

ANROWS

Inaugural National Research Conference
on Violence against Women and their Children

The ASPIRE Project:

*Prevalence & incidence of violence & dynamics of
violence against immigrant & refugee women*

Presenter:

Dr Cathy Vaughan

University of Melbourne

Facilitator:

Adele Murdolo

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

ASPIRE

Analysing Safety and Place in
Immigrant and Refugee Experience

Cathy Vaughan, Adele Murdolo,
Linda Murray, Erin Davis,
Jasmin Chen, Regina Quiazon,
Deb Warr, Karen Block.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



Multicultural
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Women's Health



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TASMANIA

Rationale

- Research with immigrant and refugee women in Australia is limited
- Research has tended to focus on a specific cultural community in a particular place; very little research that tries to capture the experiences of immigrants and refugees and asylum seekers
- Members of refugee communities have been involved in collection of data before, but limited involvement in research design, data analysis and dissemination
- There has been limited focus on identifying opportunities for community-led responses to family violence

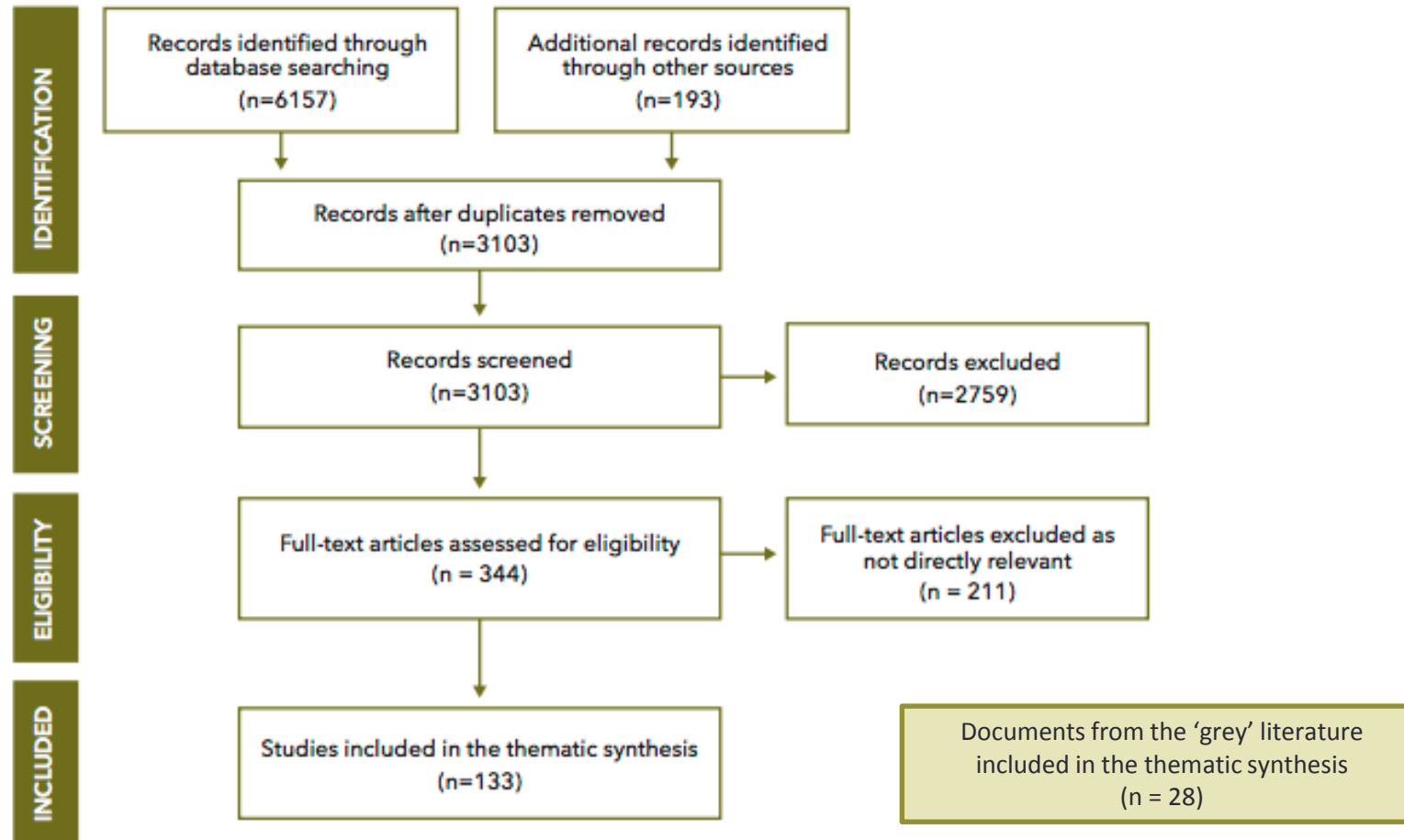
Aims

The project's overall aim is to increase understanding of the nature and dynamics of violence against immigrant and refugee women in different Australian contexts. Specific research questions include:

1. What are immigrant and refugee women's **experiences** of family violence and help-seeking, in selected geographic locations in Australia?
2. What are the **local barriers and facilitators** to immigrants and refugees accessing violence prevention and support services in different settings?
3. What **opportunities** exist for supporting **community-led responses** to family violence against immigrant and refugee women?

State of knowledge report

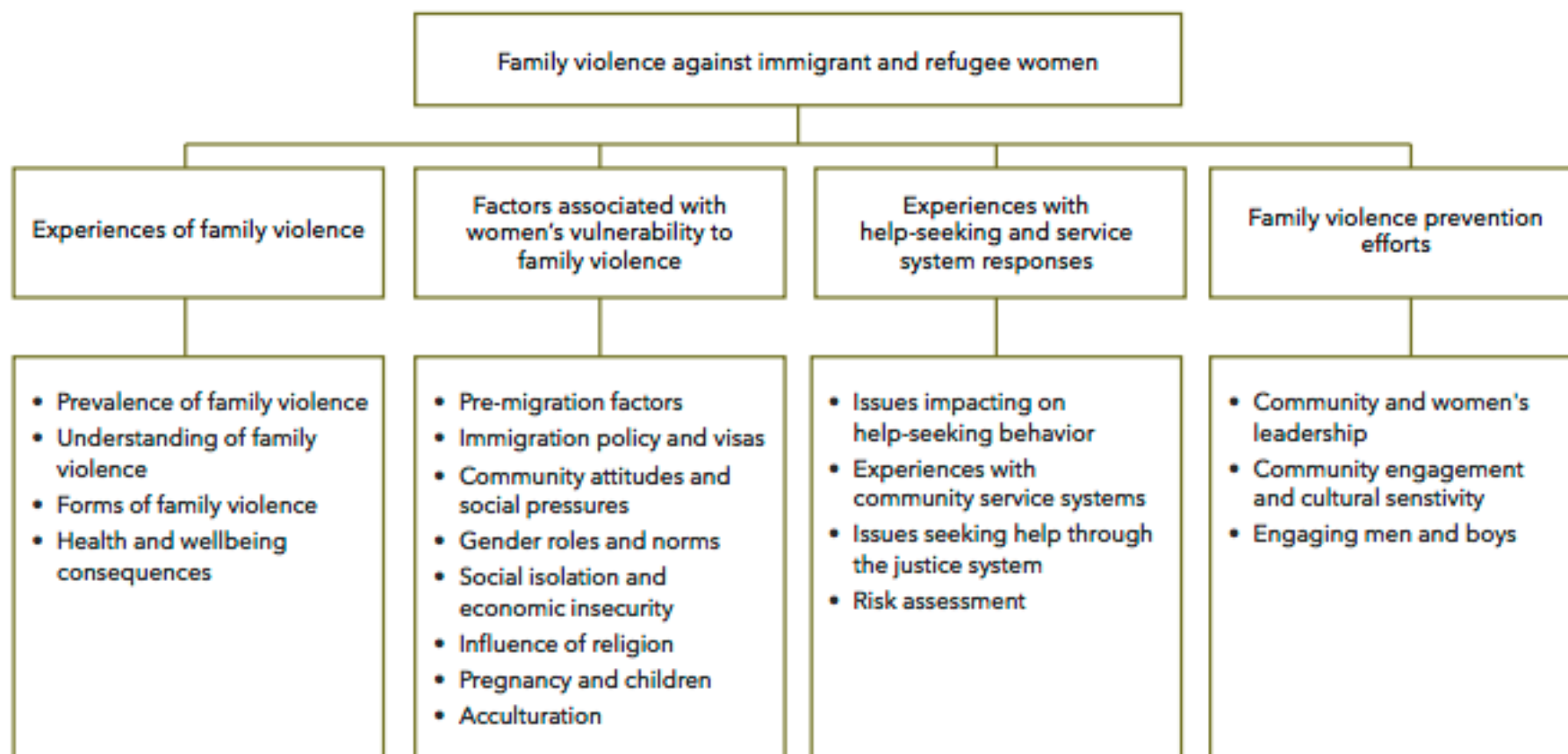
Figure 1. Flow chart for the peer-reviewed literature identification process



