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*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

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## **Acknowledgement of Country**

ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and future; and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

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## **Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia: The ASPIRE Project: State of knowledge paper**

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# Executive summary

This State of knowledge paper summarises a broad range of national and international research to describe the current knowledge about family violence against immigrant and refugee women. This includes published and unpublished studies, reports, evaluations and policy papers identified through a systematic search of key academic databases and relevant websites.

This paper is organised into seven sections. The *Introduction* outlines the aims of this paper and defines key terms. It introduces the problem of family violence both globally and in Australia, describes the context in which migration to Australia occurs and presents the overarching policy responses to family violence in Australia, with particular emphasis on addressing family violence in immigrant and refugee communities. *Methods* outlines the review methods, provides an overview of the literature (including key limitations), and discusses the theoretical frameworks utilised in the analysis. *Women's experiences of family violence* discusses immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family violence including what is known about the prevalence of the problem, how women understand family violence, the types of violence experienced and the health and wellbeing consequences. *Factors associated with women's vulnerability to family violence* discusses factors associated with immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to family violence, including pre-migration experiences, immigration policies, visa status, community attitudes to violence, changing gender roles and a range of other issues. *Seeking help and promoting responsive service systems* explores opportunities and barriers for immigrant and refugee women to seek help for family violence, their experiences with service systems and particular matters related to justice responses. *Prevention initiatives* discusses research on the prevention of family violence against immigrant and refugee women, highlighting community and women's leadership, community engagement and cultural sensitivity and the limited research that has been conducted with immigrant and refugee men and boys. Finally, *Implications for policy and practice and gaps in research* concludes by considering the implications of the literature reviewed for family violence policy and practice and identifies notable gaps in the literature where further research is required generally and particularly in Australia. In the appendix, we provide a table of recommended peer-reviewed studies to highlight high-quality research that makes a particularly valuable contribution to the current state of knowledge.

It is important to note that while the paper identifies critical evidence about family violence against immigrant and refugee women, much of the research found in the literature is undermined by methodological issues. Knowledge about prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women is incomplete and inconclusive, with the

experiences of immigrant and refugee women potentially undocumented because studies are conducted in English or European languages (in which immigrant women may not have proficiency), and because surveys often report that immigrant and refugee women are under-represented. Australian evidence is particularly limited, meaning it is not possible to say whether the prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women is different to the prevalence of family violence against other women. More broadly, other methodological issues include small sample sizes, conceptualising family violence in ways that are not recognised by immigrant and refugee communities, and possibilities that women are reluctant to disclose the extent of their experiences of violence to cultural outsiders, such as researchers.

Overall immigrant and refugee women report similar forms of family violence as women from non-immigrant backgrounds. There are, however, some differences in the types of violence experienced and the structural contexts in which violence takes place. This includes experiences with multi-perpetrator family violence, and the impact of violence and abuse exacerbated by immigration policy, visa status and the stressors of the migration experience generally. Indeed, the literature overwhelmingly identifies that constraints produced by immigration policies are of significant concern, where this establishes women in relationships of dependency on perpetrators for economic security and residency rights. Within this context, perpetrators of family violence are able to add manipulations and misinformation about women's visa status as well as threats of deportation and the removal of children to their arsenal of control tactics. For these reasons, studies noted that immigrant and refugee women tend to endure family violence for prolonged periods before seeking help, accumulating several negative physical and mental health effects. Additionally, many women are highly motivated to resolve family violence without ending relationships and breaking up families, for a range of reasons including immigration concerns and family and community pressures. These objectives may not be well-understood by mainstream family violence responses, which causes concern for immigrant and refugee women alongside worries about cultural insensitivity from service providers. Furthermore, there is scant evidence that the increase in criminal justice responses to family violence, such as "mandatory arrest" and "pro-prosecution" approaches, are

helpful for immigrant women and may possibly deter them from seeking assistance in crisis situations.

Evidence in relation to effective approaches to preventing violence against immigrant and refugee women is extremely limited. While there are grassroots initiatives and community-based prevention programs in Australia that do work with immigrant and refugee communities, they are rarely documented, evaluated or sustained with adequate funding and resources. The limited research on prevention identified the importance of consulting and engaging with community elders and leaders to develop approaches that acknowledge structural and cultural factors, as well as the diversity of experiences among immigrant and refugee communities.

Finally, review of the literature demonstrates there is considerable scope for further research exploring family violence experiences, intervention programs and prevention responses for immigrant and refugee communities in Australia. By presenting this overview of the available literature relating to immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family violence, the researchers hope to have made more apparent key gaps in understanding this critical issue, particularly in connection to the ways in which immigration policies, structural disadvantage and location interact with immigrant and refugee women's experiences of violence. The ANROWS funded project, *Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia* (the ASPIRE project) aims to address some of the gaps in the current state of knowledge.

# Introduction

Immigrant and refugee women in Australia are known to face particular barriers accessing services aimed at preventing and responding to family violence. There is limited evidence, however, explaining the contexts, nature and dynamics of violence against immigrant and refugee women to inform the development of responsive and culturally sensitive community-based interventions. In late 2014, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) funded *Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia*, a research project that will work with communities in eight geographical locations across Victoria and Tasmania to generate evidence about immigrant and refugee women's experiences of violence, to address these critical gaps. The project, now known as ASPIRE (Analysing Safety and Place in Immigrant and Refugee Experience), is being led by researchers from the University of Melbourne, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, and the University of Tasmania.

The first phase of the project was a review of the published and publically available literature examining the prevalence, dynamics and experiences of violence against immigrant and refugee women in Australia and other OECD countries (with a focus on Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (US)). This paper summarises key issues and represents the current state of knowledge in relation to family violence against immigrant and refugee women in countries of resettlement.

## Aim of the paper

This paper seeks to identify and describe the current state of knowledge about:

- immigrant and refugee women's experiences of intimate partner and family violence;
- similarities and differences in the experiences of immigrant and refugee women compared to non-immigrant survivors of violence;
- contexts and risk factors associated with violence against immigrant and refugee women;
- help-seeking strategies that are relevant to the contexts in which immigrant and refugee women experience family violence; and
- the factors that promote or inhibit immigrant and refugee women's access to violence prevention and support services.

The ASPIRE research team accessed this information by examining relevant peer-reviewed literature from Australia and countries with comparable recent histories of migration, socioeconomic contexts and service systems. We also searched for relevant "grey" literature that described work that had been conducted in Australia. Grey literature refers to project reports, scoping reports, evaluation reports and other documents that are produced by a range of stakeholders and which have not been subjected to processes of formal review by experts in relevant fields. This literature offers insights into promising responses to family violence against immigrant and refugee women, policy discussions, and evaluations of existing programs across a range of local and geographic settings. This paper therefore draws on a broad range of work to identify current understanding of the prevalence of family violence among immigrant and refugee women, known risk factors and contexts that heighten women's vulnerability to family violence, and to explore how their experiences of family violence are similar or different to the experiences of women generally. This breadth of work is summarised in this paper.

## Definition of terms

There is considerable variability in the language that is used by academics, service providers, policy-makers, the media, immigrant and refugee communities and the general public to represent, describe and examine problems of family violence against immigrant and refugee women. There are also a variety of understandings associated with terms used in relation to refugees and immigration. The following provides brief explanations of central concepts as used in this paper.

### Family violence

Internationally in the peer-reviewed and grey literature, a variety of terms are used to describe violence in the context of family relationships and between partners in an intimate relationship. These terms include family violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, spousal abuse, domestic abuse, and wife or spouse battering. In the different jurisdictions across Australia, different terms are also used in legislation aiming to address violence within the context of families. In Victoria and Tasmania, the term "family violence" is used in the relevant legislation (the Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act (2008)* and the Tasmanian *Family Violence Act (2004)*). Therefore in this paper we use the term "family violence" noting that this is inclusive of intimate partner violence (violence perpetrated by a current or former partner), which is the most common form of family violence.

The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act (2008)* defines family violence as behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person that is physically, sexually, economically, emotionally or psychologically abusive; threatening, coercive or controlling in such a way as to cause that family member fear. The Tasmanian *Family Violence Act (2004)* provides a similar description of the types of conduct to be defined as family violence, which it identifies as violence committed by a person against that person's spouse or partner. The definition of family violence in Victoria incorporates violence perpetrated by a current or former partner, but also any other person who is a relative of the family member against whom violence is perpetrated. "Relative" is inclusive of parents, grandparents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and relatives by marriage ("in-laws"). The extension of the definition of family violence to include violence perpetrated by intimate partners as well as that perpetrated by other relatives, is particularly relevant to the experience of immigrant and refugee women. Therefore in this paper we reference the

broader understanding of "family violence" described in the Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act (2008)*. It is also important to note that in the Victorian legislation, behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of these behaviors is also defined as family violence.

### Risk and vulnerability

The terms "risk" and "vulnerability" are frequently used interchangeably in the peer-reviewed and grey literature when discussing violence against immigrant and refugee women. In policy and the provision of family violence services, however, the term **risk factor** is used to describe situations or behaviours that heighten the likelihood of violence being used or the severity of violence that is inflicted. **Risk assessment** refers to processes of assessing the likelihood of an adverse event occurring, and its timing, severity and consequences (Victoria. Department of Human Services, 2012). For example, circumstances of a victim being pregnant or a perpetrator using a weapon would be considered risk factors for potentially severe and imminent violence. Across Australian jurisdictions a number of assessment tools are used to assess risk. In Victoria service providers use the *Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework* (usually referred to as the common risk assessment framework or CRAF) to assess family violence risk. In Tasmania service providers use a range of actuarial assessment tools such as the *Spousal Abuse Risk Assessment* tool and the *Dangerousness Assessment*. It should be noted that our searches of the published literature were unable to identify adapted risk assessment tools that are used with immigrant and refugee women in Australia, although verbal consultations with service providers suggest that available tools are adapted on an ad hoc basis.

Policy-makers and service providers use the concept of **vulnerability** to refer to personal, household, socioeconomic or cultural factors that heighten risks for family violence. This includes circumstances where women have limited options to avoid or escape violence or to seek help if they experience family violence. For example, perceived or actual dependence on a perpetrator or being unaware of family violence services are factors that increase a woman's vulnerability to family violence and impact on the options women may have for preventing, responding to, or coping with, such situations. It is important to underline that the causes of family violence are not the risk factors, or factors contributing to increased vulnerability; rather the source of the problem lies in the choices that perpetrators make to use family violence.

## Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers

In this paper we use the definition of these terms as they are used in international migration law (IOM, 2004):

- A *refugee* is any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.
- An *asylum seeker* is a person seeking to be admitted into a country as a refugee and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.
- IOM note that no universally accepted definition of *immigrant* exists, but that the term immigrant (or migrant) is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of “personal convenience” and without intervention of an external compelling factor.

The research presented in this paper is primarily about family violence against immigrant and refugee women. There is far less evidence about the needs and experiences of women who are asylum seekers, but where this has been identified it is also included. This evidence gap is particularly important in the context of Australia, where there has been a steady growth in the number of people seeking asylum and the length of time taken to assess asylum claims has increased significantly over recent years.

## Acculturation

The processes of change that occur when groups of people from different cultural contexts come into contact with each other has long been a subject of study by psychologists, sociologists and others. Acculturation, the process where persons from one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviours of the other, has been defined as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves “changes in a person’s behavioural repertoire” (Berry, 2005, p. 698-699). Acculturation is an important concept in the fields of research investigating family violence against immigrant and refugee women because attitudes and beliefs that are used to condone or justify family violence, such as the belief that women have inferior social status in relation to men, may vary between and within cultural groups. These attitudes and beliefs can be modified and challenged through contact and engagement between different cultural groups and within institutional settings.

## Family violence: A global problem

While this paper focuses on the situations of immigrant and refugee women, family violence occurs in all countries and across all cultures. A recent systematic review of the global evidence suggests that worldwide almost one third (30%) of women who have ever been in a relationship report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their partner (World Health Organization, 2013). This research does not capture the full extent of violence perpetrated within the context of families, but nonetheless confirms that family violence is a “global public health problem of epidemic proportions” (WHO, 2013, p. 3) and is perhaps the most common violation of the rights of (predominantly) women and children.

Large-scale research to identify the prevalence of family violence, as broadly understood in this paper (inclusive of intimate partner violence as well as violence perpetrated by other members of the victim’s family) is rare. The majority of peer-reviewed prevalence studies focuses on the most common form of family violence; that is, intimate partner violence. The largest international study of intimate partner violence is the *WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005). The study included 24,097 women recruited from a total of 15 sites spread across ten countries (approximately 1500 women per site). The study measured intimate partner violence using the domains of physical violence (sub-grouped as moderate and severe), sexual violence and controlling behaviour. The reported lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual violence, or both, ranged between 15-71 percent, with reported prevalence of intimate partner violence lower in industrialised higher-income countries than developing nations. The WHO multi-country study confirmed the pervasiveness and high prevalence of intimate partner violence against women in all of the countries covered by the study, however the variability in prevalence across countries and geographical settings showed that it is not an inevitable experience for women.

Specific claims about the prevalence of violence against immigrant and refugee women must be treated with caution. Many large-scale prevalence studies (such as the *WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005), did not specifically recruit immigrant and refugee women, nor were they sub-grouped for analysis. This can obscure the patterning of problems of family violence across different groups and settings. Furthermore, tendencies for participants to under-report intimate partner violence is an almost universal limitation of prevalence studies

(Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Survey research in Australia frequently notes under-representation of women who do not speak English as a limitation of these studies and suggests that family violence experienced by immigrant and refugee women is likely to be under-reported (Bonar & Roberts, 2006; Lievore, 2003; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004).

The wide variation in prevalence estimates between countries is likely to arise because of genuine differences in the number of women exposed to family violence. However, in part, the variability in prevalence found between countries (and different studies within the same country) may also be attributed to differences in survey design and to the varying sophistication of the measurement tools used. Yount, Halim, Hynes, & Hillman (2011) examined 67 surveys about family violence in 48 countries to see if variation was attributed to questionnaire design, socioeconomic conditions or both. It was found that variation in questionnaire design had considerable predictive power and accounted for a non-trivial amount of variance in women’s responses affirming that they had experienced family violence. Subtle variations in the semantic meanings of interview questions (e.g. hitting or beating, versus hitting and beating) do have an effect on affirmative responses to questions about violence, and thus affect prevalence measures. The interviewer and mode of survey administration are also likely to influence prevalence estimates. In addition to contributing to variability in the prevalence of family violence reported within and between countries, measurement bias may also contribute to the under-estimation of family violence against immigrant and refugee women. Semantic differences in questionnaires may affect the responses of immigrant women within a national sample as they may not be fluent in the national language. In the large-scale prevalence studies from OECD countries that were reviewed, only studies conducted in the Netherlands (Prosman, Jansen, Lo Fo Wong, & Lagro-Janssen, 2011) and the US (Chang, Shen, & Takeushi, 2009) explicitly stated that different language versions of their questionnaire were available.

## The Australian migration context

In reviewing research on violence against immigrant and refugee women conducted in Australia, it is important to position research findings in relation to evolving contexts of immigration to Australia and changes in immigration and other policies. Similarly, assessment of the inclusion of immigrant and refugee women in responses to family violence, and of the appropriateness of these responses to women's needs, requires consideration of the overall response to family violence nationally and in different Australian jurisdictions. The section below will briefly summarise the Australian context in order to situate findings from the literature review.

### Immigration to Australia

Immigration has been a central and defining feature of Australian history, identity, population growth and productivity, at least since the initiation of mass migration in the post-Second World War period (Castles, Cope, Kalantzis, & Morrissey, 1987). Today, as a result of an active and diverse immigration program, Australia is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. Almost half of the Australian population (46%) has a direct link to the migration program, with 32 percent of the Australian population having been born overseas and 20 percent having at least one parent born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

Since the beginning of mass migration to Australia, immigration policy has dictated the demographic make-up of the immigrant and refugee population. In the immediate post-war period, and in the context of the White Australia Policy that was in force until 1973, immigration policy and practice favoured the immigration of Europeans (Vasta & Castles, 1996; Castles et al., 1987). In the later 1970s, larger numbers of immigrants and refugees from the Middle East and South East Asia were accepted into the program, followed by people from the African continent and South Asia in the late 1980-90s.

Today, Australia's cultural diversity and widespread social and political support for multiculturalism shows that community attitudes and immigration policy have changed since the days of the White Australia Policy. However, immigrants and refugees in Australia continue to experience contradictory attitudes and responses. Support for multiculturalism co-exists with racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in ways that have been described as "unsettled multiculturalism" (Wise, 2005). It has been argued that this is because multiculturalism continues to be bound with a legacy that denies recognition of Aboriginal people as original inhabitants, valorises whiteness and displays highly ambivalent attitudes to immigration (Henry-Waring, 2008).

With respect to services and welfare, the landmark 1978 Galbally Report, adopted by the Fraser government as a framework document, was based on the assumption that the state had a central role in providing for the welfare needs of immigrants (Rivzi, 2014). At this time a range of specialist welfare and ethno-specific services were established, the legacy of which remains today as an integral part of service delivery to immigrants. However, according to the liberal multicultural framework that has formed the basis of multiculturalism in Australia into the present day, self-sufficiency is simultaneously promoted, and there is an implicit expectation that while immigrants may need specialist services in the immediate settlement period, these needs will diminish over time (Rivzi, 2014).

Over the last 20 years the migration program has transformed from one that favours the permanent settlement of people and their extended families, to one based on the temporary migration of workers and students, arriving in large part as productive labour force focused individuals and couples. The subclass 457 visa for example, established in 1996 by the Howard government, enables the migration of specifically skilled people, who are sponsored by an employer, for a period of up to 4 years. As of March 2013, there were 105,600 primary 457 visa holders and 85,000 secondary visa holders (spouses and children) in Australia (Migration Council Australia, 2015).

International students also make up a significant number of temporary Australian residents and workers (Poljski, 2011). There is active and ongoing movement between visa categories, with students taking up further temporary working visas on graduation, and both workers and students making up a significant component of the permanent migration intake. In 2011-12, more than half of all permanent skilled and family visas were granted to previous 457 visa holders (Migration Council of Australia, 2015). Ultimately, many temporary immigrants become permanent Australian residents and citizens, but permanency is prefaced by a period of 4-10 years when immigrants are responsible for their own health care through compulsory health insurance, and when they do not have entitlements to use all government services. While permanent immigrants have an ambiguous relationship to welfare provision, temporary immigrants are expected to pay their own way. In addition, the prohibitive cost of sponsoring the migration of parents, siblings and other extended family has limited the capacity for many permanent immigrants to establish themselves in Australia in larger family groups.

## Summary of policy responses to family violence in Australia

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (hereafter the National Plan) provides the current framework of action by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reduce violence against women and their children. It aims to do this by facilitating governments to work together, increasing support for women and their children and bringing about innovative and targeted change. The vision of the National Plan is that “Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities” and its target is for “a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children by 2022” (Council of Australian Governments, 2011). With specific reference to immigrant and refugee women, the National Plan notes that violence against women crosses all races and cultures, and acknowledges that some women are at higher risk. It makes a further commitment to diversity, stating: “... policy solutions to address domestic violence and sexual assault must take into account the diverse backgrounds and needs of women and their children ... [and] be relevant to all Australians irrespective of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability, religious belief, faith, linguistic background or location” (Council of Australian Governments, 2011, p. 11).

The National Plan has been implemented under four separate action plans, with the Second Action Plan currently in operation. The First Action Plan (2010-2013) was themed *Building a Strong Foundation* and established the groundwork for the National Plan (COAG, 2012). The Second Action Plan (2013-2016) is themed *Moving Ahead* and aims to build on the gains of the first 3 years (Australia. Department of Social Services, 2014). The development of the Second Action Plan was supported by evaluation of the achievements of the First Action Plan and included consultations with the business and community services sectors (DSS, 2014). These consultations found that while there were some significant achievements in the First Action Plan there were also challenges and gaps relating to the ways that violence against culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women had been addressed. CALD women had not been identified as a key group for focus and many of the specific issues impacting CALD women had not been addressed. Opportunities were also identified, including the potential to expand the engagement of Muslim communities and to more accurately direct support to CALD women and children; to expand existing programs that supported both sponsors and partners utilising the Partner and Prospective Marriage Visa Program; and to address the findings of the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Family Violence, and the Senate Inquiry into Forced Marriage (DSS, 2014).

The consultations resulted in a number of proposed key features for the Second Action Plan, including a specific focus on three vulnerable groups: Indigenous women, women with disabilities and CALD women (including women on temporary visas and who are newly arrived). It was further proposed that the definition of violence against women be broadened to include specific forms of violence such as polygamy, refusal of divorce, and denial of learning English (DSS, 2014).

The Second Action Plan acknowledges the importance of specifically addressing CALD women’s experiences of violence. One of the five national priorities in the Second Action Plan is to “understand diverse experiences of violence”, which includes working with CALD communities to reduce violence and support women and their children (DSS, 2014). Strategies include supporting the work of key violence prevention agencies to engage CALD communities in primary prevention, developing resources for young people and ensuring that CALD women’s voices are heard. In addition, there will be further exploration of the ways that women may become more vulnerable due to their visa status (DSS, 2014).

### Policy responses to family violence against immigrant and refugee women

Nationally, policy interventions and reforms relating to family violence have reflected the ambivalent relationship that immigrants and refugees have to the state and their entitlement to welfare. Family violence policy and response systems have not been sufficiently inclusive of immigrant and refugee women’s needs and experiences of violence. Immigrant and refugee women have limited access to preventative and early intervention programs across Australia and as a result are over-represented in the crisis response system (Murdolo, 2014). While many policy and reform documents have contained statements about diversity, the lack of follow-through limits the extent to which policy has led to effective gains within immigrant and refugee communities. Furthermore, inadequate funding has been allocated for policy and program implementation that specifically addresses the needs of immigrant and refugee communities (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015).

This brief overview shows that issues of family violence among immigrant and refugee women have been largely overlooked and are situated in a complex and changing policy landscape.

