

Geographies of Peace & Violence:

Plural Resistance to Gender Violence and Structural Inequalities in Hyderabad and Seattle

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Abstract

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In this dissertation, I investigate “community-based response” to domestic violence facilitated by NGOs working with Muslim women and families in Hyderabad and South Asian Muslims in Seattle. My transnational comparison of women’s anti-violence organizations reveals the complex webs of intimate and structural violence navigated by Muslim women. My findings suggest that at each site, anti-violence workers identify the intersectionality of violence in Muslim women’s lives and create practices of plural resistance to simultaneously address multiple forms of violence. Their peace-building work in families and communities contests intimate gender violence and structural violence, and disrupts “culture blaming” discourses of Muslim women’s oppression and victimization. Rather than accepting the inadequate (and often

traumatizing or violent) response mechanisms of the modern state (through criminal justice), these organizations create alternative pathways for social change around domestic violence.

My argument proceeds in three intertwined parts. First, I chart the ways in which culturalism dominates global and local representations of Islam and Muslim women, deploying Orientalist views of ‘culture’ in service of counter-terrorism and modernization. My findings in Hyderabad and Seattle unsettle these culturalist narratives by drawing attention to the complex social relations within which intimate violence is embedded, and by demonstrating how women’s organizations in both cities assemble cultural resources (including both religious teachings and social networks) with cultural critiques (of patriarchal justifications of violence and ‘misuse’ of religion).

Culturalism ignores the conditions of structural violence and spatial exclusion characterizing Muslim lives in India and the U.S. Structural violence names the material and embodied manifestations of inequality as *violent* – as causing suffering and signaling oppression. My findings in Hyderabad and Seattle reveal that structural violence takes three primary forms for Muslim women at these sites: (1) uneven development and urban exclusion; (2) rhetorical, political, and legal dispossession through Islamophobia, Hindu nationalism, and/or xenophobia; and (3) insecurity vis-à-vis the state due to the inadequacies of criminal justice responses domestic violence, failures which are heightened for Muslim, poor, and/or racialized immigrant women.

Finally, I explore peace-building as a form of plural resistance that repurposes culture within community mobilization efforts that contest the violence of modernity and the dominance of Western liberalism’s claims to “freedom” and legitimate violence. In this work, women’s organizations in Hyderabad (Old City Women’s Resource Center and Healthy Families) and

Seattle (API Chaya) employ peace-ful concepts, like mutual care, respectful communication, tolerance and appreciation of difference, in order to construct alternative modes of non-violent resistance. This peace-building approach refuses the common assumption that (failed) “protections” of state apparatuses provide the best means of intervening in situations of intimate abuse. Alternatively, peace-building seeks to meet survivors’ needs for safety and dignity and to empower them within their families and communities as part of broader strategies that work for long-term social change and the primary prevention of gendered oppression. This multi-scalar peace also offers a theoretical outside to the ways in which modernity enacts violence, including through developmentalism and capitalism.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: Contesting Culturalism & Structural Violence through Intimate Peace-Building.....	1
<i>Collaborative, Transnational Feminist Praxis</i>	7
<i>The Global-Intimate of Gendered Violence</i>	10
<i>Intersectionality</i>	15
<i>Intimate Gender Violence in Diverse South Asian Communities</i>	16
<i>Structural Violence</i>	18
<i>Women's Movements and Peace-Building</i>	23
<i>Revealing Disjunctures and Continuities through Comparative Analysis</i>	25
Chapter 2: Striving Toward a Critical Feminist Praxis.....	30
<i>Framing the Project & Process: Methods & Comparative Analysis</i>	32
<i>Uneven Research Relationships</i>	39
<i>Fictions, Failures, Feminisms</i>	42
<i>Telling Feminist Stories</i>	44
<i>Meanings and Practices of Collaborative Feminist Research</i>	51
Service	52
Alliance-Building	57
Accountability & Reflexivity	60
<i>Navigating an Impossible Space</i>	64
Chapter 3. Beyond Culturalism: Modernity & Domestic Violence	67
<i>Culture</i>	76
<i>Structural Inequality, Racism, and Cultural Visibility</i>	80
<i>From Culture to Culturalism</i>	83
<i>Culturalism & Modernity</i>	89
<i>Transnational Patterns: Contemporary Culturalism & Islamophobia in India and the U.S.</i>	97
India & Hyderabad: Development, Culture & the 'Misuse' of Religion	98
The U.S. and Seattle: Immigration, Culture, and Community Organizing	104
<i>Strategic Cultural Engagements</i>	110
<i>Conclusion: Reclaiming Culture?</i>	118
Chapter 4: Structural Violence & Vulnerability	121
<i>Legitimate Violence, Nationalism & the State</i>	129
<i>Structural Violence, (In)Visibility & Spatial Dispossession in Hyderabad</i>	133
<i>Structural Violence in Seattle: Islamophobia, Immigration, and Political Dispossession</i>	150
<i>The Failings of Criminal "Justice" in Hyderabad and Seattle: Addressing Domestic Violence Beyond the Law</i>	164

<i>Conclusion: Securing Muslim Women’s Safety?</i>	174
Chapter 5: Making Meaning, Making Peace: Plural Resistance and the Politics and Possibilities of “Community”	176
<i>Peace-building as Plural Resistance in Hyderabad</i>	181
Old City Women’s Resource Center	182
Healthy Families	186
<i>Community-Based Peace-Building in Seattle</i>	193
Our Analysis	196
“Complicating” Community	198
Communities as Sites of Immigrant Belonging: Culture, Spirituality, and Assimilation	205
‘Community’ & Criminal Justice Systems	209
Community Empowerment.....	214
Intimate Peace-Building	226
<i>The Intimate-Geopolitics of Making Domestic Violence (or Peace?) a ‘Public’ Matter</i>	234
Chapter 6: Conclusions.....	239
<i>Moving Forward with Peace</i>	245
References	252
End Notes	267

List of Abbreviations

CAIR	Council on American-Islamic Relations
HF	Healthy Families (Hyderabad)
OCWRC	Old City Women's Resource Center (Hyderabad)
SAALT	South Asian Americans Leading Together (United States)
PWDVA	Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act (India)
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act (United States)

Chapter 1: Introduction: Contesting Culturalism & Structural Violence through Intimate Peace-Building

In May of 2013, as I began my fieldwork in Hyderabad, India, I met Rabia¹ – a lifelong resident of the city, an artist, social activist, and a woman well known for her commitments to women’s rights and to development. Given her busy schedule, I often spent time with her in transit – as she moved between events or most often, between her home and her organization’s offices. One afternoon, we were bumping and honking along the streets of Hyderabad’s Old City, sitting together talking in the backseat as her driver deftly inched us along. After a decade leading the Old City Women’s Resource Center, my companion is accustomed to the complexity of describing her collective’s work. In fact, she tells me that many people are suspicious of organizations serving only women, assuming that such groups are ‘anti-Muslim’. For this reason, Rabia now often positions their work on women’s rights and empowerment in relation to programs serving marginalized communities more generally, specifically Muslims and low-caste² groups in this impoverished area of the city, and including boys and men. Through the course of this conversation and many more, she tells me that women face violence not only from their husbands and mother-in-laws, but also through hunger, poor living conditions in the slums, and lack of educational and health resources. But Muslim women also rarely leave the Old City or their slum neighborhoods – transportation is difficult, they have many responsibilities at home, and quite often their families fear for their safety outside this largely Muslim area. The

¹ All names of individuals and organizations in Hyderabad are pseudonyms.

² While recent work of largely Muslim organizations like OCWRC involves some coalition work with low-caste Hindus, it is important not to conflate the status or everyday lives of these two marginalized groups.

police are known to beat up their sons and husbands, and rarely help in domestic violence cases without first receiving bribes.

As Rabia recounts these everyday intersections of violence and oppression, I see how her experiences in Hyderabad's Old City point to a critical issue many women's organizations face: the tension between empowering women as women, and addressing the various ways women are oppressed as members of marginalized social groups. Our conversations reminded me of many similar discussions I've had with anti-domestic violence activists working in the U.S. South Asian diaspora. Their stories relate similar tensions: between supporting individual women and working with immigrant communities; between fighting patriarchal violence and resisting racism and Islamophobia; between changing social norms and undoing myths of 'traditional cultures'.

