. Even though there are provisions in cases of abuse, women are often unaware of these and may not have the proper documentation (Allagia et al., 2009). Thus, the fear of deportation can keep many immigrant women from reporting and seeking help (Allagia et al., 2009; Baker & Tabibi, 2017; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). Another fear is the loss of child custody in situations where women are not aware of related rules, regulations, and laws (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). In addition, immigration abuse can be a form of abuse, whereby partners may threaten to get their spouse deported if they report the abuse (Giesbrecht, 2023).

Collectivist cultural values

Women may not see that leaving their partner is an acceptable solution to their situation due to cultural values, religious teachings, or economic reasons (Holtmann, 2016; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). This can be particularly apparent in women from collectivist cultures, where the wellbeing of the group is prioritized over the individual (Rajkumar, 2023). Rajkumar (2023) states that notions of family honour and shame in collectivist cultures can lead to a "culture of silence" surrounding intimate partner or family violence – leading to "delayed or absent help-seeking and prolonged exposure to trauma" (p. 2). Women from certain cultures may also see family violence as a private matter that should not be discussed outside of the family unit (Holtmann, 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). This can be seen, for example, in the South Asian communities where silence ensures that shame is not brought upon the family. Participants in Okeke-Ihejirika and colleague's (2019) study stated that they would like to adjust their relationships and parenting styles, *"as long as [these] do not conflict with their fundamental cultural values or threaten the survival of the family unit"* (p. 594).

Lack of knowledge about services

Newcomer women may also lack knowledge about the services available to them, such as shelters, welfare benefits, subsidized housing, counselling, and other supports (Ahmad et al., 2009; Guruge and Humphreys, 2009). Other women may mistake abuse for "a behaviour problem" and not be aware of the specific supports and services that are available to them. (Holtmann, 2022, p. 176-177; Gesbrecht et al. 2023, p. 133). It is also possible that women cannot access services and resort to other ways of coping, such as praying and other faith-based practices (Omoridion, 2020). In terms of child abuse reporting mandates, women may be unaware that doctors, nurses, and other professionals have reporting duties which can lead to the removal of their children (Clarke, 2011). They may also be uninformed about their parental rights and unaware about where to access information and support, or where to file a complaint if dissatisfied with a service or worker (Clarke, 2011).

Culture of child-rearing and the involvement of cultural communities with CFS

Studies indicate that challenges in communication, differences in cultural norms surrounding child-rearing, limited comprehension of the child welfare system among service users, and a lack of awareness regarding the role of social workers have contributed to uncertainties in assessing maltreatment within cultural communities (Kriz & Skivenes, 2012; Lee et al., 2017). The child welfare system exhibits significant biases against certain communities (Lee et al., 2014). Normative and systemic biases disproportionately impact marginalized communities, including Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, and immigrant families. These biases manifest in various forms, such as cultural insensitivity, stereotyping, and structural inequalities, leading to disproportionate intervention rates and disparate outcomes for children and families from marginalized backgrounds (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2020; Lee et al., 2014).

Historically, cultural values have played a pivotal role in shaping parenting styles (Dufour, 2016). For example, in many Southeast Asian cultures, corporal punishment and physical sanctions wielded by parents are often viewed as essential aspects of child-rearing and are commonly endorsed as 'best practice' (Chao, 1994; Lieber et al., 2006; Tang, 2006; UNICEF, 2005). Cultural values significantly influence the perception of child physical abuse in Chinese communities, where there is often a high tolerance for physical discipline. Some studies emphasize the importance of contextualizing child abuse within cultural frameworks while also upholding the rights of the child (Kwok & Tam, 2005; Lee et al., 2017). Values such as filial piety, familism, and harmony are deeply ingrained in many Southeast Asian communities (Chao, 1994; Lau, 2010; Lieber et al., 2006; UNICEF, 2005; Zhai & Gao, 2009). Filial piety and familism promote hierarchical relationships, patriarchal authority, and family unity (Chao, 1994; Lau, 2010; Lieber et al., 2006; Zhai & Gao, 2009). Traditionally, children across Southeast Asia are expected to show deference to adults and hold subordinate status in the social hierarchy. Challenging or questioning adults is often considered disrespectful and can lead to a loss of face for the adult (Chao, 1994; Lau, 2010; Lieber et al., 2006; Zhai & Gao, 2009). There may also be various disciplinary practices, such as yelling and others, that may not be acceptable in the Canadian society but are practiced in other contexts (Suleiman et al., 2023). Overall, the role of culture significantly influences how families raise children and perceive the quality of their care. Changes in family roles are witnessed during migration but are perceived differently by caregivers and children, underscoring both the strengths and challenges associated with sibling care during migration (Klassen et al., 2022).