# Methods

This section discusses the methods used in this paper for identifying, screening and synthesising relevant studies and reports, and the major theoretical frameworks that have guided the ways in which this varied material was organised and interpreted to identify key factors associated with immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family violence. Studies included in this paper were retrieved through a methodical search of the international peer-reviewed literature available through online databases. Key documents produced by government agencies, service providers and non-government organisations working in response to family violence were also identified through desktop searches of the grey literature. All documents drawn upon are recorded in *References*. The 34 references that were used to inform the introduction to this paper, as well as the theoretical frameworks and literature review methodology described in *Methods*, have not been included in the count of studies included in the thematic synthesis of the literature in this paper (as detailed in Figure 1).

## Search strategy to identify peer-reviewed studies

In April 2015, we conducted a planned, comprehensive search of the following databases to identify peer-reviewed literature relevant to the aims of this paper: Scopus, MEDLINE/PubMed, Embase, CINAHL and PsycINFO (see Figure 1 for schematic representation of this process). Our search was conducted using combinations of the following search terms, with Boolean operators:

- immigrant, refugee, migrant, culturally and linguistically diverse, diaspora, overseas born AND
- violence, abuse, domestic violence, coercion, partner homicide, intimate partner violence, bash, batter AND
- women, girl, female, gender.

Inclusion criteria for retrieval of publications identified during the search were:

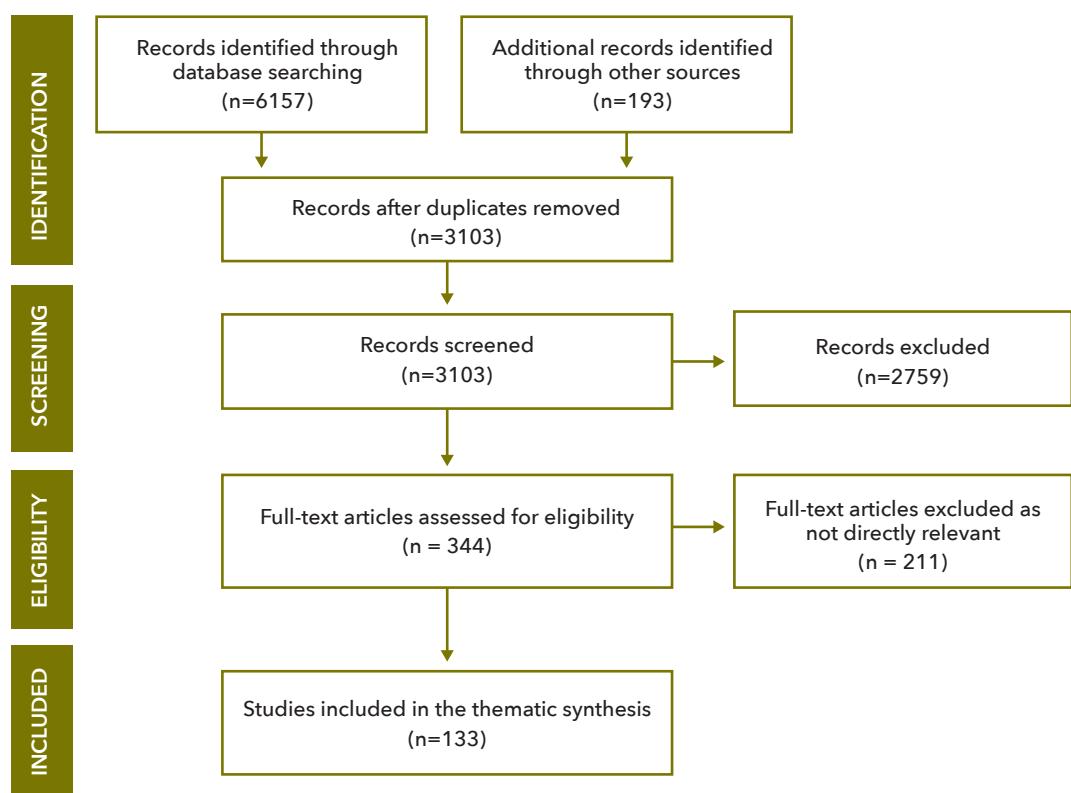
- Studies published in English between January 1990 and March 2015.
- Studies undertaken in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the European Union, United Kingdom and United States of America. A limited number of studies from other countries were identified during the search and deemed eligible for review and consideration for inclusion in the paper.
- Qualitative and quantitative studies were included, along with analyses of methodology and policy published in peer-reviewed journals.

Following the removal of duplicate titles, two members of the ASPIRE research team screened publications by title and abstract to exclude material that was not directly relevant to this paper:

- Studies that focused on specific issues involving immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, but where there was no discussion of family violence, were excluded. This included studies that, on screening, were identified as being about medical or health related conditions; drug and alcohol issues; religion or spirituality; labour and employment; farming; detention or incarceration; and studies that focused only on children, young people and/or men.
- Studies relating to violence in countries of origin, or that related to violence taking place during the migration process (e.g. in refugee camps and conflict settings) were excluded.

- Studies describing research with Latina and Hispanic women (including immigrant farm workers) in the US were also excluded from this paper because of the specific historical and socio-political contexts for cross-border migration in the US, which are quite different to the experience of other immigrant and refugee groups resettling in the US or in Australia.
- Studies describing research with African-American women in the US were excluded, except where authors had clearly distinguished that they were working with immigrant and refugee women from a cultural community who had resettled in the US from an African country or countries, as distinct from research with the wider population of African-American women.

**Figure 1. Flow chart for the peer-reviewed literature identification process**



## Identifying the grey literature

Our search of the grey literature aimed to identify documentation of relevant policy, intervention programs, evaluations and community-based research in relation to violence against immigrant and refugee women. The search was limited to relevant key national documents and materials produced in Victoria and Tasmania, as the ASPIRE project will be conducted in these two states. Relevant grey literature was purposively selected from documents obtained from:

- websites of organisations and peak bodies in the multicultural services and domestic violence sectors;
- ANROWS Resources Database; and
- Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse Research and Resources Database.

The grey literature search identified material potentially relevant to the aims of this literature review, which was further reviewed for inclusion in this paper. In the final analysis we drew upon a total of 28 documents from the grey literature in the drafting of this paper.

## Synthesising the literature

The sizeable body of literature for detailed review was divided evenly among the eight members of the ASPIRE research team, with each reviewer allocated a collection of publications that had been deductively categorised as being similar (for example, one reviewer read the collected prevalence papers, another reviewer read a collection of papers describing barriers to services). Each researcher appraised the quality of the publications they had been allocated for review, using a data extraction template to comment on the:

- appropriateness of the methods used for the study's purposes;
- validity, robustness and reliability of research methods/tools;
- adequacy of the description of research processes and findings;
- identification of and transparency about limitations of the study;
- content, depth and usefulness of the findings; and
- contribution to addressing gaps in the literature.

Peer-reviewed studies of the highest quality have been included in the summary table attached as Appendix A. Given the limited volume of relevant peer-reviewed literature from Australia, this table also includes some Australian studies that would otherwise have been excluded because of limitations that may affect the credibility, transferability, dependability, and validity of the research (Downe, Simpson, & Trafford, 2007). Flaws or limitations to studies included in Appendix A are noted in the table.

The overall body of literature was subject to thematic synthesis (Tong, Flemming, McInnes, Oliver, & Craig, 2012). The data extraction template used in appraisal of the quality of studies enabled researchers to describe the key themes identified in each publication. The team collectively synthesised the themes present across the literature, noting patterns and divergence in the material. Identification of themes was inductive and driven by the content of the material under review. Figure 2 presents a conceptual map of the organising themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001) identified in the literature, which informs the presentation of key issues that are discussed in this paper.

## Overview of the literature synthesised

It is evident that family violence against immigrant and refugee women is an expanding sub-field of research both in Australia and in other OECD countries. Of the 133 peer-reviewed articles included in the thematic synthesis, the vast majority had been published in the last 10 years. The largest proportion of this literature reported qualitative studies, though there were a sizeable number of papers reporting research using quantitative methods and a limited number of studies with mixed-methods designs. The peer-reviewed literature retrieved also included policy analyses and conceptual pieces, which were a valuable addition to the policy documentation available in the grey literature.

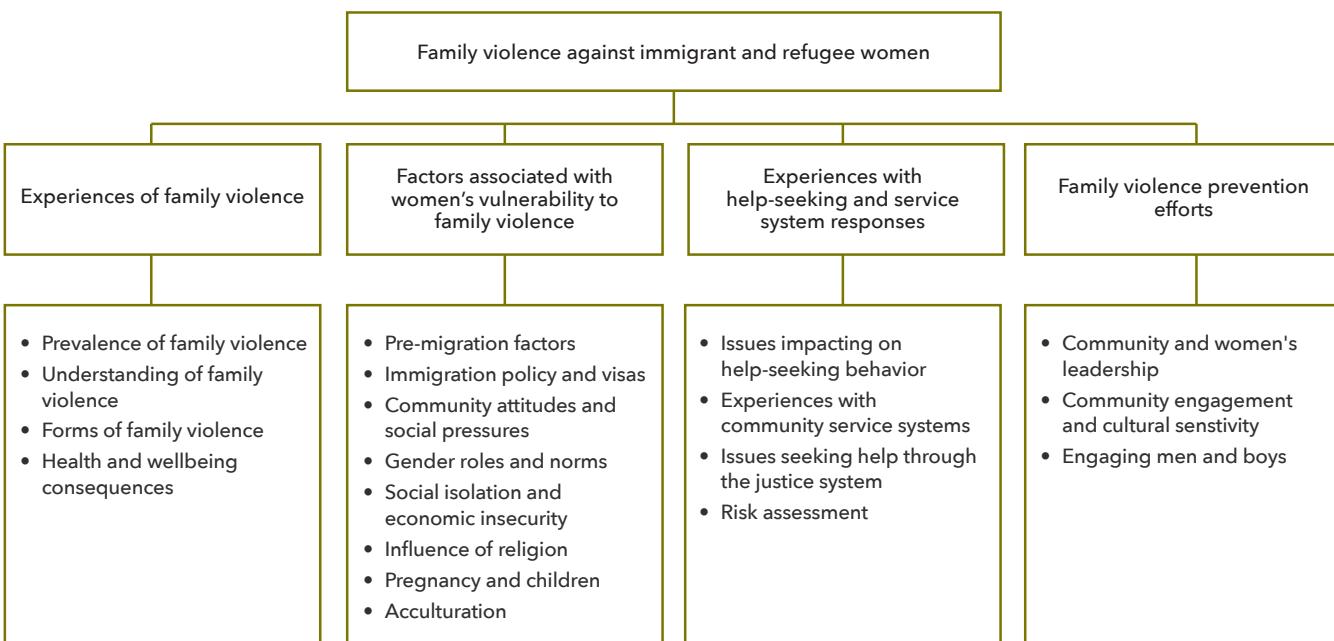
The peer-reviewed literature included in the synthesis described studies undertaken in a range of countries, including Australia, Canada, and a number of European countries including the UK. However the largest proportion of items is based on research undertaken in the US. It should be highlighted that, given the large proportion of the Australian population who are immigrants or refugees, the evidence available about family violence against immigrant and refugee women in local contexts is relatively limited.

The majority of studies reviewed were ethno-specific, providing valuable insight into the perspectives and experiences of immigrant women from within their specific communities and migration contexts. Particular communities that have been

the focus of inquiry in a range of countries of resettlement include South Asian (see for example Abraham 1998; Adam & Schewe, 2007), Chinese (Shibusawa & Yick, 2007; Wong, Tiwari, Fong, Humphreys, & Bullock, 2011), Vietnamese (Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, & Sullivan, 2005; Morash, 2008; Taft et al., 2008), Korean (Lee, 2007; Lee & Hadeed, 2009; Shim & Hwang, 2005), Horn of Africa (Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday, 2005; Nilsson, Brown, Russell, & Khamphakdy-Brown,, 2008; Pittaway Muli, 2009; Gregory, Bamberg, Dowd, & Marlow, 2013) and West African (Ting, 2010; Ogunsiji, Wilkes, Jackson, & Peters, 2011; Zannettino, 2012; Akinsulure-Smith, Chu, Keatley, & Rasmussen, 2013) communities. There was also a number of studies that focused on examining or identifying experiences of violence common to immigrant women from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds (see for example Erez & Ammar, 2003; Menjívar & Salcido, 2002; Rees & Pease, 2007; Sokoloff & Pearce, 2011). These studies are particularly useful insofar as they focus on immigration itself as a social location or positioned identity which shapes and structures women's experiences of violence.

It should be noted that although the available research spans a wide range of ethnic groups and communities, taken collectively it is not necessarily representative of women's experiences from the particular immigrant and refugee communities currently settled or settling in Australia, or immigrant and refugee

**Figure 2. Conceptual map of organising themes identified in the literature**



women in general. Nevertheless, synthesis of the literature does identify common themes and experiences relating to violence against immigrant and refugee women (as illustrated in Figure 2), as well as indicating gaps in current knowledge and the complexities that arise from making general statements about such a broad category.

#### Key limitations of the research

Limitations in the literature to be noted are:

- Some research was conducted only in English (or other European national languages), with no or limited options for participants to communicate in their preferred languages.
- Small sample sizes in some of the studies were used to make summative claims about immigrant and refugee women's experiences, but actually indicated significant limitations in the validity and reliability of the data.
- Data collection methods used in some studies engaged with service providers rather than community members themselves. While this may have been due to ethical and safety concerns for victims of violence, it may limit further understanding of women's experiences of violence as described directly by immigrant and refugee women themselves.
- Prevalence data were unreliable and often biased due to variations in measurement tools and study methodologies, including semantic differences in interview questions.
- The general underreporting of family violence may have impacted on research results, particularly because additional barriers for immigrant and refugee women (e.g. language and literacy barriers and social isolation) are likely to have limited statistical measurements and community members' capacity to participate in research.
- Western understandings of family violence, womanhood, and gender have the potential to influence findings and overlook manifestations of patriarchal social ordering in countries of origin, cultural contexts of family violence perpetration and nuanced theorising about family violence from marginalised women's perspectives.

#### Theoretical frameworks and concepts underpinning our synthesis

Key theoretical frameworks that are commonly used in the analysis of family violence are: intersectionality and social ecological models of health and human rights. These frameworks enhance understanding of women's risk and vulnerability in multiple contexts, and can inform development of effective strategies to address and prevent family violence. We provide a brief summary of these theoretical ideas and show how they are used to examine issues related to family violence in this paper.

#### Intersectionality

Informed by feminist theory and practice, ongoing efforts to understand varied phenomena of violence against women have focused on the significance of gender, and gender inequality, in patriarchal social structures. However it is evident that gender alone is insufficient for explaining women's vulnerability to experiencing violence across different socioeconomic, ethno-cultural and other circumstances. The concept of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression, first defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, is used to understand how immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family violence are situated at a confluence of circumstances linked to social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class, as well as policy and legal contexts, including immigration status and citizenship rights. Intersectional approaches enable us to consider how women's experiences of family violence will differ across varied configurations of circumstances (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005), as well as accounting for culturally specific contexts that render women vulnerable to experiencing family violence. Importantly, intersectional analysis allows for complex and nuanced insights into cultural differences and how these circumstances are shaped by social, economic and political processes, minimising the risk of essentialising some cultures as more or less violent than others.

Critically, in order to address immigrant women's "intersectional" disadvantage "there is a need to engage our general public culture and institutions that perpetuate social inequalities and power differences" (Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013, p. 805). Researchers have proposed an approach that considers the *interactions* between the various sets of circumstances - emigration, reception in the migration country, socioeconomic circumstances, racial hierarchies and cultural heritage - as they bear on individuals' experiences of migration and resettlement. There are a number of studies that have used intersectionality to gain insights into family violence experienced by immigrant and refugee women and avoid construing the "immigrant experience" as homogenous (Alaggia & Maiter, 2006). Studies drawing on the concept of intersectionality show how related dynamics of

displacement and marginalisation in immigrant communities are relevant for understanding structural and cultural contexts of family violence (Sokoloff, 2008).

### Social ecological frameworks

While intersectionality conceptualises the ways in which individuals' understanding of social worlds are comprised of multiple subject positions, social ecological models position individuals within radiating sets of social determinants that influence potential for individual agency. These models have been most notably developed to understand the social determinants of health and have been adapted to conceptualise social, economic and cultural determinants of family violence and violence against women. Lori Heise (1998) first proposed an ecological framework for family violence that characterised gender-based violence as a result of multiple interactions which occur across various spheres of social life. This social ecological model has been instrumental in developing a model for understanding violence prevention and translating the knowledge into practical strategies (for example, see Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt, & Zimmerman, 2014).

Researchers have used social ecological models to argue against explanations that imply family violence primarily arises because of a link between individual pathology and interpersonal relationship dynamics (Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013). For example, a social ecological model would support the analysis of marriage (and marital abuse) as a social institution (Lee, 2010) and the links between community characteristics and women's risks of experiencing violence (Kiss et al., 2012; VanderEnde, Yount, & Sibley, 2012). Other researchers have combined a social ecological model with theories of intersectionality to map the complex personal and social logics that are relevant for understanding the sociocultural patterning of family violence (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004). Han et al. (2010) use a social ecological model to explore the interrelated significance of cultural, immigration and marital/family factors associated with vulnerability for intimate partner violence amongst Korean Americans. Their description of the ecological framework describes "macrosystem" factors, such as patriarchy and Sam Jong Ji Do (the cultural belief that wives should be subservient to their husbands), "microsystem" factors, such as changes in gender and family roles following migration, and "exosystem" factors, which include lower job status, language barriers and low socioeconomic status (Han, Kim, & Tyson, 2010). While social ecological models have the conceptual capacity to identify complex interactions between the socio-structural contexts that frame and influence individual behaviours, it has also been noted that this can

present challenges for identifying priorities and targets for change. There is also a tendency for work based on a social ecological model to overlook intermediate pathways for facilitating and enhancing individual agency (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015).

### Human rights models

Over the past 4 decades, violence against women has been conceptualised as a human rights issue with rights-based approaches increasingly informing analyses of family violence. Feminist critiques of human rights discourse have highlighted the limitations of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1979), which originally focused on issues of political and economic discrimination. In the wake of this criticism, international legal mechanisms have been put in place, including the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (1993) and the *Beijing Platform for Action* (1995), to provide a benchmark from which international standards and norms can be established. Some feminists and human rights scholars have also argued that family violence amounts to torture under international standards, while others argue that systems of gender discrimination have created an environment that condones violence against women.

While the recognition of issues that are particularly relevant to women represents an important development, human rights frameworks continue to be problematic because they remain difficult to enforce. Most acts of violence against women are perpetrated by individuals independent of the state and should be subjected to the legal and other sanctions available to states; therefore international human rights instruments are often considered to be irrelevant and inaccessible for achieving practical effects in reducing violence against women. The notion of universal women's human rights also risks papering over the differences in the situations of women, and the multiple disadvantages experienced by some women.

In the following sections of the paper we present a synthesis of the key themes identified in the international literature on violence against immigrant and refugee women, underpinned primarily by the theoretical concept of intersectionality and a social ecological approach to understanding family violence.

# Women's experiences of family violence

In this section we discuss studies that examined prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women, including comparative studies that examined differences in the prevalence of family violence among women who are and are not immigrants or refugees. We also review research that explored the ways in which immigrant and refugee women understand family violence, and the forms of abuse and perpetrator tactics that women reported. Finally, we summarise the consequences of family violence for the health and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee women as described in the surveyed literature.

## Prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women

There were notably few studies retrieved that specifically examined the prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women, with very limited evidence available from Australia. The most recent large-scale prevalence study in Australia is the 2012 Personal Safety Survey, which showed that since the age of 15, one in six Australian women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner, and one in four Australian women reported experiencing emotional abuse by a current or former partner (ABS, 2012). While age, gender and frequency of experiences were taken into account in the 2012 data, no information is sourced on the ethnic identities of participants and no information is provided around the number of participants who were born overseas. Statistics on immigrant women are therefore not included in the study and no analysis can be made about the extent of violence against immigrant women in Australia.

Our search retrieved a limited number of studies documenting prevalence of intimate partner violence against immigrant women in Canada. These studies all used data from Canada's *General Social Survey* (GSS). The 1999 iteration of the GSS introduced indicators to measure incidences of physical assault, psychological aggression and sexual coercion. It also included one item on patriarchal dominance, asking if a woman's partner prevented her from knowing about or having access to family income. The 2009 version of the GSS expanded the items about controlling behaviour. A major limitation of the extremely valuable GSS dataset is that the original questionnaires are only available in English and French, potentially introducing selection bias against speakers of other languages. Population-based studies using these data have consistently found the prevalence of intimate partner violence reported by immigrant women to be lower than among Canadian-born women, although the difference in prevalence between the two groups has narrowed in later studies (Du Mont & Forte, 2012; Ahmad, Ali, & Stewart, 2005). This narrowing in the difference in prevalence between the two groups over the period 1999-2009 may be due to the expansion of questions on controlling behaviour included in the later survey.

A series of three Canadian studies reported analyses of data from the GSS where authors sub-grouped the sample of immigrant women into those from "developed" or "developing"

countries (Brownridge & Halli, 2002, 2003) and analysed relationships between reports of violence and length of stay in Canada (Hyman, Forte, Du Mont, Romans & Cohen, 2006). Brownridge and Halli (2003) found that women who had immigrated to Canada from developed countries had lower odds of experiencing intimate partner violence than Canadian-born women, and speculated that this was because immigrant women from developed countries were likely to have higher levels of education, be in long-term relationships and less concerned about being stigmatised for leaving a violent relationship. However, immigrant women from developing countries had a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence than either Canadian-born women or immigrant women from developed countries (Brownridge & Halli, 2002). Among these women, those who had a higher level of education than their partner, a relationship of short duration and children in the household were most likely to report intimate partner violence. Using the 1999 GSS dataset, Hyman et al. (2006) found the risk of intimate partner violence among recent arrivals to Canada was lower than among non-recent arrivals. This was consistent with other studies that found increased acculturation, as measured by length of time in a country of resettlement or generation post-migration, was linked to increased reporting of family violence (e.g. Chang et al., 2009; Yick, 2000). However, it should be noted that the findings of increased reporting of violence do not necessarily correlate with increased experience of violence.

