"A lot of These Things Nobody Talks About": South Asian Muslims' Perceptions of Dating Behaviours and Abuse

by

Amanda Couture

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities

Criminology

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

July 2011

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Submitted by Amanda Couture
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Criminology
Date of Defence: 2011/07/27

Thesis title: "A lot of These Things Nobody Talks About": South Asian Muslims'
Perceptions of Dating Behaviours and Abuse

The undersigned certify that the student has presented her thesis, that the thesis is acceptable in form and content and that a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate through an oral examination. They recommend this thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies for acceptance.

Examining Committee

_____   Phillip C. H. Shon
                                                              Chair of Examining Committee

_____   Steven Downing
                                                              External Examiner

_____   Shahid Alvi
                                                              Research Supervisor

_____   [first name, last name]
                                                              Co-Supervisor

_____   Nawal Ammar
                                                              Examining Committee Member

_____   Arshia U. Zaidi
                                                              Examining Committee Member

As research supervisor for the above student, I certify that I have read and approved changes required by the final examiners and recommend the thesis for acceptance:

_____   Shahid Alvi
                                                              Research Supervisor

Abstract

The unique meanings people of varying cultures and religions assign to dating behaviours/abuse along with the context in which these meanings are created are largely neglected in dating abuse research. Applying intersectionality, I examine understandings of dating behaviours/abuse from the perspective of South Asian Muslims in Canada. To unravel the context in which these perceptions are formed, I use intersecting characteristics that emerged as themes in 11 qualitative interviews, which include: individual identities, influences of South Asian Muslim and mainstream Western cultures, and personal perceptions of dating. The majority of participants used religion, cultures, and nations as identifiers, perceived their communities to be opposed to dating, and felt pressure to date stemming from Western society. I argue that these intersect to shape their personal perceptions of dating and the meanings and significance of dating behaviours/abuse, which revolved around: significance of exposure and sexual behaviours, control, relationship attachment, and psychological behaviours/abuse.

Key words: dating abuse; South Asian; Muslim; Islam; intersectionality

Dedication

To my ever-supportive parents, Shelley and Jack, for keeping me sane through this process and reminding me that everything would get finished because "there is no other option." You were always the voice of reason.

To my siblings, Eric and Krista, for their constant encouragement, especially in the form of whiteboard notes and arm-twisting.

To my nephew, Conner, for always being a source of smiles…hiding under my desk getting my feet as I write this.

To my loving husband, Dave, for his unwavering support of my academic pursuits and being "all in." There's nothing like notes of encouragement hidden in luggage before a conference presentation.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, mentor, and "academic dad," Dr. Alvi. You helped me find my voice (almost literally) by building my confidence throughout the past six years. You have always pushed me to my limits and challenged me to strive for more. For that, I am truly grateful. Your continuous support made it possible for me to be where I am today and know where I am headed tomorrow.

Dr. Zaidi, thank you for the encouragement and countless opportunities over the last four years. Working with you has allowed me to expand both my skills and experiences. Our research together is what sparked my interests in studying dating abuse from a South Asian Muslim perspective. For that, I thank you for the opportunity to be inspired. I also greatly appreciate you always having my best interests in mind.

Thank you Dr. Ammar. Your expertise, guidance, and support throughout this process have been immeasurable. I appreciate the time you took to give advice on both my thesis and academic career. I am also grateful for the numerous research opportunities you have given me, which I know will have a resounding effect even after I leave UOIT.

Dr. Downing, thank you for your time and effort in reviewing this thesis.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the 11 participants who made this study possible. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences with me.

To my fellow grad students, thank you for your friendship and support. It was always comforting to know we were going through this together. I will always have fond memories of our "socials," which added some fun to the MA experience.

Last, but certainly not least, a very heartfelt and sincere thank you to the GBS/the Friend deserving of CAPS, JTSA, who was present for all of the ups and downs over the past two years, or 2.5 years if counting slightly-nerdy-summer prep. As everyone told us, it was difficult for others to relate to what we were going through. Having a constant supporter who understood and never minimized kept some of the crazy away. So, thank you for understanding and encouraging. And, never forget Nashville's ability to make everything look better.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction and Purpose

Since the 1980s, dating abuse in heterosexual relationships[1] has become

increasingly recognized as a social problem worthy of study (Jackson, 1999; Straus,

2004). Studies have explored the prevalence of dating abuse (see Ashley & Foshee,

2005; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; DeKeseredy & Pollard, 1993; Straus, 2004), causes or

predictors of dating abuse (see Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010; DeKeseredy, 1988;

Foshee, Linder, MacDougall & Bangdiwala, 2001; Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard & Bohmer,

1987) and consequences of dating abuse (see Ackard, Eisenberg & Neumark-Sztainer,

2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008; Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González, 2006;

Silverman, Raj, Mucci & Hathaway, 2001). Fewer studies, however, have examined

different cultural or religious groups and even less have looked at immigrant groups.

Those who have studied these groups have focused on help-seeking behaviours (see Shen,

2011), differences in vulnerability in comparison to non-immigrant groups (see

Silverman, Decker & Raj, 2007), and strategies for resistance (see Wang & Ho, 2007).

What is missing from this field of study, however, is how various cultural and

religious groups define behaviours and abuse in dating relationship. A number of

identities including gender, race, age, culture and religion intersect in unique ways

making experiences at some levels different for different people and groups. A large

portion of research in the area of woman abuse, however, disregards "the cultural

contexts" that shape experiences with abuse (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, p. 928). To

address this, scholars have been increasingly applying a theoretical approach known as

intersectionality. Intersectionality recognizes that the multiple identities everyone has

---

[1] From this point on, when I refer to dating, dating behaviours, and dating abuse, I am referring to heterosexual relationships.

intersect and interact with each other, which create unique sites of oppression that shape our lived experiences and the meaning we assign to behaviours (Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff, 2008). Insights from intersectionality remind us that behaviours and abuse in dating relationships will not be understood nor experienced in the same way by everyone. As such, it is necessary to look at dating abuse and other dating behaviours from the perspective of various groups of individuals including cultural and religious groups to ensure that we are not imposing a monolithic definition on all experiences.

One understudied group in particular that could experience dating and dating abuse differently is South Asian Muslims. In Canada, the South Asian Muslim population has and will continue to grow, which I will demonstrate. Even within the more developed field of marital abuse, Muslim women's culturally unique experiences with abuse are lacking attention (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). Pinnewala (2009) specifically points out the importance of extending Asian intimate partner abuse research from a focus on marital abuse to other forms of relationships, such as dating and cohabitating. As it currently stands, marital abuse is privileged over other relationships as more deserving of attention (Pinnewala, 2009).

Answering the call for attention to dating abuse while adopting an intersectionality approach will help enable a better understanding of how South Asian Muslims make meaning of dating behaviours and dating abuse, the primary research goal of this thesis, which will in turn allow for a better appreciation of what they believe to cause dating abuse, aspects of the religion and/or culture that protect against dating abuse, and potentially effective initiatives to prevent and/or respond to dating abuse. To achieve this, in my thesis I will focus on religion and culture as the added intersectionalities that may differentiate the experiences of dating and dating abuse. More specifically, I will

2

analyze and structure data from 11 qualitative semi-structure interviews with Canadian South Asian Muslims using a model of intersecting characteristics. The specific research questions that will provide the data for the intersecting characteristics include:

1) How do the participants describe their individual identities?

2) What are their perceptions of the South Asian Muslim community's acceptance of dating?

3) Are they influenced by the West or pressured to date?

4) How do they define dating and its purposes?

5) Do they personally accept dating?

6) What are the meanings and significance of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships that they perceive to be unique to South Asian Muslims?

7) What are the perceived effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse?

8) What do they perceive to cause dating abuse?

9) What are aspects of the religion and/or culture perceived to protect against dating abuse?

10) What do they believe to be potentially effective initiatives to prevent and/or respond to dating abuse?

To fully understand their perceptions of dating behaviours and dating abuse, it is essential to first explore the participants individual identities, the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures (i.e., perceptions of the South Asian Muslim community's acceptance of dating), the influence of Western norms (specifically the pressure to date), the meaning and purpose they assign to dating in general as well as their own acceptance of dating. Each of these things provides a context that will help give a comprehensive

understanding of their perceptions of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships specifically.

The groundwork this thesis offers is necessary for future research with first and second generation South Asian Muslim women living in Canada who have experienced abusive dating relationships as it will help guide the research structure and develop the necessary information that can be used for policy makers, funding agencies, and others.

In chapter 2, I will present the context for the current research. I will situate the present study within the broader context of dating abuse and intersectionality, the driving theoretical force behind this thesis. I will also provide evidence of its relevance of looking at South Asian Muslims specifically, especially in Canada. Finally, aspects of being a first or second generation South Asian Muslim youth that have the potential to affect perceptions and experiences will be discussed.

In chapter 3, I will discuss the methods for this thesis. Here, I will present the specific qualitative method used and a detailed description of the recruitment, data collection and analysis processes, including a model of intersecting characteristics.

In chapter 4, I will present the data analysis. This will include a sample profile, a brief description of each of the participants, and a thematic analysis of the data using intersecting characteristics.

Chapter 5 will consist of the discussion and conclusions. I will provide a summary of the themes and their implications, weaknesses, strengths, and directions for future research as well as some final thoughts.

2. Situating the Research Within a Broader Context

2.1 Dating and Dating Abuse

Dating is a socially constructed (Western) institution (Adelman & Kil, 2007) that emerged during the twentieth century (Feinstein & Ardon, 1973). There are numerous definitions of dating. With the aim of keeping the definition as broad as possible, dating, for the purposes of this research, is a romantic relationship between two unmarried individuals (Carlson, as cited in Jackson, 1999). It generally involves "commitment, future interaction and physical intimacy," although to varying degrees (Sugarman and Hotaling, as cited in Jackson 1999, p. 235).

Since the mid-1920s, dating in the United States has been a "universal custom...[and] the dominant script for how young people would become sexually intimate and form relationships" (Bogle, 2008, p. 14). This is evident in the 1998-1999 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth which showed 71% of Canadian youth dated by the age of 15 and 55% of those same individuals dated before the age of 12 (Mahony, 2010). With dating being a widely accepted norm and popular activity in the west, it often takes a prominent and significant role in the lives of youth as well (Jackson, 1999).

The primary purpose of dating has been, and continues to be, the development of an adult relationship achieved through the "practice and experimentation in heterosexual relationships" (Feinstein & Ardon, 1973, p. 158). Adolescence, in particular, is noted as a stage of life when intimacy is developed (Paul & White, 1990). It is through the institution of dating that youth are able to transition into sexual beings through their involvement in heterosexual relationships (Paul & White, 1990). Other purposes of dating include: recreation, socialization, courtship (to find a potential partner for marriage) (Skipper & Nass, as cited in Paul & White, 1990), sexual experimentation,

5

companionship, and intimacy (McCabe, 1984; Rice, as cited in Paul & White, 1990).

Furthermore, dating has also been recognized as a means of developing identities independent of the family of origin (Paul & White, 1990).

Although numerous purposes and benefits of dating have been identified, there is the potential for negative consequences as well, one of which is dating abuse. I operationalize dating abuse using Wolfe and his colleagues' (1996) definition. Relationship abuse is "any attempt to control or dominate another person physically, sexually or psychologically, causing some level of harm" (Wolfe, D. A., Wekerle, C., Gough, R., Reitzel-Jaffe, D., Grasley, C., Pittman, A., & Stumpf, J., as cited in Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999, p. 436). This definition was chosen for the same reason as the definition of dating; I want dating and dating abuse to be as broad and inclusive as possible to ensure that no manifestation is ignored.

Research has shown that dating abuse is an endemic problem. Straus (2004) examined physical dating abuse at 31 universities across 16 countries. The results indicate a median of 29% of students who reported physically assaulting a dating partner (Straus, 2004). Looking specifically at Canada, DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993) analyzed data from the only nation-wide dating abuse survey of university and college students. They reported that 45% of female students had experienced an unwanted sexual experience since leaving high school (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). Additionally, 86% and 35% of the female students surveyed reported psychological abuse and physical abuse respectively since leaving high school (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). Furthermore, due to the nature of the victimization, underreporting was likely, thus, DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993) suggested that these figures should be considered underestimates.

While there have not been national studies of dating abuse in Canada outside of university and college students, there are some official statistics on dating violence in the general population. In 2008 alone there were approximately 23, 000 incidents of dating violence reported to the police (Mahony, 2010). This represents 28% of all intimate partner violence reported to the police (Mahony, 2010). For the same reason noted above, these statistics likely underestimate the actual occurrences of dating abuse as well. Furthermore, these figures only represent physical forms of dating abuse. Although the available data may not accurately reflect the true extent of dating abuse, it does support the assertion that dating abuse is a social problem warranting study.

In addition to the commonly thought of immediate consequences of dating abuse, such as physical injuries like bruises and black eyes (Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2006), there are countless long-term negative consequences for young women as well. Studies have found that these consequences include: substance use (Ackard, Eisenberg & Neumark-Sztainer, 2007; Silverman et al., 2001), unhealthy dieting, risky sexual behaviours, pregnancy, (Silverman et al., 2001), poorer educational outcomes (Banyard & Cross, 2008), and depression or suicide (Ackard et al., 2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008; Silverman et al., 2001). These negative consequences compounded with the growing number of women reporting dating abuse clearly indicate that dating abuse is a social problem.

2.2 South Asian Muslims in Canada

Studying the social problem of dating in a country as diverse as Canada warrants consideration of other cultural and religious groups beyond the dominant or mainstream groups, namely Canadians of European origins. One group that is especially large in Canada, and is continuing to grow, is South Asian Muslims. South Asian refers to an individual who identifies as having familial ties to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal,

Pakistan, or Sri Lanka. According to Statistics Canada (2008), an average of 225, 000 immigrants have entered Canada each year since the early 1990s. South Asian immigrants in particular make up a large portion of this immigrant population with statistics indicating that in 2006 alone there were 1.3 million South Asians in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). This is projected to rise to between 3.2 and 4.1 million by 2031, which would represent 28% of the visible minority population, the largest visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2010).

The South Asian population itself is relatively diverse, especially religiously diverse with popular religions being Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism. In Canada, Islam is the largest religious denomination following Christianity (Janhevich & Ibrahim, 2004). In 2001, 2% of the Canadian population was Muslim (Janhevich & Ibrahim, 2004). This was a 128.9% increase from 1991 when only 0.9 percent of the population was Muslim (Janhevich & Ibrahim, 2004). In 2006, 35% of non-Christians were Muslim and, even more importantly, this is projected to increase to 50% in 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2010). This shift in immigration and the growth of the Muslim population makes South Asian Muslims an especially relevant group to study. It is, however, essential to remember the heterogeneity or diversity of South Asian Muslims in terms of regions, cultures, etc. (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001; Khan, 2000; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Peek, 2005). The inclusion of South Asian Muslims, or any other group, in dating abuse research means recognizing their diversity through the use of intersectionality. In the following section intersectionality will be more thoroughly explained as well as some aspects of being a first or second generation South Asian Muslims that can influence understandings of and experiences with dating abuse.

2.3 Dating Abuse and Intersectionality

Research has shown that marital/domestic abuse occurs among culturally, economically, and religiously diverse populations (see Bograd, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff, 2008; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005a; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005b). While there have been advances in marital/domestic abuse research, the field of dating abuse is limited because researchers have not adequately considered the ways in which multiple identities intersect and interact with one another to shape meanings and experiences associated with dating abuse. A means of addressing this is incorporating an intersectionality approach that is being used more and more frequently in studies of marital/domestic abuse. What follows below is an explanation of the driving theoretical force behind this thesis, intersectionality, an approach to studying intimate partner abuse that acknowledges the multiple and diverse identities we hold and how those shape meanings and experiences of abuse.

Researchers of intimate partner abuse are increasingly recognizing how problematic it is emphasize gender as a causal factor above all else (Crenshaw, 1991) along with the assumption that abuse is experienced the way same by all women. Intersectionality researchers argue that gender is not an isolated monolithic identity, but rather is affected by other identities such as race, class, religion, etc. (Ammar, Couture, Alvi & San Antonio, in press; Anderson & Hill-Collins, 2006). Bograd (1999) points out that "domestic violence [specifically] is not a monolithic phenomenon...[and] social dimensions are not merely abstract descriptions as they are suffused with evaluations that have social consequences" (p. 276). This is further supported by Kanuha (as cited in Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005a) who argues:

9

the suggestion that domestic violence affects "every person, across race, class, nationality, and religious lines" equally is "not only a token attempt at inclusion of diverse perspectives, but [is] also evidence of sloppy research and theory building"... "the tag line that domestic violence affects everyone equally trivializes both the dimensions that underlie the experiences of these particular abuse victims and more important, the ways we analyze the prevalence and impact of violence against them." (p. 41)

As Yoshihama (1999) reminds us, even studies of the prevalence of domestic violence will not accurately reflect reality if cultural variations in definitions of violence are not taken into consideration. This is because, as she contends, meanings given to a partner's behaviours and defining an act as domestic abuse are influenced by the individual's sociocultural background (Yoshihama, 1999). Furthermore, although there are forms of abuse that may be universal, there are some that are expected to be unique to the "culture and history of a community" (Dasgupta, 2000). In other words there can be certain behaviours that are considered especially abusive to women of one particular cultural group and not another. For example, turning over a dining table or pouring liquid over a woman's head is considered abusive to a Japanese woman as the former challenges her role in the family and the latter implies she is impure (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005a). It is unlikely, however, that this would have the same connotations to a Canadian woman of European origin. Thus, there are behaviours that may be defined as abuse by some that are unrecognized by others who consider those behaviours normal (Sheehan, Javier & Thanjan, 2000). This affirms that it is essential when studying intimate partner abuse to give adequate consideration to the cultural context it occurs within (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001) especially since these culturally specific forms of abuse have been found to be perceived as more hurtful than physical forms of abuse for some (Abraham, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005a). Therefore, if measures of abuse do not include culturally specific forms, serious and hurtful behaviours will go unrecognized.

Taking this into consideration, intersectionality is used to help resolve this issue as it is a perspective that acknowledges the diversity of lived experiences by recognizing multiple identities. The foundation of intersectionality is that individuals have multiple synchronous identities that interact with each other in various ways (Joseph, 2006). Identities can include, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, etc. (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005a). In its ideal form, intersectionality does not value one identity over any other (Bograd, 2005). As such, people cannot be reduced to having just one identity, as Joseph (2006) points out, the sum is greater than its parts. In other words, the multiple identities one possesses are neither discrete nor explicit (Brah & Phoenix, 2004); they are inseparable. However, depending on the context, some identities may become more salient than others (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006).

Each identity one possesses has its own related unique form of oppression or dominance that is altered when combined with another (e.g., a minority women faces different oppressions stemming from being a woman and also being a minority). In recognizing this, intersectionality goes beyond merely adding together the effects of multiple oppressions by acknowledging how these oppressions interact and exacerbate each other (Joseph, 2006). Recognizing intersecting oppressions allows for the realization that there is not just one fundamental form of oppression, but rather multiple, intersecting oppressions that together construct injustice (Joseph, 2006). Systems of oppression and power exist in concert with multiple identities and the related oppressions (Bilge, 2010). These systems that produce inequality (Yuval-Davis, 2006) exacerbate the oppression of abused women in particular (Sokoloff, 2008).

Intersectionality theorists think of oppression and inequality concretely rather than abstractly. The way these identities intersect and the intersection of power and oppression has *tangible* effects on our social situations (Bograd, 2005) and all other aspects of our lives as well (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006). More specifically, the intersection of identities shapes "the opportunities, resources, and power of some even while other groups struggle" (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006, p. 2). In doing so, it impacts the social locations of various groups in our society (Anderson, as cited in Brah & Phoenix, 2004) and creates and alters relations of power (Davis, 2008). Again, it is race, class, and gender (among many other identities) which are the basis for systems of power and inequality which impact individuals' lives, group interactions, and group access to power and privilege (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006). Adopting this approach means recognizing and being critical of the current systems of power and oppression.

Ignoring intersectionality by emphasizing only one particular identity, which is commonly gender, or neglecting identities altogether does not provide a holistic understanding of lived realities. Furthermore, basing policies on fragmented information has concrete consequences. For instance, it can lead to counterproductive social policies (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006). It also assumes that groups of individuals as a whole are homogeneous. Taking a universal approach to understanding multiple discrimination problematically assumes "sameness or equivalence of the social categories connected to inequalities" (Verloo, 2006, p. 211). This is problematic as it masks the actual diversity of individuals and experiences, which is evident in the dating abuse scholarship. To apply intersectionality and begin to study South Asian Muslims' understandings of and experiences with dating abuse requires attention to be given to the intersecting cultural

and religious contexts that can influence those understandings and experiences. In the section that follows, I will explore aspects of these contexts.

2.4 South Asian Muslim Immigrant Women: Culture, Religion, and Dating

Being a South Asian Muslim, like all other identities, influences experiences "in ways that are culturally specific and culturally bound" (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, p. 928). Dating and dating abuse are two such experiences. With this recognition, as per intersectionality, it is necessary to identify some aspects of being a first or second generation young South Asian Muslim that have the potential to play a role in shaping their understandings and experiences of/with dating and dating abuse. The factors I will discuss in the following sections include: (1) community denial of social problems, (2) exposure to conflicting cultures, (3) cultural, religious, and parental expectations regarding dating, (4) family honour, (5) collectivism, and (6) patriarchy. It should be noted that while these are some of the most important factors, they are by no means all of the factors that may be influential.

2.4.1 Denial of social problems and the "model minority" myth. Although there has been a call for the inclusion of South Asian Muslims in research on dating abuse and violence against women generally, this community can be difficult to reach because there is often a denial that Muslim women experience such difficulties (Khan, 2000), accompanied by a secretiveness and fear within the community (Sheenan, Javier & Thanjan, 2000). The invisibility of these issues is exacerbated further by the "model minority" myth of being without problems associated with the West (Abraham, 2005; Ayyub, 2000; Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Huisman, 1996; Sokoloff, 2008). Accordingly, dating abuse is a shrouded issue for many of these women. This is necessary to recognize as the unwillingness of a community to admit that dating abuse is a problem can influence

13

the way individuals perceive the issue as well (i.e., if the community does not identify it as a problem, it is possible that individuals, potentially even those experiencing it, may not identify it as a problem either). This provides additional context important for understanding perceptions of and experiences with dating abuse among South Asian Muslims.

2.4.2 Exposure to conflicting cultures. Another significant issue that first and second-generation immigrant youth living in Canada generally have to deal with is the exposure to multiple, and sometimes conflicting, cultures. This is especially evident among South Asian Muslims as there are "significant contrasts between Eastern and Western cultures" (Shariff, 2008, p. 70) or fundamental differences between world-views (Abraham, 2005). Some argue, however, that this conflict is more accurately described as a clash between the familial and dominant society's norms rather than between two specific cultural groups (Giguère, Lalonde & Lou, 2010). As such, it is not surprising that these cultural differences can lead to conflict within the family, especially between parents and daughters (Rajiva, 2006). Regardless of religious affiliation, South Asian norms generally do not mesh well with "typical" Western youthful behaviour or activities (e.g., working, dating, partying, etc.) (Dwyer; Puar; Hennink, Diamond & Cooper; Handa, all as cited in Rajiva, 2006). Some view Western activities, or the general mainstream Western culture, as diminishing community life and tradition (Handa, 1997). As such, there are parents who focus on protecting their children specifically from the influence of the dominant Western culture (Handa, 1997). To curb this influence, South Asian youth are pressured by their family to live up to the heritage (theirs or their parents') cultural standards and remain dependent (Purkayastha, 2000) while at the same time being pressured by outside forces (i.e., peer groups) to engage in the mainstream

culture, or to generally assimilate (Handa, 1997; Rajiva, 1996). This is further compounded by the desire for acceptance, believed to be achieved by participating in the dominant culture (Handa, 1997), and their Western peers' expectation that they will acculturate (Purkayastha, 2000). Jiwani (2005) explained how trying to navigate two conflicting cultural norms and attempting to assimilate in order to avoid the stigma of failing to do so is an enormous struggle for young women in particular. As something that can be a challenge for South Asian Muslims, this tension, especially for women, has the potential to affect the way dating and dating abuse is thought of and experienced.

2.4.3 Cultural, religious, and parental expectations regarding dating. Cultural and religious norms and expectations related to dating and the struggle it can cause between South Asian Muslim youth and their parents are also factors that can influence perceptions of and experiences with dating and any subsequent dating abuse. Dating has been attributed to "the root of a raging intergenerational controversy" (Dasgupta, 1998 p. 957). Or, as Varghese and Kenkins (2009) put it, dating is "a primary locus of cultural value conflict;" a conflict within the family and also within the individual (i.e., internally) (p. 236). As previously discussed, dating is a normalized and often encourage activity in the mainstream Western culture. Generally, however, South Asian cultural norms are far from accepting of dating and it is generally discouraged (Alexander, Garda, Kanade, Jejeebhoy & Ganatra, 2006). Within that context, interpretations of dating are often specifically considered incompatible with Islamic beliefs as well due to the fear that it will lead to premarital sex (Kopp, 2002), which is forbidden in Islam. It is so incompatible in fact that in some Muslim families, dating is regarded as shameful or is "frowned upon" (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006, p. 87). In many South Asian cultures, dating is generally considered taboo (Abraham, 2001, 2002; Abraham & Kumar, 1999)

15

and forbidden (Chakraborty, 2010; Haddad et al., 2006). The seriousness of the shame associated with dating is especially evident in parents' attempts to protect their daughters, in particular, from "that American adolescent tradition known as dating" to maintain their daughters' future prospects (Hickey, 2004, p. 5).

2.4.4 Family honour. Family honour, simply put, is the family having a good reputation and dignity within the community (Dodd, 1973). Wiess (1994) argued that norms related to respect and honour are the basis for the entire "Muslim social order" (p. 123), which suggests the significance family honour can have in South Asian Muslim communities. How consistent individuals' behaviours are with cultural and religious norms can cause the entire family's honour (including that of the extended family) to raise or lower, but once it is lost, it is often difficult if not impossible to regain (Dodd, 1973). Scholars have recognized that this "social order" and individual families' honour are strongly tied to women's actions; their behaviour has the potential to dishonour the entire family system (Ayyub, 2000; Dodd, 1973; Weiss, 1994). In other words, women are responsible for "upholding the family's religious and cultural integrity" (Dwyer, 2000, p. 478). They are considered the keepers of the family honour (Chakraborty, 2010). More specifically, family honour typically centers on their virginity or "sexual purity" (Chakraborty, 2010; Gillespie, as cited in Durham, 2004; Haddad et al., 2006; Varghese & Jenkins, 2009, p. 236). As such, this is tied to the prohibition of dating, which was discussed in the previous section. Having a relationship prior to marriage has the potential to shame the family (Alexander et al., 2006) or threaten the family's honour.