These tensions articulated by women working against violence in marginalized communities – tensions between women's individual empowerment and the complex ways their lives are embedded in collectivities – also emerge in feminist scholarship as analytical tensions between the reliance on gender as a primary lens and the push for deeper engagements with the intersectional operation of power through multiple axes of privilege and oppression. My research maintains gender as a lens on violence, but explores the articulation of regional patriarchies with other forms of structural inequality. I investigate “community-based response” to domestic violence facilitated by NGOs working with Muslim women and families in Hyderabad and South Asian Muslims in Seattle. My transnational comparison of women's anti-violence organizations reveals the complex webs of intimate and structural violence navigated by Muslim women. Employing a collaborative feminist praxis, I shaped the following research questions in conversation with these organizations: (1) What are the conditions of modernity that we expect will mitigate violence? Why does ‘culture’ persist as an explanation for violence among certain

groups? (2) How does response to domestic abuse take shape within Muslim communities facing various kinds of exclusions (i.e. based on religion, racialization, class status, gender, & age)? and (3) How and why is ‘peace’ deployed as a response to domestic violence, or as a mode of violence prevention? My findings suggest that at each site, anti-violence workers identify the intersectionality of violence in Muslim women’s lives and create practices of plural resistance to simultaneously address multiple forms of violence. Their peace-building work in families and communities contests intimate gender violence and structural violence, and disrupts “culture blaming” discourses of Muslim women’s oppression and victimization. Rather than accepting the inadequate (and often traumatizing or violent) response mechanisms of the modern state (through criminal justice), these organizations create alternative pathways for social change around domestic violence.

My argument proceeds in three intertwined parts. First, I chart the ways in which culturalism dominates global and local representations of Islam and Muslim women, deploying Orientalist views of ‘culture’ in service of counter-terrorism and modernization. Culturalism positions notions of freedom and rights, as understood within Western liberal modernity, as universal norms that conflict with ‘traditional’ cultures of ‘the East’ (Mohanty 1991; Narayan 1997; Sangari 2008). Within this framework, gender violence sits at the center of the presumed conflict between women’s rights and culture in ‘developing’ or non-Western places (Levitt and Merry 2011). Recent revivals of the “clash of civilizations” rhetoric inform a particular mode of culturalism that focuses on Islam and Muslim peoples and places as exemplary of “premodern” culture, and relies upon representations of Muslim women as passive victims of violence and oppression (Abu-Lughod 2013). Women become central both to discourses of “good Muslims,” who must reform and modernize, and “bad Muslims,” who’s outright rejection of modernity

necessitates their destruction (Mamdani 2004). My findings in Hyderabad and Seattle unsettle these culturalist narratives by drawing attention to the complex social relations within which intimate violence is embedded, and by demonstrating how women's organizations in both cities assemble cultural resources (including both religious teachings and social networks) with cultural critiques (of patriarchal justifications of violence and 'misuse' of religion). In so doing, they hold fast to the aspects of their cultures and communities that provide support or make survival possible, while rejecting violent practices that they argue violate women's rights, within Islam, as human rights, and under the law.

Culturalism ignores the conditions of structural violence and spatial exclusion characterizing Muslim lives in India and the U.S. Structural violence names the material and embodied manifestations of inequality as *violent* – as causing suffering and signaling oppression. This disrupts the normalization of inequality and puts a spotlight on interconnected systems of deprivation and thriving within which some suffer violent lives and deaths, while others enjoy relative comfort and longer life. *Placing* structural violence within geographic locations and within differential power relations works to uncover the particularities of (often muted or invisible) systemic processes. My findings in Hyderabad and Seattle reveal that structural violence takes three primary forms for Muslim women at these sites: (1) uneven development and urban exclusion; (2) rhetorical, political, and legal dispossession through Islamophobia, Hindu nationalism, and/or xenophobia; and (3) insecurity vis-à-vis the state due to the inadequacies of criminal justice responses domestic violence, failures which are heightened for Muslim, poor, and/or racialized immigrant women.

Attention to the everyday realities of structural violence problematizes culturalist narratives that construct othered cultures (in this case Muslims and South Asians) as prone to

violent behaviors and beliefs. As a theoretical tool and umbrella term, structural violence uncovers the (often hidden) systemic production of the more visible manifestations of vast inequalities – such as extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of access to preventive health care and medical treatments, and hate crimes. My analysis shows that structural inequalities are both a source of violence in Muslim women’s lives, and an important factor in increasing their vulnerability to intimate abuse. While structural violence makes possible a more complex investigation of the everyday realities of suffering and violence in Muslim communities in Hyderabad and Seattle, this does *not* mean that Muslim women are solely or primarily “victims”. Community-based anti-violence organizing in each city demonstrates Muslim women’s agency and their creative strategies of plural resistance to structural violence and intimate abuse. Plural resistance theorizes Muslim women’s complex responses to domestic violence - beyond “culture” or “religion” as singular explanations and instead as embedded within multiple, intersecting inequalities. Breaking down culturalism makes room for women’s agency, but structural violence also shows how that agency can be constrained. Attention to peace-building re-establishes the agency of Muslim women not only as actors in their own lives – resisting multiple forms of violence on behalf of themselves, their families, and their communities – but also as local thinkers and actors whose theories and practices are consequential on a global stage.

I explore peace-building as a form of plural resistance that repurposes culture within community mobilization efforts that contest the violence of modernity and the dominance of Western liberalism’s claims to “freedom” and legitimate violence. In this work, women’s organizations in Hyderabad (Old City Women’s Resource Center and Healthy Families) and Seattle (API Chaya) employ peace-ful concepts (Williams and McConnell 2011; Koopman 2011) like mutual care, respectful communication, tolerance and appreciation of difference, in

order to construct alternative modes of non-violent resistance. This peace-building approach refuses the common assumption that (failed) “protections” of state apparatuses provide the best means of intervening in situations of intimate abuse. Alternatively, peace-building seeks to meet survivors’ needs for safety and dignity and to empower them within their families and communities as part of broader strategies that work for long-term social change and the primary prevention of gendered oppression. This multi-scalar peace also offers a theoretical outside to the ways in which modernity enacts violence, including through developmentalism and capitalism.

Central to my argument that peace-building creates new formations of response to domestic violence are relationships of care, obligation, and mutual need within organically formed ‘communities’. In this sense, community is not the object of my study, nor do I suggest that *bounded* communities of “South Asians” or “Muslims” exist. These social networks of intimacy offer unique pathways for alliance building across sites of difference (Chavez 2013; Albrecht and Brewer 1990). The example set by peace-builders in Hyderabad and Seattle suggests the possibility of realizing social justice through compassion, love, and interdependency (hooks 2000a, 2003; Smiley and West 2012).

My focus on peace-building also intentionally considers domestic violence from the perspectives of those who organize against it, rather than featuring survivors’ stories of abuse. This frame dismantles perpetrator-victim dichotomies and places intimate gender violence firmly in the realm of the social. While it is vital to listen to the voices and experiences of survivors of violence, only considering the ‘lessons learned’ from individual or even aggregated cases of domestic violence primarily provides insight into the dynamics of abusive relationships, and only a limited view of how both abusive and peaceful intimate relationships are situated within social networks, political systems, and economic inequalities.

Collaborative, Transnational Feminist Praxis

My argument emerges from five months of field research in Hyderabad in 2013 and six months in Seattle in 2013-14. I examined narratives and practices of community-based response to domestic violence within marginalized Muslim communities in Hyderabad, and South Asian Muslim communities in the Seattle area. I conducted institutional ethnographies (D. E. Smith 2005) with three nongovernmental organizations, all of which advocate against gender violence and work toward gender equity and social justice. I partnered with two organizations in Hyderabad – Old City Women’s Resource Center (OCWRC), which is over a decade old and operates primarily in the Old City with a small staff of about 20; and Healthy Families (HF), which is a relatively new, quickly growing NGO with over 80 field level staff and about a dozen managers, operating in four *basti*, or settlement, areas scattered across the city.³ In their anti-violence praxis, these organizations approach gender violence as embedded within complex and intersecting social institutions, including family, kinship and community networks, state bureaucracy and legal infrastructure, and labor markets (see Kabeer (2005) for a typology of social institutions and relevance of intersectional institutional analysis). OCWRC and HF’s varied narratives and programs emerge from distinctive organizational histories and varying degrees of investment in the labels of “feminist,” “women’s movements,” and “activism”. While OCWRC claims these labels to a greater degree, they also invest in the language of women’s empowerment and rights and family counseling that are used by HF. The HF founders distance their organization from labels of activist and ‘women’s organization’ due to their frequent encounters with both men and women’s anxiety around these terms and the divisiveness they

³ As with individuals’ names, these organizational names are pseudonyms.

invoke. My analysis employs all of these terms to map the intentional contributions of both organizations to social change aimed at mitigating (and eventually ending) many forms of violence in Muslim women's lives. Despite their differences, both organizations project narratives that locate women's vulnerability to intimate violence in Hyderabad as closely linked to economic inequality and structural violence.