Few of the large-scale studies conducted to establish the prevalence of family violence in European countries have been disaggregated by migration status or country of birth. In one analysis of exposure to violence, measured in a Swedish national general health questionnaire, Fernbrant, Essen, Ostergren, & Cantor-Graae, (2011) found that foreign-born women reported significantly higher rates of both perceived threat of violence and exposure to violence, even after adjustment for factors such as marital status and disposable income. Kimber et al. (2013) cited grey literature from Denmark that reported the prevalence of intimate partner violence to be similar or higher for “foreign-born” women than women born in Denmark, Ireland and the UK. None of these analyses, however, have been published in the peer-reviewed literature. In a smaller cross-sectional study of women attending 15 general practices in Rotterdam, Proisman et al. (2011) analysed responses to a comprehensive screening tool to measure intimate partner violence (the Composite Abuse Scale). The questionnaire was made available in Dutch, English, Turkish and Arabic. Analyses found that immigrant women were 1.5 times more likely to report having ever experienced intimate partner violence than women born in the Netherlands. A Norwegian study analysed differences between Norwegian-born and immigrant help-seeking women in relation to the

types, severity, frequency, duration, regularity and predictability of family violence and feelings of guilt and shame; partner's ethnicity; and children being exposed to violence (Vatnar & Bjørkly, 2010). Immigrant women had lower income, were less likely to use alcohol and were more likely to have an immigrant partner. No differences were found in the severity, frequency, guilt, shame or types of violence that were perpetrated (physical, psychological and sexual).

Data retrieved from the *National Latino and Asian American Study* (that recruited participants from a “variety of ethnic subgroups including Vietnamese, Filipino, Chinese, “other Asian” and “other Islander” respondents) in the US were analysed by Chang et al. (2009). Results suggest that prevalence of intimate partner violence among Asian-Americans was lower than in the general population. The authors note, however, that Asian-American women with traditional views on the acceptability of violence within a marriage may have been reluctant to report intimate partner violence. These findings contrast with those of Lee and Hadeed (2009) who suggest that community-based studies (with non-representative samples) in the US have found considerably higher rates of intimate partner violence against Asian-American women than for the general population, and that Asian-American women are over-represented among deaths due to intimate partner violence. Menjivar and Salcido (2002) reported no difference in the prevalence of family violence against immigrant women in the US compared with the wider population. A secondary analysis of data from a large population survey found that women presenting to services tended to be aged in their 20s-early 30s, and were referred by police. An exception to this pattern was found among Asian-Americans who tended to be older and referred by family and friends (Grossman & Lundy, 2007). Some studies reported prevalence figures derived from women's self-reporting in community-based studies. Lee and Hadeed (2009) provide a comprehensive summary of community-based studies that show prevalence of family violence among Asian-American women as high as 40 percent reporting abuse from current partners and up to 60 percent reporting having ever experienced family violence. In Bui and Morash's (2008) sample of Vietnamese immigrant women, 75 percent reported having experienced at least one kind of abuse (physical, sexual or verbal).

The prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women is likely to be mediated by the contexts of both country of origin and of resettlement, with estimates also affected by selection and measurement bias. The wide variability in findings reinforces the need to develop survey tools that are able to meaningfully capture the experiences of immigrant and refugee women, and research processes that are inclusive of diverse cultural and language groups.

## Women's understandings of family violence

Importantly, the literature noted some reluctance among immigrant and refugee women to conceptualise family violence in ways that emphasise aggression. Authors noted that some women are concerned about, and open to discussing issues of family violence, but prefer to use more neutral terms such as family conflict (Fisher 2009), or emphasise objectives of promoting family harmony (Abu-Ras, 2007). These issues may partly explain why family violence in immigrant and refugee communities is generally considered to be under-reported in prevalence studies, contributing to measurement errors as discussed in *Prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women* (Ghafournia 2011; Raj & Silverman 2002). One of the reasons posited for this under-reporting is that women from different immigrant and refugee communities may have varying understandings of concepts of family violence and the range of behaviours that are considered as such. For example, in research undertaken with West African women now living in Australia, Ogunsiji et al. (2011) reported participants' descriptions of family violence focused mainly on physical violence. Controlling behaviours and verbal or financial abuse were not recognised as family violence, and sexual violence was not mentioned at all. Zannettino (2012) found that Liberian refugees living in Adelaide were unfamiliar with the concept of rape in marriage or the notion that sexual abuse by a partner could be considered family violence. This resonates with Canadian research undertaken by Ahmad et al. (2009) with South Asian immigrant women, which found that differences and discrepancies in knowledge about family violence undermined women's reporting and help-seeking.

However, the review of the substantial body of literature collated for this paper suggests that immigrant and refugee women have broad and nuanced understandings of family violence. This is particularly evident in data generated by qualitative studies that afforded women the opportunity to describe their understandings of family violence in their own words (and often their own languages). In a qualitative study involving immigrant and refugee women from diverse immigrant and refugee communities now living in Melbourne, women described physical violence, emotional abuse, controlling behavior, financial abuse and imposed social isolation as forms of family violence (Rees & Pease, 2007). Economic abuse and controlling behaviour (such as refusing to allow women to take a job) were reported as family violence by Thai immigrant women living in Brisbane (Vatcharavongyan, Hepworth, Lim, & Marley, 2014). Research conducted in other countries also noted that participants' definitions of what constitutes family violence may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse, isolation and intimidation (e.g. Chaudhuri, Morash, & Yingling, 2014; Lee

et al., 2014; Sokoloff & Pearce, 2011; Barata, McNally, Sales, & Stewart, 2005; Crandall, Senturia, Sullivan, & Shiu-Thornton, 2005; Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, Shiu-Thornton, & Giday 2005; Abraham, 1998).

Divergent accounts of immigrant and refugee women's understanding of violence could be attributed to the diverse range of immigrant and refugee communities from which participants were recruited. They could also be connected to differences in the ways that participants were recruited into research projects, for instance, from the general population or from samples of women who were engaged with family violence support services. Sullivan et al. (2005) reflected that because nearly all the Ethiopian immigrant women in their study were accessing family violence services, their views and understanding of family violence may differ significantly from Ethiopian immigrant women who had not accessed such services. Similarly, in studies where participants were recruited either wholly or partially through family violence services (Chaudhuri et al., 2014; Sokoloff & Pearce, 2011; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009; Crandall et al., 2005; Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Ahmad et al., 2004; Erez & Ammar, 2003), women's descriptions of family violence did not necessarily represent the views of women in their wider communities. Consequently, some authors explored differences between women's awareness in relation to their own experiences of violence and their perceptions of their communities' understanding of family violence.

In addition to examining what immigrant and refugee women (particularly women who have experienced violence) understand to be family violence, researchers have explored attitudes and concepts of family violence in a range of immigrant and refugee communities. In her work with refugees from the Horn of Africa and West Africa now living in Perth, Fisher (2013) found that community members distinguished between family violence and "discipline", despite the latter often involving physical assault. Discipline was not seen as family violence and was even viewed as men's duty towards children and in some cases, their wives as well. Similar views were reported in other studies (Zannettino, 2012). Researchers have also found that within resettled immigrant and refugee communities there may not be shared understanding of what constitutes family violence (Crandall et al., 2005; Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005; Dasgupta, 2000). While some respondents do not see men's violent behaviour as problematic, others contradict perceptions that immigrant and refugee communities have permissive attitudes to violence, with women in particular disagreeing with the use of violence (Rianon & Shelton, 2003). The heterogeneity of views about what family violence is, and whether behaviours defined as

family violence are acceptable, is unsurprising given the diverse range of immigrant and refugee communities involved in the research included in this paper. In addition, the literature suggests that a range of factors impact on community members' beliefs and understandings about family violence, including gender, age, generation post migration, level of education, acculturation, and acceptance of patriarchal beliefs (Lee et al., 2014; Akinsulure-Smith, Chu, Keatley, & Rasmussen, 2013; Hyman et al., 2011; Shibusawa & Yick, 2007; Barata et al., 2005; Latta & Goodman, 2005; Ahmad et al., 2004). As noted by Yick and Oomen-Early (2008) in their content analysis of literature on domestic violence and "Asian-Americans", it is unhelpful and inaccurate to make summative claims about the views of particular immigrant and refugee communities without considering the nuance and complexity arising from these varying influences.

Research around the impact of acculturation also generated contradictory findings. While some studies reported associations between acculturation and reduced likelihood of condoning or rationalising family violence (Shibusawa & Yick, 2007; Barata et al., 2005), others found that the prevalence of family violence increased among immigrant and refugee women who had spent longer periods of time in countries of resettlement, and also among second generation women. It is unclear if this higher prevalence is due to an increased proportion of women actually experiencing violence or an increased proportion of women reporting violence (Chang et al., 2009; Hyman et al., 2006; Yick, 2000). It is important to distinguish between attitudes and behaviours that may be contradictory and the significance of acculturation remains unclear. Increased capacities to access available services and changing knowledge and attitudes arising from acculturation may encourage women to report family violence, contributing to findings of increasing prevalence with longer periods in countries of resettlement. However acculturation may also coincide with intensifying strains within households that give rise to other behaviours known to be associated with family violence (such as alcohol use), reduced family support networks and the loss of other protective mechanisms, and cumulative stressors in relationships between spouses as they negotiate changed expectations of gender roles (Hyman et al., 2006).

## Forms of family violence used against immigrant and refugee women

Immigrant and refugee women reported similar forms of family violence to women from non-immigrant backgrounds. In describing their experiences, immigrant and refugee women reported: physical abuse, including violence of such severity that hospitalisation was required; being beaten with objects; choking; sexual violence and controlling behaviour in relation to reproduction; emotional abuse and humiliation; intimidation; financial abuse; partners withholding information and enforced social isolation (e.g. Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013; Liles et al., 2012; Erez et al., 2009; Bui & Morash, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2005; Abraham, 1998). One study reported on the specific places where immigrant and refugee women experience family violence. In addition to violence occurring in all parts of their homes, and in particular the bedroom and kitchen, violence was perpetrated in public areas including medical clinics, cars and various social service offices. Women also reported violence occurring in front of family, children, neighbours and other family members (Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2009).

In addition to these forms of abuse, immigrant and refugee women reported specific forms of family violence that are not (or are rarely) reported in research with non-immigrant women. Although most reported abuse was perpetrated by partners, descriptions of violence also included incidents involving members of extended families, including parents-in-law and partners' siblings (Salter, 2014).

Immigrant and refugee women reported forms of family violence, such as shaming and humiliation, inflicted by multiple perpetrators (similar forms of abuse were also reported by women associated with collectives such as gangs, see Salter, 2014; Cooper, Anaf, & Bowden 2008). Women from immigrant and refugee communities where females are traditionally held responsible for upholding family "honour" and unity were more likely to report these kinds of multi-perpetrator family violence (Salter, 2014; Chesler, 2009; Gill, 2008; Dasgupta & Jain, 2007). Traditional constructions of marriage and gender roles can be reinforced by extended families and communities through norms of collectivism and familism, and research in relation to violence perpetrated by in-laws often focused on communities that conventionally adhere to joint family systems based on patrialism and familism, such as South Asian communities (Chaudhuri et al., 2014; Raj, Livramento, Santana, Gupta, & Silverman, 2006; Abraham, 1998). However, it is important to note that neither residing in a collective family system nor having an arranged marriage is related to higher rates of family violence among South Asian women (Raj et al., 2006; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Multi-perpetrator violence has also been documented

in studies with Russian-speaking, Vietnamese and Korean immigrants to the US (Crandall et al., 2005; Shiu-Thornton et al., 2005; Lee, 2000).

Other specific forms of family violence reported by women from immigrant and refugee communities included forced marriage (Colucci & Montesinos, 2013; Ayyub, 2000) and female genital mutilation or cutting (Gele, Kumar, Hjelde, & Sundby, 2012; Morison, Dirir, Elmi, Warsame, & Dirir, 2004). In relation to the latter, it should be noted that while some women who have experienced genital cutting would describe it as a form of family violence many others would not. There is no evidence to suggest that female genital cutting is commonly practiced within Australia (Moeed & Grover, 2012), with recent research suggesting declining support for, and relevance of, cutting practices in immigrant and refugee communities who have resettled in Victoria (Vaughan et al., 2014a; Vaughan et al., 2014b). In Australia, discussions of severe multi-perpetrator violence such as the phenomena of “honour killings” have often been framed within an Islamophobic discourse (Ho, 2007), which has complicated efforts to understand the consequences of masculine notions of honour and rigid gender norms across a range of immigrant and refugee communities, and indeed in wider Australian culture (Salter, 2014; Ho, 2007).

The review of the research found that immigrant and refugee women are particularly vulnerable to a form of family violence that relates to their uncertain citizenship in countries of resettlement, involving a perpetrator’s use of migration and visa status to wield control. In Australia, women from a range of immigrant and refugee communities reported that men use their partners’ dependent visa status as a means of manipulation and intimidation by invoking fear of deportation of the woman and/or her children (e.g. Ogunsiji et al., 2011; Pittaway, Muli & Shtier, 2009). Women also reported being denied access to information about the law by their partners, and not knowing their rights in relation to family violence. This included being unaware of special provisions in Australian immigration law regarding women experiencing family violence (Ghafournia, 2011). Researchers elsewhere also found that perpetrators of violence against immigrant and refugee women use women’s visa status and, in the case of sponsorship, visa dependence, as a way of controlling women’s behaviour (Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013; Erez, Adelman, & Gregory, 2009; Crandall et al., 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Erez, 2000; Abraham, 1998). The overarching impact of immigration policy on the vulnerability of women who are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers will be discussed in more detail in *Immigration policy*.

## Health and wellbeing consequences of family violence

It has been extensively documented that family violence has a range of negative impacts on the health of women and their children (Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011). Women who are subject to family violence experience:

- physical injuries;
- sexual and reproductive health problems including sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy, risk of miscarriage, premature delivery and low birth-weight babies;
- depression and other mental health problems such as excessive use of alcohol and suicidality; and
- heightened risk of murder by their intimate partners (WHO, 2013; Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts, & Garcia-Moreno, 2008; Hegarty, Gunn, Chondros, & Small, 2004).

A number of researchers have documented the health consequences of family violence for immigrant and refugee women. Researchers in the US found associations between family violence against immigrant and refugee women and poor physical health (Stockman, Hayashi, & Campbell, 2015; Hurwitz, Gupta, Liu, Silverman, & Raj, 2006); gynaecological symptoms (Raj, Liu, McCleary-Sills, & Silverman, 2005); negative mental health outcomes including depression (Stockman et al., 2015; Hicks, 2006; Hurwitz et al., 2006); posttraumatic stress disorder (Yoshihama & Horrocks, 2002); and suicidal ideation (Hurwitz et al., 2006). Frye et al. (2008) examined the medical reports of 1861 “femicide” (female homicide) victims over a 10 year period in 59 New York City neighbourhoods; after controlling for a range of social and economic neighbourhood factors, they found the strongest predictors for being a victim of femicide perpetrated by an intimate partner were being foreign-born and younger (Frye et al., 2008).

Associations between family violence and depression (Miszkurka, Zunzunegui, & Goulet, 2012; Proisman et al., 2011), and family violence and suicidality (Patel & Gaw, 1996; Hicks & Bhugra, 2003; Colucci & Montesinos, 2013) have been documented among immigrant and refugee women in a range of other settings including Australia. Women from African communities in Western Australia reported a range of health and wellbeing impacts of family violence, including decreasing mental health, and an increasing and persistent fear that manifested itself in an increased heart rate (Fisher, 2009). Women also strongly noted the detrimental impacts on children’s mental health and behaviour.

The health consequences of family violence are important considerations for all services meeting the needs of women.

These consequences may be heightened for immigrant and refugee women in light of evidence that suggests that these women are likely to endure family violence for longer periods of time before seeking help. This potentially increases the likelihood of chronic physical sequelae and the development of severe mental disorders including suicidality (Hicks & Bhugra, 2003; Colucci & Montesinos, 2013). Currently, international guidelines to inform the health sector response to family violence do not discuss the particular experiences of immigrant and refugee women, or provide guidance to health service providers seeking to address the specific needs of immigrant and refugee women experiencing family violence (WHO, 2013).

## Summary of key issues

*Women's experience of family violence* offers critical insights into what is known about the prevalence and experiences of family violence for immigrant and refugee women. Evidence about prevalence of family violence against immigrant and refugee women is inconclusive, with the available large-scale, population-based data sets rarely enabling analysis of the specific experiences of immigrant and refugee women as compared to other women in countries of resettlement. It is not possible to quantify whether and to what degree there are differences in the prevalence of violence experienced by these different groups of women, largely because immigrant and refugee women are so poorly served by current survey research. What evidence there is suggests that women who have immigrated from developing countries may be at higher risk and that this is linked to family and community circumstances.

Immigrant and refugee women report similar forms of family violence to women from non-immigrant backgrounds. However immigrant and refugee women are more likely than other women to experience multi-perpetrator family violence, involving extended families and community members, and to experience violence associated with their migration status. Women's uncertain visa status, lack of access to information about their rights and social isolation can be used by perpetrators to threaten and control women and their children.

Immigrant and refugee women have diverse and nuanced views of what constitutes family violence, though researchers have found variability among and within groups as to how some immigrant and refugee women recognise and define family violence with some women taking a narrower view than is found in the policy and practice arena. Factors influencing community members' beliefs and understandings about family violence, include gender, age, generation, post migration, level of education, acculturation, and acceptance of patriarchal beliefs.

The health and wellbeing consequences for women are largely similar to those experienced by other women who are victims of family violence, but are likely exacerbated because immigrant and refugee women endure violence for longer periods of time before being able to access support and prevention services. Factors contributing to this will be explored in the following section.

# Factors associated with women's vulnerability to family violence

Immigrant women have been identified as being vulnerable to family violence for a range of complex and frequently overlapping reasons. Many studies explore the sociocultural significance of marriage and gender roles that may explain why women are inclined to endure family violence for long periods of time and be reluctant to seek help. Paternalism has been identified as an issue in cultures where men consider themselves superior to women and are granted special privileges, while women are expected to be silent and subservient. Traditional gender roles also influence marital roles and responsibilities with implications for how women respond to family violence. Sociocultural factors can assign women responsibility for ensuring marital harmony and family unity in ways that deter women from seeking help for family violence. Immigrant and refugee women's situations are also located within families experiencing intensifying stressors associated with resettlement, precarious household incomes and experiences of downward mobility following immigration. Similar themes were identified across studies conducted with different cultural groups, with some variations in emphasis. Key issues discussed in this section are the significance of pre-migration factors, community attitudes towards and expectations of women, gender roles, uncertainties in regard to visa status, and contexts of immigration policies. The uncertainties that are generated by restrictions enforced through immigration policies are critical for understanding why immigrant women have particularly limited options to escape family violence. Other issues noted in the literature as heightening immigrant women's vulnerability to family violence are also considered, including social isolation and economic insecurity, the influence of religious institutions, pregnancy, children and acculturation.

## Pre-migration factors

Pre-migration factors are related to experiences in home countries. This could include experiences of political violence and trauma that have ongoing personal consequences, histories of family violence pre-dating immigration experiences and the effects of childhood experiences of violence.

Although research related to perpetrators is not the focus of this paper, participants in a number of studies perceived pre-migration trauma as a factor contributing to the perpetration of family violence (Guruge, Khanlou, & Gastaldo, 2010; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). During research with refugees from diverse backgrounds who had resettled in Australia, Rees and Pease (2007) identified an association between men experiencing trauma in their country of origin and later perpetration of family violence. Trauma included imprisonment, torture and involvement in conflict as a combatant and, for men, this was associated with negative mental health impacts and violent behaviours. These findings were supported by a larger study undertaken in Boston that found that men who had been exposed to political violence before migration were significantly more likely to report having perpetrated family violence in the past 12 months (Gupta et al., 2009). James (2010) also noted the impact of armed conflict on men's self-understanding of gender roles, including experiences of shame and distress if they were unable to protect their wives and children (see also Pittaway et al., 2009; Rees, 2004). However, Rees and Pease (2007) noted that women in war and conflict situations are also exposed to extreme violence and do not go on to become aggressors in their families, suggesting that trauma prior to migration intersects with patriarchal gender norms and acceptance of using violence in response to anxieties or to enforce discipline in families. Similarly, a recent multi-country study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific, which included research conducted in post-conflict sites, suggested that the connection between the impact of armed conflict and the perpetration of family violence is far from clear (Fulu et al., 2013). A significant challenge in gaining a clearer understanding of potential associations is disentangling the circumstances of pre-migration trauma, the migration and settlement experience and attitudes and beliefs about gender roles and acceptable behaviours in families.

Some studies focused on associations between previous exposure to family violence and the risk of perpetrating or experiencing family violence. For example, a quantitative study with Korean women who had migrated to the US after the age of 16, found that experience of physical assault as a child was a risk factor for experiencing family violence (including physical assault, psychological aggression and injury caused by a partner) as an adult (Lee, 2007). Another study found that immigrant women often experienced intimate partner violence prior to migration and that this then worsened following migration (Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). These results should be considered with caution due to the limited scope of these studies, and recognising that not all persons who are exposed to family violence necessarily go on to replicate or accept abusive behaviours in their adult lives.

Some studies noted that immigrants settling into Western societies can encounter situations that subsequently heighten tensions in families. In moving to Western societies, marriages are transplanted into new social and cultural norms that may be significantly different from the country of origin, making it difficult to settle into the new social fabric and possibly exacerbating risks of family violence as additional strains are placed on marriages and families (Ben-Porat, 2010).

## Immigration policy

Review of the collated research evidence highlights how immigration policy has an overarching impact on women's experiences of violence by exacerbating risks and creating barriers for seeking help. The literature suggests two key ways in which immigration policy impacts on immigrant and refugee women:

- through restrictive evidentiary requirements when making applications for residency rights via family violence exemptions; and
- through bureaucratic barriers to accessing economic security via restrictions on employment and/or limiting or preventing access to public benefits.