The discovery or accusation of such a relationship has serious consequences, especially for girls. There is the potential for being stigmatized and labeled as a 'bad girl' (Chakraborty, 2010). This is due to the expectation that an individual will only ever have

one relationship, a permanent marriage (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996), and will be a virgin prior to marriage (Abraham, 2001). Consequences of not adhering to these expectations can include: poorer options for future arranged marriages for the girls (Abraham, 2001; Alexander et al., 2006; Dodd, 1973) and potentially other family members (Alexander et al., 2006; Dodd, 1973), accelerated arranged marriages that are not desired (Alexander et al., 2006; Chakraborty, 2010), restricted mobility (e.g., removal from school, being escorted outside the home, etc.) (Chakraborty, 2010), and being ostracized (Khan, 2000) and abused (verbally and physically) by the community (Chakraborty, 2010).

Briefly, family honour has been found to affect women in abusive marital relationships. For instance, Ayyub (2000) found that women in abusive marital relationships would remain in the relationships to avoid bringing shame to their family. Fear of being excluded or shunned by the community has also been found to affect help-seeking behaviours among abused Asian women (Huisman, 1996). Thus, it is arguable that it will likely play a role in dating relationships as well.

Values regarding honour, shame, and respect often continue to persist even post-migration in Canada (Abraham, 2005) making them relevant for study in Canada. Furthermore, regardless of the influence of the West, it is still recognized by some young South Asian Muslim women living in Western cultures that dating can have a negative impact on the family's honour (Zine, 2008). Thus, the influence of the religion and culture do not disappear once one has engaged in discouraged activities, like dating, even if hidden. With the significance family honour often has in South Asian Muslim families and communities, it is arguable that it will play a role in shaping the actions and behaviours of young South Asian Muslims. Thus, it is likely to extend to their

17

experiences in dating relationships, including abusive ones. As such, it is necessary to acknowledge its existence and its potential to influence.

2.4.5 Collectivisim. The collectivistic nature of Eastern cultures heightens the significance of family honour. Not only do women have to worry about their own honour and reputation, but they also have to consider how their behaviours and actions will impact the entire family (Abraham, 2001). Being of a collectivistic culture means they have been socialized to think of the family before the individual (Ayyub, 2000). The good of the entire group is emphasized over individual wants (Ayyub, 2000). Moreover, the community or family expectations are placed above individual freedoms (Huisman, 1996). This is also because the family is often a key source of identity; a woman's identity is often tied to her role as "a mother, daughter, niece, sister, and so on" (Ayyub, 2000, p. 243). Collectivism and the primacy of family have also been acknowledged in studies of domestic abuse, as women are expected to place the needs of others above their own, even to the detriment of their physical, emotional, personal and psychological well being (Pinnewala, 2009). Furthermore, as first, second, and third generation immigrants, there is also pressure to maintain the community's honour in a foreign society that is believed to lack family values and morality (Abraham, 2005). Some South Asian Muslims are socialized within collectivistic cultures and as such have been and will likely continue to be influenced by the importance of family over the individual. Thus, similar to family honour, it is arguable that the collectivistic nature of Eastern cultures will also play a role in shaping their lived experiences.

2.4.6 Patriarchy. Another aspect of South Asian Muslim cultures that will likely play a role in shaping experiences with dating and dating abuse is patriarchy. Patriarchy is the ideology that supports the subordination of women by men (Ahmad, Riaz, Barata,

Stewart, 2004). Patriarchy is universal, however, it differs by region and culture (Ahmad et al., 2004). For instance, while it exists in the West, it is less present than in other regions such as South Asia (Ahmad et al., 2004). Some argue that most South Asian cultures are more patriarchal and traditional (Ayyub, 2000) or even oppressive than in the West (Huisman, 1996). This is evident in the additional restrictions and controls placed more on women than men, especially regarding sexuality (Abraham 2001, 2002; Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Chakraborty, 2010). India (a South Asian country), in particular, is thought of as an ideal example of patriarchy as it has specific gender expectations and roles assigned from birth (Tichy, Becker, & Sisco, 2009). This patriarchy extends to relationships between men and women as the differential treatment of males and females by parents and the community reinforces the "gender hierarchies between partners" (Rao as cited in Purkayastha, 2000, p. 216). Thus, patriarchy is essential to consider when studying intimate relationships and abuse within them, including dating relationships.

The denial of social problems, exposure to conflicting cultures, cultural, religious and parental expectations regarding dating, family honour, collectivism, and patriarchy are all aspects of being a first or second generation South Asian Muslim that are part of the context in which dating abuse occurs. As such, this context is essential to understand dating behaviours and abuse from the perspective of South Asian Muslims. These are the vary aspects of identities that intersectionality calls our attention to. This is not to say that any of these things cause abuse, but rather shape the meanings assigned to behaviours and abuse within dating relationships and related experiences. The goal is not to point out a specific community that is more likely to engage in abuse, as that "stigmatizes these communities as others, and this results in further marginalization" (Narayan, as cited in

19

Jiwani, 2005, p. 852). The goal is rather to draw attention to the context that shapes

meanings and behaviours in dating relationships, as per intersectionality.

2.5 The Realities of South Asian Muslim Dating

Although there are consistent influences from the family and community, young

Muslims are still impacted by the norms of the mainstream Western culture, and

sometimes this influence is stronger than that of the religious expectations (Zine, 2008).

It is important to recognize the "ever-present gap between the social reality of Muslims

and their religious doctrine" (Chakraborty, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, it is not shocking that

some South Asian Muslims disregard these perceived archaic traditions. This is evident

in a recent study of 57 South Asian students in Canadian universities/colleges which

found that 95% (19 out of 20) of the Muslim participants had been in a dating relationship

and 40% (8 out of 20) of the Muslim participants even lost their virginity (Zaidi, Couture,

Maticka-Tyndale, 2011). Furthermore, studies have also shown that premarital sex,

pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases among unmarried youth in India, where

South Asian norms forbidding dating and premarital sex are still evident, are increasing

(Abraham, 2001, 2002; Abraham & Kumar, 1999). With the strong cultural messages

discouraging dating, it is expected that these relationships are often hidden, especially

from parents (Alexander et al., 2006), which in and of itself can have implications for

dating abuse that I will explore in my research. Therefore, where there is dating, secret or

otherwise, there is the potential for dating abuse.

Even if some young South Asian Muslim women are dating and consider the

norms discouraging dating as outdated, they are still norms and expectations, along with

all the others previously discussed, which can still be taken very seriously by their

religious/cultural community and quite possibly by their family as well. As such, the

norms and expectations are still likely to impact even those girls who defy them generally and shape their experiences with dating and, consequently, dating abuse. Therefore, taking an intersectionality perspective, it is necessary take into account the potentially unique aspects of the South Asian and Muslim identities that, in combination with numerous other identities, shape understandings/perceptions of and experiences with dating behaviours and dating abuse. These identities and perceptions are also relevant to consider when examining what they perceive to be the causes of dating abuse, especially related to cultural or religious issues, as well as aspects of the religion or culture that serve to protect against dating abuse. By answering the specific research questions proposed in the introduction, I aim to shed light on these issues.

3. Methods

This is qualitative research that used one-on-one qualitative semi-structured interviews. The qualitative approach was used to maximize its ability to bring forward the voice of the respondent and allow them to speak for themselves. Additionally, this approach allowed me to delve deeper into the narratives of those interviewed in order to better understand how some first and second generation South Asian Muslims in Canada talk about dating and dating abuse, or make meaning of it, and the words they use to do so. The interview guide covered a variety of areas, which included:

- Background information (this was comprised of questions regarding age, country of origin, etc.)

- Identity (asking participants to identify or describe themselves)

- Their understandings of the Western forms of dating

- If they perceive Western forms of dating to be accepted within the South Asian Muslim community and why?

- Patriarchy (including what the participants believe to be the a typical South Asian family structure and their own family and an assessment of those structures. They were also asked to describe their ideal future intimate relationship)

- Perceptions of healthy and unhealthy dating relationships (this involved asking questions about what they consider to be abusive or non-abuse behaviours. They were also presented scenarios of dating interactions and were asked to comment on them)

- Culturally specific forms of abuse (they were asked to identify any behaviours that may be considered especially significant to or experienced in a unique way by South Asian Muslims)

- Causes of bad relationships (e.g., lack of self control)

- Potential response to an abusive friend (e.g., talking to their abusive friend about what is bothering them or attempting to help them)

- How girls who are/were in abusive dating relationships should or would cope and if the participant was female, how they think they would cope

- Initiatives they think could help prevent or respond to dating abuse in the South Asian Muslim community.

Questions beyond the interview guide were asked as they became relevant and appropriate in the discussion. Participants were also permitted to delve into expansive discussions even if not directly related to the question asked. This enabled me to get to know the participants better and allowed the participants to discuss things that they wanted to talk to someone about.

I purposively selected first and second generation self-identified South Asian (i.e., with families originating from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) Muslim college/university students between the ages of 18 and 25. The participants were recruited from college/university campuses. Mass emails were sent to all students attending a college and university in the Greater Toronto Area via their college/university provided email address. Posters advertising the study were placed throughout the campuses. Furthermore, advertisements were placed on WebCT, an online tool used in colleges/universities to maintain professor-student contact. The advertisements provided information on who was eligible to participate based on country of origin, age, and religion. A draw for a $100 gift card was used as incentive. Interested people were asked to contact me via email. Once I received an email I would confirm their eligibility for the study and, if eligible, make arrangements for the interview.

The interviews took place in either a private office or boardroom. The door was shut to maintain privacy. Each participant was read a consent form as the Research Ethics Board had concerns about the potential discovery of a paper consent form by their parents. After reading the consent form, I asked if they understood what I explained. I then asked each participant if I was allowed to audio recode the interview. Once they allowed me to, I confirmed the voluntariness of their participation for the recorder. The interviews took between 45 minutes and two and a half hours.

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the interviews I audio recorded. Upon completing the transcription of the interviews, I began to develop themes from the interviews and proceeded to conduct an analysis of the data. The analysis included a review of the transcribed notes and quotations for each individual participant. During this phase I analyzed each response to the questions posed. I used a combination of simultaneous and thematic coding techniques. This involves applying multiple thematic codes to the data since it can be nearly impossible to apply a single code to the data (Sandãna, 2009). The first code was used to identify the general theme of the data, such as initiative for prevention. The second code was to identify the more specific or secondary theme, such as educational programs.

Once I completed this stage of the analysis, I identified the common overarching themes. I then sorted all of the data by general themes. I organized the data into a three-column table. One column included the original interview notes and quotations. The second column was used for me to take notes about what I believed the participants were conveying or trying to convey. The last column included the codes.

After this stage was completed I examined all of the codes to determine which ones were consistently arising. Once I identified the common secondary themes, I further

sorted the data based on those themes. This left me with a final product of the quotes and notes for each interview organized by major theme and then the secondary themes within that.

Upon completion of the data sorting by various themes, I began to look for the big picture of how everything connects, or the story of the data. Analyzing the data from an intersectionality perspective, I wanted to see how the various aspects of being a first or second generation South Asian Muslim living in Canada, along with additional individual identities, could intersect to influence perceptions of dating, dating behaviours, dating abuse, and other related issues. This is, as intersectionality tells us, because perceptions do not exist in a vacuum; there are countless factors that shape them. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the meanings participants gave to dating as well as behaviours and abuse in dating relationships, it is necessary to consider how characteristics of their lives can intersect to influence these things. Examining the data with this in mind is when intersecting characteristics began to emerge and connect. This led to how the data analysis is organized/structured and understood. See Figure 1 for a visual of the intersecting characteristics.

Figure 1: Intersecting Characteristics
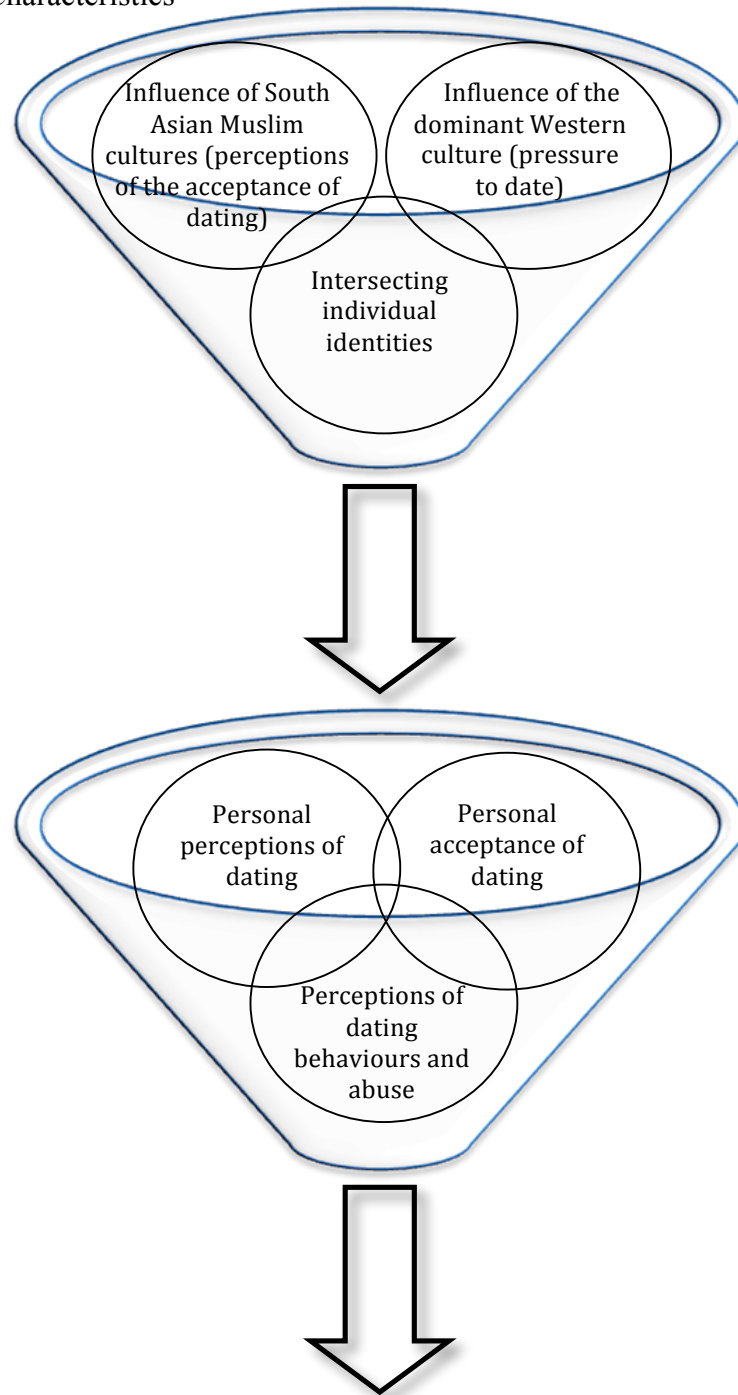
- Effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse
- Perceived causes of dating abuse
- Aspects of the religion/culture perceived to protect against dating abuse
- Initiatives to prevent and/or respond to dating abuse

It is essential for this intersectional analysis of the data to start with an understanding of who these participants are. To do this, an analysis of the participants' individual identities was done, such as cultural and national identities, which are distinct, age and even student status. This analysis provides the starting point of the context in which meanings of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships are made.

The next factor, which is separate from individual intersecting identities, is the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures[2]. When I refer to the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures, I am not looking at it as an individual identity, but rather as a social force influencing individuals' understandings and experiences. The impact this has on individual identities cannot be measured here and is beyond the scope of this thesis, but would be relevant for future studies. While there is no single South Asian Muslim culture or a homogenous South Asian Muslim community, the understandings of what this "culture" is to the participants will likely shape their perceptions of dating, dating behaviours, and dating abuse. The influence of South Asian Muslim cultures will be examined by looking at the participants' perceptions of their South Asian Muslim community's acceptance of dating. This will allow us to have a fuller understanding of the meanings of dating generally, as well as behaviours and abuse in dating relationships specifically by providing additional context within which those meanings are created.

The dominant society's culture of the West can also play a role in perceptions of dating and dating abuse as South Asian Muslims living in Canada are regularly exposed to Western cultures since many of their daily experiences are outside of the home (e.g., attending school). The manifestation of the Western cultures' influence that will be

---

[2] When I refer to South Asian Muslims or South Asian Muslim cultures, I mean South Asian Muslims or cultures in Canada. For the sake of brevity, I will use South Asian Muslims and South Asian Muslim cultures.

examined is the pressure to date since it is a Western norm and even expectation. Similar to the influence of South Asian Muslims cultures, the influence of Western cultures is part of the context within which dating, dating behaviours, and dating abuse are understood.

Individual identities and the influence of South Asian Muslim and Western cultures intersect and affect not only how each is experienced, but together trickle down to shape individuals' perceptions and acceptance of dating as well as perceptions of dating behaviours and abuse. Personal perceptions and acceptance of dating will then intersect and interact to impact aspects of dating behaviours and abuse that are perceived to be unique to South Asian Muslims.

All of the characteristics associated with being a first or second generation South Asian Muslim living in Canada, namely individual identities, the influence of South Asian Muslim and Western cultures, personal perceptions and acceptance of dating, and perceptions of aspects of dating behaviours/abuse that are especially significant or unique to South Asian Muslims, will also intersect and interact to shape additional issues related to abuse. These include: perceived effects of family honour and shame on dating abuse, perceived causes of dating abuse as well as aspects of the religion and culture perceived to protect South Asian Muslims from abuse, and initiatives believed to effectively prevent and/or respond to dating abuse.   These intersecting characteristics provide the necessary context for examining perceptions of dating, dating behaviours and abuse as well as the related issues previously mentioned.

Following this structure of analysis and understanding, the next chapter presents the data analysis.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis will begin with an overall description of the sample and a brief introduction to each participant. Next, I will present an analysis of the intersecting characteristics, which includes: the participants' individual identities, the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures (i.e., perceptions of their South Asian Muslim community's acceptance of dating), the influence of the mainstream Western culture (i.e., the pressure to date), personal perceptions (i.e., definition and purpose of dating) and acceptance of dating, meanings given to behaviours and abuse in dating relationships (with emphasis on aspects participants perceive to be especially significant or unique to South Asian Muslims), perceived effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse (specifically the decision to stay or hide an abusive dating relationship), perceived causes of dating abuse, aspects of the culture (South Asian) and/or religion perceived to protect against dating abuse, and initiatives believed to be effective in preventing and/or responding to dating abuse

4.1 Sample Profile

There were 11 self-identified South Asian Muslim participants in this study. There were six females and five males. Half of the female participants wore a hijab. Table 1 provides a breakdown of country of origin by gender. The average age of the participants was 20 years. The participants were both first and second generation immigrants with some having been born in Canada and others coming as recently as two years ago. The majority (73%, n=8), however, was born outside of Canada and the average age of migration for those participants was eight.

Table 1: Country of Origin by Gender

		Sex		Total
		Female	Male	
Country of Origin	Bangladesh	2	0	2
	Pakistan	1	3	4
	Malaysia/India	1	0	1
	East Africa (India)	1	0	1
	India	1	2	3
Total		6	5	11

4.2 A Brief Description of the Participants: Please Allow Me to Introduce…

In addition to the overview of sample characteristics, it is necessary to have some background information for each participant. This gives the reader the opportunity to become familiar with the participants, although minimally, prior to reading about their perceptions of dating and dating abuse. The names of the participants are pseudonyms to help ensure anonymity.

Jameela is a 19 year-old Canadian born woman. Her mother was born in Guyana, but her family originated in India. Her father was born in Burma and moved to Pakistan when he was a few months old. She identified her mother's side of the family as Indian and her father's side of the family as Pakistani. She described herself as being a religious person, which will become more evident through her later statements.

Sadaf is a 20 year-old female participant. She was born in Zambia (Africa) and came to Canada at the age of eight. Her family originated from Bangladesh, but lived in Zambia for 11 years prior to migrating to Canada. Sadaf also identified herself as a pretty religious person as religion is a very important aspect of her daily life.

Faiza is a 24 year-old female. Her family is originally from India and migrated to East Africa and then to Canada where she was born. She identified herself as quite religious.

Sana is an 18 year-old female. She was born in Qatar in the Middle East. Her family, however, is originally from Bangladesh, where her siblings were born. Despite being born in the Middle East, she identified only with Bangladesh and Canada. She moved to Canada when she was five years old. She said that she is religious, but not too extreme. She explained this by saying she would be a six or a seven on a ten-point scale of religiousness (with ten being very religious).

Rabia is another female participant. She is 20 years old. Her father was born in India and her mother was born in Malaysia. Her extended family, however, is from Pakistan originally. She, herself, was born in Saudi Arabia, but did not consider this part of her identity. She came to Canada at the age of six. She described herself as religious, but not over the top.

Shama is the last female participant in the sample. She is 20 years old. Both her parents are from India, but she was born in Manama, Bahrain in the Middle East. She lived there until she was one year old when her family then moved to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. At the age of five her family migrated to Canada. She stated that she is not very religious.

Faraz is a 20 year-old male participant. He was born and raised in a major metropolitan city in India and migrated to Canada when he was 13 years old. He described himself as moderately religious.

Adeel is a 19 year-old male participant. His family migrated from India to Canada where he was born. He said he was pretty religious, but stated he would be a four on a ten point scale of religiousness (ten being very religious).

Adil is also a 19 year-old male participant. His family, however, migrated from the large city of Kuratchi in Pakistan to Canada when he was five years old. He

31

explained that he is not as religious as others that he knows, but he still follows the religion.

Hafeez is a 21 year-old male participant whose family was also from Pakistan. He said he lived in an area similar to a suburb outside of the city where there was livestock. He was born in Dubai and migrated with his family to Canada at the age of seven. He identified himself as quite religious since he does not engage in activities forbidden by Islam. He also explained that he lives Islamically (e.g., prays five times a day).

The last participant is Javed who is a 19 year-old male participant from Pakistan. He came to Canada on his own 2 years ago, when he was 17. He lives with family friends in Canada. He said that he is moderately religious since he does not follow all the Islamic rules.

4.3 More than South Asian Muslims: Participants' Individual Identities

Each of the participants was asked how they identify themselves. It became clear very quickly that the participants are not just South Asian Muslims. Consistent with the intersectionality literature (e.g., Sokoloff, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Anderson & Hill Collins, 2006), all of the participants (with the exception of one) discussed having multiple identities. These identities included: religion, national identities, cultural identities, student status, gender, and age. The saliency of each identity, however, varied among the participants. Furthermore, there were some participants who specifically noted that the importance of their identities depends on the situation or context they are in or that they often have to switch between identities.

4.3.1 Religious identities. With respect to religious identity, the participants discussed it in two distinct ways. The majority was religious in a spiritual or guidance sense (i.e., having faith or belief in the religion and following the overarching tenets –

e.g., believing there is a God or being kind to others), rather than adhering to the specific rules (e.g., praying five times a day, not eating pork). There were others, however, who spoke of Islam as a way of life where they did try to follow all the religious expectations.

4.3.1.1 Islam as spiritual. Those who think of religion in a more spiritual sense held a different perspective on Islam than those who saw Islam as ruling their lives. For instance, Sana describes Islam's role in her life. She said:

> *It does [play a role], but like I don't let my religion define me, it sort of just supports me.*

She went on to further say that she does not follow all of the rules of Islam (e.g., dating and not praying five times a day), implying she is not a practicing Muslim. A similar sentiment can be gathered from Shama's statement below as well. She said:

> *I definitely like I believe in God strongly…I totally respect and am knowledgeable about all the customs and rituals of Islam. I just don't practice them. So, but um…it is important in my decision-making.*

For Faiza, it was clear that although religion is important to her, it primarily serves as a general guideline and source of community (she was the only participant who said this), but not something that affects her individual daily decisions. She stated:

> *My religion, it's nice. I think about it and I feel like I have an identity to it and I like that….It's my guideline and it's also an identifier for me so I'm proud…and I like my community.*

However, when asked if it affects her daily decision-making, she said no, it does have an influence as it is a guideline for her, but the ultimate decision is her own.

There was also one participant, Adeel, who also described his religious identity in more of a spiritual way, and spoke of finding his own way in the religion. He talked about how when he was younger the religion played a significant role in his decision-making. Now, however, he said:

I kind of made my own path within my religion.

This seems to suggest he was able to almost make the religion his own. He explained that

his other experiences growing up have affected the role religion has in his life as well as

shaped who he is and how he makes decisions. This change in the role of religion speaks

to the fluidity of identities, in this case of religious identities. The position religion has in

an individual's identity is not static, but rather ever changing and affected by other

factors, such as life events. For Adeel, it was his experiences moving to different cities

with different demographic make-ups that changed the role of his religious identity. The

fluidity of religious identity was also evident in Hafeez's discussion of Islam as he

explained that he became more religious and adopted Islam as a way of life relatively

recently after he was severely beat up and could have died. Adil also spoke of wanting to

"become a Muslim," which he said means he wants to follow the teachings of Islam.

4.3.1.2 Islam as a way of life. Turning now to those who consider Islam as a way

of life, it is apparent that there are some (four) participants who established their religious

identity as the most important aspect of who they are. They not only subscribed to the

religious beliefs, but also incorporated the teachings into almost every aspect of their

daily lives. This is especially evident in Faraz's statement below.

> *Islam is like a way of life, right? Like it teaches you everything. You know it has
> a way for everything. Like the way you go to the washroom till the way you, till
> the way you're buried when you die…the Prophet taught us a way to do things,
> right? So, when we use His thing, like say for eating, there are a lot of dietary
> laws where you can't eat pork, you can't consume alcohol, no drugs. So, it
> impacts us a lot.*

What Faraz said speaks to the possible extent to which Islam can become a way of life.

For these participants, Islam is not just an abstract religion with general rules on what is

right and wrong. Rather Islam provides concrete teachings for almost every aspect of life.

Sadaf also spoke of how important Islam is throughout her daily life. She said:

> *My religion is kind of like intertwined with who I am. Like the way I speak, the way I act with people, everything about me is some kind of reflection of my religion and my beliefs… The first thing I would probably say [about who she is] is I'm a Muslim woman…*

Similarly, Jameela stated:

> *I guess I try my best to stay within the bounds of Islam when I'm living my life...*

She later discussed how religion is often the first thing she uses to describe herself

because she believes it tells those around her exactly who she is. Her statement below is

how she responded to being asked how she would describe herself to others and illustrates

that religion is her most defining identity.