Synthesising the literature

- Peer reviewed publications described studies from Australia, Canada, and a number of European countries including the UK, and the US
- Grey literature limited to key national documents, and materials from Victoria and Tasmania specifically
- Quality of papers appraised using a data extraction template
- Limitations across the body of work identified
- Thematic synthesis (Tong et al. 2012)
- Underpinned by theoretical concept of intersectionality and a social ecological approach to understanding family violence

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



Overview of literature

- Evidence about prevalence of family violence in immigrant and refugee communities in Australia is inconclusive
- Overall immigrant and refugee women have broad and nuanced understandings of family violence, however views are not homogenous within and between communities
- In addition to forms of violence reported by other women, immigrant and refugee women experience violence related to migration status, extremes of social isolation, multi-perpetrator violence, forced and early marriage, community pressures to stay in violent relationships

Overview of literature (2)

- Impacts of family violence similar to those experienced by other women, though length of exposure often greater increasing risk of physical and mental harms
- Immigration policy and women's immigration status has an overarching impact on women's experiences of violence and ability to seek help
- Women's vulnerability increased by community attitudes and social pressures (including expectations in marriage, religious customs, normalisation of violence, fear of alienation from community, role of extended families)
- Impact of (shifting) gender norms

Overview of literature (3)

- Immigrant and refugee women experience multiple barriers accessing services (including language barriers; unfamiliarity; actual or perceived racism and bigotry; ambivalence towards police; pro-prosecution approaches)
- Women often seek help from family and community members in first instance
- Some violence response services perceived as culturally unsafe; some culturally specific services have poor understanding of violence
- Complex and multiple service needs (immigration, settlement, housing, transport, economic, literacy)
- Prevention initiatives are few

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Our data collections tools and process will assess relationships between women's experiences of violence, help-seeking, access to services and:

- Current place of residence
- Immigration status
- Access to networks of social support
- Demographic factors
- Experiences of violence pre-migration
- Knowledge of relevant laws and services
- Specific types of violence experienced by immigrant and refugee women
- Other factors known to affect experiences of violence

Research sites

ASPIRE is focusing on 8 sites (5 in Victoria, 3 in Tasmania):

- Inner northwest Melbourne
- City of Greater Dandenong
- Brimbank City
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Latrobe City
- City of Hobart
- City of Glenorchy
- City of Launceston

Methods

In each research site a range of qualitative methods are being used to collect in-depth, place-based data including:

- **In-depth interviews** with immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking women who have experienced family violence
- **Key informant interviews** with service providers (including domestic violence, law and justice, health, housing, resettlement, multicultural and other services)
- **Focus group discussions** with prominent cultural communities in each site (women and men, separately)
- **A Photovoice** project with community leaders.