Critically, immigration policy establishes women's dependency on the family for economic security and residency rights, and often fails to acknowledge the complexity in situations where immigrant women must seek assistance for family violence when the perpetrator is a visa sponsor and/or the primary source of family income. These issues were referenced in many studies, which noted that immigration policies create insurmountable barriers to seeking help for many immigrant and refugee women, or prolong the amount of time women and their children stay with perpetrators (Bhuyan, 2012; Thronson, 2012; Ghafournia, 2011; Anitha, 2010; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 2010; Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010; Alaggia, Regehr, & Rishchynski, 2009; Anitha, 2008; Shim & Hwang, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Erez, 2002; Sheppard, 2000).

The only peer-reviewed paper that specifically addressed immigration policy and family violence in Australia was a policy analysis conducted by Ghafournia (2011), which discussed the history, changes and impacts of the Family Violence Provisions implemented in the 1994 *Australian Migration Regulations* of the *Migration Act* (1954). Comparing the Australian policy context to the US and the UK, the analysis found the Australian Family Violence Provision to be innovative because: 1) it allows immigrant victims of family violence to leave an abusive relationship during the 2-year temporary status waiting period and apply for permanent residency; 2) it is inclusive of a range of family-like relationships (not just spousal) between the sponsor and the victim; and 3) it does not rely solely on public record evidence of family violence (although it is preferred) and allows for statutory declarations from the victim and at least two "competent persons" (professionals such as a doctor, social worker, psychologist, or manager of a women's refuge or family violence service) to be submitted as evidence (Ghafournia, 2011). While these features help facilitate immigrant women accessing assistance under the

Family Violence Provision, Ghafournia (2011) noted that some outstanding issues in Australia's immigration policy should be addressed. These include:

- High numbers of immigrant women who, particularly when English is not their first language, continue to lack easy access to support services due to language barriers.
- A general lack of knowledge among women relating to their rights, limited knowledge of available services and a lack of culturally appropriate services.
- Perpetrators restricting women's abilities to participate in the new country and a lack of support for women in their own communities.
- Significant financial barriers to leaving a violent relationship for women, whose situations are affected by whether or not they have children, access to special benefits or rights to employment under their visa conditions.
- Vulnerability of women to endure protracted social isolation which may cause impediments to obtaining evidence of violence for state support.
- Xenophobic and racist attitudes held by government and social service providers who assume that immigrant women are misusing the Family Violence Provision to gain permanent residence, despite the fact that reviews of the provision by the Department of Immigration found that the majority of applicants were in genuine need of assistance.
- The questionable role of Centrelink as an "independent assessor" for claims under Family Violence Provisions where they are also a Commonwealth agency that defers to the Immigration Department for final decision-making.
- The lack of monitoring of male perpetrators who serially sponsor immigrant women and subject them to abuse.
- The precarious position of women on Prospective Marriage Visas who are able to access the Family Violence Provisions after they marry (and before they change their visa status) but are excluded from these provisions in the period leading up to their marriages.

Community-based research conducted by inTouch (2010) also provides some qualitative evidence about the impacts of immigration policy on immigrant women experiencing family violence. The report showed that women were finding visa dependency to be one of the main barriers to accessing legal and justice support for family violence. It also found that while women were waiting for permanent residency approvals they were restricted from accessing public housing

and faced limited income assistance and rights to work. This put resource constraints on social services and prolonged the amount of time women experiencing crisis situations needed to stay in refuge accommodation.

Outside Australia, the majority of the literature found relating to immigration policy was qualitative research and policy analyses from the US, the UK and Canada. A number of studies focused on the operation of rules that provide immigrants with the opportunity to be exempt from deportation and gain residency rights if they are victims of family violence, particularly where the abuser is their sponsor. A participatory action research project conducted in Toronto, Canada described how immigration policy set up significant barriers that were perceived by immigrant women and service providers to be entrapment and collusion by the state with abuse (Alaggia et al., 2009). This study found that immigration policy barriers were particularly associated with unrealistic application criteria for residency rights, causing women to persist with abusive relationships and accrue negative health and other effects for themselves and their children (Alaggia et al., 2009). This research also noted that despite changes to Canadian immigration policy that allowed victims of family violence to exit sponsorship arrangements with abusive partners, immigrant women making applications for residency rights were subject to decisions made at the discretion of individual immigration officers which could not be appealed (Alaggia et al., 2009). In addition to this, applicants were required to pay a large fee that could not be recovered even if their application was refused, increasing the likelihood that women will stay in violent relationships.

Although an analysis of US immigration policy by Kelly (1998) took place before many important and positive changes to the *Violence Against Woman Act (1994)*, it revealed how restricted by immigration policy immigrant women can be when seeking help for family violence, and how directly policy can impact on their safety and wellbeing. In particular, Kelly found that in cases of family violence the state's reliance on public record evidence (such as court documents, medical reports, police reports) in immigrant women's applications for residency rights did not take into account how fear of deportation, fear of losing children, and perpetrators' threats and controlling behaviors effectively prevented women from using service systems that would require such explicit evidence.

Since 2000, trafficked and undocumented immigrant victims of family violence in the US have been able to seek assistance without as much reliance on public record evidence and without fear of deportation (Modi, Palmer,

& Armstrong, 2014), although they must cooperate with law enforcement where a crime has been committed (Erez & Hartley, 2003). Nevertheless, even after these changes, a policy analysis by Bhuyan (2008) found that the requirements to prove eligibility for residency relief still constructed strict guidelines by which immigrant women must demonstrate themselves to be “desirable immigrants” who have performed well as “good victims” and are able to demonstrate “good faith” in the hetero-patriarchal marriage which afforded them the opportunity to come to the US in the first place (pp. 161-165). Bhuyan also noted that immigrant women applying for a battered spouse waiver were forced to engage a host of advocates and lawyers to submit sufficient evidence.

In the UK, Anitha (2008) conducted a participatory research project in regional England with 30 immigrant women from South Asian backgrounds, who had accessed the Domestic Violence Rule and held temporary visas restricting their access to public benefits (in the UK this is commonly termed as “no recourse to public funds”). The participants reported that evidentiary requirements under the Domestic Violence Rule required successful contact with service providers to record disclosures of abuse. This requirement failed to comprehend the practical barriers immigrant women experienced in contacting such services, including language barriers, concerns about economic and housing security and threats made by perpetrators. Even when women were able to access services for assistance they could encounter variable and inconsistent responses and inadequate documentation that undermined their applications for residency rights (Anitha, 2008).

## Visa status

Many studies reported that when immigrant or refugee women held a temporary or provisional visa this promoted circumstances in they were legally, economically and socially dependent on abusive partners. Bonar and Roberts (2006) noted that dependent visa status often meant immigrant or refugee women and their children were unable to access refuge accommodation, income support, and/or faced threats of deportation. In some cases this meant women returned to violent partners.

Threats related to migration status and the conditions of visas, as well as misinformation about immigration policy, were frequently cited as a form of control and intimidation used by perpetrators (Erez & Globokar, 2009; Morash, Bui, Yan, & Holtfreter, 2007; Raj & Silverman, 2002). Threats of deportation and the removal of children in relation to visa status increased women’s vulnerability to other forms of violence and made women both less likely to seek help and less able to escape violence (Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Abraham, 1998). In a study of family violence involving immigrant women from 35 different countries, 75 percent reported that the perpetrators had at some point used their immigration status against them (Erez & Ammar, 2003). These threats deterred women from seeking assistance through fear of adverse immigration-related consequences for themselves and their children, in addition to fear of retaliatory violence from the perpetrator (Ghafournia, 2011; Anitha, 2008; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Martin & Mosher, 1995).

In a study by Erez et al. (2009), specific forms of intimidation relating to immigration included: threatening to call officials and report immigration status; threatening to have women deported; withdrawing women’s petition to immigrate or interfering with the naturalisation process; threatening to take away the children or deny women their custodial rights; and more generally using women’s immigration status to humiliate or degrade them. Many of the issues reported by women were exacerbated by their lack of legal knowledge and fear related to their legal rights and immigration processes (Erez et al., 2009). Latta and Goodman (2005) found that among their Haitian participants, women were not only afraid of their own deportation, but also of the real or imagined repercussions of deportation of their abuser - from him, his family and the wider community.

Similar issues have been noted in Australian studies. Ogunsiji et al. (2011) reported that many of the women in their study came to Australia from West Africa as spouses, with their husbands holding the position of primary visa

applicant. Refugee and immigrant women described their dependent visa status as a tool that was used by husbands to threaten and intimidate them, as a factor increasing their vulnerability to violence and impacting on their willingness to seek help (Ogunsiji et al., 2011; Pittaway et al., 2009). Rees and Pease (2006) found that women held concerns about immigration related consequences for help-seeking, particularly during the 2-year period when they held temporary visa status. These fears were also noted in a study by inTouch (2010), in which some of the women interviewed perceived public services (legal services, police, government departments) as a singular authority with the power to deport if the family relationship broke down.

In addition to exploring the impact of visa status, one mixed methods study examined the migration process itself as a risk factor for experiencing family violence (Erez & Globokar, 2009). This study was conducted with women who had sought help for family violence after migration from various countries to the US, and found that among those who migrated with a spouse, violence had often begun or increased following migration (Erez & Globokar, 2009).

Studies also found that women encountered difficulties because of the ways in which the spousal visa system was open to manipulation by abusive men. Participants in one study described how some men used spousal visas as means to divorce their "old" wives and bring young women over to the US to be treated "as maids" (Sullivan et al., 2005, p. 930). As many researchers observed, even if the law in a host country is not intentionally gender biased, immigration laws which create dependency on the basis of marriage status make immigrant women vulnerable to family violence and to abusive power dynamics (Erez et al., 2009; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Erez, 2000). It was also reported that men used spousal visas to bring women into the country to marry them (these women being widely referred to as "mail-order brides"). A US study noted that these women could find themselves married to men who had histories of multiple international marriages and perpetrating family abuse (Crandall et al., 2005).

## Community attitudes and social pressures

Many studies discussed the consequences of immigrant and refugee women experiencing intense community pressure to keep families together, and cultural prescriptions that they not disclose or expose violence or seek any outside assistance. These pressures related to patriarchal beliefs and cultural norms about gendered roles in family life, expectations in marriage, religious customs forbidding separation or divorce, the normalisation of violence and lack of community sanctions for its use, lack of sympathy towards victims and victim-blaming attitudes, concerns about cultural stigmatisation and fears of alienation and ostracism by communities. Traditional constructions of marriage and gender roles tended to be reinforced by extended families and communities through norms of collectivism and familism that present further barriers to women in seeking help for family violence (Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009). Zannettino (2012) also notes that in refugee communities, these culturally specific issues within communities are intensified by trauma and contexts of war and displacement (p. 824).

Families and communities are often the first port of call for women to disclose family violence but they may also encourage women to tolerate abuse for the sake of promoting confidentiality and keeping families intact. Immigrant social support systems within women's own cultural group may not be consistently supportive or offer the kind of support desired. For example, if members of women's support networks hold traditional values, support may be offered for dysfunctional behaviour, and women seeking help may be isolated (Liles et al., 2012). At the same time, women are likely to be reluctant to alienate themselves from family and community networks. These networks are often critical for women and their children, and they may be reduced because extended families are scattered around the globe. Community solidarity is important for getting by as immigrants but can override what is in the best interests of individuals in abusive and violent relationships (Bui & Morash, 2007; Bui, 2003).

Some studies noted that the valorisation of marriage, which tends to make women responsible for maintaining marriage and being shamed if marriages break down, heightened women's vulnerability to family violence (Ogunsiji et al., 2011; Abu-Ras, 2007). Women may be persuaded that they are responsible for making their husbands angry and that they must work harder to avoid such situations (Kulwicki et al., 2010; Ahmad et al., 2009). Women who have subsequently left violent marriages have reported

that many people in their informal community networks urged them to persist in these marriages to avoid personal and community shame (Bui & Morash, 2007; Bui, 2003). Women were encouraged to consider what they could do to reduce provoking the bad temper and anger of husbands, and were sometimes discouraged from seeking help from outside their communities. In these circumstances, women were reluctant to go against community advice for fear of being left in highly isolated situations (Bui & Morash, 2007; Bui, 2003). In a study conducted among Arabic-American women who had experienced family violence participants reported that they experienced intense pressure in their communities to keep their marriages and families intact (Kulwicki et al., 2010). Akinsulure-Smith et al. (2013) found instances when the extended family in the home country used shame tactics to pressure the woman to remain in abusive situations. They also found elders and religious leaders tended to blame women for marital tensions, favoured men in efforts to resolve conflict, and did nothing to assist women, usually making matters worse by spreading their stories back to the home country adding to women's sense of shame. Other studies have noted that some abusers involved their friends or the community as a feature of their abuse (Sullivan et al., 2005).

A 2006 study conducted in rural Victoria by the Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service found that rural location and specific cultural values create compounding barriers for immigrant and refugee women seeking to escape family violence. This study described how women experience rural community values, which emphasise the preservation of marriage and the stigmatisation of single motherhood and separation, in conjunction with similar ethno-specific community values that are further exacerbated by religious pressures to stay with their partners (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, 2006). The study found that women feared being disconnected from their communities and social networks if they sought assistance and were forced to relocate to a women's refuge that could be far away and disconnected from their culture.

Researchers working in a range of settings noted that immigrant and refugee communities rarely perceived perpetrators as responsible for resolving situations of family violence, with that responsibility more often placed on women. If women were unable to resolve a violent situation, they subsequently perceived this as failure and a source of personal shame (Kulwicki et al., 2010). In Guruge et al.'s (2010) study, community leaders and focus group

participants representing a Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada spoke about a general acceptance that men were justified in some "disciplining" of women for reasons such as incomplete housework, suspected or real infidelity, refusing a husband's requests for sex and arguing, complaining or making inappropriately timed requests for money or assistance. A review article reported similar findings from studies of Mexican and South Asian immigrants, which indicated that "marital rape" was viewed as a "male right" (Raj & Silverman, 2002). In research conducted with African communities in Western Australia, community members described family violence as complex, sometimes involving children and extended family, and intertwined with notions of the "duty" of parents and husbands to guide and "discipline" (Fisher, 2009).

## Gender roles

Considering gender roles, and the ways in which these roles can be affected by the migration process, is important for understanding immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to family violence in a number of ways. Clearly defined roles give men and women contrasting responsibilities in marriages and families and women are often particularly responsible for ensuring family harmony and unity. If family violence arises in a marriage, women can be torn between their responsibilities for preserving their family and concerns for their own security, health and wellbeing. In the context of Western countries such as Australia, resettlement can have disruptive effects on gender roles for some communities that are variously welcomed and resisted within families. The shifts in financial circumstances and employment opportunities which often accompany migration can also impact on perceived gender roles. Men may not be able to perform their traditional role as breadwinners, which can place economic strains on households and contribute to tensions in marital relationships. As Bui and Morash (2008) noted, immigrant men often experience downward social mobility following migration, which can reduce their social status, capacity to provide for their family and self-esteem (Bui & Morash, 2008). In contrast, some women find themselves with increased opportunities for social and economic independence, which can also cause tensions in some relationships.

In a study interviewing Vietnamese women living in the US, Bui and Morash (2008) observed that economic precariousness and loss of social status among immigrant Vietnamese men can push them to reassert their masculinity in other ways such as gambling and drinking (see also Ely, 2004). Participants in the study reported that in the wake of experiencing downward mobility, many Vietnamese men were particularly keen to send generous remittances back to their homeland as a way of recouping social esteem. The researchers found that gestures like these could generate additional strains in marriages that led to family violence. In Bui and Morash's (2008) study, women with unemployed partners were more likely to report experiencing abuse. As Ely (2004) notes, men's declining social status can also be attributed to experiences of racism in countries of settlement (Ely, 2004). Both authors note that a key limitation in our current understanding of these issues for male immigrants is that researchers have relied almost exclusively on women's accounts, and that men's voices are absent in this literature. In addition, it should be noted that women may also experience downward mobility through

the migration experience as they may become dependent on spouses and family members to survive in the new country.

In a study undertaken with Sri Lankan Tamil community leaders and focus group participants in Canada, Guruge et al. (2010) found that following migration it was far more common for women to be working outside the home and contributing to the household income, which led to expectations that men assume some responsibility for household tasks and childrearing. This was perceived by participants as a major cause of conflict within both the immediate and extended family. Participants agreed that women in Sri Lanka almost always married men of equal or higher status and that changes to status post migration led to men becoming demoralised and contributed to conflict (Hyman et al., 2011; Guruge et al., 2010).

Although, the importance of understanding gender roles in relation to family violence is clear, the extent to which challenges to gender roles can be connected with the risk of family violence is less certain. Challenges to rigid gender roles following migration have been widely thought to increase the risk of family violence, but there is also evidence that dissolving strict expectations of gendered behaviour can be protective, as couples become more aware of women's rights and increased autonomy (Zakar, Zakar, Faist, & Kraemer, 2012).

## Other factors associated with vulnerability to family violence

Many other factors were discussed in the literature as increasing immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to violence. Here we provide a brief overview of key issues, noting that many of them are interrelated with factors discussed above.

### Social isolation and economic insecurity

Immigrant and refugee women often face profound levels of isolation as a part of the immigration and settlement experience. Lack of social connections, language barriers and lack of support from family and friends were all regularly cited as factors that contribute to women's isolation in a new country and vulnerability to family violence. In many studies, women's descriptions of social isolation formed a key component of their experience of violence, and was used as a tactic of abuse (Chaudhuri et al., 2014; Crandall et al., 2005; Latta & Goodman, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Abraham, 1998). For example, in a study conducted with Ethiopian immigrants to the US, women described experiences of enforced isolation in which they were restricted from leaving their homes, learning English, attending classes and visiting friends (Sullivan et al., 2005). Women were also prevented from seeking or receiving education (Erez & Ammar, 2003; Abraham, 1998). Latta and Goodman (2005) noted in their research with Haitian women now living in the US, that the impacts of isolation were particularly cruel because these women had grown up in an extensive support network of family and friends, as is the case for many other cultural groups.

Women were described as potentially more vulnerable to family violence, and less able to escape it when their friends or supportive relatives were not living with them in host countries (Abraham, 1998). Erez and Globokar's (2009) study of immigrants in the US found that isolation from support systems and family and financial dependency were risk factors for domestic conflict and violence. Qualitative studies conducted with Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants to Canada reported that loss of extended family, social networks and social support following migration increased household responsibilities for both spouses and contributed to marital conflict (Hyman et al., 2011; Guruge et al., 2010). These studies also suggested that men had more power over women if their families were not living in Canada. Similarly, a qualitative study with Pakistani immigrant women in Germany found that social isolation following migration, in addition to threats to cultural identity and tradition, exacerbated tensions and conflict within marriages (Zakar et al., 2012).

Social isolation is likely to mean women have limited contact with social support service systems. Raj and Silverman

(2003) conducted anonymous surveys with 160 South Asian women living in the US to assess the association between immigration related factors and family violence. They found a high prevalence of family violence (40.8%) and low awareness of support services. Social isolation in particular was associated with increased likelihood of severe forms of abuse being perpetrated, and women with no family in the US were three times more likely to report being injured by a current partner (Raj & Silverman, 2003).

Immigration-related policies that restrict eligibility for welfare support create significant barriers for women seeking to leave situations of family violence, as they have few options for supporting themselves and their children, or to pay for legal and other services that may be required. Burman and Chantler (2005) argued that denying public resources to immigrant women seeking to escape family violence places states in a position of collusion with perpetrators. Troublingly, limited options for securing economic support are likely to deter many immigrant and refugee women from leaving situations of family violence. Morash et al.'s (2007) study of Vietnamese women in the US found that financial dependence and being legally married were predictors of women staying in an abusive relationship. Research from the UK found that a lack of housing options was likely to result in immigrant and refugee women and their children returning to violent partners (Gill & Banga, 2008).

### Influence of religious institutions

Available evidence suggests that religious leaders are unlikely to offer useful responses to women disclosing family violence and tend to reinforce notions of feminine responsibility for maintaining domestic harmony. Among women, cultural and religious considerations were reported to be associated with acceptance of family violence causing reluctance to report and fear of ostracism from one's own cultural community (Erez & Globokar, 2009; Liao, 2006; Abraham, 1998). A study by Lee (2007) of Korean immigrant women in the US found that women's levels of religious involvement were associated with increased risks of physical assault, psychological aggression and risk of injury by a partner. At the same time, religion often featured as key in women's descriptions of factors contributing to resilience.

### Pregnancy and children

Pregnancy has been identified as heightening risk for violence against women of all backgrounds, however this review found evidence about the relationship between pregnancy and family violence against immigrant and

refugee women to be quite limited. A large-scale Canadian study found increased prevalence of family violence among immigrant and refugee women who reported being pregnant (Miszkurka et al., 2012). These risks were found to differ in relation to the length of time women had lived in Canada: long-term immigrant women (9 years or more) reported the highest prevalence and recent immigrants (0-2 years) the lowest. Another Canadian study found that 7.6 percent of participants reported pregnancy associated violence, including pregnancy as a result of forced sex, and noted increased risk associated with: living without a partner; being an asylum seeker; migrating less than 2 years earlier; and lower levels of education (Stewart, Gagnon, Merry, & Dennis, 2012). This same study found that women who did not speak either French or English had a lower risk associated with pregnancy, however it is unclear to what extent these findings could be attributed to reduced likelihood of reporting.

Although the literature is unclear as to whether being a mother increases women's vulnerability to violence, or acts as a protective factor, research does indicate that children have a powerful influence on women's decision making in relation to enduring or escaping violence. At the same time, men can exploit women's fears of losing custody of their children or jeopardising children's immigration status as was described in a number of studies (Erez & Globokar, 2009; Morash et al., 2007). Concerns about how to provide for children in single-parent households also influenced women to remain in abusive relationships. This was found in a study involving Vietnamese women in the US where an increasing number of children in a family was associated with increased likelihood of remaining in an abusive relationship (Morash et al., 2007). Another study noted that in some cases, women understood their mothering role and lack of choice about reproduction as a form of abuse and control, including experiences of sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, and repeated impregnation (Kallivayalil, 2010).