> *I'm a 19-year-old Muslim girl because I think that, I think that would tell someone who understands…what Islam is [knows] what kind of girl I am because you can be from anywhere, but you know it doesn't really say much about what you are. I guess if you wanted to add on you could say yeah I'm of this descent, I'm of that descent and that could gauge like okay maybe she has these kind of cultural practices or something. But in terms of how I live out my everyday like life, I think my religion would…like telling someone I'm Muslim, would give that person a better idea of…what I am, what kind of person I am, rather than telling them I'm like half this, half that or whatever.*

4.3.1.3 Identifying as Muslim to others. Unlike Jameela and others who

emphasized that religion is one of the most important identities to them and would readily

identify themselves as Muslim to others, there were others who were more hesitant to

specifically identify themselves as Muslim to others. Faiza and Adeel both discussed

this. When Adeel spoke of this, he explained that he would not use it as an identifier to

other people, especially if they are not Muslim, because he does not feel that religion

should be used to describe oneself. When asked why, he mentioned the word

discrimination, but then quickly corrected himself by not finishing his statement and

35

instead said religion is personal and spiritual. Faiza, on the other hand, spoke of it more

casually just saying religion is not something she just randomly discusses. She said:

> *I mean it is important to me, but no I don't really mention it to…like I don't come out and say it like…I'm proud of it.   It's just that unless it comes up in conversation it's not really something I bring up.*

4.3.1.4 Summary. The multiple ways that religion is an identity and the saliency

of that identity speaks to the fact that Muslims, and Islam generally, is heterogeneous.

The importance of Islam and the role it plays in the lives of Muslims differs not only by

variants of Islam, but also by the individual.   Even within the two general categories

above, there is still variation in how significant Islam is to the participants and how they

decide to follow it.

4.3.2 National identities. Along with religious identity, many participants (nine)

mentioned national identities. It is very important to note that national identity is not the

same as cultural identity, which will be discussed in a following section. All of the

participants identified with at least two countries, with one who discussed having ties of

varying degrees to three countries. Three participants, Adeel, Adil, and Shama, identified

with multiple countries by hyphenating their national identities. For instance, Shama

said:

> *I'm Indo-Canadian I guess in the sense that I'm not more one or the other.*

While it originally seemed that Shama does not place more importance on one national

identity, she stated later:

> *…But I consider Canada my home so and I'm a Canadian citizen so I do consider myself a Canadian primarily.*

36

This illustrates how her Canadian identity takes primacy, as per her distinction. There were four others (Faraz, Rabia, Sana, and Adeel) who seemed to specifically emphasize their Canadian identity. This is suggested by Sana's statement below.

> *[I am] more of a Canadian than a Bengali because you know I've never lived there.*

The distinction for her and the others seems to be placed on where they live, where they were born, or where they were raised. Rabia stated that she's Canadian, but also Pakistani. However, she further explained that she has lived in Canada for most of her life, so she is more familiar with Canadian culture, which she said makes her more Canadian than Pakistani. For Adeel, the importance was on where he was born. He said he is Indo-Canadian, but more emphasis is sometimes put on his Canadian identity when he said things, such as:

> *I'm Canadian born*

As previously mentioned, there was one participant, Faiza, who gave three national identities. She explained how she identifies with each:

> *My background is East African and I usually say I'm, my background's East African, I was born here and my ancestry is from India.*

4.3.3 Cultural identities. There were three participants who specifically spoke of their cultural identities. These participants explained that they blend or merge aspects of multiple cultural identities. Sadaf described who she is by noting the different cultures that make up her identities. She said:

> *I'm from a Bengali culture, but I was born and raised partly in Zambia and then came to Canada so I have like a mixture of a few cultures.*

Sadaf proceeded to explain that she is able to take the best attributes of these and merge them to create her own cultural identity. She said:

I have like a mixture of a few cultures. So, I guess I kind of pick and choose and try to take the best out of every culture and mix it with my religion and I'm the product of that.

Her mention of religion is also indicative that who she is is not result of one sole identity. By saying that her identity is a "mix" of religion and cultures (among many other identities she gives throughout the interview) also suggests the inseparable nature of her identity. Hafeez was another who spoke of this blending. While he stated his primary allegiance is to Pakistan because that is where the majority of his family resides, he discussed how he adopts aspects of the mainstream Canadian culture. For example, he attributed his interest in sports and hockey to mainstream Canadian culture. He, however, made a point of saying there are other aspects of Canadian life that he cannot relate to. Moreover, there are elements of his heritage culture of Pakistan that he cannot abandon. Shama is the last participant who also spoke of cultural identities. She said:

I'm kind of a good blend of the two cultures.

What Shama said, like the others, illustrates how multiple cultural identities can be inseparable as they blend and mix shaping who the individual is.

4.3.4 Other identities. The intersectionality of individual identities as given by the participants also included others that were not discussed in as much detail as religious, national, and cultural identities. Four participants specifically mentioned that they are students when asked how they identify themselves. For Faiza in particular, this student identity was especially meaningful. Her statement below suggests this.

I'm a student, that's very important. I do identify myself with my [university] program. I like saying I'm in crim, I like crim...I like that I'm a student. I do like to identify myself as a student.

It is possible that the salience of this identity for Faiza is tied to her feeling she is a strong student, but also to the cultural significance of education (especially university education)

38

in her South Asian Muslim community (which she discussed in the interview). The importance of education is further implied by her discussion of her mother lying and telling people who asked that she, Faiza, was attending university when she was in college.

In addition to student identity, age and gender were briefly acknowledged by three and six participants respectively. These identities were typically mentioned as part of general statements of who they are with reference to multiple identities. Jameela, Sana, Sadaf and Adil's statements below are examples of this. In order of the names given:

I'm a 19 year old Muslim girl.

A brown Muslim girl.

I'm a Muslim woman.

I'm a 19 year old university student trying to become a doctor.

4.3.5 Salience of identities and switching between identities. There were two participants who specifically explained that the importance of their identities would change depending on the context of the situation they were in. Furthermore, one pointed out that he feels it is necessary to switch between multiple cultural identities to navigate the differences between himself and his parents to avoid conflict. The former is indicated in Adil's following statement.

> *I think they [identities] go hand in hand 'cause I could be a Pakistani-Canadian who's a student, university student, that's not my only role. I play many roles in life, right?...I'm also Muslim. I'm also a Pakistani-Canadian. I'm also a brother...to my sisters. So, I'm also a son. I'm also a student. [Are you all of those things at once?] I'm all those things at the same time, but sometimes some things ask for more. So, I have to be a student at times more than a brother at certain times, right? Or a brother more than a son. [Does the importance of the identity depend on the context?] Yes.*

This is also similar to what Adeel said when asked about which identities are most important to him. He responded by saying it depends on who he is around or talking to. As an example, he said that it is not logical for his identity as a Muslim to be most important when he is not around other Muslims. He said this is because:

You want to come together with your similarities.

Adeel also spoke of having to switch identities when he was around his parents because they would not be accepting of him being his true self since that does not coincide with the expectations they have of him, which may have been tied to religion and/or culture. He said:

When I left the home, I was a totally different person than when I come home. I had two like a split personality sort of thing so it was difficult just because I couldn't, like all my other friends they'd be sharing what they did with their girlfriend, where they took them out whatnot with their parents, but I couldn't necessarily do that. Well I couldn't do that. So yeah it was difficult just cause I had to put on two faces.

4.3.6 Summary. This section on identities illustrates the diversity of the 11 participants. Even within this relatively small sample, the heterogeneity of South Asian Muslims that was discussed in chapter two is further supported. Although I have presented the data by identity, seeing the myriad of identities that the participants described in each section illustrates how multiple identities can exist in unison. Furthermore, among these participants, the data suggests that the salience of identities can depend on the context and switching between identities can sometimes feel necessary. As discussed in chapter two, multiple identities can affect individuals' understandings and experiences. As such, it is reasonable to argue that the participants' individual identities will intersect and interact with their other perceptions that will be discussed in the following sections.

4.4 Influence of South Asian Muslim Cultures: "Dating is Taboo" - Perceptions of the South Asian Muslim Community's Acceptance of Dating

As discussed in chapter two, research has found that generally, Muslims perceive dating as incompatible with their beliefs and consider dating to be taboo (Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Abraham, 2001, 2002), a threat to family honour (Zine, 2008), shameful, and is "frowned upon" (Haddad, Smith, & Moore, 2006, p. 87). When analyzing the data from this study, it is clear that these young South Asian Muslims perceive that their South Asian Muslim community generally still condemns Western forms of dating. There was, however, recognition that there are some individual families who are more accepting of it, but overall, it is disapproved of. With the exception of one participant, all stated that, generally, they do not believe their South Asian Muslim community is accepting of dating.

For many, there was no question that dating is unacceptable. For instance, Adeel said that dating is:

Not acceptable, plain and simple.

Similarly, Hafeez stated:

Dating is taboo…dating is not a concept that we consider…it's wrong.

These straightforward statements illustrate that, for some, there is no argument or room for interpretation; it is clearly understood by Adeel and some of the others that dating is forbidden. The reasons participants gave to explain this disapproval revolve around what they perceive to be religious and cultural norms. The participants also acknowledged that dating is a generational issue in terms of conflicting opinions regarding dating between the generations.

4.4.1 Religious rules. When religion was discussed specifically, the participants explained that dating is explicitly forbidden in Islam[3]. Four participants discussed the religious rules related to the prohibition of dating. This is illustrated by Faraz's statement below:

> *In Islam dating is forbidden, right?...Islam like I'll speak to it because I'm Muslim, right? Islam, they say dating is forbidden...*

Hafeez also stated:

> *Islam forbids it [dating] regardless of where you are.*

Likewise, Adil discussed how religion plays a big role in why dating is unaccepted by his South Asian Muslim community. He said that the religion does not approve of dating. Thus, what the religion proscribes, the community simply follows.   In addition, Adeel explained that there are rules in Islam that indirectly circumvent dating as well. More specifically, the rules that restrict communication between the sexes, he said, are primary rules that "*cancel out*" dating.

4.4.2 Fear of premarital sex. Another reason given to explain why dating is unaccepted by the South Asian Muslim community is the fear that dating will lead to premarital sex. This is related to both cultural and religious norms that place significance on virginity, which was previously noted in chapter two. Faraz's statement below explains how this can manifest.

> *'Cause we believe in you got to be virgin before marriage, right? So…dating…they don't [approve of it].*

Hafeez spoke of this and emphasized the significance of virginity as well as explained that premarital sex is a serious sin:

---

[3] Note that only some interpretations of Islam forbid dating directly.

It's wrong [dating]…because a lot like right now you date, at the end of the date sometimes there's sex. Sex is a major, premarital sex is a major sin in Islam…it's one of the biggest things that you can do.

Faiza and Jameela also discussed with me how dating is perceived to result in sexual intimacy. While Faiza explained it as a general perception, Jameela described it in such a way that implies she, herself, believes that being in close proximity with someone of the opposite sex, even if just friends, may lead to sex. She said:

Eventually one thing leads to another.

The manner in which Jameela talked about the issue illustrates that some of the participants subscribe to their perceptions of their South Asian Muslim community's views on dating.

4.4.3 Arranged marriages and family honour. Another cultural justification for the disapproval of dating in some South Asian Muslim communities is the norm of arranged marriages and the threat dating poses to family honour. The norm of having an arranged marriage is challenged and undermined by dating. Very briefly, the arranged marriage process is one that involves, at the very least, parents and often other family members. The family considers potential partners and presents those deemed acceptable to their child and then, in most cases, the child will agree or disagree to the arrangement. Dating, however, is contradictory to this process as the child will select their own partner and date them for a period of time with or without their parents' knowledge and/or approval.

Rabia explained how she perceives that dating is in direct conflict with what she said are the Qur'an's teachings that state parents are to pick who their child marries. Adeel is another participant who mentioned that the cultural norm of having an arranged

marriage is another reason why dating is not approved of. Similarly, when asked why

dating is unaccepted Shama said:

> *Well I guess because well first of all like arranged marriage is commonly an*
> *accepted practice there so um…and I also think that relationships and what you*
> *do with others is strongly connected to family honour.*

Shama's statement not only illustrates that the norm of having an arranged marriage is

threatened by dating, but also acknowledges the importance of family honour when

considering dating. Shama discussed this further and said:

> *And like [parents/family will think] "this is how you represent our family so don't*
> *do anything stupid" um…and that family honour carries on into an arranged*
> *marriage when you're trying to [find a potential spouse].*

What Shama said here indicates the significance of family honour in terms of future

arranged marriages, which is consistent with literature discussed in chapter two (see

Abraham, 2001; Alexander et al., 2006; Dodd, 1973). Thus, dating compromises family

honour and has the potential to have a negative impact on future marital relationships.

In addition to Shama, there were other participants who also mentioned family

honour when discussing reasons why dating is generally unaccepted in their South Asian

Muslim community. Javed in particular explained how his mother responded to

discovering his relationship with his girlfriend with concern for his girlfriend's family's

honour as well as their own. He said:

> *Yeah, it's family honour kind of thing. They're like, "what? She's someone's*
> *daughter. You're my child. What if you're caught somewhere or where you're*
> *dating and some other guy sees you?*

Shama and Javed pointed to the threat that dating poses to family honour. As

such, it is yet another reason perceived to explain the South Asian Muslim community's

resistance to dating. Therefore, not only are there identifiable religious and cultural

norms/rule directly and indirectly discouraging dating, but there is also the potential

consequence of lowering the family's honour or bringing shame to the family that further

supports this disapproval.

4.4.4 Dating as a generational issue. The above results indicate that there are

multiple reasons given to justify the disapproval of dating. This perceived aversion to

dating, however, is also identified by some participants as a generational issue. The

majority of the participants who discussed dating as a generational issue did so in terms

of differing opinions or conflicts regarding dating between the generations. For these

participants, dating can be a site for conflicting beliefs between generations, primarily

between children and parents. Differing opinions regarding dating are attributed to

multiple things. There are four participants who said that these clashing views result

from changes over time. Adil explained that his parents' generation grew up during a

time when arranged marriages were more common and contact between partners prior to

the wedding was restricted or non-existent. Now, however, he said that parents are losing

control over their children because the younger generation has more opportunities to meet

partners on their own. Sadaf's statement below further supports how changes over time

resulting from changing surroundings can lead to more opportunities for associations

between sexes. She said:

> *Because like in the generation of my parents, they would live around their cousins, right? So, there were big joint families together living together. They didn't really need friends outside because they had like 10 cousins and they were their best friends. Whereas for us, who have grown up outside, we don't have our cousins with us so we tend to make friends that are outside of the family and so we are also more relaxed on choosing if it's a man or a woman.*

Sana attributed the changes between generations to where one was raised. She explained

why she thinks her views do not coincide with her parents and said:

> *I think it's more about yeah, like where we grew up and you know the society plays a big role in what we think right and you know me and my friends we all*

45

grew up here and so we have a more Western view of things whereas our parents like my parents, they met once before they got married and I think that's insane. I would never do that...

Using the word "insane" to describe how her parents met suggests that she passionately objects to traditional means of finding a partner. Her mention of growing up in Canada is similar to Shama, attributing the change in acceptance of dating among the younger generation to Western influences. She said:

Because I think younger generations are being more acceptable and my parents are coming to realize that you know times change and especially because of Western influence.

This is further illustrated by Hafeez who also credited the mainstream Western culture with the increase in approval for dating among some South Asian Muslim youth living in Canada. He said:

Because a lot of Pakistani people like they grew up in Canada, they want to experience the Western lifestyle. So, they're doing things, they just, they want to get into the new culture. In Pakistan this doesn't happen.

With these incompatible perspectives on dating between younger and older generations comes the potential for consequences and difficulties. This will be further elaborated upon in the section regarding the pressure to engage in dating. It is worth noting, however, that youth living in Canada can feel caught in between two cultures. Adeel briefly mentioned this when asked if dating is a generational issue, he said:

That's where like the issues come upon the first generation kids like me 'cause they're kind of trapped between the life at home and the life outside of home.

This is an example of how the generational differences regarding dating can have a negative impact on the younger generation. As mentioned previously, this will be examined further at a later point.

4.4.5 Summary. The participants' perceptions of their South Asian Muslim community's acceptance of dating, regardless of whether or not it is correct, may play a role in their own perceptions and experiences of dating, especially if their community is important to them or their families. To varying degrees, the community that surrounds our families and us is an institution of socialization and potentially control. As such, it is arguable that it can be something that individuals consider, which may affect their own beliefs and decisions. Even if their South Asian Muslim community's rejection of dating does not prevent them from dating, it is impossible to say that it has no impact at all. Individual identities and the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures intersect with the influence of the mainstream Western culture as well, which I present in the section that follows.

4.5 Influences of the Mainstream West: Pressure to Date

The influence of the mainstream West can be difficult for most South Asian Muslims to escape when it surrounds them outside of their home or community. Dating is a social norm in Canada and as such, it has the potential to pressure South Asian Muslims to date. This is suggested in Adeel's statement below.

The whole social thing and what society forces you to do in that case.

The word choice of "force" may suggest that Adeel perceives there is a very strong pressure to date and it can perhaps be extremely difficult to resist given that dating is very normalized in Western society. Thus, for this study, the influence of the dominant culture of the West is being examined by looking at the pressure to date specifically.

4.5.1 Feeling different or left out. Three participants, Shama, Hafeez, and Adil, discussed how the pressure to date stemmed from feeling left out or different from their peers and also feeling unable to relate to their peers. Shama indicated she felt unable to

relate to her peers, while Hafeez and Adil also explained that not having a relationship made them feel lonely.

When asked if she felt different or left out because she was not in a relationship, Shama responded:

> *Kind of just because it was like the popular thing to do and like now…like I don't care that I wasn't part of that crowd, but back then right, you just want to feel like you're fitting in.*

This suggests that even though some South Asian Muslims do not necessarily want to become popular by dating, they still want to fit in and to not feel different from everyone else. She also stated:

> *When I was younger, like when I was like 16 or whatever, and I had my, my first crushes or whatnot, it was um…like I knew I couldn't act on it and at the same time I'd see all my high school friends in relationships, right? And especially in high school um…like having sex is all the rage (laughter) so you'd hear about it and um…I guess I couldn't participate in those conversations.*

She also explained:

> *I never felt pressured, but at the same time I felt like "okay I don't know what you're talking about," right?*

This implies (which I will expand on further) that for some, even with the acknowledgment that pressures do exist does not mean that they, themselves, necessarily felt pressured to actually engage in dating.

Hafeez, however, explained that seeing everyone around him date did encourage him to do date as well to avoid feeling peculiar. He said:

> *For about three years when I did not have a girlfriend, I felt like naked sort of like…you need to have one because if you don't, you feel weird. So, like for three years I always had a girlfriend.*

Hafeez continued and discussed how being single him feel lonely, another potential source of pressure for some. His statement below suggests this.

It makes me feel a little bit alone, but I know that it's temporary.

This is similar Adil's statement that follows.

There was a point where it seemed like everybody had a boyfriend or everyone had a girlfriend. I'm like "okay, I'm kind of lonely here like what do I do?" Right? So, it was kind of different 'cause then I'm like "okay, but I'm not allowed to date. So, I don't know what to do." So, that was a kind of big stress, it was pressure.

Adil specifically stated that this was a source of pressure. Saying that "everyone" was dating suggests that he felt different from everyone else; refraining from dating was something that distinguished him from his peers, and likely in a negative way.

Shama, Hafeez and Adil all explained that they felt different or left out because they believed that all of their peers were engaging in something that they were unable to. There were others who also spoke of the role of social surroundings in whether or not the pressure to date was palpable.

4.5.2 Social surroundings encouraging dating. Adeel and Sadaf discussed that their social surroundings allowed the pressure to date to manifest. When asked if seeing dating around him made him more likely to do it or more curious, Adeel responded:

Yeah, absolutely. That's when high school came in.

He explained that your social surroundings, in this case seeing dating all around, make you more likely to try dating. He stated that that is what happened to him as everyone around him was doing it.

Sadaf also touched on this when asked if seeing everyone around her date made her want to date or feel pressured, she stated:

Sometimes, not because I feel pressured [by peers], but sometimes you know you'd see your friends talking about this guy who's making them feel so special and you know sending them flowers, this and that and then that makes you kind of feel bad like, "oh I don't have anyone like that." But I don't think it got to the point where I felt like I needed to be in a relationship because I always knew that

even though those guys are doing all those sweet things, they're also doing so much that is hurting them right.

Although the pressure to date was present, it was not strong enough to make her engage in the behaviour. The pressure to date was also counteracted by the negative aspects she witnesses in other dating relationships.

    4.5.3 Social surroundings discouraging dating. As previously mentioned, social surroundings not only have the potential to enhance the pressure to date, but can also diminish that pressure. Faraz, Hafeez, Sana, and Jameela all discussed how their social surroundings, which included friends who did not date, reduced the tangibility of the pressure to date. Faraz explained that the majority of his friends did not have girlfriends so he did not feel pressured to date.

    Hafeez also spoke of this. Although he did report feeling pressured to date because he felt different, once he became more religious and became friends with people who did not date, this changed. He said his friends were not able to pressure him directly because none of them had girlfriends either. This also implies that since his friends were not engaging in dating, there was less indirect pressure for him to do so as well. Similar to Sadaf, Hafeez also explained how the pressure to date was minimized by seeing the unfavourable situations those who were relationships would end up in.

    Sana's statement below illustrates how social surroundings can extend beyond peers. When asked if she felt pressure to date, she responded:

> *Not really 'cause the neighbourhood I come from, it's mostly brown people. So, I wasn't really pressured by my friends or anything…*

Her reference to her neighbourhood speaks to the importance of the surrounding community. Thus, social surroundings may not be limited to their immediate peers or friends.

50

Similar to Sana, Jameela's discussion supports social surroundings including communities as well. In Jameela's case, her social surroundings also included her Islamic school. She explained not participating in dating was not difficult for her. She attributed this to attending an Islamic school for eight years which required everyone to adhere to rules, such as abstaining from close contact with the opposite sex, including dating. She did admit, however, to still having crushes, suggesting that even when in surroundings that discourage relationships between the sexes, feelings can still develop. While she did attend a public school around the age of 13, she explained that by this time she already had the "grounding" that prevented her from feeling like she had a bad life because she was unable to do things that her peers did. This also speaks to the lasting effect that social surroundings can have even upon leave said surroundings.

4.5.4 Difficulties arising from pressure to date. There were some participants who discussed experiencing difficulties emerging from the pressure to date. Adil, Adeel, and Faiza explained how distressing this was for them. When Adil discussed the pressure to date, he expanded and said:

> *So that [pressure to date] was a kind of big stress, it was pressure. It was a big stress 'cause like okay like is that the way I fit in, like if I get a girlfriend? But, like I'm not allowed to do that, so it was a big fight within myself. Like I don't know what to do. So, it was, it was an interesting time.*

Adil's statement speaks to the inner struggles that can arise when having to deal with two conflicting cultural norms, norms associated with their heritage country that, generally, forbid dating, and norms associated with the West that approve of dating. As he indicated, this was a distressing situation for him to manage.

Adeel talked about the difficulties he faced in a different way than Adil. Instead of an inner struggle, Adeel had to navigate what he termed "two faces" because of conflicting norms surrounding dating. He stated:

When I left the home I was a totally different person than when I come home. I had two like a split personality sort of thing so it was difficult just because I couldn't, like all my other friends they'd be sharing what they did with their girlfriend, where they took them out whatnot with their parents, but I couldn't necessarily do that. Well I couldn't do that. So yeah it was difficult just 'cause I had to put on two faces.

His statement not only illustrates how he felt the need to have two identities, but also speaks to the challenge of not being able to have the relationship with his parents that he saw between his peers and their parents. For Adeel, he had difficulties stemming from having to manage two separate lives that likely resulted from being influenced by the dominant Western culture and moreover, not being able to share his life outside of his home with his parents, which he saw peers do (his social surroundings).

Faiza's situation also varied from Adil and Adeel's. Prior to entering her first relationship, she explained how she felt that being in a relationship was something that she *should* do. She also said that it was difficult conflicting with her dad and trying to hide her relationship. She felt as if she was being pulled in two different directions. When asked if this was a struggle she responded:

Absolutely and for me I was just really trying to pull them [her parents] to a place where it [dating] was more accepted and I was trying to be honest and I think that I wanted to pull them with me so we could have an open dialog and this could be something I could have my family a part of...

Although the situation was slightly different from Adeel's, Faiza also explained how she did want to have an open relationship with her parents. This may indicate that some South Asian Muslims do not want to hide their dating relationships from their parents and

desire their parents to be more accepting of this to facilitate an open relationship. And, when this does not happen, it can be difficult to deal with.

4.5.5 Summary. The pressure to date, stemming from the normalization of dating in the mainstream Western culture, can manifest itself in different ways for different people. Some experience it from feeling left out or different from peers. For some, their social surroundings can be another source of pressure. Yet it is also possible that their social surroundings can lessen the pressure to date if their peers or community do not engage in it. When this pressure is felt, there can be difficulties that have to be managed.

The pressure to date from the dominant West and the conflicting pressure not to date from South Asian Muslim cultures are mediated by the participants' intersecting individual identities in shaping the meanings assigned to dating, dating behaviours, and dating abuse. I will start with the definitions and purposes participants gave to dating in the following section.

4.6 What is Dating?: Participants' Perceptions of the Definition and/or Purpose of Dating

Before delving into discussions of dating abuse, it is first necessary to establish what dating means to these participants. One of the most memorable responses was given by Adeel who laughed about it being hard to explain what dating is. His laughter and inability to give an answer immediately after being asked suggests that, for him, dating is a taken for granted term that has not required prior thought, but is rather a concept that is generally just understood. It is possible that this is also a reflection of how accustomed to or integrated in the mainstream Western culture Adeel is. This was also evident in my interactions with him as a whole.

For others like Hafeez and Jameela, however, who have not adopted the mainstream Western culture to the same extent as Adeel, dating is not a given concept. For Hafeez,

Dating is not a concept that we [South Asian Muslims] consider, but it's what happens. It's the Canadian culture, Western culture that's been adapted.

When asked, Jameela also suggested that dating is a uniquely Western phenomenon. She said:

People living in this part of the world have this idea that I need to get to know this person a year, in a year span before I marry them or more and in that span I am dating them.