Ways to Address Barriers/Challenges Associated with Help-Seeking

It is crucial to understand that family violence often has structural causes in the context of immigrant communities, especially if it begins post-migration. Factors such as poverty, precariousness, racism, and deskilling play a crucial role in experiences of family violence (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). It is also important to understand that the involvement of immigrant families with CFS may also be related to cultural differences and cultural biases of those who report families to social services. The structural perspective provides a background to understanding the root causes of family violence within immigrant communities and balances the over-reliance on cultural causes of family violence (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018). However, culture does play an important role in prevention work as well as in the design of the provision of services to those who are impacted by family violence.

Policy level changes

Unfortunately, key social services that address family violence are often underfunded (Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018; Mohamud et al., 2021). Policy and decision-makers need to allocate more funding for services and community-based organizations that specifically address family violence in immigrant communities. This should include financial support for culturally safe transitional housing and mental health supports, as well as programmes for abusive partners (Takano, 2006 as cited in Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020; Mohamud et al., 2021). There are numerous community-based organizations and programs that need to be supported so that services can address these complex issues (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020).

Acknowledging that structural challenges play an important role in shaping experiences of family violence, prevention and intervention efforts should include supports at the provincial and national levels of government for immigrant families. This specifically includes greater efforts from policymakers to engage immigrants in the Canadian economy and reduce financial stressors (Okeke Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). For example, there is a need to address deskilling as an important social problem (Okeke Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). If this can be addressed within the framework of economic empowerment for newcomers, it can alleviate some of the stressors that immigrant families face upon coming to Canada (Okeke Ihejirika & Salami, 2018). In addition, there is a need to invest in "education, affordable housing, and healthcare, paths to employment that enable economic independence, and the ability to escape abuse" for women as well as public education (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016, p. 577). These issues require innovative, policy-based solutions.

There is also a need to understand the heterogeneity of experiences that immigrant women face within formal support services and to improve existing services (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). This involves addressing systemic racism within these services, and ensuring that "services and supports should center on promoting individual and family wellness, happiness and sense of belonging, in addition to addressing basic survival needs, such as financial stability and accommodations" (Lorenzetti et al., 2023, p. 17). Okeke-Ihejirika and colleagues (2020) argue that only two provinces – British Columbia and Ontario – have policy guidelines for service providers about working with immigrant families.

Engagement with cultural communities: Prevention and intervention

There are several ways in which service providers and organizations can better serve immigrant families experiencing family violence. First, Alghamdi and colleagues (2022) recommend that service providers should be aware of "post migration stressors", cultural nuances, and barriers to accessing services experienced by immigrant victims of family violence such as language barriers, socio-economic challenges, family and the role of the extended family, patriarchal attitudes, and beliefs about divorce. There is also a need to deliver services in women's preferred language, as women may not speak English or French (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). It is also important to be aware of other challenges that immigrant communities face, such as a lack of access to transportation, risks to anonymity, and a lack of informal supports, particulalry in rural or remote areas (Giesbrecht et al., 2023).

Service providers should also be trained in immigration processes and cultural safety to become aware of their own biases and understand the cultural needs of immigrant women

(Baker & Tabibi, 2017; Giesbrecht et al., 2023; Kardashevskaya et al., 2021). This is especially important because immigrant women can have higher levels of social isolation due to a lack of friends or family in their host country (Alghamdi et al., 2022). Often, women cannot address all their concerns in one place and face numerous and diverse difficulties when accessing help (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). Strong partnerships between immigrant-serving organizations and IPV-specific agencies can help address these service gaps, enable information sharing, and deepen understanding on culturally safe care and IPV for service providers in both agencies (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). Additionally, agencies and organizations may have cultural biases that are expressed in policies – therefore, it is important that these policies are reviewed to ensure that they don't discriminate on the basis of ethnocultural background, or overlook other harmful behaviours such as microaggressions (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009).