## **Acculturation**

A number of studies found that greater acculturation and/or longer residence in the host country appears to be associated with increased levels of reporting of family violence, although methodological limitations make it difficult to draw conclusions from these findings. Many of the studies excluded women not proficient in the host language (likely to be the most newly arrived and possibly the most vulnerable to abuse) and the authors of several of these studies also stressed that more newly-arrived women may be more reluctant to report. Furthermore, definitions of "recent" migration differed considerably between studies, ranging from 2-20 years.

In a study involving Somali women living in the US, Nilsson et al. (2008) used a group format to conduct surveys exploring associations between acculturation, domestic violence (psychological abuse and physical aggression) and mental health. The surveys could be completed in English or the women's first language. Researchers found that increased proficiency in English was associated with higher rates of reported psychological and physical family violence. Experiences of family violence were associated with increased psychological distress, although among women who had experienced physical assault, lower levels of proficiency in English and less time living in the US were associated with increased levels of distress. The authors acknowledge that the scales used were not validated for Somalis and that some questions may have been poorly understood or translated. Additionally, limited privacy in the research setting may have compounded a cultural reluctance to disclose family violence. These methodological issues are also evident in studies conducted with immigrant men where limited proficiency in the dominant language contributes to scenarios where misleading insights are generated through research. One study found that low proficiency in English speaking ability was associated with men being more than twice as likely to report having perpetrated family violence in the previous year, compared with immigrant men with high English speaking proficiency (Gupta et al., 2009). This study also found that men with "non-recent" migration coupled with poor English were most likely to report perpetrating violence against family members.

From cultural community perspectives, acculturation is conceptualised in different ways and with ambivalent and, for some, undesirable, effects. In US based studies, processes of acculturation were referred to as "Americanisation" by Horn of Africa and Arabic immigrants (Pan et al., 2006) and linked to concerns around the erosion of traditional values, and the influences of Western cultural and social practices, particularly in relation to gender roles. At the same time, these changes were viewed more positively by women as providing the grounds for enhanced social and economic autonomy. Charges of "Americanisation" were also used by men drawing on residual cultural authority to portray such influences as negative, and even grounds for divorce.

## Summary

This section considered a broad range of issues that have been identified as heightening immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to family violence. For many immigrant and refugee communities, sociocultural norms regarding marriage and gender roles present a reassuring continuity that are the basis for community organisation. They can also, however, contribute to the ways in which women are made to bear responsibility for family violence. Women are noted to endure family violence for fear of being alienated from community networks and support. At the same time, traditional expectations in relation to gender roles and marriage can be profoundly challenged by changed circumstances in host countries, particularly when men are unable to sustain their traditional role of breadwinner. In these contexts, the significance of gender roles is uncertain: there can be tensions as the balance of economic and social power between men and women shifts at the same time as these shifts promote women's independence and increased awareness of their rights to be free from violence.

It is clear that in the wake of resettlement, circumstances of cultural displacement and ongoing trauma place considerable pressure on immigrant families. In particular, the literature highlighted how immigration policy has an overarching impact on women's experiences of violence by exacerbating risks and setting up barriers for seeking help. Immigration policy does not often account for the complexity and multiplicity of challenges that immigrant and refugee women face when seeking assistance for family violence, particularly where such policy makes immigrant women more dependent on the abuser for economic security and residency rights. Many studies indicated that immigration policy creates insurmountable barriers to help-seeking for some women and, for others, prolongs the amount of time women and their children stay with perpetrators.

# Seeking help and promoting responsive service systems

The studies discussed in this section refer to related sets of issues: help-seeking behaviours and strategies that immigrant and refugee women use when seeking help for family violence; women's experiences with service systems, and approaches to assessing risks of family violence among immigrant and refugee women. Within these issues, this section considers some of the contexts and women's experiences of justice systems and examines policing responses to family violence, including "mandatory arrest" and "pro-prosecution" strategies for the perpetrators. The available literature suggests that these approaches have unanticipated consequences, such as deterring women from using police in crisis situations. There are generally fewer studies exploring these issues and the majority have been conducted in the US, using qualitative methods. Findings from studies conducted in Australia, North America and other OECD countries suggest that immigrant and refugee women are experiencing significant barriers in accessing services and there is much room for improvement in developing cultural competency in services systems.

## Seeking help for family violence

Many of the difficulties that immigrant and refugee women experience in accessing services are not unlike those experienced by other victims of family violence, such as fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, staying for the sake of children, feelings of low self-worth and powerlessness, hopes for change in perpetrator behaviour, the effects of social isolation and financial barriers. However, it is not clear that service providers are always aware of the different ways in which these issues may manifest in the circumstances of immigrant and refugee women. Furthermore, for refugee women who have experienced torture and trauma before migration, there is a complexity to their experiences that has not been addressed within existing family violence systems (Tayton, Kaspiew, Moore, & Campo, 2014; Zanettino et. al., 2013).

Overall, studies confirmed that in Western countries immigrant women are less likely than non-immigrant women to seek help in response to family violence (Gilroy, McFarlane, Nava, & Maddoux, 2014; Raj & Silverman, 2007). There were many reasons reported as to why women may be reluctant to seek help for family violence, including limited knowledge of available services, fears of retribution from perpetrators, concerns for the perpetrators themselves or the consequences of using legal systems, and previous negative experiences from contact with services. The literature also suggests that if women feel that family violence is related to resettlement stresses experienced by their partners, they may be reluctant to seek help (Ben-Porat, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2008). Amanor-Boadu et al. (2012) explored decision-making processes among immigrant and non-immigrant women in the US and found that immigrant women reported higher perceived risks and barriers to leaving an abusive relationship compared to US-born women. Perceived risks included incurring further physical harm, as well as social, legal and economic risks.

Immigrant and refugee women from diverse cultural backgrounds share many common barriers to seeking help, which is well summarised in Erez and Ammar's (2003) landmark US study involving immigrant women from a wide range of nationalities:

Battered immigrant women have several interrelated and intricate problems, which prevent them from leaving the abuser or pursuing independence. They face barriers confronted by all battered women, including embarrassment and shame about disclosing the abuse and having to seek help, emotional and economic dependency on the abuser, reluctance to break up the family and fear of retaliation by the abuser. For battered immigrant women, these difficulties are compounded by problems they experience as new immigrants, including lack of familiarity with the social and justice systems, their immigration status, little employment and language skills, no support network or family, a deep fear of losing the support of their immigrant community (often the only community they know), and fear of retaliation by the partner and his family (often the only family they have in the new country). Thus, immigrant women often do not even consider leaving as an option. (Erez & Ammar, 2003, p. 120)

Similarly, a number of studies discussed how the barriers experienced by immigrant and refugee women involve intersecting systemic issues (Ghafournia, 2011; Kulwicki et al., 2010; Alaggia et al., 2009; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Bhuyan, 2008; Bhuyan, 2007; Rees & Pease, 2006; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Erez & Hartley, 2003; Martin & Mosher, 1995). In a 2 year ethnographic study at a community-based domestic violence organisation serving South Asian women in the US, Bhuyan (2008) observed that battered immigrants are often "trapped by regulatory state policies, as well as by their abusive partners" (p. 168). Similarly, in qualitative interviews conducted with both social services staff and with domestic violence victims from a range of cultural backgrounds in Manchester, UK, Burman and Chantler (2005) explored how women confronted "complex and intersecting connections between domestic violence, law, mental health provision, entitlement to welfare services, which function alongside constructions of cultural identifications, structures of racism, class and gendered oppression" (p. 59).

Women reported using a range of coping strategies to minimise the seriousness or significance of violence. These included assuming fatalistic attitudes that there was little that could be done other than to endure violence, attributing violence to pressures experienced by husbands and partners and feeling

guilty because they were unable to prevent violence occurring (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013). Studies also noted that immigrant and refugee women were often highly motivated to find ways of resolving family violence without resorting to leaving a marriage and breaking up their families (Abu-Ras, 2007). This clashed with the position of some support services that viewed exiting abusive relationships as a critical step for women seeking help for family violence. This stance, or women's perceptions that services held this stance, meant that some women preferred to seek help from community-based services, which they perceived to better understand their position (Abu-Ras, 2007).

The decision to seek help for family violence was a critical turning point for many women. A number of studies noted that immigrant and refugee women tended to seek help for family violence only after many years of enduring abuse (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2009; Bui & Morash, 2008; Raj & Silverman, 2007). They were eventually prompted to act for reasons including escalating frequency and/or severity of episodes, increasingly ineffective personal coping strategies and rising concerns for the effects it was having on children. Personal networks, and informal family and community networks were the most commonly used resource by women seeking advice about family violence (Bui, 2003; Raj & Silverman, 2003). Pan et al. (2006) also found that families can be critical resources for resolving marital issues, including family violence, but they are not always available following migration. One study noted that the internet was highly valued by immigrant and refugee women in seeking information about sources of support to deal with family violence (Finfgeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013).

## Experiences with service systems

In seeking formal help for family violence, women are likely to engage with both community-based organisations and complex service systems. While there is evidence that immigrant and refugee women in Australia are less likely than non-immigrant women to report family violence to police or to access mainstream services (Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, 2013; Allimant & Ostapiej-Piakowski, 2011; Fisher, 2009), service usage data from across the country indicates that immigrant and refugee women, and Muslim women in particular, are over-represented as users of crisis services. This suggests that they are much less likely to seek early assistance or intervention for family violence, and instead delay seeking help until the violence has increased in severity and impact (Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, 2011; inTouch, 2010; Aly & Gaba, 2007; Esteal, 1996). There is also evidence that immigrant and refugee women with disabilities experience even higher levels of violence and lower access to appropriate services (Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW, 2010).

In Australia, participatory research by Rees and Pease (2006) and inTouch (2010) identified concerns amongst both service providers and immigrant women that women needing assistance did not know very much about the family violence system and were unsure about how to access support. inTouch (2010) also found that distrust of the system could be linked to lack of integration between family violence and settlement services. Women were reported to be more comfortable going to settlement services for their support needs, expecting to find everything "in-house", only to discover a lack of referral procedures in place between settlement services, support agencies and legal service providers (inTouch, 2010). An earlier study in rural Victoria found that in addition to negative experiences from mainstream service providers, some women also had negative experiences with local ethno-specific organisations that attempted to enforce traditional values in ways that disregarded women's safety (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, 2006). Further, Rees and Pease (2006) reported that many immigrant and refugee women distrusted mainstream domestic violence services because of concerns that seeking help would result in family breakdown and disruption to children's education.

Features of effective community-based support services were identified in a range of studies. Anitha (2008) found that women considered services to be effective when they enabled and documented disclosures of violence, took their disclosures seriously and provided information, options and referrals that helped women eventually leave their abusive

relationships. Cultural competency of organisations and staff providing services to immigrant groups was also found to be important (Ely, 2004). Cultural competency included having bicultural workers in areas with high populations of particular ethnic and immigrant groups, implementing strategies for addressing potential language barriers in accessing services and sensitive awareness of cultural contexts and specific needs such as halal diets (Abu-Ras, 2007). The importance of demonstrating sensitivity to sociocultural beliefs and practices was frequently raised in the literature. Pan et al. (2006), for example, noted that immigrant groups' definitions of family violence differed from mainstream service system definitions and that it may be important to reconceptualise problems of family violence in order to engage immigrant communities. Notably, in their own study, they reframed these issues as promoting "family harmony" because it better resonated with community concerns and experiences (Pan et al., 2006).

While the literature makes clear the value of culturally tailored services and culturally sensitive practices there are also risks associated with community-based services that serve specific cultural groups. These include safeguarding service recipients' privacy and confidentiality and ensuring that prominent community members do not exert undue influence in organisations in ways that privilege men over the safety and rights of women (Kulwicki et al., 2010). One study found that some culturally specific health services had a limited understanding of issues associated with family violence. Chung et al. (2009) examined attitudes among Korean physicians whose patients were almost exclusively Korean. When presented with evidence of family violence experienced by female patients, 17 of the 20 participants displayed attitudes that either denied or trivialised issues of family violence and attributed it to patients' own behaviour. This was a small study but the researchers noted that physicians trained in the US (rather than Korea) were more likely to display sensitive understanding of issues of family violence, and a willingness to raise these issues with patients when they had concerns.

Many studies noted that women had received highly inappropriate responses of racism and anti-immigration sentiments in their encounters with service providers and this discouraged them from seeking help for family violence (Dimopolous, 2010; Kulwicki et al., 2010; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Taft et al., 2008; Bhuyan, 2007; Aly & Gaba, 2007; Rees & Pease, 2007; Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, 2006; Erez & Hartley, 2003; Huisman, 1996; Martin & Mosher, 1995). These experiences fueled concerns for the ways they would be treated by services, the ways in which

perpetrators would be treated and how their communities would be portrayed. A few Australian studies discussed how racist, anti-refugee and anti-immigration sentiments in the community created barriers that discouraged women from seeking help. Rees and Pease (2007) found that those persons who arrived in Australia as asylum seekers and refugees were well aware of the negative perceptions held about them in the wider community and that this fostered reluctance to seek help from services.

These issues have been particularly acute for Muslim women. An Australian study involving 179 women and youth from Muslim backgrounds found that the climate of scrutiny on the Muslim community created barriers to help-seeking as people did not want themselves, or their community, to be seen in a negative light (Aly & Gaba, 2007). Similarly, Bhuyan (2007) noted that American-Muslim women in the US were concerned about the detention of Muslim men, particularly since 9/11, and would avoid contacting police to avoid this outcome, even in a crisis. Concerns about negative portrayals were echoed by Dimopolous (2010) in a study with personnel involved in CALD-specific legal empowerment programs in Victoria. The research found that several participants highlighted how negative stereotypes of immigrant and refugee communities restricted people's capacity to speak out about family violence, for fear of escalating racist responses, and similar concerns have been noted in other studies (Martin & Mosher, 1995).

Immigrant and refugee women seeking help in response to family violence may be concerned about shaming families and entire communities. Women's extended family and community networks can also be a source of stress for women if they exert pressure on women to keep problems in private spheres and discourage women from seeking help from specialist services. In a study with 30 South Asian women in regional England, Anitha (2010) found women who had sought help in response to family violence had no contact with family or friends in the two weeks prior to the research interview for a range of reasons, including a lack of informal sources of support in the UK, being disowned by family for leaving the marriage, fear of being traced, and lack of sufficient funds to visit friends or to speak to family in the subcontinent (Anitha, 2010). This illustrates key problems for immigrant and refugee women seeking help or leaving an abusive relationship. Other research confirms the significance of issues such as cultural practices prohibiting disclosure or reporting of abuse, reluctance of police intervention, isolation, staying for the children, economic barriers, and fear of immigration status repercussions (Alaggia et al., 2009).

Immigrant-specific social support systems may not be consistently supportive or offer the kind of support desired, with women reporting pressure to tolerate abuse and maintain loyalty to their family (Erez & Ammar, 2003; Erez, 2002; Huisman, 1996). Importantly, Erez (2002) provides a reminder that attitudes reinforcing the patriarchal social order is something that diverse immigrant communities have in common with the Western societies in which they now live (p. 291).

Anitha (2010) found that immigrant and refugee women who already experienced ostracism from their communities for leaving a violent perpetrator were likely to feel even more isolated when placed in a mainstream refuge due to its limited capacity to cater for varied language needs and the cultural differences among women. Women who were housed in ethno-specific specialist refuges were more likely to express high levels of satisfaction with these services (Anitha, 2010). In a similar vein, Gill and Banga (2008) found that placement in culturally specific refuges may assist to de-escalate a woman's risk and reduce repeat presentation at homelessness agencies and other support services. Women in this study reported a preference for ethno-specific services because they provided cultural sensitivity and women experienced a sense of inclusion, empowerment and avoided experiences of racism. Aly and Gaba (2007) found that Muslim women who accessed crisis accommodation to escape domestic violence described negative experiences such as difficulties maintaining Islamic practices, compromised capacities to prepare halal food, language barriers and cultural differences with the service providers and other residents.

Language barriers can also inhibit women's access to services. Immigrant and refugee women living in rural Australia are likely to have limited access to interpreting services or rely on inexperienced interpreters (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, 2006). The use of local interpreters also raises concerns about confidentiality for some women. Significant issues associated with interpreting were also raised in relation to women's contact with the justice system in Victoria. In their survey of 52 women, inTouch (2010) found that concerns with police intervention for family violence usually involved a lack of provision for interpreting services at incident call outs, and when in court, language barriers set up significant challenges for women who wanted to access support and legal advice, and understand proceedings. Some women also expressed concerns about interpreters mistranslating and distorting their communications. Similar concerns were raised in international studies (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009). Erez and Ammar (2003) found that while immigrant women

generally had positive experiences with the justice system in the US, difficulties usually arose because of language barriers and communication problems as well as problems with a lack of impartiality by interpreters. A low level of English proficiency amongst immigrant women in the US was associated with difficulty accessing support and greater risk of “dual arrest” (that is, both parties being arrested) if police were called (Erez & Globokar, 2009).

It was also found that “revolving door” experiences, in which women make repeated attempts, in the face of numerous barriers, to access service systems, can lead to distrust and lack of confidence in services (Anitha, 2008). In supporting her research, Anitha referenced a community-based study by the UK’s Fawcett Society, which found that on average, a woman facing domestic violence has to make 11 contacts with agencies before getting the help she needs and this increases to 17 attempts if she is from a Black, Minority or Ethnic community. When barriers to getting help appear insurmountable, immigrant women will stop seeking support and return to violent partners, leaving both women and service providers feeling pessimistic and frustrated towards the possibilities of positive change (Anitha, 2008).

## Issues with seeking help through justice systems

Several studies discussed immigrant and refugee women’s distrust of policing and legal systems, which were viewed as authoritarian. Many women feared that involving police, lawyers and child protection services could jeopardise their immigration status, break up families and negatively impact on their housing and economic security (Ghafournia, 2011; Dimopolous, 2010; inTouch, 2010; Singh, 2010; Alaggia et al., 2009; Taft et al., 2008; Bhuyan, 2007; Rees & Pease, 2007; Rees & Pease, 2006; Shim & Hwang, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Erez & Hartley, 2003; Martin & Mosher 1995).

Research conducted in Victoria by inTouch in 2010 specifically highlighted that when a woman comes from a culture that does not construe family violence as a problem, she may have difficulty recognising her own rights and be less likely to seek formal assistance from the justice system. However, research undertaken with workers in CALD-specific legal empowerment programs in Victoria presented an alternative view (Dimopoulos, 2010). Community members were critical that mainstream agencies assumed that culturally diverse communities were unaware of the system or misinformed, rather than questioning whether the information they were providing was relevant or inclusive of culturally diverse experiences. Furthermore, participants were concerned that these assumptions signaled that caring about the safety of women and children was only a Western value, suggesting a cultural essentialism exists in mainstream views that ignores immigrant women’s agency and their own methods of resisting violence and oppression.

The literature revealed that problems of racism experienced by immigrant communities can also filter the ways in which they view accessing support from police and justice services. Immigrant communities may seek to avoid bringing situations of family violence to the attention of police because of concerns that police will treat men harshly. In particular, these fears can affect immigrant communities that have collectively experienced violence and oppression from majority groups (such as Muslim communities since 2001). Many studies noted that women may lack an awareness of their legal rights as well as what responses to family violence exist in their country of arrival (Ammar et al., 2012; Ghafournia, 2011; Ogunsiji et al., 2011; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Aly & Gaba, 2007; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Shim & Hwang, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Martin & Mosher, 1995).

Erez and Ammar (2003) found that immigrant women had both positive and negative experiences of police. Positive experiences included feeling secure and protected, feeling that there was accountability for perpetrators, getting information

about the system, learning that certain abuses are criminal offences, knowing that help is out there and feeling that they were taken seriously. Negative experiences included a lack of arrest or action taken by police, not being taken seriously, being talked down to, not being provided with an interpreter, and police only speaking with the perpetrator. Negative encounters with police and justice systems discouraged some women from using these services in the future (Erez & Hartley, 2003).

Some studies reported that women's attitudes to police can be highly ambivalent because of experiences in homeland countries, and they can see police as a threat to the family, or believe that their partner's accounts of events will be credited above their own (Wachholz & Miedema, 2000). An analysis of Australian immigration policy by Ghafournia (2011) discussed how women's fear of the police and the legal system might be linked to women's past experience of corrupt governments in their homeland. inTouch (2010) found that while most of the 52 women surveyed in their study had positive experiences with police, there was a small number who expressed fear of the police and negative experiences in both their country of origin and in Australia, including a lack of interpreter services, unsympathetic attitudes and discrimination due to visa status.

Women were also found to be reluctant to involve the police and justice systems because of the potentially real or perceived consequences if their husband or partner was arrested, such as loss of income, involvement of child protection, or even deportation. This was a particular concern for women who were restricted from employment or receiving public benefits due to their immigration status, low English literacy or lack of recognition of foreign qualifications (Martin & Mosher, 1995). These factors could be intertwined with fears of deportation and concerns about apprehension of children by child protection system.

### **Mandatory arrest and pro-prosecution approaches**

In recent years many national and state jurisdictions have adopted "mandatory arrest" and "pro-prosecution" strategies in efforts to deter perpetrators of family violence. However, available studies have found that these approaches may have unintended consequences when applied to issues of family violence in households from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. In particular, these types of measures have been found to deter women from seeking the help of police (Singh, 2010; Bui, 2003). Studies exploring these issues have used small samples so findings should be treated with caution. However, available research suggests that particular consideration should be given to mandatory arrest approaches when applied to immigrant and refugee families.

Singh (2010) found that mandatory arrest policies are likely to make life more difficult for immigrant women, in addition to placing service providers in a bind when engaging in advocacy. Service providers who were interviewed noted that when immigrant women are informed about the mandatory arrest policy, they rarely consider invoking police protection, forcing service providers to pursue alternative paths that avoid the justice system, such as referrals to women's shelters. If shelters are full, women are left with few options for protection that are amenable to their needs, which is a particular concern in high risk situations. Some studies noted that although immigrant and refugee women would use policing services in an effort to stop or defuse a violent episode, they were reluctant to seek police intervention if the police were obliged to arrest perpetrators. Women may be keen for police to attend to calm situations and talk to men (Bui, 2003), but in jurisdictions where "mandatory arrest" or "zero tolerance" provisions are in force police have a very limited range of options for responding to these situations.