In Seattle, I collaborated with (API) Chaya,⁴ an organization I had worked with for ten years when this research began in 2013. API Chaya serves South Asian and Asian Pacific Islander communities, working with survivors of violence, families in crisis, and their wider communities to contest domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Since 2011, I have worked most closely with API Chaya's Peaceful Families Taskforce, a program serving local masjid and Muslim⁵ communities, drawing upon Qura'nic family models and ideas of

⁴ I use this format for the organization's name at times when I am referencing my history with their work because originally, I volunteered with Chaya, an organization serving South Asian communities. In October 2011, after some months of discussion, Chaya officially merged with the API Women and Family Safety Center, a similarly sized, community-based Seattle organization working on gender violence issues and serving Asian Pacific Islanders in the area. I continue to work most closely with staff who began as Chaya volunteers or staff and serve South Asian and/or Muslim communities. I use the organization's name with the express permission of the Executive Director and after presenting information about my proposed research to the full staff. This difference from Hyderabad reflects my longer term relationship of trust with API Chaya and honors our co-production of knowledge. This does not mean that I devalue my research partnerships with OCWRC or HF. However, some of the field staff at these organizations expressed a desire for maximum anonymity. And regardless, without their deeper input through co-authorship, I would not feel ethically comfortable naming these organizations. All quoted staff and volunteers with API Chaya remain anonymous (through the use of pseudonyms), with the exception of the co-authored section of Chapter 5, written with Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi.

⁵ Masjid is an Arabic word, also used in Urdu, meaning 'mosque' or a Muslim place of worship. I reference both masjid and Muslim communities here because the program works through these places of worship and their leadership, but also reaches out to people identifying as Muslim (who may not attend a particular masjid) through volunteers who are part of those social networks, as well as through networks cultivated by (API) Chaya and PFT's over ten years of community mobilization work.

peace and mutual respect to promote peace-building within families and communities. Similarly to my analysis of OCWRC and HF, I at times employ analytical concepts and labels – like “feminist” – that API Chaya’s self-descriptions do not employ.⁶ The reasons for avoiding the language of feminism at times, varies for API Chaya, but includes their deep investment in intersectional analysis of (anti-)oppression that does not ignore racist, homophobic, ableist, or xenophobic violence or subsume these within struggles against patriarchy. The work of all three organizations – OCWRC, HF, and API Chaya – is described in greater detail in Chapter 2, “Striving Toward a Feminist Praxis,” where I explore my own long-term (and ongoing) process of building allyship with API Chaya and of operationalizing a collaborative feminist praxis in conducting research about and with anti-violence movements led by immigrant women, women of color, and/or Muslim women.

My feminist praxis (Visweswaran 1994; England 1994; Swarr and Nagar 2010; Sandoval 2000; L. T. Smith 2012) centralized the perspectives of front-line anti-violence workers (Wies and Haldane 2011), highlighting their *theoretical* insights, which emerged at intersectional sites of struggle (hooks 1984, 1997; Crenshaw 1991) and offered rich analysis (Richa Nagar 2015). I engaged in participant observation at all the organization’s offices and events, and analyzed the text of written manuals, brochures and other program materials. In Hyderabad, I invited all staff to participate in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, but interviewed only those who showed no hesitation in participating.⁷ I interviewed a total of 49 NGO staff and 7 public officials. In

⁶ My one-on-one conversations with staff members do reveal investments in the term and open use of it, as was also the case with OCWRC.

⁷ Interviews were conducted in English, Urdu and Hindi. A research assistant provided support with interviews and transcriptions. Documents examined were originally written in English, Urdu and Hindi.

Seattle, I interviewed 20 current and former NGO staff and volunteers⁸ and 6 public officials.

Throughout the chapters that follow I intersperse direct quotations with stories and events recorded in my field notes.

The Global-Intimate of Gendered Violence

Feminist praxis draws attention to the interplay of the everyday and the structural, of ‘the home and the world’, of the personal and the political. A transnational, collaborative approach reveals the inadequacies of binaries that divide private from public, as well as the insufficiencies of socially constructed scales that neatly divide place and space and presume siloed forms of social and political life within such imagined demarcations. My work points to the ways in which binaries and scales both fail us analytically *and* do political work in the world - too often becoming tools of power and domination that divide and rank human beings by gender, race, class, religion, caste, culture, and/or place of origin. My analysis centers relationality and interconnection as a means of “step[ping] out of hierarchical ontologies of scale or frameworks of micro/macro or the general and specific” (Pratt and Rosner 2012, 2) and working to understand the ‘messiness’ of the everyday *without* imposing a disciplining order on the complexities therein. Just as I critique hierarchies of knowledge production and theory that position ‘Western liberal modernity’ as the universal good, I also resist the re-production of such dominance through paradigms of theorizing that seek tidy frameworks to tame the chaos of the everyday. Divisions of home and public, of local and global, and of West and East emerge from such ordered accounts of social, political and economic life. Instead, I centralize ‘intimacy’ in

⁸ I reference NGO staff and volunteers as a broader category. A majority of these participants are staff at my three partner organizations, but a handful worked for other anti-violence NGOs in Hyderabad or Seattle.

my analysis as “potentially and productively disruptive of the geographical binaries and hierarchies that often structure our thinking” (Pratt and Rosner 2012, 2). And I bring intimacy into conversation with the global by theorizing everyday experiences of structural processes. I draw upon intimacy “both as a subject and as an analytical rubric” (A. Wilson 2012, 31) to understand the ‘disorderly’ processes of peace-building imagined and enacted by Muslim women, which feature “unruly” (Das Gupta 2006) and sometimes contradictory practices that reveal the *uncontained* violence of liberalism and modernization for othered, dehumanized subjects. These peace-building processes both reject and sometimes must draw upon state interventions; they challenge religious and regional patriarchies even as they draw strength from religious teachings and work to incorporate men in anti-violence efforts; and they recognize and respond to many sources of violence in women’s lives (including structural forms that men in their families and communities also experience).

As a participant in and a critical analyst of social movement activism against intimate gender violence, I extend intimacy beyond its association with romantic or familial relationships to also consider the range of intimate relationships that anti-violence movements both rely upon and cultivate. In this sense, attention to intimacy makes visible the interdependencies of social life as potentially powerful tools of social change. Feminist care ethics offers a frame for critically engaging with such relationships of care – for understanding the ways in which care and caring labor are raced, sexed, and gendered (Nakano Glenn 2010) and for thinking through the sociality of care in relation to political-economy. Care ethics articulates a relational social ontology (Robinson 2005; Lawson 2007a) as a lens for exploring both the substance and the politics of care work and care relationships. In a broad sense, this means “understanding our world in terms of the connections that bind us together” (Lawson 2007a, 4–5), and recognizing

that both our world and our ways of knowing the world are always “communally wrought” (Mohanty 2003). It also raises *responsibility* as a consequence of human interconnection (D. Massey 2004; M Sparke 2000; Matthew Sparke 2007).

My work extends this analysis of care and responsibility to encompass the caring labor of social movement actors who are embedded in extended kinship and social networks, and within organizational ‘cultures’. This embeddedness shapes their ability to work against violence and to labor for peace, as their relationships and obligations of care create possibilities for transformative social change separate from state interventions. Muslim women organizing in Seattle and Hyderabad understand the ways in which women’s caring labor is or can be exploited, in both ‘private’ and ‘public’ settings. Thus, while I draw upon feminist theorizations of intimacy and care ethics to reflect the complexities of social relations and modes of resistance revealed by my empirics, I do not romanticize the intimate as a site of resistance or of care. As Pratt and Rosner (2012) argue, intimacy is “equally caught up in relations of power, violence, and inequality and cannot stand as a fount of authenticity, caring, and egalitarianism” (3). Keeping this in mind, I explore the ways in which strategies of intimate peace-building simultaneously resist interlinked forms of violence in Muslim women’s lives by taking seriously the radical potential of caring relationships built upon and maintained through dialogue, obligation, compassion and interconnection.

Bringing feminist care ethics into this conversation about new trajectories of response to intimate gender violence also serves to de-center global feminist “human rights regimes” (Grewal 2005) from their predominance as *the* ethical paradigm for contesting violence against women within and across national borders (Robinson 2005; Robinson 2011). Grewal (2005) defines human rights regimes as “the networks of knowledge and power that inserted these

discourses [of human rights and women's rights as human rights] into geopolitics" (126) and discusses their emergence as an ethical paradigm and a "normalizing technology" of a "global/transnational civil society" (124), within which "liberal feminist subjects" (125) attempted to assert and extend their 'freedom'. While the organizations I partnered with in Hyderabad centralize 'women's rights' in their broad framing of women's empowerment and anti-violence work, their daily practices and strategies of action operationalized this idea beyond liberal feminist calls for government action and protections. Rather, they integrate rights-claims within peace-building work that employs multiple frameworks (i.e. legal, familial, religious) to construct peacefulness as inclusive of 'women's rights' to mutual respect and care (including economic livelihood, education, and health care). This approach allows for resistance of domestic of violence together with resistance to other forms of systemic violence, such as Islamophobia and poverty.