Both Hafeez and Jameela self-identified as religious and their interviews as a whole suggest they both have a strong attachment to the religion. This could be one possible explanation for their perception of dating as an unnatural phenomenon unlike Adeel. This is especially interesting and worthy of consideration in future research since Jameela, like Adeel, was also born in Canada while Hafeez came to Canada at the age of seven. Thus, it may not be simply about time in Canada.

4.6.1 Getting to know someone. The specific explanations of dating given often overlapped with the discussions of the purposes of dating. The majority of participants (8) discussed dating as the process of getting to know a partner. As plainly stated by a laughing Javed:

It's [dating] so you know what you're, what you get at the end. It's not new and you say, "oh shit I was expecting something else, damn I married that one."

For Javed, dating allows someone to get to know his/her partner before marriage since no one wants to be surprised after making such a commitment. This statement suggests that Javed may hold some patriarchal ideologies, as he seems to value himself and his happiness over his potential partner and her happiness.

54

Similarly, Faiza, Rabia, and Faraz also spoke of dating leading to marriage. For instance, Faiza said that, for her, dating is to get to know someone with the intention of becoming exclusive/committed leading to marriage. Rabia took a similar stance explaining that dating is going out on dates, getting to know someone with the purpose of finding someone you are potentially going to marry. This is consistent with Faraz who stated that, for some, the purpose of dating is to get to know someone and their personality to ensure you know the person you plan on spending the rest of your life with. Even though Jameela did not appear to have a favourable opinion of dating, she also acknowledged that dating is also a process of getting to know someone with the intention of a long-term relationship.

While Sadaf's statement below also points to the purpose of getting to know someone, for her, dating does not have to result in marriage. She said dating is:

> *Two people getting to know each other, usually it doesn't have to have any intention of it going anywhere.*

This is similar to Sana who also acknowledged that dating, while it is to get to know someone completely, does not have to lead to marriage.

Shama, although not specifying that dating should result in marriage or not, also spoke of dating as a means of getting to know a partner. She said:

> *Dating is for me the process of getting to know someone, seeing if they're compatible with you and sharing intimacy.*

Not only did Shama explain that dating is to get to know someone, but she also mentioned that dating is to share intimacy.

4.6.2 Finding and having a constant partner and intimacy. Having someone to always be with, including being with that person intimately is another purpose two other participants discussed. Adil explained that dating is two people who want to be together

and help each other with different things. It is having someone you can talk to no matter what; someone you are comfortable with and could spend all the time in the world with. Sana discussed this as well and said that dating is being with someone and liking someone. It is sharing thoughts and feelings with that person as well as being physically involved with them.

Another explanation or purpose of dating is dating as a means of finding a partner. Both Faraz and Hafeez spoke of dating as a process that allows one to find a partner. Faraz said:

> *I think dating is just when a person is trying to get serious with his life and he tries to, he or she starts to like find the right person for his future and so he's starts the process of dating to meet people.*

As Faraz explained, dating is something that occurs at a stage of life when someone is ready to pursue the search for a serious partner. Hafeez discussed dating in a similar manner, but specifically mentioned that individuals engaging in dating to find a partner are doing so with the end goal of marriage.

4.6.3 Recognition of diversity in definitions and purposes. Dating is not a uniform phenomenon; it means different things to different people. An example of how some participants recognized this can be seen in Hafeez's discussion. He stated that dating can be to find a serious partner, but for others with less honourable intentions, dating is a means of gaining sex. There were four others (Shama, Jameela, Faiza, and Sadaf) who also recognized that the purpose of dating and what it is varies by the individual. Similar to Hafeez, Shama also spoke of dating as a way of meeting sexual needs. She said:

> *I guess it depends. Like casual daters, it's just to fulfill that sexual need (laughs) and um…in terms of like I prefer long-term dating scene and that is to measure*

compatibility and to see your, see if you can see yourself with that person…Long-term as in marriage and raising a family, etc.

This is similar to Sadaf who stated:

It [dating] could just be like a fling or it could be something that has a purpose.

Jameela, however, explained it a little differently. The purpose of getting to know a potential partner remains the consistent. Instead, she specified two forms of dating using the level of seriousness as the distinguishing factor. She explained that more casual dating is when individuals are getting to know each other by going out and also talking on the phone. She also said that dating is when individuals have a long-term relationship to get to know each other with the intention of marrying.

Faiza acknowledged different forms of dating in a manner somewhat comparable to Jameela with getting to know someone as the purpose still. For Faizia, dating can take the form of being either exclusive or not. She explained that going out on dates with multiple people to get to know them is dating. The individual, however, would still be considered as single. On the other hand, dating is also when the relationship is exclusive and it becomes a relationship. This is when, she said, your status would no longer be single.

Adeel's perception of dating was unlike any of the other participants. When asked what the purpose of dating is, Adeel responded that the purpose is curiosity and liking someone a lot. He further explained that the purpose is also to show off, to be able to say to their friends that they have been with a girl. This suggests that he thinks some perceive dating as a status symbol.

4.6.4 Summary. The participants' discussions of what dating is and its purposes illustrate the heterogeneity of dating. Dating can have multiple purposes depending on

the individuals involved, which can include getting to know someone (for marriage or not), having someone to be with always and sharing intimacy with, finding a partner, and having casual sexual relations. Some participants recognized the diversity of purposes and forms themselves, which may suggest that some South Asian Muslims realize that dating does not have a consistent meaning or form for everyone. In the section that follows, I will explore the participants' acceptance of various forms of Western dating and their accompanying explanations.

4.7 Personal Acceptance of Dating

While there were some participants who either completely accepted or rejected any and all forms of dating, the majority found a middle ground between the two. This middle ground is the acceptance of dating with specific limitations.

4.7.1 Unqualified acceptance of dating. Adeel and Javed were the only two participants who specifically stated that they accepted Western forms of dating without any reservations. Adeel admitted to approving all forms of dating, including casual. He said this is because:

I'm born and raised here.

Consistent with previous discussions of Adeel, this statement seems to suggest that the mainstream Western culture has a significant influence on his perceptions and beliefs. It is arguable that Adeel has adopted or assimilated to much of the mainstream Western cultural perceptions, especially regarding dating, as evident by his unconditional acceptance of dating, and his interview as a whole. He also accredited this to his exposure to many different things as he lived in different places in Canada and he does not see anything wrong with dating. In fact, he said that dating is a curiosity of his. Implying it is something that he, himself, is willing to, and has, explored.

Javed claimed to be accepting of Western forms of dating as well. When asked if he thinks dating is acceptable, Javed stated:

Yeah, 'cause my theory is like you have to find someone right?

While Javed said he was accepting of dating, and gave no limitations, the same explanation given for Adeel does not seem to apply to Javed. Generally, Javed does not seem to be acculturated to the Canadian mainstream society to the same extent as Adeel is. It is worth noting that Javed came to Canada two years ago. He may not be as accepting of it as he appears to be because he was not expecting to see casual dating relationships when he came to Canada. This is suggested by his shock from seeing casual relationships in Canada. He discussed the first time he witnessed this and his statement is below:

> *When I moved, one of the guys here came up with a girl for the night and like "oh is she your girlfriend?" "No!" Like "oh so she didn't leave last night?" "Yeah, so?" That, that thing was new for me 'cause you know normally if you're dating someone then you do that. I couldn't believe it at first… but I thought it was more of a you know movie thing, not what happens generally, but that time I'm like "oh really? That does happen." So it was kind of new and shocking for me.*

It is difficult to determine if Javed is entirely accepting of the more casual forms of dating. Even in his discussions of casual relationships, however, he did not seem to emit a negative affect toward the casual forms, based on my perceptions, but rather utter shock that this happens in real life. Javed appeared to take a laissez-faire attitude towards dating and did not present a strong opinion either way. Other participants, however, did take a stronger stance.

4.7.2 Complete rejection of dating. Three participants, Faraz, Jameela, and Sadaf, explained that they disagree with Western forms of dating completely. Regardless of their acknowledgment of the purposes of dating, which was previously discussed, it

was still thought of by these participants as unacceptable.   For Faraz, dating is unacceptable because it goes against the religion. He explained that religion plays an important role in his decision-making, thus he personally does not agree with it.

Jameela also referred to religion when she justified her disapproval of Western forms dating. She specifically stated that she is not okay with Western dating. She also went further by discussing how it is pointless and inexcusable to engage in a long-term relationship when you can get married, making you "halal" for that person, and still engage in the fun activities one would do while dating.

Sadaf's argument for disagreeing with Western forms of dating differs from Faraz and Jameela. Sadaf substantiated her opinion by explaining how Western forms of dating are detrimental or harmful even if people do not realize it. When asked what is harmful about it, she responded that having multiple boyfriends prior to marriage makes marriage less special. She explained that for South Asian Muslims who have not dated, they are experiencing everything for the first time with their partner. She said this allows you to feel much closer to your partner. Furthermore, she explained many people experience "drama" with Western dating. Put simply, she argued that any benefits of dating are outweighed by the potential harms. She has witnessed what her friends have gone through while dating relationships and she said:

Trade off isn't worth it.

4.7.3 Acceptance within limits. Unlike the previous participants, the remaining majority found a middle ground between the two extremes of either accepting all forms of Western dating without reservation or disagreeing with dating completely. For these participants, they accepted certain forms of dating or dating with certain limitations.

Most of these participants agreed with dating as long as it was not casual. Shama Rabia,

and, Sana spoke of this. For instance, Shama stated:

> *I prefer long-term dating scene and that is to measure compatibility and to see your, see if you can see yourself with that person. Long-term as in marriage and raising a family, etc…I definitely would not do it [date casually] for myself. I can I guess why others would do it and I'm okay like I don't stop them or anything, but I personally do not agree.*

While Rabia reasoned this is because there is no purpose in casually dating and Sana

explained it is because they do not mean anything, Shama justified it in more detail and

stated:

> *I just think it's very superficial and I treat, I guess I treat my sexuality as more valuable and kind of precious in the sense that I just don't want it to share with everyone. Yeah, so I think I just put a lot of value in intimacy and uh kind of when you do find the right person, I just want to be like "you know I saved myself for you."*

Similar to Shama, Adil also referred to premarital sex. For Adil, dating is

acceptable; however, certain behaviours sometimes associated with dating are still

unacceptable, primarily premarital sex. He explained that premarital sex is very

significant in his culture and he personally does not recommend having sex with someone

if there are any doubts about being with that person. He stated that having sex with that

person would make them another name on a list. This implies that having multiple sexual

partners diminishes the meaning of sexual intimacy. Furthermore, he emphasized that he

despises one-night stands and thinks they are "bogus" because it is disrespectful towards

the girl even if she wants it.

While Hafeez recognized the need to date in order to get to know one another, he

explained that certain rules must be followed. More specifically, the couple should never

be alone together (i.e., there should always be a chaperone present). He argued that these

conditions on dating correspond with Islamic restrictions.

Faiza stated that there should be restrictions on dating as well. She, however, emphasized age. Contrary to Rabia, Sana, and Shama, Faiza thinks casual dating should be encouraged at a young age, specifically around 16 years old. She argued that serious relationships should not occur until the around the age of 18 because when one is young, the role of being a girlfriend in a serious relationship and the accompanying responsibilities are too much to take on. She explained that at that age, one may not be fully developed and she would not want young people experimenting with sexual activities. She said that being in a relationship where you are seeing each other frequently and in private has the potential to allow feelings to get stronger. She argued that encouraging casual dating in public spaces could curb this development of stronger feelings. Since Faiza perceived her community to be accepting of dating, it is possible that her acceptance of casual dating at a younger age is not unreasonable. Whereas for other participants who generally believed that their communities are not accepting of dating, they only support serious dating relationships. Therefore, some of the other participants may emphasize serious meaningful relationships since they would be risking potential negative consequences.

4.7.4 Summary. As previously noted, all but one participant said that dating is generally deemed unacceptable by South Asian Muslims, even if one participant did acknowledge that these views are changing. It seems, however, that the effects of the mainstream Western culture can outweigh cultural and religious expectations for some. The South Asian Muslim culture, however, can still have an effect as suggested by the majority of the participants putting limits on what is acceptable in terms of dating. Thus, while many are breaking the cultural and religious norms/rules with regards to dating, there are some who will still only go so far (i.e., within limits). Individual identities, the

influence of the mainstream Western culture and South Asian Muslim cultures, personal perceptions and acceptance of dating, I argue, intersect to influence the meanings and significance of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships. In the next section I will examine this by focusing on that which is perceived by the participants to be unique to South Asian Muslims.

4.8 Meanings and Significance of Behaviours and Abuse in Dating Relationships Participants Perceive to be Unique to South Asian Muslims

All of the participants acknowledged the most frequently thought of forms of abuse (i.e., physical, sexual, and emotional/psychological). They generally described the forms in a manner consistent with Rabia, who stated the following about emotional and physical abuse:

> *[Emotional is] hurting someone through words and constantly putting them down, looking down upon, degrading them… obviously physical is hitting and stuff like that.*

With psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse, or the less tangible forms of abuse, the participants had greater difficulty specifying when certain behaviours would become abusive or when they would label them abusive.

The participants also did not go into detail regarding sexual abuse, perhaps implying that it does not require an explanation or that they were not comfortable defining it. An additional form of abuse identified by some participants is cheating. Three participants, Hafeez, Faraz and Javed, specifically stated that cheating is a form of abuse or, at the very least, is unhealthy. For instance, Hafeez said:

> *Islamically that's a big sin. So, he's going to go to hell for doing that. It's sort of maybe abuse because emotional abuse…you could put it in those terms…I can't think of a word to describe it specifically.*

63

While Hafeez's discussion of the seriousness of cheating was more extreme than Faraz and Javed's, they still recognized it as significant enough to be thought of as a form of abuse.

In addition to the forms of abuse the participants discussed, they identified issues they perceived to be especially significant or unique to South Asian Muslims. Even if they were unable to identify what is specifically different, there is a widespread perception that there are aspects of dating abuse that can be experienced differently for South Asian Muslims. As Rabia stated:

> *There could be many things [differences in experiences with abuse] because, like I said, it's that different expectation, right? So I can expect different things from my husband than you would from yours.*

Note that I am not arguing that these things are in fact completely unique to South Asian Muslims. I am, however, presenting what the participants think is unique to South Asian Muslims. The specific aspects that are perceived by some participants to be unique to South Asian Muslims include: significance of exposure to parents/community, behaviours related to sex, strong relationship attachment, acceptance/lack of resistance to control, and psychological, emotional, and/or verbal behaviours/abuse.

4.8.1 Significance of exposure to parents/community. The majority of participants (8) discussed the significance of exposure to parents/community. Generally, exposure of a relationship or sexual activities to parents or the community was something the participants believed to be especially detrimental to South Asian Muslims. Adeel specifically discussed how he thinks South Asian Muslims and non-South Asian Muslims might experience this. He said:

> *That would really cause the South Asian girl to be trapped, but if someone like you, if let's say your boyfriend said that to you, you'd probably be like, "are you freaking serious? Like no, that's not happening" sort of thing.*

Rabia discussed why she perceives South Asian Muslims to be especially vulnerable to threats of exposure to parents and/or the community. She explained:

> *Sometimes it's easier to target South Asian girls just because it is typical for their families not to be able to be a part of like that couple. Like so, they obviously look down upon it. So, it 's easier to target them just because "oh if you leave me you know, I'll tell your parents" or "'if you leave me, I'll tell everyone that you did this with me [sex]." So it's just easier in some senses.*

Rabia and Adeel's statements highlight the perceived vulnerability and unique experiences South Asian Muslims may have with threats of exposing a relationship to parents and/or the community. While this is not necessarily unique to South Asian Muslims, these participants perceive this to be especially harmful to South Asian Muslim women. One of the reasons this can be particularly problematic for women specifically may be the emphasis placed on women to uphold the family honour, as per the literature examined in chapter two (see Ayyub, 2000; Dodd, 1973; Dwyer, 2000; Weiss, 1994).

Rabia explained how even rumors negatively affect South Asian Muslims in particular. She stated:

> *If that person was going around telling other people oh you know this and this happened and rumors get around. Even though they may not be true, a lot of people would hear them and maybe stay away from that person. [Is that a form of abuse?] Definitely because he is ruining her future prospects of what she could do and I'm sure he only would do it if he was abusive to just take um…push her away from him that "there's no problem with me, it's her."*

When asked what could affect a South Asian Muslim girl the worst, in the context of an abusive dating relationship, Shama responded that exposing a sexual relationship to parents is the worst. This is illustrated in her statement below.

> *Maybe telling her parents about any sexual exploits, especially like if her parents are conservative or if they don't know about it, right? And that could cause big trouble for her at home…Like I think crossing that privacy or whatever is abusive. [Would that be a big deal?] Yeah, I think so. I mean if the parents are conservative, that's a big problem like she could be disowned you never know or*

she could be like married off like right away just so to prevent it from happening again.

Shama specifically recognized exposure to parents as one of the worst things a dating partner can do and, similar to Rabia, she also spoke of the significant consequences of such exposure.

Jameela explained how the severity of such exposure lends itself to being used as a means of blackmail.   Her statement follows.

Yeah, like obviously you could blackmail someone right. 'Cause…for some girls, knowing that they've done that [had a sexual relationship], having other people know about it, including her parents, it's a very like "oh my god I can't let that happen ever" kind of a thing. So, obviously she'd maybe be more of "I should do things" for her boyfriend so that that secret stays between them.

Rabia also discussed the consequences of this form of exposure at the hands of a partner, which is illustrated in her statement below.

He just basically ruined her life. [What would happen?] If it was a South Asian family, I'm sure that in some cases I heard that the girl has been disowned by the family, the girl has been shut in the house and can't be out, and you know she'll get married soon.

Sana also discussed the potential for this to be used in an abusive relationship and the negative impact it would likely have in a manner comparable with the participants above. She stated:

The guy could you know always threaten to tell the parents. [Is that something that someone could use if he was abusive?] Yeah, definitely. [Is that a big thing?] Yeah, it's a big (emphasis) deal. The parents would get really mad.

It is arguable that the significance of the potential consequences of exposure can have for some, which is likely linked to family honour, is a key reason why this is one of the worst things these participants perceived could be done to a South Asian Muslim woman.

4.8.2 Behaviours related to sexuality. Another dating issue the majority of

participants perceived to be experienced in a way unique to South Asian Muslims is

behaviours related to sexual intimacy. For instance, when asked if there are behaviours

that could hurt South Asian Muslims more than non-South Asian Muslims, Jameela

responded:

> *Maybe like more sexual things that are normal for this culture that might not be normal for that part of the world [South Asia]. That could be something along those lines.*

Although Jameela was not able to give a concrete example, she did acknowledge that it

would most likely be related to sexual intimacy. Hafeez attributed the differences in

experiences regarding sexuality to the cultural and religious norms surrounding sexuality.

He explained:

> *Well certain things that you think is normal, is bad for us. [Like what?] Kissing and everything's okay like we don't like in Islam like you don't even…touch a girl until you're married. That's just how it is. Like you're supposed to keep your distance. Like when a girl comes, you lower your gaze and you just wouldn't look at her. Like right now, I shouldn't be looking at you…anywhere like anywhere you go like you see girls who are dressed in skirts, they're showing all their cleavage, it's kind of like difficult. That's like you can't look at that, but like you see it everywhere. So, you have to like lower, you look away or something.*

Hafeez's statement illustrates how the differences in cultural and religious norms

surrounding sexual intimacy affect behaviours, in this case, men lowering their gaze

around women. Moreover, his statement also suggests that, for some, being constantly

surrounded by sexuality in Canada can make it challenging to adhere to South Asian

Muslim cultural norms.

Furthermore, there are some behaviours of a sexual nature, in particular,

participants perceived would be experienced uniquely by South Asian Muslims. While

these behaviours are not necessarily abusive, participants identified these behaviours as

having negative consequences unique to South Asian Muslims. There were three

participants (Hafeez, Shama, and Faiza) who identified public displays of affection as

something South Asian Muslims perceive differently compared to other Canadians

generally. When asked if there are specific behaviours South Asian Muslims would find

abusive or bad, but others would not, Hafeez pointed out public displays of affection and

responded:

> *We start making out. If you saw me and a girlfriend, a girl, making out, you'd*
> *probably think okay, whatever. But if like a friend of mine saw that, he would*
> *think it's really bad.*

Faiza, consistent with Hafeez, also explained that kissing in public is inappropriate, which

would be crossing the line for her, but maybe not for someone who is a Canadian of

European origins.

Shama expanded on this further by explaining how she thinks South Asian

Muslims would perceive these behaviours specifically. She stated:

> *I'd say in Western cultures um…just like public displays of affection. Like um…I*
> *don't see South Asian couples you know like kissing in public or anything right*
> *whereas like a Western couple might do that. Like it would be disrespectful in the*
> *sense of just like he, he's crossing her like personal bubble or whatever right.*

Shama's statement illustrates that not only are public displays of affection unacceptable to

some in general, but some may perceive it to be disrespectful to women.   Faiza explained

how the negative perception of public displays of affection by some South Asian Muslim

communities can lead to girls saying no to sexual advances when they mean yes, or

faking resistance to sexual advances. For instance, when her boyfriend kisses her in

public, she will resist and say no even though she wants him to. If she does not feign

resistance, she explained, she would look bad to her community. This speaks to the

perceived significance of the negative effects of public displays of affection since it can make some girls resort to pretending to resist to maintain their good image.

Related to general public displays of affection is the specific behaviour of smacking a woman on her buttocks. The participants were directly asked what they think of this behaviour and five participants, Adil, Faiza, Adeel, Hafeez and Sadaf, responded in great detail. The general consensus among the five participants was that this behaviour is unacceptable and some find it especially so for South Asian Muslims. Adil described the behaviour as disrespectful and, for South Asians, incredibly bad. He explained experiencing this would be worse for a South Asian Muslim than it would for me (a Caucasian). Faiza's discussion was consistent with Adil's as she described this behaviour as degrading. Adil attributed the negative perception of this behaviour to South Asian Muslim cultural and religious norms surrounding sexuality. He believes that South Asian Muslims are very private with their sexuality and do not express it publically. He went further and also said:

Something like that in our community would be like exploiting yourself.

Hafeez expressed a similar sentiment. He stated:

Like if he touches her like smacks her ass, like something like that, that's very unacceptable.

Hafeez, however, explained that it varies based on the individual. He noted that there are some South Asian Muslim girls who would consider that behaviour flattering. He stated:

It depends on the kind of girl you do it to. If like, if I see you do it to a girl I know like probably has sex, I can just tell by looking at her she's sort of whorish, I wouldn't care.

Hafeez's statement illustrates that the response of some individuals to seeing a girl's buttock smacked may depend on how that girl is perceived in general. His comment

suggests that for some, if a girl is perceived to be sexually active, making her a "whore,"
then there may not be as much outrage as if she was perceived to be a virgin. This,
however, is not unique to South Asian Muslims since victim blaming exists in the
mainstream Western society as well.

Sadaf took a slightly different approach in her understanding of this behaviour.
When asked if this behaviour is abusive, Sadaf responded affirmatively. Her statement
below provides a more detailed account of how this can be defined as abuse.

> *I think something like abuse, there, there is a general term and there's also*
> *specific terms based on just those two individuals.*

Sadaf's statement speaks to the subjectivity of defining abuse. For her, if the behaviour is
something that hurts her, but would not hurt someone else, it is still abuse for her. Some
South Asian Muslims may perceive slapping someone on the buttocks as a significant
affront. Thus, it can be defined as an abusive behaviour if it is something a South Asian
Muslim woman perceives to hurt her. There are, however, some who may not
specifically define this behaviour as abuse, as evident in some of the examples provided
above. This supports the fact that even within the South Asian Muslim community there
is variation in definitions of abuse.

Progressing more towards behaviours that are generally accepted as abuse within
the broader Canadian mainstream, is name-calling using sexual references. Three
participants, namely Hafeez, Adil, and Adeel, specifically reported the significance of
sexual references in name-calling for South Asian Muslims in particular. Hafeez
explained that calling a South Asian Muslim girl a whore is the worst thing you could call
her. He stated:

> *That crosses the line…[because] you have to respect your girlfriend. You have to respect anybody. Like respect is a main thing. In Islam you have to respect others.*

Not only can it be problematic on a personal level, but Hafeez's statement suggests it can deemed unacceptable on a religious level as well.

Similarly, Adil stated that he thinks calling a girl something with sexual connotations is one of the worst things you could call a South Asian Muslim girl because of the cultural and religious expectations that girls are pure and innocent. He said it would be more of a "blow" for South Asian Muslims.

Similarly, Adeel addressed the cultural and religious significance. He explained that be believes that calling a girl a whore is worse for a South Asian Muslim girl than a non-South Asian Muslim girl (generally referring to a Canadian of European origin). This is because:

> *That's not the image that they [South Asian Muslim girls] portray in our society. A lot of them, like most, like the majority of them are covered up and whatnot so you wouldn't call someone who's covered their body up a whore. That just doesn't make sense. So yeah, that's extremely offensive.*

Going one step further is the significance of sexual assault specifically. For Adil, sexual abuse is one of the top two or three worst forms of abuse for South Asian women. This was echoed by Faiza who said that rape, in particular, is the worst form of abuse. When asked if this is because of the cultural and religious significance of sex and virginity, Faiza responded yes and explained if a South Asian Muslim who was raped was a virgin:

> *Holy crap that's just terrible.*

Rabia also mentioned sexual abuse when she explained if she would inform her parents if she were being abused. Rabia said that her decision to tell her parents would

71

depend on the type of abuse she was experiencing and how embarrassing it was. She explained that sexual abuse would be a form of abuse she would be reluctant to report to her parents because she would be too embarrassed. While she said that she thinks a lot of people would react in a similar way, she suggested that the significance of sex and the stigmatization of non-virgins, especially for women, could cause some South Asian Muslims to perceive sexual abuse as especially embarrassing and hurtful.

Although slightly different from the discussions of the previous participants, Shama's statement below also emphasizes the significance of sexual intimacy. When Shama was asked to name the worst thing someone could do to a South Asian Muslim girl, she responded:

> *If she's, okay maybe not even religious, but basically like taking her virginity I think if she's not ready to and um…maybe even like bragging about it or something you know like telling your friends about it.*

The scenario Shama is describing is not forced sexual assault, yet she perceives that this particular behaviour, having sex with a girl who is not ready and making a spectacle of it to others, is the worst thing that can be done to a South Asian Muslim girl. This, again, may suggest the heightened significance of sexual intimacy and how it can affect South Asian Muslims in a unique way. While this is not to say that non-South Asian Muslims would not be hurt by this, some South Asian Muslims perceive their community to be more adversely affected by it than non-South Asian Muslims. The cultural and religious significance of sexual intimacy can lead to South Asian Muslims having different experiences with these types of behaviours. This supports the intersectionality argument that the behaviour itself can be the same, but can affect people differently (see Dasgupta, 2000; Sheehan et al., 2000; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Yoshihama, 1999).