Martin and Mosher (1995) concluded that mandatory arrest and pro-prosecution policies are ineffective, particularly for immigrant women. Their research highlighted that aggressive criminal justice responses can exacerbate other concerns held by immigrant victims of domestic violence such as fear of state surveillance and deportation, fear of negative impacts on family/community, and concerns about child protection interventions. They also found that these negative consequences did deter women from utilising the police, even in a crisis (Martin & Mosher, 1995). Further, when women did have interactions with the mandatory arrest policy, more often than not the criminal justice response left women with unresolved outcomes. In their study, only one case went through to a criminal court. This led the researchers to conclude that mandatory arrest and no drop prosecutions failed to deliver on promises of protection for immigrant and refugee women. In another study, involving social workers serving the Korean community in New York City, Shim and Hwang (2005) found that the inconsistent application of policy by the police led clients to lose trust in the system (however, this is contextualised with an understanding that sometimes police are unable to implement the policy due to minimisation of violence by victims). Mandatory arrest policy was shown to potentially lead to conflict between the goals of victims and the goals of the police.

In another study that focused on immigrant women's attitudes towards policing solutions to address family violence, Wachholz and Miedema (2000) found little support for this kind of approach among immigrant women. Women nominated a range of risks associated with the policy including heightening

women's social isolation in the community, reducing control over their situations, heightening their partner's controlling behaviour, bringing them to the negative attention of child protection services and, depending on their immigration status, making their partners vulnerable to deportation. Finally, the women feared that their family's livelihood may be threatened if partners are arrested and unable to work. Respondents in this study pointed to the potential value of other strategies for responding to and preventing family violence, including addressing structural issues and promoting collaborations between family violence and immigrant support services in order to develop community education initiatives giving greater focus to shifting men's attitudes and behaviours (Wachholz & Miedema, 2000).

### **Protection orders**

Civil protection orders are a significant aspect of the police response to family violence, yet only one peer-reviewed academic study examined whether and how civil protection orders met the needs of immigrant and refugee women (Ammar et al, 2012). This US-based study found that most of the immigrant women who participated (89%) had no prior knowledge that civil protection orders were a legal option before they sought help from the legal and social services system. It should be noted that this may be due to a stronger reliance on criminal justice, rather than civil justice, to protect victims of domestic violence in overseas jurisdictions. In Australia, a number of community-based research reports examined the impacts of protection orders on immigrant and refugee communities (inTouch, 2010; Fraser, 2009; Rees & Pease, 2006). In a report commissioned by Footscray Community Legal Services, Fraser (2009) reviewed 18 months of casework from African Legal Service and found issues for clients relating to intervention orders included: reluctance to seek orders because of the belief that domestic violence issues should be resolved privately by the family or community elders; lack of understanding that police could seek an order on someone's behalf and that this process was separate from criminal matters; and lack of understanding that breaches of intervention orders could result in criminal charges. Nevertheless, participants in the study by Rees and Pease (2006) reported that intervention orders and other remedies offered by the criminal justice system had a positive effect, by increasing men's awareness of the legal consequences of family violence and increasing women's confidence to challenge violence. inTouch (2010) found that most of the women they surveyed had an experience of applying for an intervention order, with a third of those reporting that the order came as a result of a police issued Safety Notice. This research found that immigrant women

relied on the police for information about intervention orders (as well as other issues, including referrals to support services and legal assistance) and that most had positive experiences. Where women described a negative experience relating to intervention orders it was connected to issues with police and court-based responses, including lack of information about cross-applications from perpetrators, language barriers in understanding the order or getting the correct information on the order, lack of police action in response to breaches of intervention orders and lack of consideration of intervention orders in family court proceedings.

### **Family law courts**

Only a few studies and reports have examined immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family law courts. A report by the Family Law Council (2012) described a range of factors that impede access to the family law system, including: a lack of knowledge about the law and a lack of awareness of available services; language and literacy barriers; cultural and religious barriers that inhibit help-seeking outside the community; negative perceptions of the courts and family relationships services; social isolation; a lack of collaboration between immigrant services and the family law system; a fear of government agencies; a lack of culturally responsive services and bicultural personnel; legislative factors; and cost and resource issues (Family Law Council, 2012). The report noted that these issues are compounded by the fact that, in Australia, immigrant settlement services are not funded to deal with family law and family violence issues, and concluded that many immigrant and refugee families fall through the gap between these systems.

In the international literature, a US policy analysis by Pendleton (2003) noted perpetrators' use of women's immigration status as a weapon against them in court. Pendleton argued for the need for judges to guard against biases relating to immigration status in their decision making (2003). A similar argument was made by Thronson (2012), who noted that in family law courts perpetrators use circumstances related to women's immigration to manipulate proceedings to the detriment of women.

More generally, mainstream or "generic" women's family violence support services were described as having a limited understanding of the complex issues facing immigrant and refugee women seeking help for family violence (inTouch, 2010; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003).

## Risk assessment with immigrant and refugee women

Only one paper found in the literature was specifically related to the development of a risk assessment instrument for family violence among immigrant women (Messing, Amanor-Boadu, Cavanaugh, Glass, & Campbell, 2013). A US study adapted a 20 item danger assessment tool for social workers to use with immigrant women and tested it for effectiveness (in terms of predicting re-assault and severe incidents of family violence). The study sample included 148 immigrant women recruited from family courts, domestic violence shelters, public hospitals and after calls to police. Analyses indicated that the adapted assessment tool predicted risk for immigrant women with significantly greater accuracy, retaining 15 items from the original 20 and including 11 additional items assessing immigration-related risk factors, such as social isolation, marginalisation and gender norms. However, 66.8 percent of participants were Latina which may limit the relevance of these findings for the Australian context. One other study explored the acceptability of screening for family violence among immigrant women. It found high acceptance, except among those at highest risk, specifically young women and women who had reported early sexual abuse and severe victimisation in the previous year (Zeitler et al., 2006).

## Summary

*Seeking help and promoting responsive service systems* explored help-seeking behaviour among immigrant and refugee women who had experienced family violence, barriers to accessing services and women's experiences of support services and justice systems. Studies noted that immigrant women tend to endure family violence for many years before seeking help and eventual help-seeking is usually driven by being subjected to increasing severity of violence, coping strategies no longer being effective and growing concerns for the welfare of children. Women encounter a range of barriers in seeking help for family violence and many women are highly motivated to resolve family violence without breaking up their families, although there are fewer options for women seeking this outcome. Many of the barriers experienced by immigrant women are similar to those experienced by other women who have endured longstanding family violence, but with some key additional features. On the whole, studies suggested that immigrant women preferred ethno-specific services. Key reasons for this included the fact that language did not pose a barrier and there was sensitivity to the cultural contexts of women's situations. Generic family violence support services were seen to lack expertise in understanding immigration-related issues for women, which were often key factors in women's predicaments. Research suggested that some women felt comfortable turning to police, and had generally positive experiences, however for others, fear of deportation, child protection and arrest made women reluctant to report. There was little in the research literature that supported "mandatory arrest" approaches to family violence involving immigrant and refugee women and it appears likely to deter women from seeking the support of police in crisis situations. Other justice system initiatives, such as family law courts and intervention orders, need to understand and take into account the specific circumstances of immigrant and refugee women in order to be effective in addressing and preventing family violence.

# Prevention initiatives

The prevention of violence against women, which seeks to change the behavioural, social and environmental factors that give rise to violence (VicHealth, 2007; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002), has been a matter of public policy in Australia since the 1980s (Murray & Powell, 2011). It builds on the work of the women's movement, and more particularly, the women's refuge movement of the 1970s (Hague & Malos, 2005). Globally, women's movements and women's groups have also advocated for violence prevention, through their ongoing activism around women's safety and rights (Crenshaw, 1991). However, the study of the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia and internationally, articulated as a specialist field of work and addressing the risk factors and drivers associated with family violence, is relatively new and is still in the development stages (Carmody, Salter & Presterudstuen, 2014; VicHealth, 2007).

Thus far, Australian approaches to primary prevention have adopted a socio-ecological approach, addressing gender inequity as a key driver of violence against women. Accordingly, prevention programs have aimed to build gender equality within public and private spheres and have focused on developing equality and respect within relationships between women and men. The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (COAG, 2011) is indicative of the focus for many violence prevention programs operating in Australia: promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women, promoting non-violent social norms, reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence (especially on children) and improving access to resources and systems of support (Mitchell, 2011; VicHealth, 2007). More recently, international approaches have advocated that violence prevention must move beyond a focus on attitudinal change and awareness-raising, and aim rather to effect transformational and multi-dimensional change to "discriminatory and violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours, community norms, institutional practices and systems, laws and policies, and society as a whole" (UN Women, 2012, p. 6).

Primary prevention programs that specifically address immigrant and refugee communities are few and far between across Australia and internationally. A number of promising prevention strategies and practices have been explored but for the most part, resources for rigorous evaluation have been lacking. Moreover, many of the programs remain limited in their cultural reach and thus comprehensive and rigorous evaluations of prevention programs that specifically reach immigrant and refugee communities are extremely limited (Carmody et al., 2014; Tayton et. al., 2014; Poljski, 2011). Accordingly, there is very little literature about the prevention of violence against women among immigrant and refugee communities in Australia. Available literature shows that mainstream programs that aim for universal reach fail to adequately account for the diverse lives of immigrants and refugees (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015). School-based primary prevention programs for example, are a “universal” population-based approach, which in effect excludes most immigrants and refugees, who largely arrive in Australia after their primary and/or secondary schooling is completed (ABS, 2014). Targeted primary prevention programs are developed alongside universal approaches, but only reach small groups of people, and are often restricted to 3-6 ethno-specific communities in a defined geographical area (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015; COAG, 2011). Resources are limited and such programs, often led by ethnic community organisations and women’s groups, are rarely adequately documented, evaluated or sustained (Bartels, 2011).

## Community and women’s leadership

There is very little literature that addresses the issue of immigrant and refugee women’s leadership in the primary prevention context. In the area of addressing family violence more broadly, there is some strong evidence that women’s movements around the world are a critical success factor (Weldon & Htun, 2013), and more specifically, that immigrant and refugee women, and women of colour, have important specialist expertise and knowledge to bring to the work (Murdolo, 2014; Larasi, 2013; Rehman, Kelly, & Siddiqui, 2013; Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights, 2011; Volpp 2011, 2001).

A 2011 review of primary prevention programs for immigrant and refugee communities found that appropriate and meaningful leadership was a central factor in effective practice. The review found that programs that were led by immigrant and refugee women, and their representative organisations, and which engaged a broad range of diverse leaders – women, men and young people, from all walks of life – in learning about and promoting primary prevention, were more likely to lead to active involvement in programs by the targeted community (Poljski, 2011).

## Community engagement and cultural sensitivity

Tailored and sensitive community education strategies that reflect understanding of the contexts and concerns for immigrant women are important strategies for effective prevention practice (Ben-Porat, 2010). Similarly, the effectiveness of grassroots and cultural community socio-educational efforts in primary prevention has been noted (Abu-Ras, 2007; Ely, 2004). A recent evaluation of a violence prevention program conducted by an outer Sydney migrant resource centre targeting newly arrived South Asian and Chinese families, found that community engagement was a very important factor in ensuring that the program met the direct needs of the women clients. The program was community-driven, based on ongoing consultation with the women, and tailored to suit the specific cultural context. Program outcomes included reduced isolation, strengthened community connections, enhanced knowledge of family violence and services, improved self-esteem, and strengthened personal and community capacity (Tayton et. al., 2014).

Pan et al. (2006) note that holding their “Community Dialogues” program at community locations such as temples, services, community-based organisations and homes was effective, as was the promotion of non-violence (from disciplining children to resolving a range of disputes) as a core value for all interpersonal relationships. The key issues for intervention - youth development, parenting (awareness of the need for youth activities, communication skills and learning effective alternatives to corporal punishment) and promoting economic opportunities for women – were decided on the basis of community consultation (Pan et. al., 2006).

There is some evidence to indicate that primary prevention programs that incorporate cultural sensitivity strategies are more effective in reaching communities and fostering engagement (Tayton et al., 2014; Poljski, 2011). For a group of South Asian and Chinese women in Sydney, program workers found that framing the program topic around “family relationships” instead of family violence builds rapport and trust, and that providing opportunities for a “soft entry” into the program improves access for women (Tayton et al., 2014).

## Engaging men and boys

There is a small body of literature that addresses the question of the engagement of immigrant and refugee men and boys in violence prevention. A recent review of primary prevention practices and programs focused on men and boys in Australia found a number of promising practices and programs, including programs that worked with, or could be adapted for immigrant and refugee communities (Carmody et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the study noted that in general, prevention activities are piecemeal, ad hoc and dispersed, and that a coherent and identifiable field of prevention practice focused specifically on men and boys has yet to emerge in Australia (Carmody et al., 2014). Researchers identified a number of key themes and strategies taken from stakeholder interviews, which informed promising practice: gauging community readiness for prevention interventions; consultation and collaboration; engaging with key figures and leaders; engaging with other services and stakeholders; pedagogical strategies and maintaining commitments. Researchers have noted that stakeholders who worked with refugee and immigrant communities had found partnerships with community elders or leaders to be integral to ethical and effective work (Carmody et al. 2014; Gregory et al. 2013).

Michael Flood provides an overview of the key intersectional issues specific to immigrant and refugee men in Australia, noting that men’s lives and identities are structured by diverse masculinities, and that this impacts on their access to power and resources and their understandings of gendered relationships. Flood argues that violence prevention programs need to address structural, as well as cultural, factors, in order to be effective with immigrant and refugee men, and they also need to acknowledge the diversity in the situations of men. Flood advocates the engagement of male community leaders to reach immigrant and refugee men (Flood, 2013). Murdolo and Quiazon also take an intersectional approach to discussing the engagement of immigrant and refugee men in violence prevention, arguing that gender equity is more effectively promoted within immigrant and refugee communities when men are engaged through the leadership of women (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015).

# Implications for policy and practice and gaps in research

This section summarises implications for policy and practice addressing family violence against immigrant and refugee women, and identifies notable gaps in the international and Australian research literature.

## Implications for policy and practice

The following implications for policy and practice in regard to addressing family violence with immigrant and refugee communities are derived from suggestions made directly by researchers in the literature, from our analysis of this body of literature as a whole and our professional expertise. Suggestions for policy-makers and practitioners include:

- Engage intersectional feminist frameworks within research, policy design and service provision to understand family violence in the context of immigrant women's gendered oppression alongside constructions of other forms of oppression caused by social and economic inequality (Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013; Sokoloff & Du Pont, 2005).
- Increase integration and central involvement of multicultural, ethno-specific and immigration related services within family violence response systems at a national and state-wide level. This will ensure that professionals in these systems enhance their understanding of each other's work and are better able to support immigrant victims of family violence in navigating interrelated systemic issues (Ammar, Orloff, Dutton, & Hass, 2012; Dimopolous, 2010; Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Rees & Pease, 2007; Erez & Ammar, 2003).
- Policy-making and funding allocation by governments and peak bodies must ensure that immigrant and refugee women are not excluded from receiving practical and financial support or protective services because of their particular immigration status (inTouch, 2010; Erez & Ammar, 2003).
- Immigration policy must remove any obstacles to reporting violence and seeking help for family violence with assurances that women and children will not risk being deported or criminalised if they disclose violence to government, justice or community services (Erez, 2002; Sheppard, 2000).
- Increase women's economic security and self-determination to enable women to seek help and leave violent situations (Bhuyan, 2007; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Martin & Mosher, 1995). Gaining economic independence is important for any woman who is attempting to leave a relationship with an abuser; immigrant and refugee women may be particularly restricted in this regard due to restrictions on employment and access to public benefits. In addition, other opportunities for immigrant and refugee women to

- increase independence and self-determination should be supported, such as increasing language and literacy skills, access to education and employment (Erez & Ammar, 2003).
- Rights-based education should be provided by immigration agencies to ensure that families are aware that the law does not tolerate family violence and that sponsored victims of violence do have a right to assistance (Family Law Council, 2012; Martin & Mosher, 1995).
  - Enhance therapeutic jurisprudence for immigrants and refugees interacting with the criminal, civil and family law systems for family violence related matters (Erez & Ammar, 2003; Erez & Hartley, 2003). The therapeutic jurisprudence approach allows for courts to support the wellbeing of immigrant victims of family violence by accounting for how immigration policy, social isolation and exclusion, language barriers, and societal racism constrains women's choices and behaviours and exacerbates risks and vulnerabilities. Courts must ensure that adequate and culturally competent services are provided such as magistrates, judges and lawyers with understanding of the dynamics of family violence, access to specialist family violence support, access to free legal advice and the provision of accredited female interpreters.
  - Promote genuine regard and understanding of the law within diverse communities and counteract culturally essentialist beliefs that excuse abuse for "cultural reasons" or allow perpetrators to use women's immigration status to manipulate any part of the justice system as a means of further control and intimidation (Thronson, 2012; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Pendleton, 2003).
  - Ensure that service design centralises the needs of immigrant and refugee women responding to family violence. All services, whether providing family violence specialist support or other types of community service, must be able to offer culturally appropriate support accounting for the specific risks, vulnerabilities and health consequences experienced by immigrant victims of family violence (Tayton et al., 2014; Garcia-Moreno & Watts, 2011; Moynihan, Gaboury, & Onken, 2008; Bhuyan, 2007; Shirwadkar, 2004; Erez & Ammar, 2003; Esteal, 1996).
  - Invest in culturally/ethno-specific family violence services that provide specialist crisis and outreach support to immigrant and refugee women. Many studies have identified

the importance of culturally specific family violence specialist service provision in reducing ongoing risks and vulnerabilities. These agencies must be funded to provide bilingual/bicultural support, interact with the family violence system and justice settings, work respectfully with community members' confidentiality and privacy rights, and provide women and children's counselling and men's behaviour change programs that are culturally specific and delivered in community languages (Tayton et al., 2014; Family Law Council, 2012; Kulwicki et al., 2010; Gill & Banga, 2008; Taft et al., 2008).

- Culturally-sensitive risk assessment and safety planning must be responsive to the particular barriers that immigrant women face such as visa dependence, economic and housing insecurity, isolation, multi-perpetrator risks and culturally or community sanctioned tolerances for violence (Messing et al., 2013; Bhuyan, 2012; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Erez & Ammar, 2003).
- Outreach and communications about family violence laws, systems and services must engage with immigrant families in ways that are central to daily life such as schools, health and community centres, religious settings, apartment buildings, and media outlets, including non-English media using community languages (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Moynihan et al., 2008; Rees & Pease, 2007; Erez & Ammar, 2003).
- Work with the ethno-specific family violence expertise of immigrant women alongside anti-violence community leaders to build prevention programs. Immigrant and refugee women have long-term specific expertise in the field of family violence that makes a strong contribution to thinking and practice (Murdolo & Quazon, 2015; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, 2011). The greater participation of immigrant and refugee women and their communities in family violence service development will ensure improved access (Tayton et al., 2014; Allimant & Anne, 2008).
- Collaboration between victims of violence, community leaders, service providers and other organisations that come into contact with immigrant families (e.g. healthcare settings, churches, community services, immigration lawyers, multicultural agencies) will enhance the effective prevention of family violence through strengthening

## Gaps in knowledge requiring further research

The review highlighted some key gaps in knowledge and suggests areas requiring further research and efforts to overcome methodological limitations:

- community intolerance of violence, and promote culturally appropriate norms for healthy families and relationships (Guruge & Humphreys, 2009; Rees & Pease, 2008; Taft et al., 2008; Erez & Ammar, 2003). Partnerships between ethnic communities, the non-government, civil society sector, and government, should be equal and culturally inclusive (Fisher, 2009).
- Any primary prevention strategies that attempt to empower women must be done on women's own terms in ways that are creative and culturally sensitive rather than prescriptive of western values (Singh, 2010; Erez & Ammar, 2003). At the same time prevention efforts must ensure that communities understand that violence against women is not unique to their own group but rather a patriarchal construct that cuts across all nationalities and backgrounds (Rees & Pease, 2006).
- The effectiveness of family violence risk assessment tools when used with immigrant and refugee women is unknown (our review found one published article from the US on this subject). There is little evidence of the inclusion of any specific risk factors in risk assessment tools despite the fact that in numerous studies immigrant and refugee women themselves have noted specific risk factors to be of particular concern (e.g. multi-perpetrator violence, immigration related threats and community shaming/ostracism).
- There is limited understanding of how the experience of family violence is mediated by differing migration pathways and visa classes, with particularly limited evidence about the experiences of international students, marriage migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This creates gaps in understanding the particular issues, barriers and perspectives of these different cohorts within populations generalised as "immigrant women".
- Lack of understanding of the true impact of acculturation on family violence, with studies presenting contradictory findings as to whether acculturation increases or decreases the prevalence of family violence and violence supporting attitudes in communities.
- Very little is known about the specific impacts of family violence on immigrant and refugee children and how children factor into successful strategies for help-seeking and violence prevention. Issues related to children were not the focus of this review and thus few studies discussed children specifically, however, the literature does highlight that fear for children and a desire for children to enjoy a prosperous and happy life in their new country is both a motivator for women in seeking help, and a deterrent if women have concerns that exposing family violence might jeopardise children's visa status or safety.
- Impacts of justice system interventions in regard to criminal law (particularly pro/mandatory arrest policies), civil law (such as protection orders), and family law matters on immigrant families. Our review found very few studies examining these areas and they are hampered by limitations in sample size and differences in approach to family violence in different legal jurisdictions.
- Identifying protective factors, resilience, personal agency and everyday strategies for safety planning and resisting violence that are used by immigrant and refugee women within their familial, community and cultural contexts.

- Bi-national comparative research into family violence to better understand and improve responses for women in both their homeland and in post-migration diasporic contexts (see Shirdwadkar, 2004 for an example of bi-national research in India and Canada).
- Primary prevention of violence against immigrant and refugee women, particularly in regard to effective community engagement strategies, exploring cross-cultural and intra-cultural diversity of views about concepts of family violence, family life, sex/gender, and migration within intersectional frameworks.