In this sense, feminist geographers juxtaposition of the intimate and the global (Mountz and Hyndman 2006; Pratt and Rosner 2012) intertwines analysis of the inter-personal with that of the systemic. As Pratt and Rosner (2012, 3) write: "Intimacy does not reside solely in the private sphere; it is infused with worldliness". Lowe (2015) offers an insightful extension of the intimate into the geopolitical, suggesting that to understand the inheritances of colonialism and slavery (one of which is contemporary liberalism), we must recover the intimacies and interconnections (of continents, imperialism, and liberalism) from the obscurity produced through the systematic erasure of practices and ideologies inconsistent with the promises of freedom, choice, and equality foundational to European liberalism. She deploys "the intimacies of four continents" to examine "the often obscured connections between the emergence of European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade,

and the East Indies and China trades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries” (Lowe 2015, 1).

These more recent explorations of the global-intimate have a long history in the critical scholarship and activism of post-colonial, transnational, and U.S. women of color feminisms, including Lowe’s own early work (1997). In challenging the reproduction of dominance in middle-class, white, Western feminism through universalizing discourses of ‘sisterhood’ that depoliticized many women’s experiences of a “matrix of oppression” (Hill Collins 1990), these overlapping fields of feminist theory have exploded earlier notions of intimacy as a secluded sphere of gender and sexuality (Domosh and Seager 2001). Foundational works collecting U.S. women of color’s artistic, activist, and theoretical engagements with trauma and resilience – such as “The Combahee River Collective Statement” (Combahee River Collective 1983), *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983), and *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo caras* (Anzaldúa 1990) – offer heart-wrenching, yet inspiring insights into the significance of intimacy for understanding wide-ranging systems of violence and oppression. More recent interventions deepen and extend this work. Andrea Smith (2005) lays bare the un-settling realities of the foundation of the U.S. nation-state through a genocide predicated upon sexual violence, and the continuation of these relationships of violence and erasure through the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands and startlingly high rates of violence against Native American women.

Post-colonial and transnational feminisms reveal the relevance of intimacy within border-crossing epistemologies (M. J. Alexander 2006; M. J. Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Grewal and Kaplan 1994). For example, Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) emphasize border-crossing as the active and persistent encounter with difference, referencing both the traversal of nation-state

boundaries and the boundaries of social collectivities. This animates much transnational and postcolonial feminist analysis and practice concerned with critiquing and undoing hegemonic power structures that are both globally and locally constituted, discursively and materially manifest (Mohanty 1991, 2003a, 2003b, 2008, 2011; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Ramamurthy 2000, 2003; Grewal 2005; Joseph et al 2005; Swarr and Nagar 2010; Abu-Lughod 1998, 2001, 2002; McClintock et al 1997; Mani 1993; Sundar Rajan 1993).

Intersectionality

These modes of feminist theorizing hinge on an understanding of power as relational and intersectional. Intersectionality describes the multiple (and dynamic) axes of power and difference simultaneously experienced and embodied by subjects. The term emerges from anti-racist feminist analyses of domestic violence – originally coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to “map the margins” of violence against women and to recover Black women’s experiences from their “relegation to a location that resists telling” by feminist and anti-racists struggles being waged in “mutually exclusive terrains” (Crenshaw 1991, 1242). A rich body of feminist scholarship continues to elaborate, contest, and evolve this concept (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Fenstermaker and West 2002; Swarr and Nagar 2003; Burman 2003; McCall 2005; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Bredstrom 2006; Mehrotra 2010; Dhamoon 2011; Purkayastha 2012). This scholarship on intersectionality is indebted to U.S. women of color theorizations of power, privilege and oppression, which in many cases also actively engaged sexuality and queer identity in theory making that does not always employ the term ‘intersectionality’ (hooks 1981; hooks 1989; hooks 1990; hooks 2000b; Dill 1983; Dill 1979; Lorde 1984; Anzaldúa 1987; Christian 2007; Hill Collins 1990; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Fine et al. 1997). More

recently, feminist geographers have elaborated the spatial dimensions of intersectionality in relation to identity, migration, social movement struggle, and labor (Valentine 2007; Peake 2009; Sangtin Writers 2009; McDowell 2008; Nightingale 2011).

Research on gender in South Asia also addresses multiple axes of identity and experience, in relation to cultural and political shifts at national and global scales (A. Rao 2003; Oza 2006; Lukose 2009; Nightingale 2011; Perera-Mubarak 2013). This emphasis on the intersectionality of subjects' lives and of the lived world extends to studies of **sexualities** (Mohamed 2005; J. Sharma and Nath 2005; Srivastava 2004; N. Menon 2007; Nair and John 1998), **queer identities and activism** (Dave 2012; Arondekar 2009; M. Sharma 2006; G. Reddy 2005; Narrain and Bhan 2005), **caste** (Chakravarti 2003; Dirks 2001; Pandian 2009; A. Rao 2009), **class** (Fernandes and Heller 2006; Herring and Agarwala 2008; Baviskar and Ray 2011); and **religion** (Hasan 1998, 2014; Hasan and Menon 2004, 2005; Jeffrey et al 2008; S. Banerjee 1999; Sikata Banerjee 2005; Bachetta 2001; Sarkar 2001). Other studies draw attention to the complex identities and inequalities in diaspora communities (Women of South Asian Descent Collective 1993; Dasgupta 1998; Rana 2011; C. Reddy 2011; Purkayastha 2010, 2012).

Intimate Gender Violence in Diverse South Asian Communities

Many of the feminist theorizations of intersectionality and complex inequalities cited above emerged, in part, from research on domestic violence and sexual assault within diverse communities. Feminists studying gendered and sexualized violence in India consistently draw attention to the intersections of caste, class, and religion with gendered victimization (R. Kumar 1993; Karlekar 1998; Magar 2001; T. K. Menon 2003; Nayak 2003; Bhattacharya 2004; Kannabiran 2005; S. Krishnan 2005; Suneeta Krishnan 2005; Suneetha and Nagaraj 2010).

Critical analyses of regional patriarchies (Kabeer 2005) also emerges in this literatures. The complexities of domestic violence within joint families, where the figure of the mother-in-law looms as an agent of violence, shatters assumptions about a male monopoly on intimate violence. As Sangari puts it, "...that women can be active agents in inciting and inflicting violence, suggests the obvious: that patriarchies are not the rule of men over women but systemic structures. A simplified conflation of (a singular) patriarchy with male domination unfortunately still underwrites most analyses of violence against women" (2008, 3). My findings in Hyderabad demonstrate the limitations of singular or simplified notions of patriarchy, as Muslim women narrate the intersections of patriarchies with religion and class, and pursue resistance strategies that involve entire families and community-based organizing.

In the U.S., research and story-telling around South Asian American women's experiences of abuse also draw attention to the intersections of such violence with immigration status, linguistic diversity, religion, caste, class, and sexuality (Women of South Asian Descent Collective 1993; Abraham 1995; Abraham 2000; Dasgupta 1998; Dasgupta 2007; Sahota 2006; R. Bhuyan 2008; Ahmed, Reavey, and Majumdar 2009). As immigrants and people of color in the U.S., South Asian American women have also allied their analysis of intersectional violence with parallel work in these broader communities (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Sullivan et al. 2005; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006; Lockhart and Danis 2010; Fineman and Zinsstag 2013). For South Asian Americans, diversity of experience and the dynamic nature of familial and kinship relations, mean that subjects' agency is not always transparent and forms of resistance can vary significantly even *within* categorizations, such as 'Pakistani Muslim American' (Chaudhry 1998; Hasnat 1998; Islam 1998).

My analysis builds upon the intersectional and relational analysis of intimate gender violence pioneered by U.S. women of color, postcolonial and transnational feminist scholars and activists. I work both to deconstruct categories of the “victimized Muslim woman” or “violent Muslim man” and to *construct* a picture of the active role of marginalized women in peace-building, drawing from the alternative narratives of frontline workers creating new intimate geographies of peace.