4.8.3 Acceptance/lack of resistance to control. Another theme that emerged in the data is the perception that South Asian Muslim girls are easier to control or less resistant to control than non-South Asian Muslims. Generally, some participants perceived South Asian Muslim girls to be more accepting of male dominance. For instance, when asked if there are behaviours that would more accepted in a South Asian Muslim relationship than a Caucasian one, Jameela stated:

> *Maybe it could the whole like male dominance thing. Maybe to them it's okay, it's normal, but maybe someone looking in would be like, "that's kind of weird."*

Sadaf's discussion of control paralleled Jameela's. Sadaf explained that she would be more amenable to her boyfriend not wanting her to go some place than she perceives I would be. She attributed this to me not expecting to be as dependent on a partner as South Asian Muslim girls expect themselves to be, based on her understanding of people like me. She continued and specifically stated that South Asian Muslims would be more likely to accept a controlling boyfriend than Canadians of European origin. Perhaps this is because of the patriarchy specific to South Asian cultures, as discussed in chapter two. Further, when Sadaf was asked what could be done to hurt me, but not her, she responded that she thinks a situation of a boyfriend disapproving of his girlfriend's friends is more likely to hurt a Canadian of European origin more than a South Asian. She stated that if my husband tried to limit me from going somewhere, she thinks that I would me more likely to get upset about it than she would.

Javed also spoke of differences in response to a boyfriend attempting to limit contact with particular friends. Javed explained:

> *You know if some Muslim guy's dating a white girl and you know he tells her not to go out with her guy, guy like friends, which is pretty much normal in Pakistan, normally people don't allow their girlfriend to go out with any type of guy after they're in a relationship. That would be a big issue here, but I don't think that'd*

be an issue there. It's vice versa if a girl tells a guy not to go out with girlfriends um…like female friends, that'd an issue you know.

Javed's statement illustrates how he perceives girls in Canada as more resistant to a partner trying to control who she is friends with. This behaviour, however, is perceived as more accepted and normal in Pakistan, thus, there might be less opposition.

In addition to controlling interactions with friends, some participants also mentioned controlling clothing choices. When presented with a scenario of a boyfriend telling his girlfriend to change her clothes, both Sadaf and Faiza indicated this was a "*respectable idea,*" if, as Sadaf put it, it is discussed in a non-verbally abusive manner. Sadaf explained that if the boyfriend is not comfortable with other men looking at his girlfriend, she should respect that it is upsetting him and change. Faiza, on the other hand, discussed it with respect to cultural norms. She explained that her boyfriend prefers that she cover up because there are standards to be maintained in certain situations. Faiza perceived it to be a protective measure because of the importance of image in her South Asian Muslim community and the negative consequences she would face if she did not maintain that image.

When asked if there are ways to control South Asian Muslims that would not work for others as effectively, Adeel brought up the issue of clothing as well. He said:

Absolutely. Clothing for one example. That's one main thing. Guys will…they'll tell them like, "you can't wear that." You know sort of thing. "People are going to be looking at you and whatnot." I don't think a white girl would give two shits about that just 'cause that's just the way it is…So, their appearance in general um…their physical appearance. Yeah, I think that's one of the main things.

Adeel's statement is another example of the perception that some South Asian Muslim women are less resistant to control related to their choice of clothing/physical appearance or perhaps more willing to compromise.

74

Shama's discussion of this issue varied slightly from the others. She explained how religion could be invoked to try to control. This was something she brought up when asked about any unique ways South Asian Muslim girls can be controlled. She stated:

Maybe using religious threats like saying, "oh you're going to hell you know God will not approve of you or whatever." ...That's actually a perfect example like for example, like if the girl didn't want to wear a hijab or something um and the guy's like, "yeah well you're my girlfriend and if you don't wear the hijab then it will be considered adulterous or whatever by God and you could be punished for that."

While those who spoke of control referred to South Asian Muslim women generally, Adil made the distinction based on education. He explained that if a South Asian Muslim woman is not as educated as her partner, he could use that against her and since he believes he knows more and is more educated with a job, what he says goes. Adil explained that he does not think that would happen with a Western girl or even a South Asian Muslim woman who has lived in Canada (depending on how traditional her family is) because he perceives women to be stronger in Canada due to education, awareness of rights, and greater equality, which he believes gives them more opportunity to leave.

4.8.4 Strong relationship attachment. Related to the issue of control is a strong relation attachment. This is the heightened or especially deep attachment perceived by some participants to exist between South Asian Muslim partners. Faraz explained that this attachment is a means of controlling a South Asian Muslim that he perceives may not work to control someone else. He stated that the worst thing a male partner could do is threaten to leave his female partner, if he knows she really likes him. Adeel's statement below suggests he believes strong relationship attachment is common among South Asian Muslims.

That's [telling someone you cannot live without them] actually pretty common in South Asian relationships. The guys get just as attached to the girls as a girl does to a guy so that's not actually uncommon at all in a South Asian relationship.

When asked if expressing the sentiment that one partner cannot live without the other could be taken too far and become abusive he says absolutely. He stated that people can go suicidal over things like this and generally it makes them more helpless and if they break up, it is even harder.

Javed discussed the difficulties of breaking up, which he perceives to be heightened in South Asian Muslim relationships. For Javed, this is especially the case in a sexual intimate or physical relationship as illustrated in his statement below.

There, physical relationship is something which should happen after marriage…I know people kind of tried to do that before or do that before…just for fun or you know "oh I'm, I'm committed with her and then I'll do that and within one week…broke [up with] her and then I'll, I'll just finish the [relationship] with her." That is really bad for girls there. [To be used for a physical relationship?] Yeah, but I think it's pretty much the same here too of course, but well physical thing there is a big issue. [Is that worse for a South Asian Muslim?] Worse, probably she will just commit suicide.

Javed's statement suggests that while being used for sexual reasons would be hurtful to others, the consequences may especially acute for some South Asian Muslims. This may be due to the cultural and religious significance of sex as evident when Javed said the "the physical thing there is a big issue," meaning in Pakistan.

The reference to breaking up being more difficult was echoed by Shama as well. When asked if there is anything that would be experienced differently for South Asian Muslim couples, Shama said:

Um…I actually think breaking up would be harder like I think...Um…I think South Asians are much more attached in every relationship.

4.8.5 Psychological, emotional, and/or verbal behaviours/abuse. All of the previously discussed behaviours or abuse in dating relationships perceived to be unique to

South Asian Muslims are generally believed to have an especially negative effect on them, with the exception of acceptance of control. There was, however, another exception. Four participants discussed how they perceive that South Asian Muslims are more accepting or less affected by psychological, verbal or emotional forms of abuse, or behaviour that would be typically identified and defined as abuse by the dominant Western society (e.g., yelling and name calling). It is has become increasingly recognized by the mainstream Western society that these behaviours are harmful and are sometimes identified as more hurtful than physical forms of abuse (see Dutton, Goodman, & Bennet, 1999; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause & Polek, 1990; Marshall, 1992; Sackett & Saunders, 1999). Some participants, however, explained that these behaviours are not taken as seriously or are not experienced as hurtful by some South Asian Muslims in comparison to those of the mainstream society. For instance, Shama explained that South Asian couples are more accepting of name-calling. She stated:

> *I think South Asian couples are more willing or they're more open-minded to, or like they're more okay with just calling each other like not horrible names, but just like "oh you're stupid" or you know or like "don't be dumb" or "don't talk nonsense" kind of a thing, right?...And just bickering in general. Like just kind of 'cause I know like I know of a South Asian couple and...they just like call each other names, but it's almost like in a joking way kind of right, like "oh you're retarded" or whatever, right? But that's just a joke supposedly like they're not, they don't mean anything bad by it. So um...and I've seen like in other younger South Asian couples they'll do the same thing like they'll just, they'll I guess it's like a form of flirting for them just like call each other names.*

Shama's statement suggests that she perceives that for some South Asians, name-calling is a manifestation of flirting and joking around, something with positive intentions. Adil, however, spoke of verbal behaviours that are done out of anger, specifically, yelling. He said:

> *South Asian women, they've been yelled at quite a bit and they don't think about that as much. But I guess here, like if you yell at a woman, usually she'd be pretty*

upset, right? But there, they're like, "okay, the guy's right…let's just leave it, right? I probably did something wrong." Here [in Canada], most women would be like, "no, don't yell at me," right? They might yell back.

For Adil, yelling is more of a norm within the South Asian culture, which results in some South Asian women being more accepting of it. On the contrary, he perceives women in the West to be more resistant. When asked if it is this way for South Asian girls living in Canada, he responded that his girlfriend, who was born in Canada, would respond to being yelled at in kind. His sister, who was not born in Canada, however, would not yell at her husband unless it was a very big fight. He did state that his sister would yell a little bit more than his mother. Adil's explanation suggests that resistance, or lack thereof, may vary depending on where the individual was raised. In other words, location of where one was raised may be one factor that contributes to the acceptance of yelling.

Hafeez also discussed yelling in particular. He explained that yelling is normalized in Punjabi culture specifically. His statement below indicates this.

That's [yelling] a big part of my culture. Yelling is a big part. It's normal well in my household, in my, in all of Punjab. I don't want to say for all of Pakistan, but Punjabi culture, Punjabi culture sort of, it's sort of mixed with Indian Punjabi culture 'cause Punjab is between India and Pakistan. Punjabi culture is sort of different than the rest of South Asians. It's just, it's like a little different…like if you hear yelling it's okay. [Would yelling at your girlfriend be okay?] If somebody heard it, they're like, "okay, she probably did something to deserve it."

He went on further and gave the example of his parents. He said:

Like my parents, one thing, my dad yells at my mom a lot. I've never seen him get physical with her, but yells and swears at her a lot. He swears at everybody. That's just how my dad is. It's part of the culture. South like not all South Asian Muslims are like that, not [all] Punjabis are like that, but the majority are like that. [So yelling in a South Asian Muslim dating relationship is okay?] That's just how it is. It's not frowned upon. It's just that's just how it is.

Hafeez's statements clearly indicate that he perceives South Asian Muslims as more likely to minimize yelling since, according to him, it is inherent in Punjabi culture.

78

Sadaf also discussed how South Asians are more tolerant of psychological abuse. Her discussion of psychological or verbal abuse, however, was unique in comparison to the other participants as she specifically explained how the norm of acceptance or tolerance of psychological abuse is problematic. She argued that verbal abuse is worse than physical abuse, especially for South Asians. She explained that this is:

Because they're [South Asian women] just kind of programmed

By referring to South Asians, this statement seems to imply that they are programmed by their culture. She also justified her belief that psychological abuse is the worst by pointing out that verbal abuse happens more often than physical and verbal abuse is something that builds on itself and usually goes unaddressed. Furthermore, she explained, when something physical happens, it is taken more seriously than verbal abuse because some South Asian Muslims may forget that it is equally bad, just a different form of abuse. In her opinion, it is more insulting to be disrespected by a boyfriend in the presence of others than getting slapped. She said women in general, and South Asian women in particular, forget how important verbal respect is and they only think that being hit is disrespect. Moreover, they either forget about or do not even think of psychological abuse as abuse. She gave the example of her grandmother, whom she thinks is pro man, trying to teach her how to treat a man, but her grandmother, however, does not tell her how a man should treat her. She explained it is not because they do not have self-respect, but rather because they have never thought about it.

4.8.6 Summary. This section has presented meanings and significance of behaviours and abuse perceived by the participants to be unique to South Asian Muslims. These preliminary findings suggest that all South Asian Muslims do not necessarily experience behaviours and abuse in dating relationships in the same way. This relatively

79

small sample of South Asian Muslims not only explained that they generally believe that dating behaviours and abuse are experienced differently by their community, but also identified aspects of being a South Asian Muslim they think cause different experiences and also specific behaviours they perceive will be experienced in a unique way. These include: the significance of exposure to parents/community, behaviours related to sex, strong relationship attachment, acceptance/lack of resistance to control, and psychological, emotional, and/or verbal behaviours/abuse. Continuing with the intersecting characteristics, the analysis presented above does not exist in isolation from individual identities, influences of the mainstream Western and South Asian Muslim cultures, as well as perceptions of what dating is and means. All of these things in combination will also influence the perceived effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse, or, more specifically, the decision to hide or remain in an abusive dating relationship.

4.9 Effects of Shame and Family Honour on Dating Abuse

Five themes emerged that are related to family honour and perceived to affect experiences with dating abuse, and, more specifically, the decision to hide an abusive relationship or stay in an abusive dating relationship that is known to the family or community members. The first is *fear of the South Asian Muslim community's response* to discovering a dating relationship or, even more problematic, an abusive dating relationship, which is related to dating and dating abuse as being shameful. The second influence is *blame* perceived by participants to be placed on girls who have been abused. Third, *blackmail* is also believed to have an impact on the decision to hide and/or stay in an abusive dating relationship. This is when a partner threatens to expose a relationship or culturally/religiously inappropriate behaviours (e.g., sexual activities), regardless of the

reality of the acts, to parents, other family members, and/or community members. Fourth, the *strong attachment to relationships* thought to be especially powerful between South Asian Muslims, which is connected to family honour, is perceived to also influence decisions in an abusive relationship. Finally, the fifth theme is the fear of the *consequences of parental discovery* of a dating relationship and/or an abusive dating relationship. This is because engaging in activities that hurt the family's honour can result in punishment from the parents. The parents' reaction to finding out about a dating relationship and even worse an abusive relationship may directly reflect the harm done to the family's honour as well. The South Asian Muslim community's opinion of status and integrity relates to the honour of the larger social unit, such as the family (Ayyub, 2000; Dodd, 1973; Weiss, 1994). This kind of honour is dependent on the outside community's perspective of good behaviours and good moral conduct of its members (especially the women) (Ayyub, 2000; Dodd, 1973; Weiss, 1994). It increases with good behaviors and decreases with weak moral conduct and is reinforced by gossip and scandals about family members, especially the women, including daughters, sisters and wives (Warraich, 2005)

4.9.1 Fear of the South Asian Muslim community's reaction. All of the participants in this study discussed the significance of the community's opinion of the family. Some specifically explained that there may be fear of dishonouring the family if the South Asian Muslim community discovered a dating relationship, and even worse, an abusive dating relationship. They agreed that this fear could encourage a girl to keep an abusive relationship hidden or stay in that relationship especially if the family and community knew about the relationship. The perceived response of the community was discussed in various ways, including: gossip, rumours, labelling, and embarrassment.

81

Some participants discussed how the South Asian Muslim community is perceived to watch and judge women in the community much more than men. Adeel's discussion of women facing more scrutiny for their actions than men supports the argument that more emphasis is put on women upholding the family's status and honour. Faraz also reinforced this idea by specifically stating that society looks at the daughter more. Faraz's following statement illustrates the opinions/perceptions about family status and the behaviour of women.

When women do something in terms of like you know having sex and getting pregnant, like it brings…a lot of shame to the family and a lot outsiders they speak more when women do it than when men do it.

One reason they may fear the reaction of the community is because dating abuse itself is perceived as shameful and as a result it is difficult to disclose. This is evident in Sadaf's response to being asked why she thinks some girls hide unhealthy relationships. Sadaf stated:

Obviously, it's nothing to broadcast. It's shameful.

Fear and shame influence with whom to share the abuse. Adeel's response to being asked who a girl should or would tell about her abusive relationship is that he does not recommend her telling parents or other family members because everyone fears being judged and:

We have big mouths and things can spread [to the rest of the community].

Faraz expressed similar sentiments when he discussed who a girl should turn to. He said:

Well that's the closest people you can trust right? Your friends and your parents. Maybe if she has like family friends too you know? If you can trust them, because not all family friends are you know they can just spread the word and make it even worse. So yeah, your friends and your family would be good.

82

If the community is aware of the dating relationship, there is pressure to remain in that relationship out of fear of the community's reaction to the relationship ending. When asked if someone would feel compelled to remain in the relationship if the community was aware of it, Sadaf responded:

> *Oh yeah, yeah, yeah sometimes that could be the case that people already know "what are they going to say? What am I going to tell people?" Yeah, it happens. [Is that tied to family honour?] Yeah. "Like why did that engagement break?" People start talking. Maybe there's something wrong with the girl. It happens.*

Shama spoke of this as well and explained that within the family there is always concern with the perception or image that the community might have of the family. This may cause a girl to fear how the community may react to the break-up. She stated the family would be thinking:

> *They broke up the relationship and now you have a past right.*

This "past" that becomes part of the woman's history and individual trait is perceived negatively by the community since it is considered shameful and has grave implications for future intimate relationships, including marriage. Similarly, Rabia made the following statement:

> *Yeah, just because especially being South Asian, they might be like "oh you know she found a boy to marry" and they might just kind of look bad in the sense that maybe she might think that they'll think that she screwed it up or something and it just they probably would look down upon it saying "oh she now wants to go to another guy." So, it'd kind of be bad in that way.*

Later, Rabia discussed the significance of the community's opinion of the girl. She stated:

> *If that person [boyfriend] was going around telling other people oh you know this and this happened and rumors get around even though they may not be true, a lot of people would hear them and maybe stay away from that person.*

Sadaf, Shama and Rabia's statements illustrate how some South Asian Muslims may consider the opinion of the community and how that perception may influence a girl's future.

4.9.2 Blame. Another influence on the decisions to hide or remain in an abusive dating relationship is blame. This is related to the reaction of the community because it can be the community, along with others, who blames the girl. Eight participants discussed how they perceive girls are or could be blamed when it is discovered that they are or were abused, especially because she should not be dating in the first place. Since this is a common perception among participants, it is possible that fear of blame could potentially influence girls' decisions to hide or stay in abusive dating relationships. To illustrate, Adeel stated:

> *Absolutely, she would be blamed. She would be 100% fully blamed because she put herself in that situation.*

This is also evident when Faiza discussed how the community would question a girl who had been in an abusive relationship. She said community members would ask:

> *He was a good guy, what did you do? Or why is this a problem now? Or what did you do to cause this?*

Rabia also spoke of the girl being blamed and looked down upon if this situation were to become known and she said:

> *Definitely. They might just, they might make it seem like it was the daughter's fault she was in that situation um…that you know maybe she seduced him or something. They might look down on her so maybe she won't say anything.*

There were also discussions of the fear of blame if one sought help from a religious leader. Shama said she thought this is how an imam could respond to a girl in an abusive dating relationship:

"This is bad and you should suffer the consequences or you know like learn from it"...Yeah, yeah. They'd definitely put like all responsibility on the girl. "Oh you should have known better." You know?

Adeel specified that girls who have been abused should avoid seeking assistance from "old school" imams as that is when judging and labeling can occur. It is worth mentioning, however, that Adeel did say that more modern imams would be helpful people to turn to. Faraz also said an imam is someone worth getting help from. This is also illustrated in Sana's discussion of seeking help from a religious leader if she was abused. She said:

I totally would [seek help from an imam] ...Imams these days, they're pretty accepting like they know it's not what we should do, but they know that it's something we're going to do anyways and so they try to be helpful.

4.9.3 Blackmail. As discussed in the section regarding the perceived unique aspects of dating abuse (section 4.9), blackmail is means of controlling a girl. It is arguable that if shame and family honour were not as significant and did not have such serious implications for the future of families, blackmail might not be as effective. The implications of family honour and shame are evident in the statements above regarding the fear of the South Asian Muslim community's response to discovering a relationship. Faraz discussed the potential for blackmail in a South Asian Muslim dating relationship. He stated:

If she doesn't do something right like let's say if she pisses him off or something, he could actually threaten "oh yeah? I'll just tell your parents."

He went on and connected this to family honour as he explained that it would hurt a South Asian Muslim even more because her parents and community could find out and it would bring shame to the family. He simply said:

It'll screw things up.

While some participants recognized that this can be used in relationships of other cultures or religious groups, it is perceived by some like Hafeez to be even worse for South Asian Muslim girls. He explained:

> *But in South Asian culture it's probably, like with you, if I threatened to tell your parents [said to a Caucasian interviewer], it's not really a big deal right? But…a Muslim girl, like South Asian girl, it's probably a big thing…it's probably a much bigger deal.*

4.9.4 Strong attachment to relationships. Strong attachment to relationships, which some participants perceive to be especially significant between South Asian Muslims, is another potential factor in the decision to hide or remain in an abusive dating relationship. This is connected to family honour since being in multiple relationships brings shames to the family (Alexander et al., 2006). As such, it was perceived by five participants as factoring into the decision to hide or stay in an abusive dating relationship. In the unique aspects of dating abuse section (section 4.9), Shama said that breaking up is harder for South Asians because they are more attached to their relationships. When asked why, she responded, as stated above, that they would have a past and furthermore:

> *I guess they just have the perspective of like putting it in for the long haul and obviously. Um…their families' reaction to knowing that "oh you know they called, they whatever, they broke up the relationship" and now you have a past right that you have to deal with. [Do you think that would pressure them to stay in a relationship?] Yeah, I think so. I think that um…they would try to be more forgiving um…yeah. I think so just because of pressure from family and it's more humiliating I think if a relationship doesn't work out for them. [Is that tied to family honour?] Yeah, I think so because I think like South Asian like couples they kind of take a risk in terms of you know this really needs to work out um…for like 'cause I mean like I guess parents are expecting more of an arranged marriage so then when their kids do get into a love marriage you know it's almost like "oh we have to prove ourselves now right to our parents."*

Shama's statement suggests that the strong attachment in a South Asian Muslim relationship stems from the significance of having a relationship to begin with and the

negative consequences they might face if the relationship ends since dating is generally unaccepted by the South Asian Muslim community, as discussed previously.

Sana also explained the expectation or pressure on relationships. She, however, took it a step further and expressed that this attachment could not only lead a girl to be more forgiving, but could actually be taken advantage of by an abusive partner. She stated:

> *As a brown Muslim girl, I've been taught to just be in a relationship and just stick with that one person for the rest of my life whereas when you're white, you know you try out guys see which one works for you. [What do you think that does?] I think the guy could be like use that against me…[How?] Like I don't know. Like if I was in a relationship, I'd want it to work right so the guy might use that against me and you know you know cheat on me or something and then be like, "hey, you know what? You chose me, you have to stick with me."*

Faiza, who was previously in an unhealthy relationship, stated:

> *I think it's why…like after being with my first boyfriend I really was so devastated by the fact that I like I slept with him and "oh my god now I didn't marry him and now my life is over" and I took it in so much although I was born here and like you know…it is of course not okay in my religion and there is the culture, it's not okay there, but I think the reason why it was so much heavier consequence for myself was because I internalized a lot of to those Indian perceptions.*

She identified this as one reason for staying in the unhealthy relationship she was in for as long as she did. Her statement also illustrates that relationship attachment can be even stronger if the relationship is sexual. Adeel's statement below also supports the added significance of sexual intimacy.

> *[Does the relationship being sexual make them more likely to stay?] Absolutely, 'cause, especially for the girl, they've given up something like extremely, extremely, extremely valuable to them…[Is this because of the cultural/religious significance of sex?] Yes, if a girl like even gave that up to a guy like she would be thinking about marrying him in the future, like it would be that kind of serious relationship.*

The perceived relationship attachment and pressure to stay in a relationship, which may be driven by the cultural and religious expectations or risk the family's honour, is

recognized by these participants as playing role in the decision to hide or in an abusive dating relationship.

4.9.5 Consequences of parental discovery. Numerous participants (8) talked about the perceived consequences of parents finding out about a dating relationship. A wide range of consequences was given which include: additional restrictions on the girl, beating, getting married off, and being disowned.

Rabia said that if parents found out about a relationship or abuse from a partner:

He just basically ruined her life. If it was a South Asian family I'm sure that in some cases I heard that the girl has been disowned by the family, the girl has been shut in the house and can't be out, and you know she'll get married soon.

Sana's fear of her parents' reaction to finding out she was ever in an abusive dating relationship was so strong that she said she would prefer to turn to the authorities over her parents. This is illustrated in her statement below.

I'd rather go to the police than my parents. Yeah, I think the police can you know come fix things whereas my parents would make them worse, right?

In addition to the consequences of exposure to parents generally, there were some participants who perceived the consequences to be exacerbated by parents finding out about the relationship and at the same time discovering it is/was sexual relationship. For instance, Adeel stated:

Because up until this point the parents had no idea really of what's going on and then when someone just says "you have a boyfriend and your daughter's having sex" that's just I mean it like the parents wouldn't even envision or like even dream of their kids doing that kind of thing you know and then when they get hit with reality yeah that's, that's terrible…it would change her life forever. She would be restricted more than she already is um and yeah I mean it really depends on the way her parents discipline her. If they're more the physical side then she would definitely get beat for that. I wouldn't be surprised at all.

Moreover, when asked if it is shameful or embarrassing to be abused, Adeel explained:

The more embarrassing thing would be being in a relationship just because you're not supposed to... Like the fact that you're getting abused is just the 'cherry' on top.

Similar to Adeel, Shama discussed how the consequences are heightened by the discovery of the two secrets (i.e., the relationship and the abuse). She said:

I think if the parents don't know about the relationship, that's worse because you have to deal with the parents' initial reaction which is usually not pleasant right and if they're in that state of mind where they're angry then any decision they make...it could be like 3 times worse right for the daughter or the son.

4.9.6 Summary. The analysis presented above suggests that there are potential factors related to family honour and shame that may play a role in the decision to hide or remain in an abusive dating relationship. These include: fear of the community's reaction, blame, blackmail, strong relationship attachment, and fear of consequences of parental discovery. Each of these things can be traced to family honour and shame. Shame is argued by some to be unique to Muslims (Patai, 2002). As such, it affirms the importance of using intersectionality as it leaves room to acknowledge such unique cultural/religious factors that, as the data supports, can shape understandings and experiences of abuse and other related issues, such as the decision to stay or hide an abusive relationship. The next issue related to dating abuse that I argue is shaped by the intersecting characteristics of individual identities, the influence of both the mainstream West and South Asian Muslim cultures, and the resulting perceptions and acceptance of dating is the perceived causes of dating abuse.

4.10 Perceived Causes of Dating Abuse

The participants were asked to discuss what they think causes dating abuse. All of the participants identified multiple causes of abuse. The causes given can be grouped into

89

two categories: dating abuse being an individual problem or dating abuse being a social problem.