## Gaps and further research in Australia

The areas requiring further research described above are especially applicable to the Australian context due to the significant absence of local peer-reviewed literature published on this subject. Indeed, most of the Australian literature that exists on this subject is found in grey literature policy documents, discussion papers, community-based research and program evaluations. There are, however, some notable exceptions which provide a basis from which to build academic work in this area. This includes work conducted by Fisher (2013), Ghafournia (2011), Ogunsiji et al. (2011), Pittaway et al., (2009), Rees & Pease (2007), Taft et al. (2008) and Zannettino (2012), included in the list of recommended papers in Appendix A. Nevertheless, there are far too few studies to provide a robust evidence base for understanding the range, diversity and complexity of immigrant and refugee women's experiences and help-seeking behaviours in response to family violence in Australia.

In addition to the gaps described above in *Gaps in knowledge requiring further research*, our analysis of the literature and understanding of the Australian context for immigration and family violence as described in *The Australian migration context* suggests that there are specific areas of research required in Australia. These additional gaps include research into the following:

- Prevalence of family violence against immigrant women in Australia on both a national scale and in specific cultural and geographical contexts. This type of research is required to respond to culturally essentialist and unfounded assumptions about prevalence of family violence in ethno-specific communities that currently has little evidence base in Australia.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of "integrated" multi-agency systemic responses to family violence for immigrant and refugee communities. This research must centralise evaluation from the experiences of immigrant and refugee families, rather than from the mainstream point of view, which has typically only considered these populations as an afterthought.
- Documentation of the impact of immigration policy in regard to the Family Violence Provision within different migration pathways and visa classes. Research may take a human rights perspective to investigate how refugees, asylum seekers, marriage migrants, international students and individuals on other visa classes who are experiencing family violence are impacted by immigration policy (and in the case of asylum seekers, offshore processing and mandatory detention). Research is needed to understand the

way immigration policy affects the subsequent experiences of women and children who have experienced family violence in their efforts to access residency rights, support services and justice responses.

- Identification of barriers set up by lack of cultural awareness and immigration related discriminatory practices in Australian family violence intervention systems and policy – this may require an investigation into whether or not anti-immigration attitudes, xenophobia, racism, and policies that foster service exclusion (such as limited services to persons with permanent residency) factor into immigrant women's help-seeking and experiences with service equity. Research is also needed to clarify the limitations on service providers both in their practice frameworks and fiscal resources to assist women with specific immigration and cultural needs.
- Experiences, knowledge and safety management strategies of immigrant and refugee women in the post-migration and place-based context, particularly as specific refugee populations are being placed into various urban and rural settings across Australia, where there may be a lack of services and awareness about effective response for cultural groups. The ASPIRE research project will address this issue in particular, and add to evidence base in this area.

## Concluding remarks

This review of the relevant literature presents a summary of the state of knowledge of key issues related to immigrant and refugee women's experiences of family violence in largely English-speaking countries of resettlement, and identifies critical gaps in the Australian evidence base. These insights will inform the next stages of the ASPIRE project that will work with immigrant and refugee women and immigrant and refugee communities in eight sites across Victoria and Tasmania. This work will contribute to addressing the gaps that have been identified in this review.

# Appendix A

## Tabulated data of recommended literature

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Abraham (1998)	US	To provide a brief overview of some of the manifestations of marital violence among South Asian immigrants in the US.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 South Asian immigrant women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh - all were victims of marital violence and from a range of socioeconomic and religious backgrounds.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collected over a 3 year period.</li> <li>• In-depth, unstructured interviews conducted in English, Hindi, Malayalam and Bengali as primary data source.</li> <li>• Secondary sources of data collected via questionnaires and observations with South Asian organisations and multi-media resources.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysed and coded into thematic categories using an intersectional ethno-gender approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well written, clearly documented sub-set of interviews drawn from a larger study.</li> <li>• Ethno-gender analysis conceptualises marital violence within the normative framework of South Asian immigrant culture and religious institutions.</li> <li>• Results defined marital violence in the South Asian immigrant context as any form of coercion, power and control - physical, sexual, verbal, mental or economic - perpetrated on a woman by her spouse or extended kin, arising from the social relations that are created within the context of marriage.</li> <li>• Recommends the inclusion of an ethno-gender approach for future analysis of domestic violence.</li> <li>• Describes the manifestations of marital violence in the South Asian immigrant context and outlines some strategies for change.</li> <li>• Reflects on the impact of acculturation - being an ethnic minority; role of culture; role of religion; visa status; and misunderstanding by services.</li> <li>• Gender role conditioning and cultural specificities both contribute to marital violence among the South Asian immigrants in the US.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Ahmad et al. (2009)	Canada	To explore why South Asian immigrant women with experiences of partner abuse delay seeking help from professionals.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 South Asian immigrant women in Toronto participating in 3 focus groups.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three focus groups were conducted in Hindi language with South Asian</li> <li>• Research team were South Asian descent and recruited participants via community-based domestic violence agencies.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic analysis conducted on the transcribed data using constant comparison</li> <li>• techniques within and across the focus groups.</li> </ul> <p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32 in-depth interviews with service providers.</li> <li>• 6 focus groups with 24 service providers.</li> <li>• 4 focus groups with 21 women involved with domestic violence services primarily from Punjabi, Bengali, South Asian and Latin American backgrounds.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collected over nearly 3 years in focus groups using a participatory action research framework.</li> <li>• Individual interviews with service providers were conducted in preparation for focus groups with survivors.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic analysis of audio-recorded interviews and focus groups.</li> <li>• Nvivo used to conduct further micro-analysis using multiple coders to maximise consistency and reduce bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear description of design methods, ethics, and safety protocols. Replicable processes that contributes to research and theoretical frameworks about domestic violence and immigration generally.</li> <li>• Study found that in Canada (in 2009), immigration application criteria for cases of sponsorship breakdown due to intimate partner violence are unrealistic and perpetuate systemic barriers for immigrant victims of violence.</li> <li>• Immigration policy barriers contribute to women staying in abusive relationships with children for prolonged periods accruing negative mental health effects.</li> <li>• Emergent and recurrent themes identified in the data were: cultural practices prohibiting disclosure of violence to authorities, reluctance to seek police intervention, isolation tactics and threats of immigration repercussions by abusers, staying for the children and economic security barriers.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Alaggia et al. (2009)	Canada	To identify factors that facilitate or impede women from disclosing IPV, traced help-seeking actions in relation to obstacles women encounter due to immigration status and sponsorship relationship.	Qualitative Participatory Action Research	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32 in-depth interviews with service providers.</li> <li>• 6 focus groups with 24 service providers.</li> <li>• 4 focus groups with 21 women involved with domestic violence services primarily from Punjabi, Bengali, South Asian and Latin American backgrounds.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collected over nearly 3 years in focus groups using a participatory action research framework.</li> <li>• Individual interviews with service providers were conducted in preparation for focus groups with survivors.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic analysis of audio-recorded interviews and focus groups.</li> <li>• Nvivo used to conduct further micro-analysis using multiple coders to maximise consistency and reduce bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear description of design methods, ethics, and safety protocols. Replicable processes that contributes to research and theoretical frameworks about domestic violence and immigration generally.</li> <li>• Study found that in Canada (in 2009), immigration application criteria for cases of sponsorship breakdown due to intimate partner violence are unrealistic and perpetuate systemic barriers for immigrant victims of violence.</li> <li>• Immigration policy barriers contribute to women staying in abusive relationships with children for prolonged periods accruing negative mental health effects.</li> <li>• Emergent and recurrent themes identified in the data were: cultural practices prohibiting disclosure of violence to authorities, reluctance to seek police intervention, isolation tactics and threats of immigration repercussions by abusers, staying for the children and economic security barriers.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Ammar et al. (2012)	US	To examine the decision-making factors, accessibility, and effectiveness of civil protection orders for immigrant women abused by their intimate partners.	Mixed method quantitative and qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 153 predominantly low income immigrant women from various backgrounds including Asian, Latin American, African, Middle Eastern, Eastern and Western European.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposive sampling of women who sought assistance for domestic violence from social service organisation, shelters, or legal aid agencies.</li> <li>• Interviews conducted by domestic violence advocates from 14 different agencies across several US states.</li> <li>• Developed a survey tool from the COSMOS Study Questionnaire, the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory—Short Form, the IPV Threat Appraisal scale, the Conflict Tactics scale and the Lifetime Trauma and Victimization History scale.</li> <li>• A few qualitative questions were included to capture experiences in pursuing protection orders.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPSS used for quantitative analysis including descriptive and frequencies, cross tabulations, linear, and logistic regression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed description on COSMOS study questionnaire and other scales used to collect data and research methodologies. Very robust sample size across large geographic area and range of immigrant backgrounds.</li> <li>• 89% of the participants had no prior knowledge of protection orders before they turned to the legal or social services organisation for help.</li> <li>• 81% of the women had obtained protection orders at some point, and almost 58% had current protection orders in place.</li> <li>• Decisions to file for protection orders were fear from threats, exposure to previous trauma, and economic security.</li> <li>• 20% did not file for protection orders citing that they did not think they needed a protection order, thought it would make things worse with their partner, did not know about protection orders, and were afraid of what law enforcement would do.</li> <li>• 57%, said that the protection order was very helpful, helpful, or a little helpful. 70% stated that filing for a protection order made them feel safer; however, 41% said the order made them more vulnerable because of fear of retaliation from the abusive partner due to separation-related violence.</li> <li>• Unique factors also emerged such as immigration-related abuse and the unpreparedness of the justice system to serve abused women with diverse needs requires further research and more appropriate personnel training and policy.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Anitha (2008)	UK	To inform policy changes by documenting the nature of domestic violence faced by South Asian women with no recourse to public funds, the process of leaving the abusive relationship, the service pathways during and after exit, experiences of health, welfare and legal services.	Qualitative Participatory Action Research	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 South Asian women (Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu speaking) who had left violent relationships and had no recourse to public funds due to their status as recent marriage migrants to the UK.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured in-depth interviews and questionnaires conducted within by trained survivors of domestic violence.</li> <li>• Snowball sampling used for recruitment.</li> <li>• 8 refuges provided snapshot data on numbers of residents with no recourse to public funds.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic coding using NVivo and Excel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative study transferring research knowledge and skills to DV survivors using PAR methodology to investigate one of the most significant barriers to help-seeking in UK immigration policy.</li> <li>• Study found that the UK's "Domestic Violence Rule" which permits victims of domestic violence to apply for permanent residency fails to take into account the multiple dimensions of disadvantage that recent marriage migrants face.</li> <li>• While women wait for visas to remain in the UK after an abusive sponsored relationship ends, they have no recourse to public funds meaning they have no income or access to public housing.</li> <li>• Despite these barriers, women do attempt to access services to find the help they need to leave the abusive relationship, often repeatedly. The effectiveness of services to respond remains highly variable and inconsistent.</li> </ul>
Ben-Porat (2010)	Israel	Ben-Porat (2010)	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 teachers and 17 social work students (12 women and 5 men) in the Ethiopian social worker program.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluations of social workers practice prepared by program directors.</li> <li>• Focus groups with program students and teachers.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic analysis with 2 'judges' - one with experience in community work and other working in immigrant communities; consensus approach used to agree on key themes in the data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to describing the program evaluation, the study offers a good discussion of the contexts for immigrants moving from traditional to western societies.</li> <li>• The program was effective in engaging men using violence in the community which was seen as an important outcome.</li> <li>• Outcomes of this program demonstrate the need for integration of individual, group and community work and the use of culturally sensitive methods in interventions with those groups of immigrants, based on multi-systemic collaboration.</li> <li>• The program promoted empowerment among members of the Ethiopian community and create a new balance in those families, where attention is provided to both the violent husband and to the wife, the victim of violence.</li> <li>• The study highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity where the social workers believed their capacities to effectively and empathetically engage with community had improved.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Bui & Morash (2008)	US	To report on the perceptions of Vietnamese immigrant women and the domestic violence service professionals with a focus on 1) the dynamics of work activity and status change in relations to intimate partner violence; and 2) insights into other reasons for violence, notably jealousy and the practice of sending remittances to relatives in the home country.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 155 Vietnamese immigrant women who were married to or had an intimate relationship with a Vietnamese immigrant man.</li> <li>• 13 service providers whose roles involved working with women experiencing violence.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment via social service providers, radio advertising and snowball sampling.</li> <li>• In depth interviews with a survey instrument that was used in two research projects. The data was subsequently combined.</li> <li>• First project focused on factors contributing to domestic violence and abused women's help-seeking behaviour. Second project focused on the intervention experiences of abused Vietnamese immigrant women.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic coding in QSR N5 Information from different sources and geographic areas was used to establish the validity of findings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigorous paper, large sample of participants with quantitative and qualitative data collected.</li> <li>• The findings provided comprehensive summaries of the reported incidence of physical, sexual and verbal abuse among participants.</li> <li>• Women with unemployed partners were more likely to report experiencing abuse.</li> <li>• The qualitative analyses found key issues including: significance of the erosion of men's status following migration, issues with jealousy because of women's increased power and agency following migration, men resorting to other ways of being "men" (e.g. drinking and gambling), issues of remittances causing friction in families where men are keen to preserve social status by sending remittances to family in Vietnam.</li> <li>• Men attempt to overcome the perceived loss of masculine identity through a symbolic reassertion of power and privilege as it is constructed in Vietnamese culture and reinforced by aspects of US culture.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Burman & Chantler (2005)	UK	To examine service responses to minoritised women surviving domestic violence, highlighting both general and specific ways that women from historically and currently marginalised cultural backgrounds and subjected to racialised oppression within contemporary Britain are systematically disadvantaged, if not excluded, from accessing support and provision.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews were carried out with 13 primary domestic violence services.</li> <li>Information generated from face to face or telephone contact with 26 other organisations.</li> <li>23 survivors drawn from community backgrounds including African, African-Caribbean, Irish, Jewish and South Asian.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment of survivors through their involvement with services included in the study.</li> <li>Semi-structured interviews conducted with service providers and survivors.</li> <li>Within the PAR methodology, the final phase of the project contributed to service provision by setting up short-term support groups for, and in consultation with, survivors.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thematic analysis of convergent and divergent themes emerging from iterative readings of the texts as discussed by the research team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grounded PAR practice in the methodology contributing both to research as well as the practical development of services for immigrant victims of domestic violence.</li> <li>Interviews with both survivors and workers were oriented around the following five areas: eliciting accounts of experiences of identifying and using services; barriers to accessing services; meanings and perceptions of domestic violence, and any associations of cultural specificities in relation to these; the role of children in relation to these issues; and service development needs in order to facilitate women's transitions out of the service to independent living.</li> <li>Study highlighted the complex and intersecting connections between domestic violence, law, mental health provision, entitlement to welfare services, which function alongside constructions of cultural identifications, structures of racism, class and gendered oppression. All these contribute to maintain women, particularly minoritised women, in violent relationships.</li> <li>Dominant culturally essentialist explanations of violence and gender norms is akin to cultural pathologisation that obscures more state and collusion with violence.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Chang et al. (2009)	US	To provide the first national estimates of the prevalence and correlates of intimate partner violence among Asian-Americans.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1470 Asian Americans</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on data extracted from the National Latino and Asian American Study where face to face interviews were conducted in English, Chinese, Tagalog, or Vietnamese and structured questionnaire administered using an adaption of the conflict tactics scale.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multivariate statistical analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results suggest that rates of IPV among Asian Americans are low compared to the general US population. Minor violence victimisation by a current intimate partner was reported by 10.2% of women and 12% of Asian-American men.</li> <li>• A greater proportion of participants admitted having perpetrated IPV than having been a victim.</li> <li>• Predictors of IPV included younger age, socioeconomic status, alcohol- and substance-use disorders, depression, ethnicity, and being US-born.</li> <li>• Results suggest the need for additional research to examine the interactions between gender, ethnicity, and acculturation to develop group-specific models of IPV risk and resilience within diverse Asian-American groups.</li> </ul>
Chaudhuri et al. (2014)	US	To understand how patriarchal family arrangements and culture were related to South Asian immigrant women's abuse and their strategies for coping with it in the United States (US).	Mixed method quantitative and qualitative study using participatory action research methods	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 women – 8 who had not experienced abuse and 32 women who had experienced abuse, all from South Asian immigrant backgrounds (Indian also Pakistani, Nepalese, Bangladeshi).</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposive selection for recruitment.</li> <li>• In-depth structured interviews conducted in English or participants' preferred language.</li> <li>• Ethical safety protocols in place to minimise risk.</li> <li>• Quantitative measures based on the Conflict Tactics Scale and the Battering Experience Scale.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used an ethno-gender and narrative approach to analysis.</li> <li>• Coded key themes using NVivo 8 software.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper presents clear descriptions of research process and results noting limitations, and providing detailed and nuanced analysis and insight about women's strategies for surviving and resisting violence – an often overlooked area of study.</li> <li>• Defines the patriarchal bargaining framework to highlight the issue of women's agency within the constraints of family and culture.</li> <li>• Women confronting abuse and extreme patriarchy most often used three strategies in their initial, and often repeated, efforts to manage it: 1) they became unnoticeable; 2) obeyed their husbands; and 3) prayed and relied on their faith.</li> <li>• Participants in consistently non-abusive relationships did not aim for changes in visa status or employment; rather, their goals were more consistent with the goals of their marital families.</li> <li>• None of the women with abuse histories talked about going back to their home countries.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Du Mont & Forte (2012)	Canada	To compare immigrant and Canadian-born women on the physical and psychological consequences of intimate partner violence as well as examine important sociodemographic, health and social support and network factors that may shape their experiences of abuse.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6859 women reported contact with a current or former partner in the previous 5 years, of whom 1480 reported having experienced emotional, financial, physical and/or sexual IPV.</li> <li>• Of these women, 218 (15%) were immigrants and 1262 (85%) were Canadian-born.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on data extracted from Statistics Canada's 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) – a national, population-based cross-sectional survey.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multivariate statistical analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds to the very limited research examining the physical and psychological consequences of IPV among immigrant compared with non-immigrant women; however, as suggested by the study, future research should include larger diverse samples of immigrant women.</li> <li>• Immigrant women were less likely than Canadian-born women to report having experienced emotional abuse and physical and/or sexual violence from a current or former partner.</li> <li>• There were no differences between immigrant and Canadian-born women in the physical and psychological consequences of IPV.</li> <li>• Abused immigrant women's lower levels of trust for certain individuals (neighbours, people at work/school) and experiences of discrimination may create help-seeking barriers and reveals the need for IPV-related intervention and prevention services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Erez et al. (2009)	US	To analyse the relationship between immigration and domestic violence in an effort to highlight “immigrant” as a separate and multiplicative aspect of identity, violence, and oppression.	Mixed method quantitative and qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 137 women who had immigrated to the US from 35 countries across the globe and had experienced domestic violence.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenience sampling via bicultural workers who conducted in depth interviews and questionnaires in California, New York, Florida, Texas, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative data were calibrated and the open-ended questions transcripts were analysed through coding techniques within an intersectional framework and feminist criminology analysis of domestic violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality, well contextualised and very comprehensive explanation of research methods, high quality ethical and safety standards, extensive and nuanced findings – based on a 2003 study which has produced numerous articles and subsequent research.</li> <li>• The experiences of battered immigrants are different from US citizens and yet similar to one another, regardless of country of origin.</li> <li>• Builds on the substantial literature on intersectionality to reveal the intersection of immigration and domestic violence.</li> <li>• Over time, immigration shaped the meaning that battered women gave to the controlling behaviours and violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partners.</li> <li>• Women distinguished between attitudes and practices related to domestic violence in their country of origin and in the US</li> </ul>
Fernbrant et al. (2011)	Sweden	To determine the prevalence of intimate partner violence amongst foreign-born women in Sweden.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2054 immigrant women (18–64 years).</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigated data about the population group using data obtained from the 2004 Public Health Survey in the Swedish province of Scania.</li> <li>• Examined exposure to violence based on two questions in the larger health survey “Have you at any time in the last 12 months been exposed to threat of violence dangerous or serious enough to scare you?” and “Have you at any time in the last 12 months been exposed to physical violence?”. </li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multivariate statistical analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality quantitative study, providing useful and generalisable prevalence estimates. As the data was extracted from a larger health survey the measures of violence and analysis is quite narrow (physical violence only).</li> <li>• Foreign-born women reported significantly higher rates of both perceived threat of violence and exposure to physical violence compared with Swedish-born women.</li> <li>• Migration may confer an increased risk of interpersonal violence against women. Although the underlying causes of this increased risk are unknown, a complex set of factors may be involved, including socioeconomic disadvantage.</li> </ul>