Structural Violence

“...exploring the relationships between different forms of violence, looking at the pattern and structure of violent acts, questioning the distinctions between so-called private and public violence, between modernity and tradition, between one’s ‘own’ women and ‘other’ women, within the parameters of the current political economy may help to rethink the ‘national’ and ‘regional’ boundaries of gendered violence” (Sangari 2008, 2–3)

Indian feminists have long since linked forms of gendered violence and vulnerability across the global and the intimate and the so-called public and private spheres (R. Kumar 1993; Gandhi and Shah 1992; Gangoli 2007; Kannabiran and Menon 2007), and drawn out the systemic and institutionalized forms of oppression (in relation to gender, sexuality, caste, class, and religion) that often play out brutally upon women’s bodies (Kapadia 2002; A. Rao 2003; Das 2006; Kapoor 2007; Irudayam, Mangubhai, and Lee 2011). The activism and scholarship of South Asian American women makes similar linkages to structural forces that shape intimate violences (Das Gupta 2006; Rudrappa 2004). This adds to the literatures described above, which together prefigure my theorizing of the specific forms of structural violence shaping response to domestic violence by women’s organizations in Hyderabad and Seattle.

In articulating “Feminist Perspectives on Structural Violence,” Anglin writes:

“Through structural forms of violence persons are socially and culturally marginalized in ways that deny them the opportunity for emotional and physical well-being, or expose them to assault or rape, or subject them to hazards that cause sickness and death.” Structural violence is the “net result” of practices that discipline, categorize, and exclude and “is normalized and accepted as part of the ‘status quo,’ but is experienced as injustice and brutality at particular intersections of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, gender, and age” (Anglin 1998, 145–46).

Explaining how structural violence hides in plain sight through the kind of normalization Anglin references, Farmer draws out the embodied experiences of poor men and women in Haiti to “illustrate some of the mechanisms through which large-scale social forces crystalize into the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering” (1996, 263). My own theorization, emerging from my empirical findings in Hyderabad and Seattle, finds structural violence operating through regional patriarchies that intersect with uneven development and geographic exclusion, Islamophobia, and state structures of ‘security’ and ‘protection’ (i.e. counter-terrorism and response to domestic violence and sexual assault). The effects of these structures can be witnessed in the significant limitations on women’s access to quality education, health care, and work; in heightened risk of arrest, detention, and police violence; in substantively reduced rights-bearing capacity; and in increased vulnerability to intimate violence.

In this way, my analysis of structural violence builds upon my critique of culturalism. Exposing the politicization of culture in discourses of violence against women in non-Western places, I then lay out the ways in which structural forms of violence showcase the widespread use of legitimated state violence against marginalized subjects as central to the establishment of “freedom” (for some) by the modern nation-state (C. Reddy 2011). Imperial histories undergird this form of Western liberal modernity, within which “the modern distinction between definitions of the human and those to whom such definitions do not extend is the condition of

possibility for Western liberalism, and not its particular exception” (Lowe 2015, 3). Feminist critiques (and re-visioning) of “development” also inform my theorizing of the violence of modernity (Beneria 1981; Sen and Grown 1987; Mohanty 1991; Kabeer 1994; Kabeer 2005; Kapadia 2002; Klenk 2004; Roy 2010). But my comparison upsets the binary of “developed” and “undeveloped,” and rather than attempting to re-assert that frame, I explore similar questions – around women’s empowerment, political rights, state complicities in the (re)production of inequalities, and the ‘right’ to live without violence or suffering – through critical analysis of Orientalism, imperialism, and nationalism (Jayawardena 1986; Sunder Rajan 1993, 2003; Sinha 2006; Lewis 1996; Said 1979). I explore the ways in which women’s everyday, intersectional lives, and their resistance to intimate and structural violences, challenge the culturalist assumptions underlying the progress narratives deployed by development institutions.

Following Chakrabarty, I insist that “...no human society is a *tabula rasa*. The universal concepts of political modernity encounter pre-existing concepts, categories, institutions, and practices through which they get translated and configured differently. If this argument is true of India, then it is true of any other place as well, including of course, Europe, or broadly, the West” (2007, xii). My research is therefore interested in excavating the so-called modernity of the U.S. as much as it is interested in “development” in India, or how migratory bodies and cultures encounter notions of modernity and development as they translate their lives and communities in relation to old and new institutions, nation-states, and social formations. Scholars like Inderpal Grewal (2005) have demonstrated that we can learn much about the production of ‘American’ culture and nationalism from close examination of diasporic communities living in the U.S. and from examination of their ‘homelands’ (Visweswaran 1994).

In my analysis, structural violence is the connective node between disruptions of culturalism and the pedagogic potential of Muslim women's peace-building work for theorizing power, violence, and the active production of peaceful social relations. Structural violence is both what is covered over by culturalist accounts of violence against Muslim women and evidence that Muslim women's lives are significantly impacted by inequalities of class, race, and religion (Abu-Lughod 2013). Denouncing "the tendency...to confuse structural violence with cultural difference," Farmer asserts that:

"Abuses of cultural concepts are particularly insidious in discussions of suffering in general and human rights abuses more specifically; cultural difference is one of several forms of essentialism used to explain away assaults on dignity and suffering in general...Such analytic abuses are rarely questioned, even though systemic studies of extreme suffering would suggest that the concept of culture should have an increasingly limited role in explaining the distribution of misery" (Farmer 1996, 278).

Instead, Abu-Lughod, Farmer and others suggest that political economy provides greater insight into 'distribution of misery' and the intersectionality of injustice and brutality. "Simultaneous consideration of various social 'axes' is imperative in efforts to discern a political economy of brutality" (Farmer 1996, 274). This attention to systemic violence also parallels feminists calls for greater attention to the political economy of intimate abuse (Adelman 2004) and intimate peace (Brickell 2015). As Adelman (2004, 45) explains:

"A political economy of domestic violence...reveal(s) the intersection between domestic violence and (1) the organization of the polity, (2) the arrangement of the economy, and (3) the dominant familial ideology expressed normatively through state policies. The combination of these components makes visible the articulation between domestic violence and an often invisible set of conditions in US society – structural inequality as shaped by 'family values' and the logic of state-economy relations."

Adelman's analysis reveals that a political economy of domestic violence is not about correlating domestic violence and poverty, or suggesting that poor people are prone to intimate violence. Rather, it reveals the structural factors that underlie intimate abuse, at the same time that it makes visible "the battering state," in the particular context of U.S. political-economy, as predisposed to a status quo of domestic-violence-as-usual. Similarly, my analysis of the articulation between structural violence and intimate gender violence in Muslim women's lives in Hyderabad and Seattle does not suggest a correlation between being poor and being violent [nor between being an immigrant and being violent, or being a Muslim and being violent]. Rather, my empirics expose the operation of structural forces that produce brutality and suffering (that is, *violence*) in the lives of marginalized Muslim women and men. My findings also demonstrate an understanding among anti-violence workers of the ways in which such structural violence heightens women's vulnerability to intimate abuse.

As a connective node, structural violence serves as an illustration of the multiple forms of violence that Muslim women resist simultaneously with their work to end intimate abuse. While I heed Farmer's warning not to valorize resistance to systemic violence in such a way as to downplay the significance and durability of the suffering produced by structural inequalities, I also follow the lead of women of color and post-colonial feminists scholars and activists who point to resistance movements to more deeply theorize the institutionalization of inequalities and legitimization of violence against marginalized peoples, as well as for alternative visions of nonhierarchical social relations. The women that I have worked with to produce this analysis also require representation beyond their relationships to violence and marginality – and in fact even attention to peace-building cannot capture their courage and vision as agents of social change. But this is a good starting point.

Women's Movements and Peace-Building

“We must...ground our thinking about the meanings of freedom in the everyday lives of individuals, on the one hand, and the imperial politics of intervention, on the other. We will find that it is rarely a case of being free or oppressed, choosing or being forced. Representations of the unfreedom of others that blame the chains of culture incite rescue missions by outsiders. Such representations mask the histories of internal debate and institutional struggles over justice that occurred in every nation. They also deflect attention from the social and political forces that are responsible for the ways people live” (Abu-Lughod 2013, 20).