4.10.1 Dating abuse: An individual problem. The participants identified seven main causes related to dating abuse as an individual problem. These include: personality/psychological/anger issues, lack of communication skills, lack of coping skills/mechanisms, lack of control, biological/hereditary causes, cheating and jealousy, and substance abuse. Related to dating abuse causes that suggest dating abuse is an individual problem is victim blaming. This emerged in some discussions and will also be briefly explored.

4.10.1.1 Personality/psychological/anger issues. Five participants, Faraz, Adil, Jameela, Rabia, and Sana, reported personality, psychological or anger issues as a cause of dating abuse. Faraz said the number one cause of abuse is if the guy is a "*total psycho.*" Similarly, Adil indicated that dating abuse happens because some guys are just crazy and will find any way to hurt a girl. Jameela attributed it to aggressive personalities while Rabia said the abuser could feel bad about himself or just be an angry person. Sana stated an abusive relationship is:

One where one of them is short tempered.

This statement implies that Sana perceives one cause of abuse is a person who is quick to anger.

4.10.1.2 Lack of communication skills. Lack of communication skills was another common response. Four participants indicated this as a cause. Adil, Shama, and Sadaf each explained that dating abuse happens when the couple does not understand each other and lacks the ability to effectively communicate in a healthy manner. Shama's statement below illustrates this as well.

Um…communication. I think that that is totally number one in terms of like um…I mean in my experience I've just had uncommunicated feelings and like one party or the other is like completely not aware that the person felt that way.

4.10.1.3 Lack of coping skills. Additionally, lack of coping skills was also reported as a cause of dating abuse. Adil and Jameela discussed this generally stating that dating abuse can emerge when a partner does not have the coping skills or mechanisms necessary to deal with stressful or upsetting situations. This is also evident in Shama's description of a scenario that could result in abuse. When asked what causes abuse, Shama responded:

Not talking it out…or taking out frustrations even like at work if they have a stressful day, they'll come home and take out their frustrations.

Faiza's discussion and interpretation of her parents' abusive relationship suggests she too may perceive lack of coping skills as a cause of abuse. She explained that when fighting, her father would attempt to regain control of the situation and she said he did not have any coping mechanisms to deal with the hostile situation in a non-abusive manner.

4.10.1.4 Lack of control. With respect to lack of control, Adil, Faraz, and Adeel indicated this was a cause of abuse. As previously mentioned, Adil attributed abuse to some men being just crazy (i.e., having psychological issues), which also implies a lack of control. When Faraz spoke of this, he stated:

Well it depends on what she does too, right? Like I said if she does something really stupid and he has a bad temper then maybe in the moment you just do, people do stupid things, right? But I would say if a person, generally, if he really has a bad temper, like a high blood pressure, then I think I guess he's justified to do it because that's in his nature, right?

He went on to further say that this is a "bad thing" and the person with the "bad temper" should try to control it. This statement also implies some level of victim blaming, which will be discussed further in a following section.

91

4.10.1.5 Biology/hereditary causes. Related to lack of control are biological/ hereditary causes. Adeel's discussion of sexual abuse/pressure is something that relates to lack of control. He attributed it to male excitement and said:

We're hungry for that stuff.

Adeel's statement also suggests that he accredits abuse to biological causes as well. Some participants perceived biology/inheritance, or the notion of 'boys will be boys', as another cause of abuse. Adeel made other statements during the interview that also suggest his perception that there are biological causes of dating abuse. For instance, he made the following two statements:

That's just angry brown guys doing what they do best…

That's where testosterone builds up in the male and they think they have the right to do certain things just because they're the male.

Hafeez discussed his own behaviours, specifically his tendency for yelling and swearing at his sisters. He stated:

If instead of hit, if I get really angry, for me, it comes from my dad, all my other, my sisters, we all, my whole family [has] short fuses. It's hereditary. Short fuses [are] very hereditary thing[s].

Explaining his own behaviour may indicate that he perceives abusive behaviour on the part of others to be hereditary or part of someone's biological make-up as well.

Adil also linked dating abuse to the idea of 'boys being boys' or in this case being masculine men. He explained that when men become abusive because they suspect their partner of cheating, 90 percent of the time the girl is not cheating; it is just the man being the "*alpha male.*"

4.10.1.6 Cheating and jealousy. Furthermore, participants specifically mentioned jealousy and cheating as a cause of abuse as well. There were five participants who reported this. For instance Hafeez said:

> *The main thing is jealousy. That's like the main thing.*

Adil and Javed explained how if they discovered their partners were cheating, they would just leave. They, however, stated that they think most other men would react in a more negative way, such as hitting the girl or the other guy. This is suggested by Javed's statement below.

> *But yeah, I know people who would, if they find out that she or he was dating like dating someone else or being with someone else…Yeah, that'd be the biggest thing [cause of abuse], yeah.*

The other two participants who discussed this did so in a way that almost justified the abuse or made it more understandable. Faraz's statement below illustrates this. He explained that if the partner has a bad temper he might hit her if:

> *The girl did something really stupid you know like maybe cheating or something you know.*

This also implies that the girl being abused is at least partly to blame in this situation because *she did* something stupid. Although Shama does not place blame directly on the abused partner, her discussion does suggest that abuse may be justified if someone has cheated. She stated:

> *Calling names like I, I can understand if something horrible happened like if, if like a girlfriend cheated or something obviously that's not something that you can deal with calmly at the moment, right?*

4.10.1.7 Substance abuse. The final cause the participants gave for dating abuse is substance abuse. Four participants indicated this as a cause of dating abuse. Adeel explained that when there are conflicts in which drugs and alcohol are involved, it could

lead to dating abuse. Both Faraz and Rabia stated that abuse could happen if the abusive

partner has a substance abuse problem. Shama discussed this in more detail and said:

> *Also, any kind of substance abuse I think is, is like a big part of it [abuse]...Like um...I guess if you like have too much alcohol or you know if you're generally a drug user or something right, I think that can alter your chemicals, your brain chemical or whatever and like actually um...make you almost like more impulsive emotionally like almost more animalistic in terms of like how you react to situations or to like even if you're having a disagreement, right, with your, with your um...partner, you may lash out more so than if you were like sober at the time or something.*

For Shama, substance abuse increases "impulsivity," which can have a negative outcome

in a volatile situation.

4.10.2 Victim blaming. When the participants discussed the causes of dating

abuse, some seemed to engage in victim blaming. This is evident in a number of

narratives given by the participants. For instance, Faraz and Shama made statements that

imply victim blaming. Another illustration can be found in Hafeez's statement below.

> *[Would you ever say they deserve it?] Well not deserve it. If a girl's whoring around and she gets hit, I wouldn't care. But if it's like a decent girl and she's getting hit, she obviously does not deserve it.*

Although Hafeez was resistant to saying some girls deserve it, it is evident when he stated

that certain girls do not deserve it, which implies others do deserve it or are more

deserving of it. For Hafeez, Shama, and Faraz, in particular, dating abuse is

understandable depending on the behaviour of the abused person.

4.10.3 Dating abuse: A social problem. A number of participants identified

power imbalance or power struggle (between two partners) as a cause of abuse. They

identified the male partner as having greater power in the relationship. Despite this

recognition of male power, the majority of participants did not directly connect abuse to

patriarchy.

94

There were eight participants who discussed power imbalance, power struggle, or dominance as being related to abusive relationships. Adeel argued that men have the mentality of having the upper hand in general. Sana and Sadaf stated that there are situations when one partner is more dominant than the other (Sadaf specified the man as more dominant), while Adil described it as a power imbalance and Shama as a power struggle. Jameela explained that this could lead to abuse when the oppressed partner attempts to object to that power. She said the dominant person would become angry and there may be verbal abuse. When asked if verbal and physical abuse happen because of unequal power, Jameela responded yes and things become even worse when the dominant partner is aware that they possess more power in the relationship and use it to their advantage.

Rabia and Faiza also discussed men taking advantage of the power they have in a relationship. Rabia, for instance, argued that women have to ensure they are strong and she explained:

> [Strong] in the sense that trying to never let him see you cry. It makes you a lot more vulnerable if he's seen you in a very vulnerable state and it's easier for him to take advantage of you. So, I think for a girl you always have to be careful and you know strong.

Stating that crying makes a girl *more* vulnerable seems to imply that girls are more vulnerable than men in the first place. This suggests how it is perceived, even if not stated directly, that women are at a disadvantage in terms of power in relationships.

When Faiza discussed the unhealthy relationship she was in, she also suggested that there was a power imbalance. She explained that because she was sexually intimate with her boyfriend he was able to use that to his advantage; she said he had the upper hand. Due to the cultural and religious significance of sexual intimacy, Faiza did not

want her relationship to end, and she explained that he knew that and took advantage of that.

Three participants tied dating abuse directly to South Asian Muslim cultures (although this was not given as the only cause). As discussed above, Adeel stated that abuse might result when:

Angry brown guys are doing what they do best.

Adeel was the most outspoken about the negative aspects of South Asian cultures. He directly linked abuse to the patriarchy he perceives to exist within the culture. He said:

> *I've seen so many scenarios of guys being abusive to their girlfriends…just because they have the whole "I'm male superior" kind of thing so that mentality just sticks with them. So, they really think that women are like an object to them to a certain extent. So, that's where the physical abuse comes in and when they get angry they just do stupid things like that.*

When asked if this male superiority attitude is a male trait in general or more cultural, he responded:

> *That's where the brown guy like gets that idea from just because of their culture.*

He also attributed sexual abuse specifically to male superiority. He explained:

> *Superiority kind of forces him to like I guess that like puts the idea in his mind that he has the green light to tell her "no, you got to keep going" sort of thing and then yeah that's just all accustomed with the culture, that's what comes with the culture.*

Faiza attributed the abusive relationship between her parents to her father's need to maintain control of the family, which she explained was caused by the cultural expectations regarding gender roles. She discussed how her father felt it was his job or his role as the man of the house to keep control of his wife. When he was unable to garner control through communication, he would resort to physically abusing his wife to put a stop to her behaviour.

For Shama, the South Asian Muslim cultural/religious expectations regarding intimate relationships increase the risk of dating abuse. She explained:

I can actually see a South Asian couple for the same reasons as before just attachment and social pressures um…being more acceptable of cheating. [Vulnerable] to abuse, um… I wouldn't say vulnerable. Like I think the likelihood would increase just because you know they're more willing to put up with, with anything bad that happens in the relationship…I think, I feel like maybe one partner might take it for granted…That "okay since we're staying together you know now if I do something bad, it's okay like there's more chance of you forgiving me."

Shama's statement illustrates how some cultural norms and expectations may have an impact on dating abuse. This was discussed at length in the section above on the perceived effect family honour and shame on the decision to hide or remain in an abusive dating relationship.

4.10.4 Summary. The participants put forth numerous potential causes of dating abuse. The causes they proposed show that South Asian Muslims may perceive dating abuse as both an individual and social problem. When dating abuse is considered an individual problem, perceived causes include: personality/psychological/anger issues, lack of communication skills, lack of coping skills/mechanisms, lack of control, biological/hereditary causes, cheating and jealousy, and substance abuse. With these causes we can see that the problem is within the individual and to deal with dating abuse, individual issues must be addressed. When dating abuse is constructed as a social problem, it is recognized that dating abuse is beyond the individual; it is not solely their responsibility as causes extend to social issues, such as power inequality and patriarchy, as per the participants' perceptions. I argue that these perceived causes are influenced by the intersecting characteristics that have been previously outlined, individual identities, the influence of both the mainstream Western and South Asian Muslim cultures,

perceptions and acceptance of dating, and the understanding and meaning given to behaviours and abuse in dating relationships.

4.11 Aspects of the Religion and/or Culture Perceived to Protect Against Dating Abuse

As discussed above, religious and cultural norms impact experiences with dating abuse, primarily in a negative way. However, it is equally important to understand if there are aspects of the culture or religion that may potentially protect against dating abuse. As such, this question was posed to the participants in this research. Their responses fall within two main themes: religious/cultural norms generally and religious/cultural norms related to contact between the sexes and/or dating specifically.

The majority of the participants, nine to be exact, mentioned some feature of the religion and/or culture they perceive can protect girls from dating abuse. Six participants reported aspects tied to the general cultural and religious norms. These included religious and cultural rules forbidding beating women, arranged marriages and living Islamically. Four participants discussed specific religious/cultural rules that restrict contact between the sexes or dating.

4.11.1 Religious/cultural rules regarding women. Faraz and Sadaf both stated that the South Asian culture and Islam[4] forbid or look down upon abusing women. This is illustrated in Faraz's statement below.

> *First, you cannot beat women right in our culture…'Cause beating women in South Asian cultures is pretty…it's seen as a really bad thing, like for the male to be doing.*

---

[4] This is a reminder that these are just their perceptions of Islamic interpretations and are not necessary accurate reflections of religious scriptures.

Similarly Sadaf stated:

> *Yeah, the fact that it's not allowed and then for Islam specifically…like I know a lot of people have this misconception that you're allowed to hit your wives and stuff like that, but that's actually not true...You're not supposed to slap them on their face or anything. Violence is just something that's not encouraged in Islam whereas some people do think it is.*

Shama explained that although Islam does not have rules about acceptable dating behaviours specifically, since dating is perceived to be forbidden in Islam, Islam does give women rights that protect them. She stated:

> *Um…in terms of dating, I don't know. Well…I guess because dating isn't practiced at all in Islam [or Islamic societies] so there's no set of rules about it, right? But there are rights for women like even outside of marriage, if they're not married. Um…like they have the right to be treated with respect.*

Adeel and Adil both argued that Islam wanting girls to cover up or wear the hijab could help protect girls from dating abuse. As Adeel stated:

> *If you're covered up, no guy is going to whistle at you in the corner of an alley or anything...If they kind of stick with same values of covering yourself up then it's less of an issue that is brought to the table. So, I think if that's followed to a certain extent that we'll see less issues in that case [boyfriends abusing girls because of not liking their choice of clothing].*

Adil explained that being covered up shows men that you have respect for your body and yourself. Furthermore, it may prevent a woman from attracting substandard men.

For Hafeez, there are numerous aspects of the religion that protect against dating abuse. The first is the process of arranged marriages[5] as they allow parents to screen potential mates. He did, however, acknowledge that this is not a perfect solution since arranged marriages can be abusive. The second protective aspect is rules intended to preserve women's decency. Hafeez argued that not following rules in place to maintain decency, for instance consuming alcohol, might put girls in danger. Thus, for Hafeez, the

---

[5] He identifies this as a religious norm, however, it is a cultural norm.

rules in place to keep girls decent prevent them from engaging in risky behaviours that could result in things like dating abuse. Finally, the last aspect he mentioned is living Islamically in general. When asked if there are aspects of the religion or culture that can prevent dating abuse, Hafeez responded:

> *Like if you follow Islamically, you will live a healthy, prosperous life…The way that Islam is, is to keep you safe, it's to keep you healthy.*

4.11.2 Religious/cultural rules restricting contact between the sexes and dating. Turning to the religious and/or cultural norms specifically related to contact between the sexes and/or dating, there were four participants who spoke of this. Javed explained that he thinks the religious/cultural rules restricting contact between the sexes prevents dating abuse. This is evident in the following statement.

> *We're not allowed to talk to any kind of girl unless her parents or her brother or her husband's there…So, yeah it's not even possible to you go through that [dating abuse]. [It is] the culture and religion…And that is the kind of main reason [why there is no contact allowed] 'cause the thing is that they know a guy can use a girl in many ways right.*

Sadaf and Rabia both argued that the Islamic[6] and cultural rules forbidding dating are in and of themselves means of protecting girls from dating abuse. Rabia also explained that this prevents other negative consequences of dating, namely heartbreak, which is suggested when she said:

> *I think so especially since they say to abstain from it, it saves the girl from so much heartbreak and you know you never know who's out there. So, I think in that way yeah it does protect the girl.*

4.11.3 Summary. While the data suggests that there may be aspects of being a South Asian Muslim that exacerbate dating abuse, there may also be aspects of the religion and/or culture that protect South Asian Muslims from dating abuse. The

---

[6] Again, please recognize that Islam does not directly forbid dating, this is their interpretation of Islam.

participants identified some of these as cultural and religious rules that protect women generally and the rules that discourage contact between the sexes or even dating specifically. These factors that may help protect against dating abuse are just as important to consider as the factors that can make experiencing dating abuse more difficult. The next section will look at what the participants perceive to be potentially effective initiatives to prevent and/or respond to dating abuse.

4.12 Initiatives for Preventing and/or Responding to Dating Abuse

The participants were asked if they could think of any initiatives to prevent dating abuse or help first or second generation South Asian Muslim girls who are already in abusive dating relationships. The most common suggestion was educational and awareness raising programs. Eight participants discussed the importance of educating and raising the awareness of youth. These awareness/education initiatives, however, varied in terms of ideal location of programs and method of delivery, information/materials, and appropriate age. Some participants also mentioned the potential usefulness of education programs for parents. Others discussed what they perceive to be the ideal way to offer services for South Asian Muslim girls experiencing abuse. Finally, there were a few participants who also explained their lack of confidence in initiatives.

4.12.1 Location of programs and method of delivery. For those who specified where the education should take place, various locations were given. Faiza, for example, suggested it be incorporated into the school curriculum as a life skills program or during community social events. Sadaf also suggested it occur in schools. Jameela recommended including it in Sunday school programs, while Shama suggested workshops and seminars generally. For Faiza and Jameela, it was especially important

for awareness pieces to be incorporated, or hidden, into already existing programs

(namely Sunday school and social events) to avoid the stigma and resistance within the

South Asian Muslim community that may occur with offering programs specifically on

dating abuse. Adeel also spoke of this and said:

> *You can't really have public opinion on how do we help Muslims that are dating 'cause then there'll be a public outcry. "Well, why are my kids dating in the first place?" So that's, that's one thing where like this generation it just can't happen.*

4.12.2 Information/materials. During the discussion of possible preventative

initiatives of dating abuse, there were differences in the type of information that should be

included. For instance, Adil suggested programs directed towards South Asians

specifically that should raise awareness regarding patriarchy and the importance of

respecting women; he said girls need to be taught that they are not beneath men. Shama

also discussed this. She explained that it is necessary to teach about the religion and

show girls that Islam advocates for equality between the sexes and that abuse can happen

to anyone. She stated:

> *I think if you could like bring their religious context into it because I feel like the cultural and the religious gets kind of mixed up like um…some girls feel that like even though Islam preaches equality among men and women, the culture, South Asian culture, is more patriarchal. So, I think it's important to be like um…like even though you know the males in your society or whatever or like your family have um…the most power I guess or like wear the pants in the family...your religion, like don't feel bad like don't feel that you're weak because in your religion it says that you are equal. Right? So, I think they [education/support providers] should make that distinction and um culturally, just make them feel like, "don't worry, you didn't do anything wrong, you know. This happens to people all over the world."*

Jameela and Hafeez also argued for the importance of increasing the understanding of

Islam. For Hafeez, this was more of raising awareness of Islamic rules, specifically

reminding youth that dating is forbidden in Islam[7]. This is evident in his statement below.

> *Remind them that it's wrong by Islam…they shouldn't be dating to begin with. Some people don't care. If they don't care well then it's their choice. They don't care about Islam too much, they just want to date instead. Okay, well you do that and the consequences fit the crime I guess.*

Both Rabia and Sadaf suggested that youth should be made aware of services and support that are available to youth who are in abusive dating relationships. Rabia suggested teaching young women to always remain strong in a relationship and avoid looking vulnerable to their partners. Sadaf, on the other hand, said that youth should be taught that they are worthy of respect, which is especially important because it is possible that they are experiencing or witnessing unhealthy relationships in their homes. Similarly, Faiza indicated that youth should be made aware of the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships generally as well as life skills. While the areas discussed by most of the participants were broad in scope, Javed offered only one simple piece of information that he thinks should be taught to young men and women. He said:

> *You can just tell her that she has the power to call 911. You know, you can just tell her and then tell her that it is okay if you do that then this will happen and not tell her specifically just tell…everyone that if you hit someone, this will happen.*

Regarding the material offered, Adil and Shama both argued that males and females should be separated for these programs as they should be taught either different material or in different ways. Adil contended that boys need to be taught the importance of respecting girls, especially the ones they are in relationships with and care about. He further explained that girls should be made aware of the signs or characteristics of

---

[7] Again, this is his argument/his interpretation of Islam. Islam does not specifically forbid dating.

unhealthy relationships so they are prepared. For Sadaf, the sexes should be separated because they have different needs. She stated:

> *I think you'd have to like segregate like you wouldn't bring them all together in one room. I think you should deal with girls separately and the guys separately because for guys, it's also a matter of ego whereas girls, it's just more emotional kind of a thing. So I think you'd have to take like two different approaches to each group…I think…for each group um…because I think girls, girls are good abusing through rumors and like gossip right like they're more verbal abusers I find. Um...not even like towards their boyfriend, for example, but like abusing him behind his back kind of a thing. So, like I think there are different approaches to that um…but I think it's important for both groups to have both sides of the coin.*

4.12.3 Appropriate age for awareness/education. In addition to the type of material varying by individual, there were also differing opinions on the age at which this information should be offered. For Faiza, the information should be given at the youngest possible age. She suggested general teaching on healthy/unhealthy relationships in elementary schools. Sadaf, however, suggested middle school because she felt that elementary school would be too young, but she stated you do want to start teaching at a young age.

4.12.4 Education for parents. Although the majority of participants emphasized educating and raising awareness among youth, there were two participants who discussed doing the same for parents. Sadaf explained that parents should be educated about the importance of being more understanding towards their kids. She expanded on this and said:

> *I think often times why these relationships are secret or why they feel they have to keep it and they have to stay in that relationship is because they don't have that family support, because they know that "oh I'm gonna get beats when I go home" or something like that or if they find out…The fact that my parents have this trust in me it's, it's an entirely different situation as if it [a boy prank calling the house] happened to an average South Asian family. If that happened, the girl would probably be beaten and I'm not even kidding, right? Because the dad would be, he would be in so much anger that he wouldn't even stop to think twice.*

She also discussed how when parents tell daughters that behaviours are unacceptable then the child becomes afraid to talk to them about it. She suggested parents should be taught the importance of creating an environment where the children know their parents trust them. She explained this is because if something does happen, they can tell their parents.

Shama briefly discussed the necessity of educating parents on dating generally. She stated:

> *I think it would be good to educate parents about how dating works. Like even if you're against it, you should still know about it right.*

4.12.5 Helping girls in abusive dating relationships. There were four participants who discussed helping girls who are in abusive dating relationships generally. Adil explained that in order to help girls in abusive dating relationships, it is essential to convince them that the service providers will not tell their parents. Sana suggested that it is necessary for girls to have an alliance of support, especially if they are not able to get this from friends. Faiza, on the other hand, discussed the usefulness of counseling. Sadaf went into greater detail in her proposed initiatives than Adil, Sana, and Faiza. She stated that organizations, which provide services such as a help line, should be formed. Sadaf also explained that it is essential for these organizations to be very well known.

Two participants discussed who should provide services. Both Adil and Rabia advocated for South Asian service providers. Adil explained that it would be easier for South Asian Muslims to talk to other South Asians because they are knowledgeable of the culture and able to relate more with what they are experiencing. He argued this would increase the effectiveness of education. For Rabia, South Asian service providers will make it easier to talk about dating abuse because:

> *There's an understanding.*

Furthermore, she pointed out that if the service provider was not South Asian, the girl

might feel that the service provider is trying to impose her own values. Although, for the

most part, both Adil and Rabia advocate for South Asian service providers, they did

recognize that it is necessary to have others available. Adil acknowledged that there

might be some girls who prefer to talk to someone who is the exact opposite of them. For

Rabia, a service provider of a different culture may be needed to discuss certain forms of

abuse that are especially embarrassing for South Asians, namely sexual abuse because it

is looked down upon in the South Asian culture.

   4.12.6 Lack of confidence in initiatives. Although the majority of participants

discussed initiatives they believed might be useful in either preventing dating abuse or

helping those who have been/are abused, there were some who doubted the effectiveness

of such initiatives. Adeel spoke strongest about this and argued that mentalities and

mindsets do not change. He compared dating abuse initiatives to anti-smoking initiatives,

which he argued were ineffective. He explained that dating abuse is something engrained

in South Asians' minds; that is just how relationships work within the South Asian

community and educational initiatives will not work. When asked if there is anything

that could change mentalities such as this, he responded:

> *Through progress. The next generation will not have that same issue…With time it'll just evaporate and that's just because our next generation's going to be completely different just because the parents are all going to be Canadian, like with a Canadian mentality so that's obviously going to have an effect on their children, right?*

   While Jameela did make some suggestions for initiatives, she stated that she

believes programs and workshops offered through Islamic youth centers would not be

effective. She questioned how useful listening to a one-hour speech and returning to

one's normal life would be. She argued if you really want to change your life, you would open up a book and do it on your own.

Yet another argument for the ineffectiveness of initiatives attempting to prevent dating abuse was presented by Sana.   Sana contended that bad relationships occur all the time and people just need to be strong and deal with them. When specifically asked if bad relationships could be prevented, Sana responded in a manner that suggests dating abuse is an individual problem. She stated:

No, if the guy's a mess, what are you going to do about it?

While Adil did make some suggestions for initiatives to prevent dating abuse, he was pessimistic of the overall effectiveness. He explained this is because he believes that any relationship has the potential to turn bad. Moreover, some men are built with something inside them that gets worse and worse.

Each of the participants who expressed doubts of the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at preventing dating abuse or helping those abused suggested that there is something underlying dating abuse that cannot ever be prevented, be it cultural mentalities or dating abuse being an individual and almost pathologized problem.

4.12.7 Summary. The participants' discussions of initiatives that could prevent and/or respond to dating abuse effectively for South Asian Muslims focused primarily on educating and raising awareness. While the details of such initiatives varied (e.g., location/method of delivery), they were primarily directed at young people. There were some participants who pointed to the importance of teaching proper interpretations of Islam. Overall, the participants did not seem to think that initiatives should be directed at specific cultural or religious groups. As one participant specifically pointed out, involving diverse groups of individuals in such discussions has the potential to sensitize

all of those involved to other cultural and religious groups. While there were a few who

doubted the effectiveness of any initiative, the majority of participants were more

optimistic.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Research has consistently shown that dating abuse is endemic. Taking an intersectionality approach, which is being increasingly applied to the study of intimate partner abuse, means acknowledging that dating abuse means different things to different people and does not have an equal effect on all. This, in combination with evidence of dating among South Asian Muslim young people (Zaidi, Couture & Maticka-Tyndale, 2011), points to the necessity and importance of examining dating behaviours and abuse from their perspective. Thus, the goal of this research has been to shed light on the meanings South Asian Muslim youth give to dating behaviours and abuse. To achieve this goal, I have argued that the intersection of various characteristics, namely (1) individual identities, (2) the influence of South Asian Muslim cultures, and (3) the influence of the mainstream Western culture, shape (4) the meanings and purposes attributed to dating as well as the personal acceptance of dating, (5) meanings and significance of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships perceived to be unique to South Asian Muslims, (6) the perceived effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse, (7) perceived causes of dating abuse, (8) aspects of the religion and/or culture perceived to protect against dating abuse, and (9) initiatives for preventing and/or responding to dating abuse. The perceptions related to dating (numbers 4 through 9) interact with and shape each other as well. In this chapter I will summarize and discuss the findings and their significance/implications in relation to the available literature. I will later acknowledge the weaknesses and strengths of this research as well as directions for future research.