Dumbrill (2008) describes refugee parents' experiences in Canada and points to the fact that parents have expressed an openness to work with child welfare agencies in order to serve the best interests of their children. Yoryor (2018) also discusses the experiences of refugees and African Canadians interacting with child welfare services in Canada. Yoryor (2018) argues that cultural approaches are crucial in working with African Canadians and criticizes the approach of child welfare agencies in Canada which tend to demonize foreign cultures and perpetuate racism towards racialized Canadians and immigrants. He suggests the creation of a Parent's Association of Canada and Parent's Advisory Council to advise child welfare agencies and act as cultural brokers between the state institutions and cultural communities. He also recommends training social workers in cultural perspectives.

Giesbrecht and colleagues (2023) recommend

ensuring that information is available for all immigrants, regardless of their status in the country, about services, laws, and legal assistance in their mother tongues. It is important to work with "cultural and religious leaders to provide information and training concerning family violence" (Holtmann, 2022, p. 164). There is a need to build trust in the initial stages of the relationship development, which can lead to greater cooperation focused on developing "strategies for family violence prevention, safety planning for victims, accountability for perpetrators," and other pertinent issues concerning prevention and intervention in family violence (Holtmann, 2022, pp. 180-181). Community leaders can become informed about family violence and its dynamics and can play a crucial role in making referrals to appropriate services – acting as bridge-builders between the cultural communities in Canada and formal services (Holtmann, 2022, p. 179; Okeke-Iheijirika et al., 2019). This is advantageous because communities already have the cultural knowledge that can enable them to support their members in times of adjustment and stress (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019).

Cooperation with cultural communities can also help support newcomers in adjusting to the changing gendered dynamics in the family. Cultural communities and their formal and informal leaders are well positioned to assist newcomers with negotiating these roles within the family, which can have a preventative effect in relation to family violence (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Policymakers must engage with community members to strengthen the role of leaders in this type of preventative work (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). These cultural communities have the potential to play a more formal role in assisting families resolving various matters, including family violence (Okeke Ihejirika & Salami, 2018).

Guruge and Humphreys (2009) suggest developing community-based outreach programs. These can be led and conducted within communities, in central and convenient locations, such as apartment buildings. There should also be greater sharing of information about how to identify, prevent and address family violence with the involvement of community leaders and community-based organizations, including art-based work, such as theatre and dance. As mentioned previously, women may not know about the services

available, and it is important to incorporate information about supports for those who experience family violence in the community (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). Jonkman and colleagues (2009) describe a project titled "Communities that Care" which mobilized community members across sections to address risk factors and enhance protective factors for substance use, violence, and delinquency within the communities that participated. The projects in respective communities were based on the analysis of risk and protective factors of each community, and included parent training programs, schoolwide interventions, social skills curricula, mentoring programs, after-school activities, and other community-based initiatives.

Service providers can also integrate the "collectivist practices of care" (Holtmann, 2022). Immigrant women draw strength from social connections they make with others, and cultural communities have the potential to support and provide safety. This approach acknowledges that members of cultural communities have "collectivist" care practices that may be rooted in their religion, families, and culture (Holtmann, 2022). Cultural values and practices are not the cause of family violence "but rather shape how it unfolds" (Holtmann, 2022, p. 181). With that, it is also possible that some women may want to stay with their husbands. It is important that decisions to leave are not imposed on women, but that women are empowered to make decisions that best suit their situation (Souto et al., 2016 as cited in Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Therefore, cultural agencies and agents can be "harnessed to denounce family violence and support change" (Holtmann, 2022, p. 181).