Long histories of women's movements in both the U.S. and India are documented in the post-colonial, transnational, and women of color feminist literatures described above. My work contributes to the ways in which such ‘theorizing from the margins’ (hooks 1984, 1990) intentionally decenters academic feminism and attends to social movement spaces as sites of theorizing that push feminist thinking forward. Often such spaces are (also intentionally) on the fringes of the academy and ‘intellectual’ conversations about gendered violence, yet they produce powerful accounts of the intersections of oppression and violence in everyday life (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006; Ochoa and Ige 2007; Bierria, Kim, and Rojas 2010; Kim 2012). The peace-building work of my partner organizations in Hyderabad and Seattle offers similarly powerful insights. These peace-building efforts contend with inadequate, callous, or violent state apparatuses by seeking alternative modes of responding to intimate violence (much as organizations like Incite! do). However, their experiences fill a gap in this literature and analysis around the role of religious teachings and religious community in violence response. Analyzing feminist discourses, including a common investment in secularism, Shaheed points out that:

“the public political nature of the women’s movement: the marked tendency to focus on national-level legal rights almost excludes women’s personal lives, where definitions of gender and attendant control mechanisms are experienced on a daily basis... Without women’s recorded narratives of their lives and of their relationships with religion, analysis has often conflated people’s experiences with the political use of religion in the public arena. But these two phenomena are not synonymous” (Shaheed 1998, 143).

My work builds upon the insights of Shaheed (1998) and S. Mahmood (2005), suggesting that Muslim women working in anti-violence movements in Hyderabad and Seattle do not understand religion itself as a primary source of oppression in their lives or a primary cause of violence against women. Extending this analysis further, I argue that these distinct women’s movements actually draw upon their faith to build ‘intimate peace,’ resisting multiple forms of violence simultaneously (intimate abuse, Islamophobia, economic inequality, etc.). My work advances critical geographies of peace (K. Sharma 2002; Hays-Mitchell 2005; Ring 2006; Stokke 2009; Koopman 2010; Williams and McConnell 2011; Loyd 2012; Megoran, McConnell, and Williams 2014), building upon the idea of ‘everyday peace’ (Williams 2015) to explore ‘intimate geographies of peace’ (Brickell 2015) within homes, families, and social networks. Unlike Brickell’s (2015) work, however, my empirics explore intimate peace-building forms that are de-linked from state mechanisms of response and reveal the ways in which such hopeful efforts hold particular significance for communities marginalized by religion, race, immigration status, and class.

These explorations of peace-building (as plural resistance), and of Muslim women’s agency in resisting both intimate and structural forms of violence, came into view through my comparative analysis of this work in Hyderabad and Seattle. The analytical purposes of that comparison are explored briefly below and within each chapter’s argument.

Revealing Disjunctures and Continuities through Comparative Analysis

“Today, to attempt a comparative analysis of gendered violence is already to enter pre-fabricated discourses marked by a global universalism in which all women are subject to violence (this runs the risk of biological reduction), a regional particularism that draws a country’s cultural or religious ‘profile’ (this can deteriorate into culturalism), and national comparison that makes a merit/demerit list of countries (this can renew colonial classification)” (Sangari 2008, 18).

While there is a real risk of reproducing essentialized, culturalist, or neocolonial discourses through the comparative analysis of gendered violence in different countries (as Sangari notes), the methodology of the comparison plays a significant role in the ability of the resulting analysis to navigate the “prefabricated discourses” that universalize women’s experiences. For example, innovating the particular approach of “connective comparison” in their collaborative analysis of ‘the modern girl around the world,’ Weinbaum, Thomas, Ramamurthy, Poiger, Dong and Barlow (2008) work to “decenter the idea of Western modernity through treatment of multi-faceted linkages – ideological, aesthetic, and material – among the locales in which the Modern Girl emerged” and examine “how people in different contexts understood the Modern Girl as *modern*” (7). My cultivation of a critical transnational feminist praxis (Swarr and Nagar 2010) through collaborative work in Seattle and organizational partnerships in Hyderabad actually works to subvert the universalizing discourses Sangari calls out. I employ comparative methods to de-center Western modernity and pre-given ideas of which peoples and places are “developed” or “undeveloped” and to create a transnational frame within which I “bring ‘Third World’ questions to bear on ‘First World’ processes” (Roy 2003), meaning that when it comes to questions of rights, citizenship, interdependency, and (anti)violence, I take seriously the ways and which subjects located in the global South query processes or ideas

originating in or controlled by actors and institutions of the global North. My own transnational analysis extends Roy's use of this inverted framework to probe the 'First World' as a set of ideas and processes short-handed as 'modernity,' by posing questions raised by subjects in the so-called 'Third World', as well as by subjects who occupy the margins of 'First World' geographic spaces, marked by their 'Third World' heritage (Sandoval 1991).

By reading the Hyderabad and Seattle cases in relation to one another, I employ an epistemology of critical, relational comparison that works to decolonize discourses about domestic violence by calling into question the ahistorical, universalized truth claims of modernity (M. J. Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Pérez 1999; Sandoval 2000; Holmes, Hunt, and Piedalue 2015). Troubling a teleological narrative of modernity, this analysis challenges linear presumptions that 'more' modernity is better – that it is less violent, more humane, more orderly, more just, more wealthy, etc. I do not do this by simply 'including' women of color and postcolonial feminist analyses within white, Western frameworks (A. Smith 2004), but rather by *centering* the epistemological and ontological contributions of women of color, postcolonial, and transnational feminist theories and forms of activism. My relational, comparative analysis also reveals the kinds of violence – both rhetorical and material – produced by claims to modernity that excuse, elide, or legitimate structural inequalities.

As I elaborate the conceptual and empirical components of this comparison, I weave them together in each piece of the analysis. In each chapter, the relational analytic of my two field sites guides the empirical emphasis, at times foregrounding the empirical contributions from Hyderabad and at other times, from Seattle. Chapter 2, "Striving Toward a Critical Feminist Praxis," lays the contextual and epistemological groundwork for my primary arguments and contributions to key literatures. I provide more than an overview of my methods and

research design, elaborating on my collaborative praxis and how this shapes the substance of my project. I also unpack the different kinds of partnerships I formed with each of three women's organizations in Seattle and Hyderabad.

In Chapter 3, "Beyond Culturalism: Modernity and Domestic Violence," I compare Hyderabad/India and Seattle/the U.S., giving relatively equal weight to each site, in order to showcase the ways in which Orientalism operates through culturalist narratives and produces a 'violent modernity' for Muslim communities in both places. Here the transnational comparison serves to dis-locate non-Western, "foreign" cultures (Narayan 1997) as the primary seat of intimate gender violence by juxtaposing places typically considered to be differentially located on a linear progression toward a more plentiful and equal liberal modernity (with India of course 'lagging behind' the U.S.). I distinguish between dynamic understandings of culture (as complex and shifting formations of social networks, institutions, and norms), and *culturalism*, as a politicized use of culture within logics that homogenize and pathologize non-Western places and peoples as prone to violence, including and especially violence against women, due to their 'premodern' cultures (or cultural legacies). Drawing on the practices and insights of anti-violence movements in Hyderabad and Seattle, I point to the ways in which they disrupt culturalist narratives by assembling both cultural resources and cultural critiques in their contestation of intimate abuse and structural violence.

In Chapter 4, "Precarity, Vulnerability and Structural Violence," my relational comparison shows the ways in which economic privileges to some degree mitigate structural violence for South Asian Muslims in the U.S., but that systemic violence continues to shape Muslim women's lives in Seattle/the U.S. This reveals the importance of poverty as an axis of oppression, but also demonstrates that class does not tell the whole story of power, violence, and

oppression. Instead, the startling reality of the heightened precarity of Muslim lives in each place actually exposes the significance and insidiousness of reinvigorated forms of Islamophobia operative at local, national, and global scales. In this chapter, I foreground my findings from Hyderabad because they include this additional axis of structural violence through poverty, uneven development and geographic exclusion (which is less pronounced in the Seattle case). Here the narratives and work of women's collectives in both cities reveals the significance of structural violence in Muslim women's lives, countering culturalist narratives and raising critical questions about state (complicity in) violence and the limitations of modernist methods of anti-violence, particularly criminal justice systems.

Moving to Chapter 5, I compare Muslim women's peace-building work, foregrounding my research in Seattle and twelve year working relationship with API Chaya, due to the depth of this collaboration and my ability to continue to engage with their anti-violence work. I co-authored much of this chapter with two API Chaya (and PFT) colleagues, Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi. I then draw upon my findings from Hyderabad to query our analysis of PFT's peace-building in Seattle through 'organic community relationships'. This comparison reveals the ways in which notions of the modern (nuclear) family and appropriate modern home spaces may work to 're-privatize' domestic violence by removing intimate abuse from both the 'public' gaze of neighbors, as well as from the gaze of closer social circles and kinship networks positioned to intervene. I analyze peace-building in Hyderabad and Seattle as a form of plural resistance that contests both intimate abuse and structural violence. The innovate visions and practices of intimate peace-building at each site also offer alternative pathway for theorizing violence prevention and social change that does entirely not rely upon Western constructions of "justice"

and “freedom” and imagines ethical, caring relationships that are more than reactions to violence.