5.1 Participants' Self-Described Intersecting Identities

The intersectionality perspective is one that suggests all individuals have multiple synchronous identities (Joseph, 2006), which intersect and interact with each other to shape individual experiences. These identities are countless and can include anything from race, religion, and ethnicity to immigration status (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Consistent with intersectionality literature, all but one participant in this study discussed having multiple identities. Anderson and Hill Collins (2006) argued that these identities vary in salience. This is also evident in the present study since the three identities discussed with greatest detail and emphasis were religious, national, and cultural identities. Even within these three categories of identity there were variations in their importance.

The diversity of religious identities indicates that being religious has different meanings for different people. For example, there were some participants who were religious in a spiritual sense, while others adopted Islam as a way of life. Their discussions may suggest that religious identity is not a static identity as the level of religiousness can change throughout one's life, for instance, after a life-altering event. There were also some participants who talked about almost hiding their religious identity or not volunteering it to others who are not Muslim. One briefly mentioned this was because of fear of discrimination, while others also spoke of not wanting their religious identity to be something that separates them from others, or makes them different. One participant discussed how his religious identity is something he would bring up if around other Muslims because it is something that would bring them together. Thus, it seems that religious identity can become more or less salient depending on the situation an

individual is in and who is around him/her. All of these findings support the recognition

of Islam as a diverse religion; it speaks to the heterogeneity of Muslims.

For national identity, all the participants identified with at least two countries.

There were some participants who hyphenated their national identity and others who also

identified more with one country over another. The significance given to a particular

national identity seemed to depend on where they live, where they were born, where they

were raised, and where their extended family resides.

With respect to cultural identities, some participants specifically discussed how

they actively mix and match aspects of multiple countries' cultures to create their own

culture using the best from all. Again, this allows us to see that these participants are not

just South Asians, they identify with specific countries and their cultures. While there

may be some overarching similarities between the countries and their cultures (i.e., South

Asian cultures), this data shows that it is problematic to assume they are all exactly the

same. Even second-generation participants vary in how much they identify with the

numerous cultures and countries they have been exposed to.

In addition to the three main identities the participants focused on, there were

some who explained how their identities also emerge from their student status, their age,

and their gender. Religion, national, and cultural identities, however, were emphasized

the most by the participants. The importance of all of these identities also can shift

depending on the context and some participants specifically acknowledged this. For

example, there was one individual who explained how his identity as a brother was

sometimes more important than his identity as a student or his identity as son. This

suggests that identities are not static and may change depending on what is needed of the

person. Furthermore, sometimes it is necessary to actively switch specifically between

cultural identities to avoid conflicts or challenges in one cultural setting or another. For

instance, behaving in a culturally appropriate manner by South Asian standards when

around one's parents and then shifting to adhere to the Western cultural expectations

when around one's peers. Again, this emphasizes the importance of context in the

saliency of particular identities. Moreover, none of these identities exist in isolation. As

previously stated, and a point of emphasis, these youth are not just South Asian Muslims;

they are students, they are young people, they are brothers/sisters, they are men/women,

etc. There may be times when specific identities are more important, but their other

identities do not disappear.

Overall, these provisional results support intersectionality and the inseparability of

identities. This means that South Asian Muslims are never just South Asian Muslims.

Moreover, there were no two participants who described their identities in an identical

manner, thus, implying even the South Asian Muslim population itself is heterogeneous.

This is imperative to acknowledge in future research as well as when providing services

or assessing needs, especially when dealing with or studying issues like dating abuse.

This matters because all the identities one has will shape meanings given to behaviours

and how dating abuse, in particular, is understood and experienced. Without this

recognition, programs and research will be severely limited.

5.2 Participants' Perceptions of the South Asian Muslim Community's Acceptance of Dating

It is clear that the participants in this study generally do not believe their South

Asian Muslim community is accepting of dating, consistent with research by Dasgupta

(1998), Varghese and Kenkins (2009), Kopp (2002) and Rajiva (2006). There was,

however, one participant who explained that her South Asian Muslim community accepts

dating at an appropriate age. This, however, is not the norm in the small sample studied here.

Explanations for dating being unacceptable tended to revolve around religious and/or cultural reasons. It was argued by some participants[8] that Islam directly forbids dating, and also indirectly makes it difficult since contact between the sexes is supposed to be extremely limited and supervised. There were also discussions of the fear that dating would result in premarital sex, which is religiously and culturally unacceptable (as noted by the participants as well). Religion in particular as a justification for the prohibition of dating is in line with an earlier study by Kopp (2002) who reported that dating is not consistent with Islamic beliefs.

Another reason for the prohibition of dating is the cultural, and what some participants incorrectly assumed to be a religious norm as well, of having an arranged marriage. Dating undermines and contradicts the arranged marriage process completely since the underlying premise of dating is one of two individuals choosing each other based on the notion of romantic love. Furthermore, dating is unacceptable because it threatens family status, integrity, and honour and has the potential to bring shame on the family. Again, this is consistent with findings of other researchers, such as Durham (2004), Haddad et al. (2006), Hickey (2004), Varghese and Jenkins (2009), and Zine (2008). Thus, it is not only the cultural norms discouraging Western forms of dating, but because those are the norms of the community, the community is an agent of social control due to the potential consequences for the family's image if those rules are not followed.

---

[8] Although incorrectly because Islam does not specifically forbid dating.

113

It became clear that dating is a generational issue because older and younger generations often have differing opinions on the acceptability of dating. Thus, dating can often be a source of conflict between the younger and older generations. This is similar to Dasgupta (1998) and Varghese and Kenkins (2009) who also found that dating is a source of conflict between generations. The participants of this study explained that this often stems from parents wanting what they had for their children. Moreover, there is also fear of losing control since they will not be selecting their child's partner. In addition, this loss of control is more acute because living in Canada there are more opportunities for cross-gender relationships.

In sum, the results about perceptions of dating indicate provisionally that dating is generally unaccepted by some South Asian Muslims communities because of cultural and religious reasons. This suggests that regardless of how the participants personally felt about dating, they still recognized that their community does not accept it. Thus, not following the expectations and engaging in dating is likely to have potential negative consequences from their communities and families, even if it is just being looked down upon or gossiped about. The participant whose community is accepting of dating is additional evidence supporting the heterogeneity of South Asian Muslims. This could also indicate that not all South Asian Muslim families and communities are completely opposed to dating relationship.

Knowing how South Asian Muslims perceive their communities is relevant and important since it will likely have some impact on them and their decisions regarding dating and dating abuse. Regardless of how weak or strong of an impact it has, if the participants acknowledge that South Asian Muslims generally disapprove of dating and the potential for consequences, it is something that is real to them and thus worthy of

consideration. Furthermore, it provides additional context when dealing with or researching issues such as dating abuse; it allows us to better understand their cultural perspective.

5.3 Pressure to Date: Influence of the Mainstream West

The data presented here suggests that the normalization of dating in Canadian society can exert pressure to date and has an impact on South Asian Muslims living in Canada. As Giguère et al. (2010) and Rajiva (2006) found, South Asian youth are often pulled in two different directions or caught in between cultures. Thus, they experience pressure from both the Western and Eastern cultures. Some participants in this study felt the pressure to date stems from feeling different from their Western peers, left out, unable to relate to Western peers or lonely. In other words, because of the expectation in mainstream Western society to date, they can feel, or fear feeling, left out, different, etc. from their peers, which can pressure some to date. Social surroundings of the participants appear to have a substantial influence. Depending the behaviours of individuals around the participants, there can be pressure to date or even not to date.

Regardless of how the pressure manifests itself, feeling this pressure may a reality for some young people and this pressure goes against what is generally accepted in South Asian Muslim cultures. Thus, they may be experiencing pressure from two conflicting cultures. The narratives of the participants imply that difficulties arise when faced with conflicting cultural norms. First, some participants described having an inner struggle when trying to decide which way to follow. This inner struggle is also consistent with earlier research by Giguère et al. (2010) and Shariff (2008). Second, some felt the need to have two personalities, one with their parents where they behaved accordingly to the heritage cultural norms and another outside of the home where they behaved closer to the

115

dominant societal norms. This affirms the process of cultural frame switching which is a theory that suggests second generation immigrant youth will change their behaviours in response to situational cues (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee & Morris, 2002; Giguère et al., 2010). This process occurs when individuals switch between cultural identities depending on what is acceptable in a given situation, for instance, in the home versus outside the home among peers from the dominant society (Giguère et al., 2010). This shifting created particular challenges for some of the participants of the current study, especially when it came to wanting to have an open relationship with their parents that would not happen. Third, and related to the first two, is feeling pulled in two different directions and trying to pull one's parents with him/her towards the norms of the West or the dominant society. This is, again, similar to work by Giguère and his colleagues (2010) and Shariff (2008). It is reasonable to believe that each of these difficulties has the potential to cause individuals to experience some level of stress.

To summarize the results of this study about pressure to date, I found that most participants acknowledged the existence of pressure to dating arising from the normalization of dating in the West, which conflicts with the norms of the some interpretations of South Asian Muslim cultural norms.   Furthermore, social surroundings having the potential to influence someone in either direction (i.e., to date or not) suggests the importance of considering who individuals' friends or peers are. Thus, pressure to date can stem from being around numerous people who are also dating or the pressure to not date can be stronger if their friends are not dating. This pressure to date can be met with the young people's recognition that dating is generally an unacceptable activity in their South Asian Muslim community and likely by their parents as well. Thus, the pressure can actually be to disregard the norms found within their cultural/religious

community and home. This conflict can result in difficulties the individual must manage. It is necessary to keep all of this is mind as it has the potential to shape their own acceptance and willingness to date as well as their perceptions and experiences with dating abuse.

5.4 Participants' Perceptions of the Definition and/or Purpose of Dating

Although the participants recognized multiple definitions and purposes of dating, some saw it as a Western phenomenon or a uniquely Western concept. Dating, for these South Asian Muslims, is primarily a means of getting to know or find a partner, although there were differing opinions on whether or not it should result in marriage. Dating was acknowledged as something that allows an individual to always have someone to depend on or to be intimate with, physically and emotionally. Some participants specifically recognized that the purpose of dating depends on the individual. For example, the purpose of dating for some can be casual with the intention of sex, for others having a serious exclusive relationship leading up to marriage. There was also a participant who spoke of the dating as a means of showing off. This speaks to a dating relationship being a source or symbol of status for some men and women. These varying definitions and purposes are consistent with research on dating in the West in general. Studies by Feinstein and Ardon (1973) and Paul and White (1990) have acknowledged that there are numerous purposes of dating and the purposes discussed by the participants in this study are consistent with their research as well. This suggests that even if the participants are not involved in dating, they are, at the very least, familiar with and understand Western forms of dating. This could be indicative of some integration into the mainstream Western culture.

In all, the results of this research show that the purposes and meaning associated with dating varies. Thus, dating is not a uniform phenomenon, as supported by earlier studies (Feinstein & Ardon, 1973; Paul & White, 1990). In other words, in this study the South Asian participants did not indicate that there is a single meaning or purpose attached to dating. This is essential to recognize since the meaning and purpose of dating will arguably affect how dating abuse is understood and experienced. Again, these results provide additional context both in breadth and depth for understanding dating abuse, and, in particular, for the purposes of this study, perceptions of dating abuse of participants outside the mainstream spectrum of Canadian society.

5.5 Participants' Acceptance of Dating

While at the abstract level dating is not generally accepted in South Asian cultures, the personal perceptions and practices of dating vary among the youth in this study. There was variation in the level of acceptance of dating with the participants in this research. Some completely accepted any and all forms of dating while others disagreed with all forms and yet others expressed a moderate opinion of only accepting certain types of dating relationships (e.g., accepting only serious committed dating relationships). While few participants completely disagreed, for those who did, they disagreed because they perceived that it conflicts with the religion, it is pointless, and it is harmful. The participant who accepted any form of dating without qualification might have done so because of how integrated he appeared to be with the dominant Canadian culture. The majority, however, was those who fell in between. These participants seemed to accept dating with specific limitations or restrictions (e.g., no casual dating, no premarital sex, etc.).

In sum, these findings indicate that there is a range in perceptions and acceptance of dating relationships in general and variation within the South Asian Muslim population more specifically. Although these participants recognized that dating is generally unaccepted by the South Asian Muslim community, there are some who are still accepting and some even engaging in it. This is necessary to recognize because if dating is accepted and young South Asian Muslims are engaging in it then dating abuse is a possibility. Thus, dating abuse among South Asian Muslims is an important area of study warranting further consideration.

5.6 Meanings and Significance of Behaviours in Dating Relationships and Dating Abuse Participants Perceive to be Unique to South Asian Muslims

All the participants acknowledged widely or commonly thought of forms of abuse (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, and sexual). Even though psychological, verbal, and emotional forms of abuse were recognized as abuse, there was greater difficulty determining when these behaviours become abusive. Interestingly, cheating was also reported as a form of abuse by many of the participants.

There was widespread recognition among the participants that dating abuse is experienced differently by South Asian Muslims. This is consistent with Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) and Yoshihama (1999) who have found that meanings attributed to specific behaviours in relationships as well as the effects of behaviours vary based on the individual's background. This is evident in the current study as there are five main issues the participants perceived to be experienced differently by South Asian Muslims, which include:

1) The significance of exposure to parents and/or the community – This is perceived to be especially consequential for South Asian Muslims. This can increase the possibility or effectiveness of blackmail and threats of exposure.

2) Behaviours of a sexual nature – Some argued that behaviours of a sexual nature are more hurtful to South Asian Muslims because of the cultural and religious significance of sex. Numerous behaviours were discussed in particular, such as, public displays of affection, smacking a girl on her buttocks, name-calling using sexual references, and sexual assault.

3) Acceptance/lack of resistance to control – Some participants perceived South Asian Muslim girls as easier to control or less resistant to control. It was suggested that male dominance is more normalized within South Asian Muslim cultures. It is perceived by some participants that South Asian Muslim women are more accepting of their partners limiting their activities and more specifically their choice of clothing. Furthermore, it is perceived by some that South Asian Muslim girls are expecting to be more dependent than non-South Asian Muslims. In addition, the ease of control is thought by some to vary by education level and where one lives or was raised.

4) Strong relationship attachment – Relationship attachment is perceived by some South Asian Muslims to be stronger for those within their community. This is primarily attributed to of the belief that they are typically not supposed to be in a relationship to begin with. This is especially true if it is a sexual relationship due to the cultural and religious significance of sex. For these reasons, having a relationship is taken very seriously.

5) Psychological, verbal, emotional behaviours/abuse – The participants perceived South Asian Muslim girls to be more accepting of these forms of abuse or less affected by

them. According to the participants, this is because it is more normalized among South Asian Muslims. It is impossible to determine if the negative impact of these forms of abuse is in fact less hurtful to South Asian Muslims or if it just appears that way. However, as one participant noted, these forms of abuse can, on the other hand, be even worse for South Asian Muslims since they are not recognized by some South Asian Muslim women as hurtful forms of abuse.

To summarize, I found that some South Asian Muslims perceive that there are behaviours or abuse in dating relationships that are perceived to be unique to South Asian Muslims living in Canada relative to those of the dominant Canadian culture. What the participants discussed as unique to South Asian Muslims with regards to dating abuse are perceptions only. Therefore, I am not arguing that these are issues exclusively affecting South Asian Muslims. These issues could arise in dating relationships of other cultural or religious groups. It is, however, worthwhile to consider and understand what individuals perceive can have a unique impact on those within their varying cultural and religious communities. Such recognition supports the importance of intersectionality in understanding dating abuse as it indicates that behaviours in dating relationships are not defined the same for everyone, even within one particular religious or cultural group.

5.7 Effects of Shame and Family Honour on Dating Abuse

Related to the issues perceived to be unique to South Asian Muslims are the perceived effects of shame and family honour on dating abuse or, more specifically, the decision to hide an abusive dating relationship or remain in an abusive dating relationship if people are aware of that dating relationship. This study suggests that shame and family honour are related to five issues perceived to influence the decision to hide or stay in an abusive dating relationship. These include: fear of the South Asian Muslim community's

reaction, blame, strong relationship attachment, blackmail and consequences resulting

from parental discovery. Each of these things is perceived to be more acute because of

the significance of family honour.

To summarize, these results indicate that family honour and shame are perceived

by some to have an impact on dating abuse, specifically the decision to hide or stay. This

means that family honour and shame are thought to have a real impact on girls, and a

negative impact on decisions regarding dating abuse. This supports Haddad and her

colleagues (2006) who found that dating is shameful or frowned upon. It may suggest the

continuing existence and effects of shame and family honour on South Asian Muslims

living in Canada. This is relevant in helping girls who are in abusive dating relationships.

Family honour and shame are necessary to consider as reasons why girls may be resistant

to telling others about their abusive relationships or leaving that relationship. Even

though some South Asian Muslims break the cultural and religious norms and date, the

effects of family honour and shame are still likely felt.

5.8 Perceived Causes of Dating Abuse

The causes of dating abuse reported by the participants indicate that some

perceive dating abuse to be an individual problem and others as a social problem. The

majority of participants focused on dating abuse as an individual problem and listed

causes accordingly. These causes included: personality/psychological/anger issues, lack

of coping skills, lack of communication skills, etc. Each of the identified causes within

the category of dating abuse as an individual problem suggest that the problem is within

the individual and thus, resolvable only by the individual (e.g., improving self-control).

Regarding dating abuse as a social problem, some participants acknowledged that

dating abuse results from a power imbalance within the relationships, generally in favour

of the male. Some, however, specifically attributed unequal power to a society and culture of patriarchy. For those who did, some spoke of it generally and others accredited it specifically to the South Asian culture. With the majority emphasizing dating as an individual problem, it is possible to extrapolate that patriarchy is not readily identified as problem requiring a resolution. Regardless, the results point to individual issues participants perceived to be a source of dating abuse requiring attention. Furthermore, although indirectly, it is evident that patriarchy may be a factor in dating abuse as well.

5.9 Aspects of the Religion and/or Culture Perceived to Protect Against Dating Abuse

In addition to the causes of dating abuse, especially those stemming from the South Asian culture, there are aspects of the culture and religion that may prevent, or have the potential to prevent, dating abuse. The participants discussed general elements of the religion and culture that can protect against abuse, such as Islam and South Asian cultures forbidding the beating of women, norms of women covering up, the arranged marriage process, and so on. Others also explained that rules and expectations related to dating and male-female relationships specifically can have the potential to prevent dating abuse. For example, limiting or disallowing individuals of the opposite sex to be alone together unsupervised.

To summarize, participants perceive existing rules as potentially conducive to preventing dating abuse, if followed. Rules regulating women's behaviours are seen as protective rather than controlling. This may suggest that some participants view dating abuse as a result of not abiding by the existing religious and/or cultural rules. This in turn can set the stage for victim blaming. These protective aspects, despite the difficulty of

establishing their effectiveness, are necessary to identify since they potentially present a different way, a more positive way, of exploring the impact of the religion and culture.

5.10 Initiatives to Prevent and/or Respond to Dating Abuse

The most popular initiatives given by participants to prevent dating abuse focused on educational or awareness raising programs for youth, although the type, appropriate age, material, and location often varied. Some also suggested the necessity of having such programs or initiatives for adults. Regarding service providers, the results suggest the importance of service providers appearing and being trustworthy. Furthermore, there needs to be service providers who are both similar and different from the girls they may be assisting in terms of religion and ethnicity. This would give the girls choice as it became evident that there will be diversity in needs. For example, one participant explained that generally a South Asian Muslim would be an ideal service provider, but if there was sexual abuse, a South Asian Muslim might be more comfortable with someone who is completely different from them due to the cultural and religious significance of sex. Since numerous participants put forth the above initiatives, it is possible that they are initiatives worth further consideration and possible implementation.

While many did provide suggestions for initiatives and seemed to believe there is a possibility for success, there were some who did not express confidence in any initiatives. For these individuals, dating abuse was either a personal problem that cannot be fixed or a problem associated with patriarchy that is deeply engrained in South Asian cultures. There was one participant who compared initiatives to anti-smoking campaigns. It is important to note that anti-smoking campaigns have, in fact, been successful. Therefore, while there may be pessimism regarding initiatives, those initiatives may still be successful.

It is important to consider what youth themselves wish to see in prevention initiatives because it gives us some insight into what they believe would be useful for others who are similar to them. It can be problematic to have outsiders creating programs for individuals who they cannot relate to or do not understand. Thus, it is beneficial to explore young people's ideas. However, even though some reject ideas, it does not mean those ideas should be hastily abandoned (as mentioned in the previous paragraph). The ideas suggested by these participants indicate that for the most part, with the exception of those who suggested further teaching of the Qur'an, can be easily implemented in broad social and education settings (i.e., they did not feel it is necessary to have programs directed specifically at South Asian Muslims). Again, it is useful to go to the source rather than make assumptions on their behalf and the proposed initiatives could serve as a starting point for service providers and educational institutions.

5.11 Weaknesses, Strengths, and Direction for Future Research

Similar to all social science research, there are both weaknesses and strengths of this research. The sample for this study, although small, was relatively diverse. There were participants from various countries of origin and sects of Islam. This study did not seek out individuals from different sects of Islam nor was this a question posed to the participants. When some participants volunteered this information near the end of the study, I began to realize that sectarian differences do shape individuals' perceptions and understandings of dating and dating violence. As such, it would be useful for future research to explore the relationship between participants' Islamic sects and their perceptions of dating or abuse in dating relationships.

This study has a relatively small sample of university/college students, which limits the potential for generalizability. It would be useful for future research so expand

beyond college/university students. It is possible that engaging with high school students, for instance, would produce very different results. This would be especially relevant as dating often starts in early adolescence (Mahony, 2010). Moreover, it is likely that post-secondary education does play a role in meanings associated with dating behaviours and abuse. Therefore, it would also be worthwhile to expand to non-university/college students. While the sample is relatively small, I was able to still get rich data, which advances this area of research.

The participants of this study, with the exception of one, did not report experiencing an unhealthy or abusive dating relationship. As a result, this data is only of perceptions rather than experiences. This is, however, an essential step prior to conducting research with South Asian Muslims who have experienced dating abuse. Without this foundation, it is likely that behaviours that are considered abusive or significant to South Asian Muslims would be overlooked due to preconceived notions of what dating abuse is. Relying on this foundation, future research should be conducted with South Asian Muslims who admit to being in an abusive dating relationship to allow for an understanding of what they experienced during and after that relationship.

Being someone of a different ethnicity and religion of the participants proved to be challenging as a researcher. It was, at times, difficult from the early stage of creating the interview guide and even during the interviews when trying to ask awkwardly worded questions in an attempt to avoid offending respondents while still garnering relevant information. For instance, when trying to solicit discussions of behaviours the participants potentially perceived as worse for one group or another, it was difficult to name the comparison group. At first I made the mistake of asking "are there any behaviours that you think would be considered worse to a South Asian Muslim girl than a

Canadian girl?" Realizing my mistake that South Asian Muslim girls are also Canadian and fumbling to correct myself, I resorted to saying "someone like me," which in and of itself could still be seen as problematic. There were also challenges in interpreting the data, as I am not completely versed in the South Asian Muslim culture, which could have prevented me from seeing some of the nuances or subtleties in the data. I did, however, have a committee that is familiar with South Asian Muslim cultures. While there were some difficulties arising from this, it is possible that it allowed me to ask more questions rather than assuming I knew what they meant because I was part of the community. It may also have allowed me to look at the issue of behaviours and abuse in dating relationships without many expectations or preconceptions about how they would respond.

In addition, future researchers should attempt to create and apply a systematic measure of religiosity and cultural identity. This could be utilized to determine the extent religiosity and cultural identity impact perceptions and experiences of/with dating behaviours and abuse.

5.12 Final Thoughts

Dating is generally an inevitable life event in the West. It has simply become a norm within the United States (Bogle, 2008) and Canada, given recent statistics on the amount of youth engaging in it (Mahony, 2010). With dating there can be dating abuse. Recognizing that dating does happen among South Asian Muslims (Abraham & Kumar, 1999; Abraham, 2001, 2002; Zaidi, Couture & Maticka-Tyndale, 2011), it is reasonable to argue that dating abuse is also experienced by South Asian Muslims, especially as research has shown that dating abuse among university and college students in particular is endemic (see Currie & MacLean, 1993; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Straus, 2004). To

127

the best of my knowledge, however, dating abuse among South Asian Muslims has not been studied. Adopting an intersectionality perspective, which has been employed by numerous intimate partner abuse scholars (see Bograd, 1999; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Crenshaw, 1991; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Yoshihama, 1999), to examine dating abuse means recognizing that dating abuse is not likely to be experienced or defined in the exact same manner by all women. Thus, dating abuse will not be experienced the same by South Asian Muslims. Therefore, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the meanings given to dating behaviours and experiences with dating abuse. The necessity of using an intersectionality approach to uncover the potential role intersecting characteristics can play in the diversity of meanings and experiences with dating abuse is provisionally supported by the data presented in this thesis. The results have clearly indicated that South Asian Muslims in this study do perceive that the meanings they attribute to behaviours and abuse in dating relationships are unique to them. As such, this research is a necessary stepping-stone leading to future research of South Asian Muslims' perceptions and experiences of dating abuse. It is also a beginning point to attempting to fill a gap in the field of dating abuse research. Beyond research implications, the findings from this study also suggest the importance of raising awareness for services providers, teachers, and others who interact with youth, and South Asian Muslim youth in particular. They need to be sensitized to dating abuse occurring within other cultural and religious groups and the impact young people's culture and religious can have on experiences with dating abuse.

Reference List

Abraham, L. (2001). Redrawing the Lakshman Rekha: Gender differences and cultural constructions in youth sexuality in urban India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *24*(1), 133-156. doi: 10.1080/00856400108723441.