Pan and colleagues (2006) conducted participatory action research with several cultural communities in the United States, including Somali, Vietnamese and Latina groups, based on the Ahmisa for Safe Families Project. The project aimed to address family violence in immigrant and refugee communities in San Diego, USA by identifying barriers/risk factors for family violence, as well as solutions to address these barriers. They argue that since causes for family violence differ, so too should intervention strategies. The authors state that investments in youth development, parenting, addressing racial/ethnic conflicts, and creating economic opportunities for women are helpful. As a result, they conducted parenting

classes for cultural communities, and organized workshops for women to learn new skills, such as sewing. They conclude:

> In the development of our domestic violence prevention program, we decided to examine the underlying or root causes of interpersonal violence within the context of a family, community, and culture. We created opportunities for both community members and social service providers to explore and examine their own cultural values around domestic violence, which helped us arrive at a consensus that the family can be nurtured as the foundation for unity and peace. This led us to focus on family harmony and safety as the context within which to address domestic violence in the Somali, Latino, and Vietnamese communities of San Diego. (p. 42)

In terms of violence prevention and response services, the findings suggest a need to develop these in a culturally appropriate manner and in ways that capture the experiences of abuse in particular communities (Bhuyan & Senturia, 2005). Thus, prevention strategies need to be designed to address the issue of IPV as well as the common behavioral manifestations of IPV in any specific community. Public education and media campaigns should be developed and targeted to specific communities, using acceptable imagery and messages to community members. Response services also need to recognize that immigrant women are often victimized by their race, gender, and immigration status, and that serving these women requires an understanding of the community context in which they live. Service providers should recognize and acknowledge the strongly entrenched cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality and stigmatize women (and their children) who leave or divorce their husbands. Both individual- and community-level work needs to take place to begin the slow shifting of community values that will result in more egalitarian relationships (Mason et al., 2008).

Existing research on IPV as experienced by immigrant women indicates that to address cultural barriers, there is a need for the implementation of "culturally sensitive" and safe social services (Akinyele-Akanbi, 2021; Baobaid & Hamed,

2010; Holtmann, 2022; Giesbrecht et al., 2020; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). In Canada, service provision has been informed by dominant Western-centric views (Gebhard et al., 2022). An assertion of cultural neutrality invalidates negative racial and cultural experiences and leads to ethnocentric services that may not deliver equitable care for all (McGough et al., 2022). This realization of ethnocentrism in service provision led to the theorization of culture in service provision and several frameworks have been suggested, such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, and cultural safety (McGough et al., 2022). Within the context of family violence, culture shapes both prevention and delivery of services as it relates to immigrant communities (Alghamdi et al., 2022). Cultural safety is a concept developed within healthcare by Maori nurse Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden in the 1990s and aims to ensure the cultural safety of the Indigenous peoples (Baobaid & Hamed, 2010, Curtis et al., 2019). Paps and Ramsden (1996) argue that

> cultural safety does not place an emphasis on sensitivity or awareness" because these are "both concerned with having knowledge about culture but, more specifically, ethnic diversity (p. 495).

On the other hand, cultural safety raises the question of racism within service provision (Paps and Ramsden, 1996). Cultural safety requires understanding one's own culture, power and positionality. Based on this, understanding and learning about others' positions, differences, and similarities contribute to greater structural and intersectional equity (Curtis et al., 2019; McGough et al., 2022). A cultural safety approach differs from other approaches that centre culture in that cultural competency focuses on cultural difference and may portray the person with a different culture as "the other," whereas cultural safety asks service providers to question their own cultural assumptions and beliefs when providing care (Curtis et al., 2019). Curtis and colleagues (2019) talk about this within the medical context but this can also be applied within social services. McKenna (2020), in discussing cultural safety, argues that those "in positions of power" have "an inherent ethnocentric belief that our cultural ways of being is natural, correct and superior to that of others" and this approach explains the systemic issues that Indigenous

populations and non-Indgenous migrant groups face in white-dominated settler colonial societies (p. 495).