As a whole, my argument moves beyond accounts of Muslim women’s victimization (by their men, their culture, and/or their religion), and toward an intersectional accounting of intimate abuse and structural violence. My empirics reveal that feminist frustrations with inadequate and abusive criminal justice systems find a more hopeful footing in the grounds of peace-building laid out by women of color, immigrant and Muslim women.

Chapter 2: Striving Toward a Critical Feminist Praxis

“...we resist the inclination to position transnational feminisms as some teleological end result of progress narratives. Instead, we work within a crisis of representation that relies on critical transnational feminism as inherently unstable praxis whose survival and evolution hinge on a continuous commitment to produce self-reflexive and dialogic critiques of its own practices rather than a search for resolutions or closures – not to reproduce exercises in narrow ‘navel-gazing’ but always in relation to overlapping hegemonic power structures in multiple temporal and geographic scales”

~ Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar
(2010), pg. 9

In navigating this project, I have learned at least as much about the power dynamics of the research and writing process, as I have about the substance of the issues I explore (which of course, are also very much about power and process). In fact, I have come to understand the intricate connections between the two and thus to take seriously long-standing feminist calls for reflexivity and accountability in knowledge production processes. Perhaps it is often the case with dissertation research – that as junior scholars we are always learning simultaneously about practice and substance. Yet there is something lost by describing the relationship in such terms. Of course methods must fit research questions, and research practice significantly shapes findings. The critical feminist praxis I strive toward, however, demands more than a mere accounting of my methods and their fit to my questions and my findings. While on the whole of it this project is ‘mine’ (that is, I am primary author and interpreter of the complete data), referring to ‘my’ questions or ‘my’ findings is not a full representation of how I approach the project or how this research process played out. In fact, I formed the questions, and gathered and analyzed the findings, in close conversation with colleagues at anti-violence organizations in Seattle and Hyderabad. My own thinking and work is also embedded in a long-term relationship

– of service, learning, activism, collaboration and research – with the Seattle organization, API Chaya.⁹

In this chapter, I attend to the complexities and politics of collaborative feminist praxis that shape this project and my intellectual and political trajectories. I begin by framing the project, including research design and methods, and situating my own praxis in conversation with key texts and scholar-activists who have, and continue to, push critical scholarship forward through their analyses of power and privilege in knowledge-making. This frame provides some context for the collaborative processes I delineate through the rest of the chapter. Those processes start from a telling of my own story - of my entry into this work and the formation of the collaborative relationships that animate it. This history reveals the intimate linkages between research praxis and the research questions framing my project. Next, I lay out the particular forms that collaboration has taken in this project and link these to the goals of my research. I also clarify the particular definitions and meaning I attach to key concepts like service, alliance building, allyship, accountability, and reflexivity. Throughout, I explore the limits of striving toward a critical feminist praxis in Seattle and in Hyderabad. This chapter therefore makes transparent the relationships and practices that made my dissertation research possible as an attempt at ethical, feminist engagement in collective knowledge production. A critical feminist praxis requires a dynamic core – a significant degree of flexibility and of self-reflexivity. As

⁹ I first began volunteering (in 2003) with Chaya, a nonprofit, domestic violence advocacy organization working in South Asian communities in the Seattle area. In 2012, Chaya merged with the Asian Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center. The combined organization is now called API Chaya, and continues working in all communities formerly served by the separate organizations. While I was aware of the API Safety Center's programs and my own involvement in anti-violence movement in Seattle intersected a couple of times with their long-standing work, my history is with the organizational community of Chaya, and now API Chaya, and I do not have insider knowledge of the early organizing strategies and community-based work of the API Safety Center.

such, this is inevitably an incomplete process, an always evolving enactment that resists claims of authenticity or expertise, such as those that inject dominance and unexamined hierarchy into research relationships and totalizing knowledge paradigms.

Those relationships and practices also instill meaning in a theoretical sense, as collaborative praxis enlivens a central premise of my argument. Feminist praxis both evolves from and contributes to theory making within community-based advocacy organizations and social movements. Starting from the vantage point of intimate gender violence, and response to it, offers a detailed, yet expansive, lens on violence and power. Specifically, this lens brings into focus *intersecting and relational processes* that produce peace and violence at various scales (i.e. community, nation, globe). In describing my working relationships and collaborative practices, I establish the foundation for my argument that creating peace and preventing violence requires a serious effort from critical scholars at re-valuing the theoretical contributions of activists, organizers, and social service workers who grapple not only with the effects of power (i.e. providing direct support to survivors of violence), but in so doing, also engage in processes of meaning-making that critically theorize the causes of violence and the possibilities for peace. These insights are crucial. While many scholars focus primarily on the production of violence, these social movement actors and organizations often link their analyses of violence to theorizing peace and creating alliances for building and sustaining it.

Framing the Project & Process: Methods & Comparative Analysis

This project takes on a comparative analysis, between Seattle and Hyderabad, of the leadership of women's organizations in mobilizing response to domestic violence within Muslim communities subject to structural violence. In each city, I conducted institutional ethnographies

of community-based women's non-profit, non-governmental organizations. Following the work of Dorothy Smith (2005), I employ institutional ethnography as a feminist methodology interested in the everyday as a site of experiential knowing, within which many spheres of life collide (public and private; personal and political; civil and political society). To begin from and attend to 'the everyday' requires multi-scalar analysis (from the body to the globe and back again), as well as a blurring of the intellectually imposed separation between emotional and rational knowing, between the body and the mind (Longhurst 2005; Moss and Dyck 2003) and the resulting masculinization of academic and geographic knowledge (Rose 1993). In this way, my research design "grounds inquiry in the ongoing activities of actual people in the world...[and] aims to map the translocal processes of administration and governance that shape those circumstances via the linkages of ruling relations" (Holstein 2006, 293). In the less-charted territory of institutional and civil society governance in women's social movement work, this project investigates what it means to organize *both within and in resistance to* 'ruling relations' that structure the possibilities for both violence and peace in the lives of marginalized women and men. As such, I examine the activities that coordinate the "interconnected sites" of "people's everyday concerns, professional and administrative practice, management and policy making" (Holstein 2006, 293). For my project, these are activities linking people's everyday experiences of various forms of violence (intimate, structural, representational), with professionalized services provided by women's organizations, and with the bureaucratic and legislative functions of the state vis-à-vis "protecting" women from domestic violence (or protecting all citizens from terrorism). In addition to this focus on social movement institutions, my use of institutional ethnography also extends this methodology in critical development studies. Adding to the kinds of insights gained by Akhil Gupta's (2012) ethnography of state bureaucracy in India and

Ananya Roy's (2010) ethnography of the large scale microfinance institutions, this project highlights the relationships of subordination that become visible when we investigate the everyday operation of social institutions. My research, however, pushes institutional ethnography of development institutions toward a deeper examination of grassroots and community-based organizations and thereby reveals a powerful lens on power, oppression and violence.

In conducting these institutional ethnographies, I triangulated participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and textual analysis. My project employs this approach and set of practices as embedded within a collaborative feminist praxis, which acts as a broader framework or orientation toward knowledge making and community-engaged scholarship that centralize questions of power and politics and aims to interrogate 'the' researcher's assumptions and knowledge paradigms in equal measure with those of research 'subjects'. For this project, my participant observation occurred primarily in the everyday spaces of each anti-violence organization, including in their offices and at meetings conducted in the offices of their coalitional partners or in coffee shops. Additionally, I participated in a number of events, conferences, protests and vigils organized by the three primary organizations that are the focus of this research, as well as a few organized by organizations working on similar issues and partnering with API Chaya, OCWRC, or Healthy Families in various coalitions. These more formal spaces of organizational work were also complimented by informal settings within which I: built relationships; heard individual stories and organizational histories; helped to plan and coordinate various organizational projects or reports; and shared in the mundane practices and conversations of daily life (i.e. about the weather, traffic, food, etc.). Such informal spaces frequently included cars and buses, my colleagues' or my own home, as well as virtual spaces such as video calls. In addition to participant observation, I conducted interviews with past and

current staff at all three organizations, as well as with volunteers and affiliated community members, and with public officials working in criminal justice or human services offices at the city and county levels. Finally, I collected archival material ranging from government, development and NGO reports and publicity materials, to newspaper articles and web-based materials, such as social media posts and organizational websites.