Abraham, L. (2002). Bhai-behen , true love, time pass: Friendships and sexual partnerships among youth in an Indian metropolis. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *4*(3), 337-353. doi: 10.1080/13691050110120794.

Abraham, L., & Kumar, K. A. (1999). Sexual experiences and their correlates among college students in Mumbai City, India. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, *25*(3), 139-146+152. doi: 10.2307/2991963.

Abraham, M. (2005). Domestic Violence and the Indian Diaspora in the United States. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, *12*(2-3), 427-451. doi: 10.1177/097152150501200212.

Ackard, D. M., Eisenberg, M. E., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2007). Long-term impact of adolescent dating violence on the behavioral and psychological health of male and female youth. *The Journal of pediatrics, 151*(5), 476-81. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2007.04.034.

Adelman, M. & Kil, S.H. (2007). Dating conflicts: Rethinking dating violence and youth conflict. *Violence Against Women, 13*(2), 1296-1318. doi: 10.1177/1077801207310800

Ahmad, F., Riaz, S., Barata, P., & Stewart, D. E. (2004). Patriarchal beliefs and perceptions of abuse among South Asian Immigrant Women. *Violence Against Women*, *10*(3), 262-282. doi: 10.1177/1077801203256000.

Alexander, M., Garda, L., Kanade, S., Jejeebhoy, S., & Ganatra, B. (2006). Romance and sex: pre-marital partnership formation among young women and men, Pune district, India. *Reproductive health matters*, *14*(28), 144-55. doi: 10.1016/S0968-8080(06)28265-X.

Ammar, N., Couture, A., Alvi, S. & San Antonio, J. (in press). Experiences of Muslim and Non-Muslim battered immigrant women with the police in the United States: A closer understanding of commonalities and differences. *Violence Against Women.*

Anderson, M.L. & Hill Collins, P. (2006). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (6th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Ashley, O. S., & Foshee, V. a. (2005). Adolescent help-seeking for dating violence: prevalence, sociodemographic correlates, and sources of help. *The Journal of adolescent health: official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine, 36*(1), 25-31. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2003.12.014.

Ayyub, R. (2000). Domestic violence in the South Asian Muslim immigrant population in the United States. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*(3), 237-248. doi: 10.1023/A:1009412119016.

Banyard, V. L., & Cross, C. (2008). Consequences of teen dating violence: understanding intervening variables in ecological context. *Violence Against Women, 14*(9), 998-1013. doi: 10.1177/1077801208322058.

Benet-Martínez, V., Leu, J., Lee, F., & Morris, M. W. (2002). Negotiating biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *33*(5), 492-516. doi:10.1177/0022022102033005005.

Bilge, S. (2010). Recent feminist outlooks on intersectionality. *Diogenes, 225*, 58-72. doi: 10.1177/0392192110374245.

Bogle, K. A. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating and relationships on campus.* New York, NY: New York University Press.

Bograd, M. (2005). Strengthening domestic violence theories: Intersections of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. In N. Sokoloff & C. Pratt (Eds.), *Domestic violence at the margins: Readings on race, class, gender, and culture* (pp.25-38). Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers Press.

Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 5*(3), 75-86.

Brown, A. L., & Messman-Moore, T. L. (2010). Personal and perceived peer attitudes supporting sexual aggression as predictors of male college students' willingness to intervene against sexual aggression. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *25*(3), 503-17. doi: 10.1177/0886260509334400.

Chakraborty, K. (2010). The sexual lives of Muslim girls in the bustees of Kolkata, India. *Sex Education*, *10*(1), 1-21. doi: 10.1080/14681810903491339.

Currie, D. H., & MacLean, B. D. (1993). Woman abuse in dating relationships: Rethinking women's safety on campus. *The Journal of Human Justice*, *4*(2), 1-24. doi: 10.1007/BF02619524.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241. doi: 10.2307/1229039.

Dasgupta, S. D. (1998). Gender roles and cultural continuity in the Asian Indian immigrant community in the U.S. *Sex Roles, 38*(11/12), 953-974.

Dasgupta, S. D. (2000). Charting the course : An overview of domestic violence in the South Asian community in the United States. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*(3), 173-185. doi: 10.1023/A:1009403917198.

Dasgupta, S. D., & Warrier, S. (1996). In the footsteps of "Arundhati": Asian Indian women's experience of domestic violence in the United States. *Violence Against Women*, *2*(3), 238-259. doi: 10.1177/1077801296002003002.

Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory, 9*(1), 67-85. doi: 10.1177/1464700108086364.

DeKeseredy, W. S. (1988). Woman abuse in dating relationships: The relevance of social support theory. *Journal of Family Violence*, *3*(1), 1-13. doi: 10.1007/BF00994662.

DeKeseredy, W. S., & Kelly, K. (1993). Woman abuse in university and college dating relationships: The contribution of the ideology of familial patriarchy. *The Journal of Human Justice, 4*(2), 25-52. doi: 10.1007/BF02619525.

DeKeseredy, W., & Pollard, J. (1993). The incidence and prevalence of women abuse in Canadian university and college dating relationships. *Journal of Sociology*, *18*(2), 137-159.

Dodd, P. C. (1973). Family honor and the forces of change in Arab society. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *4*(1), 40-54.

Durham, M. G. (2004). Constructing the "new ethnicities": media, sexuality, and diaspora identity in the lives of South Asian immigrant girls. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *21*(2), 140-161. doi: 10.1080/07393180410001688047.

Dutton, M.A., Goodman, L.A. & Bennett, L. (1999). Court-involved battered women's responses to violence: The role of psychological, physical and sexual abuse. *Violence and Victims, 14*(1), 89-104.

Dwyer, C. (2000). Negotiating diasporic identitiesYoung british south asian muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *23*(4), 475-486. doi: 10.1016/S0277-5395(00)00110-2.

Feinstein, S.C. & Ardon, M.S. (1973). Trends in dating patterns and adolescent development. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2*(2), 157-166.

Follingstad, D.R., Rutledge, L.L., Berg, B.J., Hause, E.S., & Polek, D.S. (1990). The role of emotional abuse in physically abusive relationships. *Journal of Family Violence, 5*(2), 107-120.

Foshee, V. A, Linder, F., MacDougall, J. E., & Bangdiwala, S. (2001). Gender differences in the longitudinal predictors of adolescent dating violence. *Preventive medicine*, *32*(2), 128-41. doi: 10.1006/pmed.2000.0793.

Giguère, B., Lalonde, R., & Lou, E. (2010). Living at the crossroads of cultural worlds: The experience of normative conflicts by second generation immigrant youth. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4*(1), 14-29. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2009.00228.x.

Gwartney-Gibbs, P. a, Stockard, J., & Bohmer, S. (1987). Learning courtship aggression: The influence of parents, peers, and personal experiences. *Family Relations, 36*(3), 276. doi: 10.2307/583540.

Haddad, Y.Y., Smith, J.I. & Moore, K.M. (2006). *Muslim Women in America.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Handa, A. (1997). *Caught between omissions: Exploring "cultural conflict" among second generation South Asian women in Canada* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from National Library of Canada. (0-612-27942-1)

Hassouneh-Phillips, D. S. (2001). "Marriage is half of faith and the rest is fear Allah": Marriage and spousal abuse among American Muslims. *Violence Against Women, 7*(8), 927-946. doi: 10.1177/10778010122182839.

Hickey, M.G. (2004). Identity negotiation in narratives of Muslim women immigrants in the United States: 'So things are different…doesn't mean they're wrong'. *Asian Women, 19*, 1-18.

Ho, P. S. Y., with Xiying Wang. (2007). Violence and desire in Beijing: a young Chinese woman's strategies of resistance in father daughter incest and dating relationships. *Violence against women, 13*(12), 1319-38. doi: 10.1177/1077801207310802.

Huisman, K. A. (1996). Wife battering in Asian American communities. Identifying the service needs of an overlooked segment of the U.S. population. *Violence against women, 2*(3), 260-83.

Jackson, S. M. (1999). Issues in the dating violence research: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 4*(2), 233-247.

Janhevich, D. & Ibrahim, H. (2004) Muslims in Canada: An illustrative and demographic profile. *Our Diverse Cities, 1*(Spring), 49-56.

Jejeebhoy, S. J., & Sathar, Z. a. (2001). Women's autonomy in India and Pakistan: The influence of religion and region. *Population and Development Review*, *27*(4), 687-712. doi: 10.1111/j.1728-4457.2001.00687.x.

Jiwani, Y. (2005). Walking a tightrope: the many faces of violence in the lives of racialized immigrant girls and young women. *Violence against women*, *11*(7), 846-75. doi: 10.1177/1077801205276273.

Joseph, J. (2006). Intersectionalities of race/ethnicity, class, and justice: Women of color. In A.V. Merlo & J.M. Pollock (Eds.), *Women, law, and social control* (pp. 292-312). Toronto, ON: Pearson Education, Inc.

Khan, S. (2000). *Muslim women: Crafting a North American identity.* Gainseville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Kopp, H. (2002). Dress and diversity: Muslim women and Islamic dress in an immigrant/minority context. *Muslim World, 92*(1/2), 59-79.

Mahony, T.H. (2010). Police-reported dating violence in Canada, 2008. Statistics Canada. Retrieved on March 18, 2010 from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11242-eng.htm

Marshall, L.L. (1999). Effects of men's subtle and overt psychological abuse on low-income women. *Violence and Victims, 14*(1), 69-88.

Muñoz-Rivas, M.J., Graña, J.L, O'Leary, K.D., & González, M.P. (2006). Aggression in adolescent dating relationships: Prevalence, justification, and health consequences. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 40*(4), 298-304. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.11.137.

Patai, R. (2002). *The Arab mind.* New York, NY: Scribner.

Paul, E.L. & White, K.M. (1990). The development of intimate relationships in late adolescence. *Adolescence, 25*(98), 375-400.

Peek, L. (2005). Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of Religion*, *66*(3), 215-242. doi: 10.2307/4153097.

Pinnewala, P. (2009). Good women, martyrs, and survivors: a theoretical framework for South Asian women's responses to partner violence. *Violence against women*, *15*(1), 81-105. doi: 10.1177/1077801208328005.

Purkayastha, B. (2000). Liminal Lives : South Asian Youth and Domestic Violence. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*(3), 201-219. doi: 10.1023/A:1009408018107.

Rajiva, M. (2006). Brown girls, white worlds: Adolescence and the making of racialized selves. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie, 43*(2), 165-183. doi: 10.1111/j.1755-618X.2006.tb02218.x.

Sackett, L.A. & Saunders, D.G. (1999). The impact of different forms of psychological abuse on battered women. *Violence and Victims, 14*(1), 1-13.

Saldãna, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Shariff, F. (2008). The liminality of culture: Second generation South Asian Canadian identity and the potential for postcolonial texts. *Journal of Teaching and Learning, 5*(2), 67-80.

Sheehan, H. E., Javier, R. A., & Thanjan, T. (2000). Introduction to the special issue on domestic violence and the South Asian community. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *9*(3), 167-171. doi: 10.1023/A:1009422400360.

Shen, A. C.T. (2011). Cultural barriers to help-seeking among Taiwanese female victims of dating violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *26*(7), 1343-65. doi: 10.1177/0886260510369130.

Silverman, J. G., Decker, M. R., & Raj, A. (2007). Immigration-based disparities in adolescent girls' vulnerability to dating violence. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, *11*(1), 37-43. doi: 10.1007/s10995-006-0130-y.

Silverman, J.G., Raj, A., Mucci, L.A. & Hathaway, J.E. (2001). Dating violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 286*(5), 572-579. doi: 10.1001/jama.286.5.572.

Sokoloff, N. J. (2008). Expanding the intersectional paradigm to better understand
domestic violence in immigrant communities. *Critical Criminology*, *16*(4), 229-
255. doi: 10.1007/s10612-008-9059-3.

Sokoloff, N. & Dupont, I. (2005a). Domestic violence at the intersections of race, class,
and gender. *Violence Against Women, 11*(1), 38-64. doi:
0.1177/1077901204271476.

Sokoloff, N.J. & Dupont, I. (2005b). Domestic violence: Examining the intersections of
race, class, and gender – An introduction. In N.J. Sokoloff & C. Pratt (Eds.),
Domestic violence at the margins: Readings on race, class, gender, and culture
(pp. 1-13). Picatawa, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Statistics Canada (2008). Canadian demographics at a glance. *Minister of Industry*, 91-
003-X.

Statistics Canada (2010). Study: projections of the diversity of the Canadian population.
The Daily. Retrieved on December 13, 2010 from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-
quotidien/100309/dq100309a-eng.htm

Straus, M.A. (2004). Prevalence of violence against dating partners by male and female
university students worldwide. *Violence Against Women, 10*(7), 790-811. doi:
10.1177/1077801204265552.

Tichy, L. L., Becker, J. V., & Sisco, M. M. (2009). The downside of patriarchal
benevolence: Ambivalence in addressing domestic violence and socio-economic
considerations for women of Tamil Nadu, India. *Journal of Family Violence*,
24(8), 547-558. doi: 10.1007/s10896-009-9253-4.

Varghese, A., & Rae Jenkins, S. (2009). Parental overprotection, cultural value conflict,
and psychological adaptation among Asian Indian women in America. *Sex Roles,
61*(3-4), 235-251. doi: 10.1007/s11199-009-9620-x.

Verloo, M. (2006). Multiple inequalities, intersectionality and the European Union.
European Journal of Women's Studies, 13(3), 211-228. doi:
10.1177/1350506806065753.

Wang, X. & Ho, P. (2007). Violence and desire in Beijing: A young Chinese woman's strategies of resistance in father-daughter incest and dating relationship. *Violence Against Women, 13*(12), 1319-1338. doi: 10.1177/1077801207310802.

Warraich, S. (2005). 'Honour killings' and the law in Pakistan. In S. Hossain & L. Welchman (Eds.), '*Honour', crimes, paradigms, and violence against women* (pp. 78-119). New York, NY: Zed Books.

Wekerle, C., & Wolfe, D.A. (1999). Dating violence in mid-adolescence: theory, significance, and emerging prevention initiatives. *Clinical psychology review, 19*(4), 435-56.

Weiss, A.M. (1994) Challenges for Muslim women in a postmodern world. In A.S. Ahmed & H. Donnan (Eds.), *Islam, globalization and postmodernity* (pp. 123-134). London, UK: Routledge.

Yoshihama, M. (1999). Domestic violence against women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles: Two methods of estimating prevalence. *Violence Against Women, 5*(8), 869-897. doi: 10.1177/10778019922181536.

Yuval-Davis (2006). Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 13*(3), 193-209. doi: 10.1177/1350506806065752.

Zaidi, A., Couture, A. & Maticka-Tyndale, E. (2011). Should I or Shouldn't I: Why South Asian Youth Resist Cultural Deviancy. Unpublished manuscript, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Oshawa, Canada.

Zine, J. (2008). Honour and identity: An ethnographic account of Muslim girls in a Canadian Islamic school. *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies, 19,* 35-61.

Appendix A: Verbal Consent

The purpose is of this interview is to identify various meanings and perceptions of dating and healthy/unhealthy relationships from a South Asian and Muslim perspectiveIt will try to understand what role, if any, culture, religion, and parental expectations play in the unique experiences of South Asian Muslim women. The interviews I am conducting will provide the foundation for the interviews I intend to conduct with immigrant South Asian Muslim women who have been in unhealthy dating relationships.

I would like to record the interview so that I can accurately represent your ideas. Your name and other identifying information will not be attached to your answers, so no one will know who said what. Your responses will be confidential. The interview will be audio recorded, however, only the principal investigator and her supervisor will have access to these tapes. The recordings will be stored in a locked safe. Direct quotes may be used from the discussion in any presentations of the findings; however no identifying information will be given with these quotes.

Is it OK if I record the interview discussion?
Yes___ No ___

There are no risks associated with participating in the interview. However, given the topic of discussion, dating and healthy relationships, if you are uncomfortable, you have the right not to answer any questions. Your participation in the focus group is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or withdraw at any time during the focus group with no consequence to you of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any question and still continue to participate.   If you decide to withdraw, the audio recording will be destroyed.

Again, you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty. If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a participant, you are to contact the Ethics and Compliance Officer, at compliance@uoit.ca or at 905-721-8668 ext 3693.

Do you have any questions or concerns?

Before we start the interview can you confirm that you understand what I have told you and you would like to voluntarily continue with the interview?

Would you like to choose the name for the researchers to use with your comments when they write up the interviews? If yes, what name would you like them to use?

Background Information

1. How old are you?

2. What South Asian country did you and your family come from?
    a. Was the place your family and/or you came from urban or rural?

3. Were you born in Canada?
    a. If not, at what age did you come to Canada?

4. How religious are you?
    a. How important would you say your religion is in your daily life?
    b. Does it affect your daily decision making?

5. How do you see yourself? Or how do you identify yourself? Describe yourself.

Dating

1. What do you consider dating?

2. What is the purpose of dating?

3. What does the South Asian/Muslim community think about the western forms of dating?
    a. Why do you think this?

4. Generally, is the western form dating accepted in most South Asian/Muslims families?
    a. Why/Why not?
    b. Religious or cultural rules?
    c. Is it a generational issue?
    d. How did you come to know that this accepted/unaccepted?

5. Is it accepted in your family?
    a. Why/Why not?
    b. How did you learn that it was accepted/unaccepted in your family?
    c. If not accepted, how do you think your parents would respond to you being in a dating relationship?

6. Do you think dating is acceptable?
    a. Why/why not?

7. Do you/did you encounter any kind of difficulties in a culture where dating is seen as normal?

   a. Have you ever felt pressured to be in a relationship?
     i. Why/why not?

Patriarchy

I'm going to ask you some questions about what you think it's generally like in South Asian Muslim families, what it's like in your house between your parents, and what you want it to be like in your relationship in the future.

What is a typical South Asian Muslim relationship or marriage like?

Probes

1. Who is the head of the household?
  a. What do you think about this?

2. What is the role of the husband/father in a typical South Asian Muslim family?
  a. What are his responsibilities to the family?
  b. What do you think about this?

3. What is the role of the wife/mother in a typical South Asian Muslim family?
  a. What are her responsibilities to the family?
    i. Do women usually work?
      1. Do they work when they have children?
      2. If yes, why? What kinds of jobs?
      3. If no, why not?
      4. What do you think about this?

  b. Does she have any sexual responsibilities? Is she expected to please her husband?
    i. Why do you think this is?

  c. Is a woman expected to become a mother?
    i. Who typically decides when a couple should have children?
    ii. What do you think about this?

4. Who is typically responsible for taking care of the family financially?
  a. Why?
  b. What do you think about this?

5. Who typically makes the financial decisions?
  a. Why?
  b. What do you think about this?

6. Who makes decisions about what social activities the family engages in?
  a. Why?
  b. What do you think about this?

7. What is considered more shameful, a wife having an extramarital affair or a husband? Or are both equally shameful?
    a. Who would face more consequences or be looked down upon more?
    b. Why do you think this is?
    c. What do you think about this?

8. Is the relationship between a husband and wife fair?
    a. Why do you think this?

9. What is the role of a son in a typical South Asian Muslim family?
    a. What are his responsibilities to the family?
    b. What do you think about this?

10. What is the role of a daughter in a typical South Asian Muslim family?
    a. What are her responsibilities to the family?
    b. Is she expected to marry?
    c. What do you think about this?

11. Who has more independence or freedom in the family, the son or the daughter?
    a. Examples.
    b. Why do you think this is?
    c. What do you think about this? Is this fair

12. Who has more authority or power in the family, the son or the daughter?
    a. Why do you think this is?
    b. What do you think about this?

13. Is it more important for sons or daughters to attend post secondary education? Or is it equally important for both?
    a. Why do you think this is?
    b. What do you think about this?

14. Who faces harsher consequences for engaging in pre-marital sexual activites?
    a. Why do you think this is?
    b. What do you think about this?

What is it like in your house?
Probes:

1. How is the relationship between your mom and dad?
    a. Is it a good relationship?
    b. Are they happy?
    c. Do you think their relationship is fair

2. Do both of your parents work outside of the house?

3. Who makes most of the financial decisions in your house?
    a. Does it ever cause fighting?
    b. Do you agree with that?

4. Who primarily takes care of the house? (ie., cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children, etc.)
    a. Is this ever a source of conflict?
    b. Do you agree with that?

5. Does your dad make decisions about activities your mom does outside the house?
    a. What types of activities does he make decisions about?
    b. Do you agree with that?

6. Does your dad or your mom ever lose his/her temper and yell, call names or hit your mom/dad?
    a. If yes, what typically leads to this?
    b. Do you agree with that?

7. If you plan on getting married, what do you hope your marriage and family will be like?
    a. Probes:
    b. Do you want to work outside of the house?
    c. Who should take care of the finances?
    d. Who should take care of the house?
    e. Should your husband have to approve of your activities outside of the house?

Healthy/Unhealthy dating relationships

1. What do you consider a healthy or good dating relationship?
    a. i.e., what are the characteristics of a good relationship

2. What is an unhealthy or bad relationship?
    a. What would make a relationship unhealthy or bad?
    b. What behaviours or actions by a partner would make you consider it a bad relationship?

REVIEW SCENARIOS

3. Why do you think unhealthy or bad relationships happen?

4. Why do you think people stay in bad relationships?

5. How do you expect your partner to behave?
    a. How do you expect him to treat you?

      b. Are there things you expect him/her to do for you because you're in a relationship?
            i. If yes, what and why?

6. What expectations should your partner have of you?
      a. Why?

Culturally Specific Forms of Abuse

1. Thinking specifically about South Asian Muslims, are there any behaviours that would make a relationship be thought of as unhealthy?
      a. If yes, what are they?

2. Are there behaviours that might not make a relationship be thought of as unhealthy by individuals of other cultures or religions?
      a. If yes, what are they?

3. Could a boyfriend behave in a way that would make a dating relationship unhealthy with a South Asian or Muslim woman in a way that would not be considered unhealthy by someone who is not South Asian or Muslim?
      a. If yes, how so?

4. How can a boyfriend of South Asian or Muslim behave in a way that would be more hurtful to her than a non-South Asian or a non-Muslim?
      a. Why would this be more hurtful?
      b. What are the implications of this behavior?

5. Are there ways that a boyfriend could control a South Asian or Muslim that would not work to control a non-South Asian or non-Muslim?
      a. If yes, what?

6. What is the worst thing a boyfriend could do to his/her South Asian or Muslim partner?

7. If a young woman's parents are unaware of his dating relationship, can that be used in an unhealthy relationship?
      a. If yes, how?

8. Are people who are in secret dating relationships are more vulnerable to having an unhealthy relationship?
      a. Why/why not?

9. Are there aspects of the South Asian or Muslim culture that can project against dating abuse?
      a. If yes, what and why?

Causes of Bad Relationships

1. What do you think causes a relationship to become bad or a boyfriend to behave badly towards their partner?

2. Do you think there are ever situations where you might or might have behaved in way that you said is bad? Or would make someone behave badly?

3. Why do you think people treat their partners badly?

Responding to (Abusive) Peers

1. If you knew someone who was treating their partner in a way which you have previous defined as making a relationship bad, how would you react?
    a. Why do you think you would react this way?

2. Would you approach your friend or his/her partner?
    a. Why/why not?
    b. If so, what would you say?

3. Would you think differently of friend?
    a. Why/why not?

4. Would you stop being friends with someone who was treating their partner badly?
    a. Why/why not?

Coping

I'm going to ask you some hypothetical questions and I want you to tell me what you think you would do if you were in this situation.

1. If you were in an unhealthy relationship, how would you cope with the boyfriend?

2. Would you leave the relationship or would you try to find a way to work it out?
    a. If you would leave, what would cause you to leave the relationship?
    b. If you would stay, why?
        i. How would you try to work out the issues?

3. Would you tell anyone?
    a. Who? Probe - (parents, other relatives, friends, teacher, religious leader, etc.)
    b. Why/Why not?
    c. How do you think they would react?
    d. If not, how would you deal with it on your own?

4. Are there services you would contact?
    a. Why/Why not?

   b. What services would you turn to?

5. Would you ever contact the police?
   a. What would have to happen for you to contact the police?

6. What would you tell a woman/man to do if she was in a bad/unhealthy relationship?
   a. Why?

7. Do you think some people hide unhealthy relationships from their parents?
   a. Why?

8. How do you think people would cope with or deal with the unhealthy relationship if their parents are unaware of the relationship?

Initiatives for Preventing or Responding to Unhealthy Relationships

1. Can unhealthy dating relationships be prevented?
   a. If so, how?

2. Is it desirable to prevent unhealthy dating relationships?
   a. Why?

3. Can we do something help South Asians who are in an unhealthy relationship with a partner?
   a. If yes, what?
   b. Why would this be helpful?

4. Can we do something to help Muslims who are in an unhealthy relationship with a partner?
   a. If yes, what?
   b. Why would this be helpful?

5. Can we do something to help South Asian/Muslims who are in secret unhealthy dating relationships?
   a. If yes, what?
   b. Why would this be helpful?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. Your discussions will be incredibly helpful in allowing me to understand dating abuse from a South Asian Muslim perspective. It will also be invaluable in helping me develop the interview I will use to finish this research study. If you have any questions once you leave the room, please feel free to email me. You have my email address if you should need to contact me.

Appendix C: Scenarios for Interview Guide

Scenario 1

A boyfriend is picking up his girlfriend to go on a date. He insists that she change her clothes because he thinks they're too revealing and he tells her she looks like whore.

Scenario 2

A couple is with a group of friends. Throughout the night the boyfriend makes little jokes about his girlfriend including her physical appearance.

Scenario 3

A couple is with the boyfriend's friends and he slaps her on the butt in front of them.

Scenario 4

A boyfriend thinks his girlfriend is cheating on him. When he confronts her he becomes angry and calls her a whore and pushes her.

Scenario 5

A couple is on a date and the boyfriend is expressing his love and tells his girlfriend that he couldn't ever live without her.

Scenario 6

Throughout the course of a relationship with her boyfriend, a girl begins spending more and more time with her boyfriend leaving little time with her friends. This was also at the encouragement of her boyfriend who did not approve of her friends.

Scenario 7

After a bad day at school a boyfriend expresses his anger by taking it out on his girlfriend and yells at her.

Scenario 8

A couple in a committed relationship is engaging in intimate activities with each other, but when the girl tells her boyfriend that she wants to stop he tries to pressure her to continue.

Scenario 9

A girl has been dating a boy behind her parents back. When she tells her boyfriend that she wants to break up with him, he gets angry and tells her that if she does, he will call her parents and tell her they have been dating and engaging in sexual activities.

Are there other situations or behaviours that could be considered unhealthy?