While discussions of cultural safety with Indigenous individuals and communities emphasize experiences of racism, the discussion on culture and immigration tends to focus more heavily on questions of cultural sensitivity and difference (Phillips & Baobaid, n.d.). Phillips and Baobaid (n.d.) provide guidelines for service providers on how to practice cultural competence in their work with Muslim cultural communities. His argument is based on the assumption of immigrant communities as collectivist and the Canadian approach as individualist. The Muslim Family Safety Project brings together anti-violence work and the religion of Islam, functions as a cultural broker, and also aims to transform relationships by including religious leaders, and individual male and female community members in anti-violence work. Similarly, Shankar & Ellis (2020) argue that cultural brokers can play an important role in facilitating access to services for immigrant families. Cultural brokers are defined as "people acculturated in one or more minority cultures and the mainstream culture" (Singh et al., 1999 as cited in Shankar and Ellis, 2020, p.3). Cultural brokers can help resolve conflicts, confusion, or disagreements, while remaining committed to "improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families" (Shankar & Ellis, 2020, p. 3). However, there are also challenges that come with involving cultural brokers. Thus, if child welfare services are not ready to trust and work collaboratively with cultural brokers, this can lead to various inter-agency issues. In addition, child welfare services are concerned with children's well-being, not mothers, and in this way, the services accessed through child welfare agencies may negatively impact mothers who are also victims of family violence. This can make it difficult for the cultural brokers to navigate and understand the narrow focus of child welfare agencies. Furthermore, cultural brokers may also have important roles to play in their cultural communities and may need extra support to deal with various concerns that arise from their role as cultural brokers, including safety issues. There is a need for more research to understand the situation of cultural brokers and the challenges they face in supporting cultural communities when they encounter child welfare services (Shankar & Ellis, 2020).

- Understanding the family dynamic, migration experience, and acculturation is essential for a thorough assessment of risk and safety (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008). Collaborative efforts among legal and social services are necessary to address challenges during help-seeking (Roer-Strier et al., 2005; Waldegrave, 2009). Empathy entails making a deliberate effort to understand families, their beliefs, and motivations, enabling caseworkers to approach the client's experience with sensitivity to the family's cultural context (Dufour, 2016). Comprehensive assessments are crucial to understanding immigrant and refugee families' specific experiences and needs. In this case, emphasizing the need for a thorough assessment process is needed (LeBrun et al., 2015).

Racial biases also permeate the child welfare decision-making process through the utilization of psychological evaluations and testimony regarding parental capacity (Roberts, 2002). It is argued that evaluations often align with agency decisions, as psychologists are typically contracted by agencies to assess parents' capacities (Roberts, 2002). Despite the existence of multiple and conflicting explanations for the overrepresentation of Black and other children of color in the child welfare system, these explanations fail to fully address the complexities and challenges of child welfare intervention for Afro-Caribbean families (Clarke, 2011).

Several studies emphasize the imperative for Canadian school systems to bolster the integration of newcomer children into a pluralistic society. Key components to achieving this objective include teacher training, provision of resource supports, deployment of on-site settlement workers, cultivation of awareness regarding teacher attitudes, and facilitation of student inclusion through dialogue and interaction (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012). Moreover, while Canada may appear to be a safe haven for their parents, newcomers often remain unaware of other forms of peril, such as experiencing harassment at school (Klassen et al., 2022). To address this issue, schools can serve as vital sources of information. Consequently, educational initiatives targeting children of newcomers can be delivered through collaboration between settlement service providers and various child and family support

organizations, including social services and schools, aimed at fostering awareness of violence against women and children. In this context, educational materials and information may be disseminated in the form of informational packets (Kikulwe et al., 2023).

The literature suggests that fostering strong family/social worker relationships can mitigate tension between social workers and immigrant parents, promoting collaborative approaches to safeguarding immigrant children within their households (Kikulwe et al., 2023). There is a common understanding that immigrants could benefit from outreach efforts, understanding cultural norms, and legislative definitions of appropriate parenting practices (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008). However, efforts aimed at providing targeted parenting education to immigrants may inadvertently perpetuate negative stereotypes, implying deficits within immigrant communities. Child welfare providers must be cognizant of power dynamics, recognizing that their interventions can either empower or oppress the individuals with whom they engage with (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008; Lee et al., 2014).

Similarly, modeling 'good behavior' holds significant importance. Adopting the role of a teacher and educating children on how to become 'good' citizens with a strong moral compass emerged as a crucial parental responsibility.