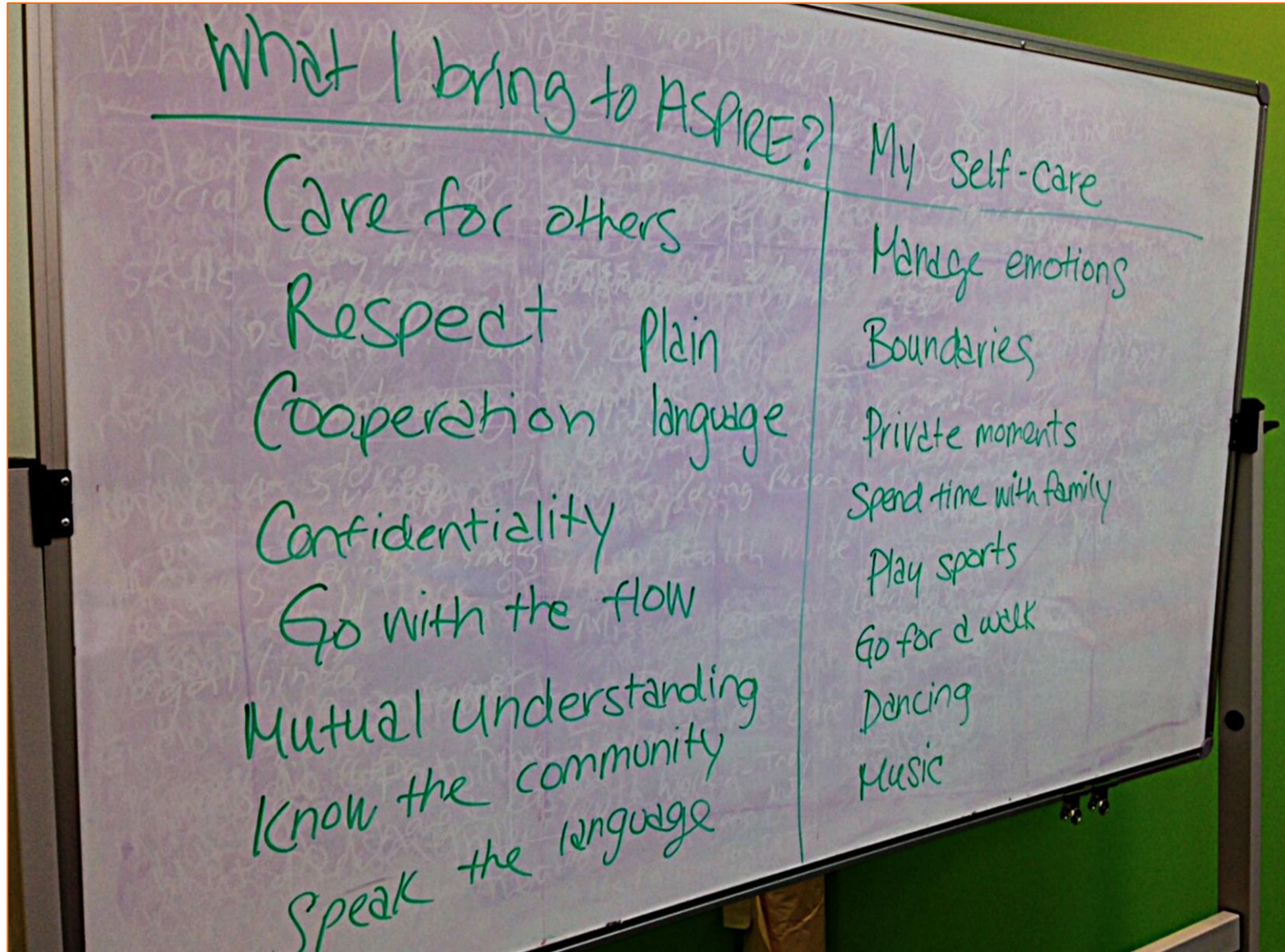


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Analysing Safety and Place in
Immigrant and Refugee Experience

Bilingual and bicultural expertise

- ASPIRE is working with 20 **Bilingual-bicultural Health Educators** from MCWH, the Australian Red Cross (Tasmania) and the Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) as part of the research team
- Trainings have been conducted in Melbourne, Launceston and Hobart
- The team can collect data in over 20 languages across the two states including (but not limited to) Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Burmese, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, Farsi, Hazaragi, Hindi, Karen, Punjabi, Maharastri, Mandarin, Nepali, Tagalog, Tamil, Tigre, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.



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Progress to date

Data collection is ongoing; so far our team has conducted:

- 32 in-depth interviews with immigrant and refugee women who have experienced violence
- 41 key informant interviews with service providers
- 26 focus group discussions (with a total of 188 participants; 141 women and 47 men)

Participants have included women on a range of visa types (e.g. humanitarian, skilled work, business, student, spousal, temporary protection), and from diverse backgrounds.

Focus group discussions have been primarily ethno-specific, with some culturally mixed groups.

Early reflections

- Severity of violence
- Children's exposure to violence
- Confusion around immigration policy
- Impact of rurality compounding social isolation
- Impact of transactional constructions of marriage
- Role of interpreters
- Lack of diversity in workforces responding to family violence
- Inconsistent responses from services
- Lack of prevention/options for men who use violence

Promoting community-led responses

ASPIRE will generate information that can be used in the promotion of **community-led responses**, including:

- Identification of existing initiatives
- Evidence about barriers to services in specific local communities, that can inform advocacy efforts
- Evidence about women's priorities and needs
- Evidence about women's and community leadership.

In addition, ASPIRE will generate evidence about factors undermining women's safety that are **structural** and require a statewide and/or national response.

Thank you

Australian Red Cross (Tasmania)

Migrant Resource Centre (southern Tasmania)

Our project Advisory Groups (Victoria and Tasmania)

The dedicated Bilingual-bicultural Health Educators who have committed to this project, and our extraordinary participants.

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

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