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Finfgeld-Connell & Johnson (2013)	UK, Canada and US	To better understand domestic abuse among South Asian women in westernised locales and to make evidence-based inferences by synthesising isolated qualitative findings across studies to identify commonalities and make generalisations that are intended to enhance research, practice, and policy formation.	Qualitative systematic review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Databases searched: CINAHL, GenderWatch, MEDLINE, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, PsycINFO, Social Service Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts.</li> <li>• Search terms: numerous variations described in the paper related to domestic violence, South Asian identity, immigration and countries of origin and emigration.</li> <li>• Inclusions: qualitative and mixed method research related to abused South Asian women living in English-speaking western countries, which was eventually limited to the UK, Canada and the US with no limiter on date.</li> <li>• Exclusions: Any report that did not meet the above criteria or assessed as poor quality.</li> <li>• Search resulted in 30 English-language research reports that represented 20 unique investigations (some papers referred to the same study).</li> <li>• Estimated that the combined studies represents data from at least 436 South Asian women, 36 health care or social service providers, 17 South Asian on-perpetrating men, 16 South Asian community members and unknown amount of individuals who inadvertently provided data as a result of participant observation.</li> <li>• Findings were extracted, assessed for quality, and analysed using an iterative content analysis approach.</li> </ul>	<p>Review results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed and replicable descriptions of literature search and analysis methodology which specifically considered the rigour of studies, level of saturation in analyses and logical coherence in conceptual frameworks</li> <li>• In 13 studies, no theoretical framework was identified. Variations on feminist theory noted in six studies, others utilised social constructionist, ethnography, and action research frameworks.</li> <li>• Data collection generated primarily via personal interviews, as well as focus groups and participant observation.</li> <li>• Thematic or categorical data analysis methods were commonly cited.</li> </ul> <p>Summary of key issues includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideals for marriage in South Asian cultures and paternalism where men consider themselves superior and are granted special privileges while women should be silent and subservient (even if well educated).</li> <li>• Women have limited input into family decisions and financial matters which contributes to undermining sense of self and autonomy.</li> <li>• Understanding and attitudes about violence included minimisation of seriousness, excusing stresses experienced by partners, becoming fatalistic, feeling guilty or responsible. Details of violence, psychological abuse and isolation tactics reported.</li> <li>• When help-seeking women expressed concerns about losing families, hope to resolve violence and keep families intact, reluctance to seek legal responses, worries about immigration status, distrust of police carried over from homeland experiences.</li> <li>• Women likely to endure violence for several years and then prompted to seek help when situations become intolerable or they feared for wellbeing of children.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Fisher (2013)	Australia	To investigate the interrelationship between experiences of domestic violence, changed and changing gender and family roles and responsibilities with African Australians.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54 members of the Somalian, Sierra Leonean, Ethiopian, Liberian and Sudanese communities in Perth.</li> <li>• Focus groups with 24 professionals from health and social service agencies.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth interviews undertaken by trained bicultural community members.</li> <li>• Focus groups conducted by researcher.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic using</li> <li>• Intersectionality conceptual framework.</li> <li>• Coding using constant comparison method.</li> <li>• Data analysis conducted in QSR NVivo 8.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants views on domestic violence included discussions about changing and changed gender and family roles and expectations.</li> <li>• Analysis showed that the main themes about the interrelationship between domestic violence and gender roles were: “male loss of the breadwinner role and status,” “financial independence,” and “mismatch between formal response and expectations”.</li> <li>• Paper provides excellent details on research methods, data collection, analysis, confidentiality and safety protocols.</li> </ul>
Frye et al. (2008)	US	To evaluate the contribution of neighbourhood level factors to likelihood of intimate partner femicide (IPF).	Quantitative (retrospective research)	<p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical examiner data for 1861 femicide victims killed between 1990 and 1999.</li> <li>• Data from archival information on 59 New York City neighbourhoods.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlled for neighbourhood level income.</li> <li>• Looked at other neighbourhood factors and individual factors including race, foreign-born, age, socioeconomic status.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strongest predictors of being a victim of IPV were being foreign-born and younger.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood level factors were not significant after controlling for income.</li> <li>• Reliable and valid study with relevant findings concerning risk of being foreign-born for IPF.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Ghafournia (2011)	Australia	To explore the status of battered immigrant women in immigration policy.	Policy analysis	Analysis and overview of family/domestic violence issues in Australian immigration policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful analysis of the impacts and gaps in immigration policy and legislation for immigrant women experiencing family/domestic.</li> <li>Immigration law changed in 1994 to enable non-Australian partners of Australians to apply for permanent residency if experiencing domestic violence.</li> <li>Notes mixed findings of research on prevalence of domestic violence in CALD communities.</li> </ul>
Guruge et al. (2010)	Canada	To explore Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants' perspectives on factors contributing to IPV perpetrated by men in a post-migration context.	Exploratory qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 Tamil community leaders.</li> <li>41 Tamil men and women in 8 focus groups (4 with women and 4 with men).</li> <li>6 women who had experienced IPV in interviews.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combined opportunity, snowball, and purposive sampling.</li> <li>Interviews.</li> <li>Focus groups.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inductive thematic analysis informed by postcolonial feminist perspective and an ecosystemic framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants conceptualised production of IPV post-migration as involving: 1) experiences of violence pre- and during migration; 2) gender inequity within marriage; 3) changes to social networks and supports; and 4) changes in socioeconomic status and privilege.</li> <li>Individual interviews did not include women currently living with abusive husbands.</li> <li>Community leaders facilitated focus groups and this may have constrained participants' preparedness to speak openly.</li> <li>Describes purpose of conducting research with community leaders and with survivors of violence to gather diverse viewpoints about macro-systemic factors (community leaders) and individual experiences (survivors).</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Heise, L. (1998).	Global	To encourage the widespread adoption of an integrated, ecological framework for understanding the origins of gender-based violence.	Theoretical analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The model is adapted from the work of Belsky (1980) to develop a four-tiered ecological framework to conceptualise gender based violence.</li> <li>This work is based on a review of North American academic literature in anthropology, psychology, sociology, cross-cultural comparative studies to expand on existing theories and develop a heuristic tool that organises this research into a holistic framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heise's ecological framework is an important and valuable contribution to understanding violence against framework, both incorporating feminist understandings while also accounting for other individual factors and sociological conditions. This work is widely accepted as a theoretical foundation for programming and research.</li> <li>An ecological approach conceptualises violence as a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors.</li> <li>The four-tiered analysis deconstructs gender-based violence at the personal level, microsystem level, exosystem level and macrosystem level and establishes factors that are predictive of abuse at each level of the social ecology.</li> <li>Presents findings related to all types of violence against women to encourage a more integrated approach to theory building regarding gender-based abuse.</li> </ul>
Menjívar & Salcido (2002)	Global	To draw on available literature and delineate a framework to explain how immigration-specific factors exacerbate the already vulnerable position of immigrant women experiencing domestic violence.	Literature review	Thematic synthesis of OECD literature (limited information about methods).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A definitive and often cited reference point for literature about domestic violence related to immigrant and refugee women. Includes a relatively lengthy discussion of the Australian response.</li> <li>The review showed that the incidence of domestic violence is not higher than it is in the native population but rather that the experiences of immigrant women in domestic violence situations are often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants.</li> <li>Case studies reported in the literature were examined to identify those immigrant-specific factors that make the experiences of immigrant women in domestic violence situations unique to the rest of the population in the host country and, in some cases, unique to the individual immigrant group.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Michau et al. (2014)	Global	To describe programming to prevent violence against women and girls with emphasis on the importance of systematic, sustained programming across the social ecology to transform gender-power inequalities.	Theoretical analysis	The authors drew on practical experience and evidence from programming and used Heise's ecological framework to understand the drivers and outcomes of violence against women and girls.	<p>Excellent and comprehensive overview presenting the possibilities for preventing violence against women and girls.</p> <p>The paper found that effective prevention policy and programming is founded on five core principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. analysis and actions to prevent violence across the social ecology (individual, interpersonal, community, and societal);</li> <li>2. intervention designs based on an intersectional gender-power analysis;</li> <li>3. theory-informed models developed on the basis of evidence;</li> <li>4. sustained investment in multisector interventions;</li> <li>5. aspirational programming that promotes personal and collective thought, and enables activism on women's and girls' rights to violence-free lives.</li> </ol> <p>Key messages from the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence against women and girls in low and middle-income countries can be prevented through interventions that target unequal gender-power relations.</li> <li>• Various sectors (e.g., health, criminal justice, security, faith, education, and civil society) should work together and use diverse strategies across the social ecology to achieve meaningful change.</li> <li>• Programming should be informed by theories of change that address the complexity of individual and social change processes.</li> <li>• Innovative collaboration and coordination across sectors is necessary - the health sector is well positioned to contribute to prevention efforts.</li> <li>• Evidence shows that changes in attitudes and behaviours do not need a generation, but can be achieved within shorter timeframes if intervention models adhere to the five key principles.</li> <li>• Women's movements are central in the design and implementation of high-quality prevention programmes.</li> <li>• Investment is needed in programmatic innovations, research-activist collaborations, and health-sector leadership.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Morash et al. (2007)	US	To identify domestic violence risk factors for Vietnamese American women.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 129 Vietnamese women, 81 were known to have experienced abuse and 48 had not.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purposive sample for women who had experienced abuse; snowball sample for comparison group.</li> <li>• Focus groups to inform design of research tools.</li> <li>• Interviews with trained Vietnamese-speaking female interviewers.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bivariate analysis and multivariate analyses of risk factors.</li> <li>• Reliability analysis conducted to test reliability of scales for the prediction of seriousness of 3 types of abuse from hypothesised risk factors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well conducted and described methodology.</li> <li>• Limitations of non-random sampling and most women were low socioeconomic status impeding on detection of empirical differences, depending on women's access to resources.</li> <li>• Feminist theory that is nonspecific to any national or cultural or immigrant group is useful in predicting which Vietnamese American immigrant women are in abusive relationships.</li> <li>• Men's domination in decision making, an indicator of a patriarchal family structure, was an important predictor of physical and verbal abuse.</li> <li>• Disagreements about gender roles and family life also were significantly predictive of women being in seriously abusive relationships.</li> <li>• Partner's threat of divorce to jeopardise a woman's immigration status was seen as a pull to stay in an abusive relationship.</li> <li>• "Picture brides" (marriage migrants) were at heightened risk for physical and sexual abuse.</li> </ul>
Ogunsiji et al., (2011)	Australia	To report experiences of intimate partner violence with West African women living in Australia.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 English-speaking West African women.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawn from a larger study in which IPV identified as central issue.</li> <li>• Convenience and snowball sampling.</li> <li>• In-depth interviews.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transcribed verbatim and</li> <li>• analysed thematically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good description of methods and results.</li> <li>• Contributes to limited literature on African refugees and immigrants in Australia.</li> <li>• Limitations by interviewing English speaking women only, but did conduct recruitment until data saturation.</li> <li>• 18 women had experienced IPV with descriptions forming two sub-themes: "suffering in silence" and "reluctance to seek help".</li> <li>• Participants also described: feelings of shame; impact of lack of extended family as mediators; impact of visa dependence on spouse/family; fear of consequences of reporting IPV; perceived cultural acceptability of IPV; different understandings of meaning of violence/abuse; perception of help seeking as futile.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Pan et al. (2006)	US	To describe the results of needs assessment and community dialogues conducted by the Ahimsa Project for Safe Families - an innovative collaborative project that addresses domestic violence in Latino, Somali and Vietnamese immigrant and refugee communities in San Diego.	Needs assessment	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120 community members total - 40 members from each of ethnic community groups within which there were subset groups of 10 men, 10 women, 10 boys, and 10 girls.</li> <li>• Seven focus groups and 20 interviews with social service providers and law enforcement agencies.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment through community groups and snowball sampling.</li> <li>• Interviewees were bilingual, bicultural workers in the Ahimsa Project.</li> <li>• Structured interview guide used to conduct needs assessment in community languages.</li> <li>• Interviews included a vignettes portraying domestic violence scenarios to assist participants to reflect and respond without needing to discuss personal stories or fear repercussions.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content analysis interpreted by Ahimsa staff, project manager, and community board members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear presentations of key findings (in tables) for each participant group.</li> <li>• Study noted that immigrant groups' definitions of family violence were different from mainstream service system definitions – domestic/family violence needed to be reframed as "Family Harmony".</li> <li>• Issues raised by communities included: intergenerational violence, concerns with childrearing practices and physical abuse, language and cultural barriers for accessing services. Immigrant status reported as serious deterrent for women from calling police and also used by men as form of control.</li> <li>• Somali participants identified issues related to gender role changes, family resources for resolving violence were not always available following migration, legal responses are unfamiliar involving outsiders.</li> <li>• Vietnamese participants discussed issues of shame, avoiding involvement of outsiders, strong links to economic stressors (e.g. sending remittances, gambling), women's responsibility for ensuring family harmony.</li> <li>• Latino participants noted shifts in gender roles becoming more equitable, economic security issues, immigrant status and drug use as factors contributing to family violence and deterring women from seeking help.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Pearce & Sokoloff (2013)	US	To describe the lived reality of immigrants in Baltimore who experience IPV and how they reach out to community and public sector remedies.	Mixed method quantitative and qualitative study	<p><b>Participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 women from 5 language groups surveyed about domestic violence in their communities.</li> <li>• 27 professionals from 10 Baltimore-based agencies (5 DV focused and 5 immigration focused) in focus groups and interviews.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data collection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants for surveys recruited through snowball and convenience sampling</li> <li>• Focus groups with 25 professionals held in 8 agencies.</li> <li>• In-depth interviews with two individual staff members in two other agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings were analysed using intersectionality theory and examined through the lenses of four social locations of immigration: contexts of exit, contexts of reception, social class and racial hierarchies, and cultural heritage.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key findings from focus groups/interviews with professionals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals reported a prevalence of IPV among foreign-born women.</li> <li>• Evident that domestic violence disclosures occurred at agencies whose core business is not addressing domestic violence.</li> <li>• Service gaps existed due to high demand which was increasing due to growing immigrant population.</li> <li>• Cultural essentialist models are highly problematic and there are ongoing concerns about the US immigration system's effectiveness in support victims of domestic violence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Findings from survey:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% viewed domestic violence as a problem in their communities; with 40% viewing the problem as "very serious".</li> <li>• 100% agreed that domestic violence needs to be stopped.</li> <li>• Only 16% were not aware that domestic violence is illegal, although 24% were unaware that this abuse carries criminal punishment.</li> <li>• 64% of women did not know about the Violence Against Women Act.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Pittaway et al., (2009)	Australia	To document resettlement and integration experiences of refugees and immigrants from Horn of Africa (HoA).	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 men and 46 women.</li> <li>• Aged 18-50, the majority in the 25-40 age bracket. 46 participants were from Sudan, the balance were evenly spread from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, with two from Kenya and one from Uganda.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants identified via the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency (HARDA).</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews and community consultations.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic with conceptual framework of integration and social connection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to limited literature on African refugees and immigrants to Australia.</li> <li>• Clear and detailed descriptions of methodology.</li> <li>• Refugees and immigrants from the HoA are settling and integrating successfully into Australian society and are making significant contributions to social, economic, and cultural life.</li> <li>• Participants identified serious problems accessing appropriate employment, housing, education, and health services which are described as both markers and potential means to integration.</li> <li>• Although domestic violence was not the focus of this study, it was reported widely including discussions about: challenges to “head of family” from children and women; confusion about role of child protection authorities; importance of keeping families together; role of churches, mosques, sport, in increasing connection; fear of police and authorities; lack of information about “the system”; women not knowing their rights and men using visa status as means of control; barriers for women to report domestic violence.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Prozman et al. (2011)	Netherlands	To explore the prevalence of intimate partner violence experienced by women (immigrant and native-born) attending general practice and to assess the association between IPV and depression.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The study had a response rate of 63% (221 of 352 women) and the results from 214 women were included in the study.</li> <li>41% of the 214 women were immigrants.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-sectional survey (self-administered questionnaires) of women (18 years and over) conducted within 15 general practices across Rotterdam.</li> <li>Women were screened for sociodemographic factors, IPV and depression using the Composite Abuse Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory, which were translated into Arabic and Turkish.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPSS 14 and Pearson's chi-square was used to correlate IPV and depression.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30% of the women attending general practise ever experienced IPV.</li> <li>Immigrants experienced IPV 1.5 times more often compared to Dutch women.</li> <li>A significant association between IPV and depression was found - half of the abused women were suffering from depression and more than three-quarters of depressed women ever experienced IPV.</li> <li>IPV is common in women attending general practice and it is significantly associated with depression.</li> <li>To improve recognition of abused women, doctors should ask depressed women if they ever experienced IPV.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Raj & Silverman (2003)	US	To assess the association between immigration related factors and IPV amongst South Asian immigrant women.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 160 South Asian women.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment through word of mouth, flyers and snow-ball sampling methods.</li> <li>• Data collected via self-administered anonymous surveys which included assessments of demographics; immigrant status; social isolation; acculturation (via a scale created for this study); participants' knowledge of IPV services; experiences of violence (via Conflict Tactics Scales).</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logistic regression analyses with odds ratios (ORs) and confidence intervals (CIs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High prevalence of IPV (40.8%) and low awareness of IPV services (50.6%).</li> <li>• 28.1% reported no family in the US</li> <li>• 10.0% indicated that they would have no social support if abused.</li> <li>• Lower social support was significantly related to sexual abuse.</li> <li>• Lower acculturation, no family in the US, lower social support and no social support if abused were significantly more likely to report IPV-related injury.</li> <li>• Participants who immigrated in the past 2 years were significantly more likely to report no knowledge of IPV services.</li> <li>• Non-US-born participants were 3.5 times as likely to report physical abuse, almost 4 times as likely to report IPV-related injury, and two times as likely to report no knowledge of IPV services.</li> <li>• Study appears well conducted; however the sample is skewed toward higher socioeconomic status and possible translation biases.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Rees & Pease (2007)	Australia	To examine the significance of traumatic history, social and economic context, cultural differences and changed gender identities on the perception and experiences of domestic violence in refugee families.	Qualitative Participatory Action Research	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrant women and men from Iraq, Ethiopia, Sudan, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia.</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment via purposive sampling targeting participants with knowledge associated with the refugee and settlement experience.</li> <li>Direct experience of domestic violence was not a prerequisite; however, participants were informed that domestic violence would be included in the study questions alongside other settlement and wellbeing issues.</li> <li>78 participants in 8 focus groups using “storyboard” methods</li> <li>Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 17 men and 25 women.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thematic with intersectionality as theoretical framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper does not generalise, noting counter examples and diversity of experience amongst participant responses.</li> <li>Excellent description of methodologies and valuable contribution to empirical and theoretical literature.</li> <li>Participants discussed these key items: impact of social isolation; men's beliefs about women's increased independence; beliefs about reporting domestic violence and undermining men's authority and family cohesion; protective influence of the law; help seeking as betrayal of culture; fear of consequences of reporting; lack of trust in service providers; factors perceived to shape men's behaviours; education of women perceived by women to be protective; impact of prior trauma and men's mental health; impact of lack of extended family as mediators.</li> </ul>
Sokoloff (2008)	US	To describe an historical context and define an intersectional and interlocking analysis within which to study domestic violence in immigrant communities in the US	Theoretical analysis	Essay using the intersectional framework for understanding domestic violence in immigrant contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article provides an overview of how the intersectional and interlocking analysis assists to understand domestic violence in immigrant communities in the US.</li> <li>Immigrant communities are using interlocking methods to deal with violence against women and addressing structural/cultural changes that are educative for immigrant and non-immigrant communities alike.</li> <li>Challenges exist between mainstream approach to domestic violence (which promotes separation of survivor and abuser) and solutions explored by immigrant advocacy groups that provide traditional batterer intervention/treatment approaches and survivor support programs alongside other community interventions that involve both the abuser and survivor.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Taft et al. (2008)	Australia, US & Vietnam	To review literature on intimate partner violence in Vietnam and among Vietnamese communities globally.	Comprehensive literature review using systematic search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Databases searched: MEDLINE, CINAHL, PsychLIT, CSA Social Services abstracts, Ovid, ProQuest, Infor-mit, Expanded Academic and Embase.</li> <li>Search terms: Viet* AND terms for domestic or family violence or intimate partner violence or abuse; NOT child or elder abuse.</li> <li>Inclusions: articles in English, French and Vietnamese with no limiter on date.</li> <li>Exclusions: excluded articles which were neither original research nor thorough reviews.</li> <li>Grey literature search on selected websites and author's libraries.</li> <li>Results organised by country and thematically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review found no relevant articles in French or Vietnamese and no well-evaluated intervention studies in Australia or overseas. Limitations of studies found for the review impact on the findings.</li> <li>Vietnamese victims and perpetrators share similarities globally, especially socioeconomic determinants and other outcomes of IPV; however, immigration and refugee status does produce unique stressors.</li> <li>Numerous key recommendations provided in the report including community engagement prevention methods; improved ethno-specific information and outreach; importance of the role of bilingual and bicultural staff; and holding male perpetrators accountable through justice responses and CALD male behaviour change programs.</li> </ul>
Vatnar & Bjørkly (2010)	Norway	To analyse differences between Norwegian-born and immigrant help-seeking women in terms of IPV categories; IPV severity, frequency, duration, regularity and predictability; guilt and shame; partner's ethnicity; and children being exposed to parental IPV.	Quantitative study (cross-sectional)	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>157 women (105 Norwegian and 52 immigrant).</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment via family counselling, police and shelters.</li> <li>All women had contact with services to seek help for IPV and had experience IPV within the previous 6 months.</li> <li>Face to face structured questionnaires: Structured Socio-demographic Questionnaire, and Semi-structured IPV Questionnaire.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistical analysis using: Mann-Whitney U tests; Kendall's tau-b; univariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and detailed description of methodologies.</li> <li>As all participants were recruited after seeking help, the study does not support or reject any hypotheses regarding comparative prevalence rates.</li> <li>Immigrant women had lower income, were less likely to use alcohol and had increased likelihood of an immigrant partner.</li> <li>No differences found concerning IPV severity, frequency, guilt, shame, or category (physical, psychological, sexual) between immigrant and non-immigrant participants.</li> <li>Immigrant women were better at predicting physical violence but also had an increased risk of physical injury related to sexual violence.</li> <li>Children of immigrant parents were more likely to be exposed to violence.</li> <li>Immigrant status of partner made no difference to outcomes.</li> <li>Psycho-social consequences of being an immigrant (such as lower socio-demographic characteristics) constituted the main differences between groups.</li> </ul>

Reference	Country	Objective of research or paper	Study design/ Type of paper	Methodology	Summary of results or discussion
Zannettino (2012)	Australia	To explore factors that impact on domestic violence in South Australian Liberian community.	Qualitative study	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 women from Liberian background</li> </ul> <p>Data collection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment via the Liberian Women's Gathering.</li> <li>• 17 focus groups over a 5 month period.</li> <li>• Consultations held with community leaders.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic using Heise &amp; Dutton Nested Ecological Model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptions of methods somewhat unclear; however study contributes to very limited body of research in Australia.</li> <li>• Findings were used to develop a practice manual for domestic violence sector to better support Liberian women.</li> <li>• Participants discussed these key items: risk associated with disruption to traditional gender roles; beliefs surrounding rape in marriage and acceptability of using violence within family for discipline; beliefs that parenting is a woman's responsibility and women punished for children's "misbehaviour"; socioeconomic factors, use of Centrelink; fear of police and legal system; impact of war and conflict on family functioning; barriers to help seeking including fear of family breakdown.</li> </ul>

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