It is necessary to teach them their mother tongue, respect for others, and guide them on how to interact with different people (Este & Tachble, 2009; Mattoo & Merrigan, 2021).

The overall scarcity of culturally sensitive translator and interpreter support services has been shown to hinder victims with English as a second language from seeking assistance and escaping dangerous situations (David & Jaffe, 2018; Runner et al.,, 2009). During crises, victims may prefer communicating in their native language despite their proficiency in English.

However, the unavailability of interpreters often leads to incomplete information being gathered by the authorities (Dasgupta, 2005; Erez & Hartley, 2003). To mitigate this, there is a need for the development of more programs aimed at improving the availability of high-quality interpreters in order to ensure positive, as well as effective, communication between service providers and service recipients (David & Jaffe, 2018; Kikulwe et al., 2023). Furthermore, it is recommended that organizations provide support for bilingual staff and offer appropriate compensation/recognition for the additional time burden. Funding levels should align with service delivery goals to prevent overburdening systems with increasing costs over time (Alaggia et al., 2017).

A more nuanced approach should be adopted in the development of safety plans, one that actively involves fathers and respects the autonomy of the non-abusive caregiver. This approach aligns with recommendations from other authors advocating for training that addresses the intricate dynamics of intimate partner and family violence, particularly concerning vulnerable populations, and acknowledges the unintended consequences of achieving safety solely through separation when comprehensive safety plans or adequate court and community support are lacking (Fleck-Henderson, 2000; Moles, 2008). Furthermore, intervention programs for victims must be enhanced to enable agencies to effectively manage perpetrator risk and ensure the safety of children. Child protection workers also need to undergo specialized training to better equip them for collaborative work in support of victims and their children, while also holding perpetrators accountable for maintaining safety (Olszowy et al., 2013).

Fontes (2017) advocates for utilizing social service websites as platforms to disseminate materials to newcomers in multiple languages. The literature underscores the importance of social workers receiving training to comprehend diverse migration experiences, including parenting among newcomers, and promoting inclusive parenting practices when newcomer children are removed from their homes. These priorities necessitate a reevaluation of child welfare practices. Scholars have expressed concerns regarding negative experiences resulting from joint child welfare and police investigations of child abuse and neglect (Kikulwe et al., 2023). The exercise of bio-power (management/control) evident in the fear of Blackness becomes apparent when child welfare workers request police accompaniment during home visits to Black families (Phillips & Pon, 2018). The presence of police aims to intimidate and humiliate Black families, reinforcing power dynamics (Clarke et al., 2018; Kikulwe et al., 2023). Cross-cultural training for child welfare workers is imperative to foster cultural sensitivity and awareness within child welfare organizations (Lee et al., 2017).

Finally, effective casework encompasses crafting solutions that are customized to the unique needs, values, and backgrounds of families, while also fulfilling legal obligations. Strategies like clarifying the function of child protective services, adjusting communication styles, offering support, and imparting knowledge have proven to be successful, particularly for visible minority families (Dufour, 2016).

Conclusions

In this literature review, we explored the subject of family violence, including IPV and child maltreatment, in families who have immigrated to Canada. The review emphasizes the prevalence of intimate partner and family violence amongst immigrant communities, as well as barriers to seeking help such as social isolation, racism, concern for children, and a lack of knowledge about services. The review also explores child maltreatment and challenges encountered by immigrant families engaged in the Canadian child welfare system, including language barriers, cultural nuances in parenting practices, and racial biases in reporting to child welfare agencies. The necessity for culturally competent supports and services are underscored, recognizing acculturation challenges and addressing language barriers. Understanding cultural nuance is crucial for informing policies and strategies that meaningfully aid immigrant families experiencing family violence. This literature review calls for a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of family violence in immigrant communities, contributing to the development of more inclusive and supportive family violence and child welfare practices in the Canadian context. There is currently a scarcity of research studies that focus on effective interventions specific to cultural contexts amongst immigrant communities in Canada (LeBrun et al., 2015). Therefore, further research is needed to explore intervention strategies and support services that are culturally appropriate and safe.

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