In Hyderabad, my participant observation spanned 5 months (over two trips to the city in 2013) and I conducted a total of 56 interviews. In Seattle, my participant observation spanned 6 months¹⁰ and I conducted a total of 26 interviews (between April 2013 and January 2014). The larger number of interviews in Hyderabad resulted primarily from the fact that I conducted interviews at two different organizations, and that one of those had a rather large number of front-line ‘field staff’, and it was important to gather a significant sample of their perspectives. This larger sample of interviews also provided one means of partially balancing my shorter time in Hyderabad with the longer-term participant observation and access I had to API Chaya when I returned to Seattle for data analysis and writing.

My participant observation, interviews, and archival analysis focused on narratives – that is, how various actors and institutions present information and describe their understandings of the core issues my research questions aim to unpack. In the same way that institutional analysis and a focus on the everyday allowed me to access a more complex picture of power, oppression and resistance in contemporary efforts to address intimate gender violence, the use of qualitative methods in gathering and analyzing *narratives* reflects my interest in the ways in which such forms of violence are always already intricately enmeshed within social, political and economic

¹⁰ This period refers to the IRB approved research with API Chaya. As mentioned in footnote #1 and elsewhere, I have worked side by side with members of the organization for over ten years.

relations and processes. This project does not aim to count or quantify intimate gender violence, in large part because such an accounting creates understandings of intimate violence that are rarely benign and always incomplete. Purely quantitative studies reveal very little about the dynamics of abuse in intimate relationships, the contexts that produce vulnerability to violence, or what factors cultivate peace within families and homes (Piedalue 2015). By emphasizing the narratives of front-line anti-violence activists, I draw attention to both the everyday character of domestic violence and to active modes of resistance to interlinked forms of violence. I value the particularity and *subjectivity* of various actors' and collectives' understandings of (anti)violence as a means of accessing situated knowledges of what violence is, why and how it is perpetuated, and what kinds of frameworks hold the most promise for disrupting violent relations and building peaceful ones. Such "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988; Rose 1993) also works through questions that even careful counting cannot answer (Piedalue 2015).

My emphasis on intimate gender violence as embedded in formal and informal social relations also answers recent calls in feminist scholarship to attend to the evidence that social networks play a vital role in survivors' experiences of both abuse and exit from abusive intimate relationships (Goodman and Smyth 2011). My analysis centralizes institutional sites of anti-violence activism - that is, women-led nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations advocating for survivors of violence, which are themselves formalized but also based within the informal social networks of neighborhoods and communities they serve. Several factors contributed to the heightened visibility of broader social relations at these sites of advocacy and mobilization. First of all, as will become clear, in their analysis of power and violence, the organizations themselves place significant emphasis upon the social, political, and economic relations that shape women's lives, and that are infused with inequalities. Therefore, front-line staff often framed their

experiences with many individuals as representative of broader social contexts and lives (Wies and Haldane 2011). Second, the fusion of survivor and family support with community mobilization and education efforts, meant that all three organizations move back and forth between these two areas in their daily work, therefore often blurring the lines between particular cases and community social norms, as well as often relying up on existing social networks to support individuals and/or to do outreach work on gender violence issues.

Finally, through my participant observation and interviewing at these institutional sites, I came to understand the significant extent to which my collaborators at API Chaya, OCWRC, and Healthy Families were actually hybrid subjects. They represent the more professionalized perspectives of nonprofit staff members actively engaged in anti-domestic violence movements, and who share a certain degree of knowledge and epistemological grounding through their joint training in organizational approaches and analysis. Yet, they also represent the various perspectives of differentiated and complex subjects embedded in ethnic and religious community spaces, as they daily occupy diverse pockets of ‘community’ in their personal and professional lives. For example, in both Seattle and Hyderabad, many staff members attended faith-centers and/or occupied faith-based community spaces along with members of the communities they serve in their work. At times their social networks overlapped considerably with the survivors they served and people they worked with in educational and anti-violence organizing. In fact, in many cases, their ability to successfully accomplish their professional work *relied upon* their membership and daily involvement in ‘community’ spaces (i.e. neighborhoods, faith-centers, markets, etc.). Therefore, my institutional ethnography, centering the hybrid identities and perspectives of front-line workers in anti-violence movements, provides considerable access to meaning-making and practices of ‘community,’ as well as important insights into the

significance of social networks in the production, perpetuation, and disruption of intimate violence.

The perspectives and experiences of survivors of domestic violence are also vital for understanding all of these issues. My praxis, however, not only aims to value and centralize the perspectives of advocates and activists, but also intentionally seeks to avoid reproducing individualized accounts of abuse that overtly or inadvertently place the onus of responsibility for ending domestic violence on those who are surviving it.¹¹ I am interested in the contexts and social embeddedness of experiences of violence and resistance to it. This interest also intentionally seeks to re-examine the terms of responsibility for ‘ending’ violence. That is, my interest in the perspectives and story-telling of organizers, community members, and public officials involved in violence response aims to open a frame for thinking about anti-violence in the kinds of collective terms and framework often employed by immigrant and women of color community-based organizations (Holmes, Hunt and Piedalue 2015). Despite my interest in the broader social worlds of (anti)violence, I was not surprised that in the course of my research some participants chose to share their own experiences of domestic violence and how this shaped their work and their understanding of why violence happens and how it can be disrupted or prevented. Thus, stories of survival and experience of abuse do thread through the stories of individual advocates, counselors and activists. Similarly to the hybridity of subjects’ voices as both community members and NGO staff, these stories also blur the lines of social location within the realm of response to intimate gender violence.

¹¹ See Holmes, Cindy, Sarah Hunt, and Amy Piedalue, 2015, “Violence, Colonialism and Space: Towards a Decolonizing Dialogue.” *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14 (2): 539–70. On page 548, I describe the political nature of this choice in my dissertation work (which parallels that of Sarah Hunt, also described in this co-authored piece).

Uneven Research Relationships

My collaborative relationships and research practices varied quite significantly between my three organizational partnerships. I provide further detail of this variation throughout this chapter, as I elaborate the specific meanings of collaboration in my project. To begin with, the most significant difference between the partnerships I forged is that for one of them, in Seattle with (API) Chaya, a ten-year history preceded our research engagements. My relationships with both Hyderabad organizations - Healthy Families (HF) and Old City Women's Resource Center (OCWRC) – are relatively new. In spring 2013, colleagues working in the city introduced me to the work of each organization and then connected me with organizational staff during my first period of dissertation research in Hyderabad. Thus, in one sense, the variation (in collaborative practices and in access to information and histories) between Seattle and Hyderabad demonstrates the different stages of development of my working relationships with each organization. My residence in Seattle following my official 'data gathering' stage (from April 2013 to February 2014) meant continued in-person meetings and conversations with API Chaya colleagues through 2014 and 2015 – as we worked on the PFT community-based research project¹² and other organizational work, but also through the process of co-authoring chapter 5 with Sarah Rizvi and Farah Abdul. I maintained intermittent email contact with colleagues in Hyderabad, but at a distance from their busy day-to-day work, these communications have been

¹² This project is described in more detail later in the chapter, but is a separate collaborative research venture with API Chaya, which I have co-led since 2011. It has been very influential in my thinking and to the research contained in this dissertation, but it not the same project. My dissertation project takes up related, but separate research questions, and involved a separate process of interviewing.

more a means of maintaining connections rather than processing ideas together.¹³ The effect of my collaborations with (API) Chaya has thus been a longer-term and more in-depth access to the kind of ‘theorizing from the margins’ that I center in my analysis throughout this dissertation. The immediate welcome and openness with which I was received at Healthy Families and OCWRC facilitated a relatively quick entry into conversations about their own theorizing and response to complex formations of violence in Muslim women’s lives. But I also know that ten years from now, I will have much more to think on and say about, and *with*, this set of colleagues.

Despite the easier access to my collaborators’ analysis at API Chaya, I have resisted warping this project into a U.S.-first analysis within which diasporic modes of resistance to violence and oppression become a lens through which we might understand and improve upon such efforts based in India or across the global South. In the daily work of Hyderabad women’s organizations, I found many opportunities to “posing ‘Third World’ questions of the ‘First World’” (Roy 2003). In particular, I found myself asking: what modes and experiences of violence are masked by presumptions of ‘development’ or ‘modernity’? What is it about state formations of response to intimate abuse that link supposedly advanced judicial systems, like that in the U.S., with so-called “corrupt” state bureaucracies in ‘developing’ places like India? How do both similarities and differences between Hyderabad and Seattle call into question the ‘developed’, ‘modern’ status of the U.S.? And how might practices of everyday response within urban slums in Hyderabad demand a new accounting of collective responsibility for anti-violence

¹³ During an upcoming trip to Hyderabad, in March 2016, I hope to spend more in-depth time presenting my conclusions and ideas, based upon my earlier work with OCWRC and Healthy Families, in order to make these accountable to staff at each organization and perhaps to incorporate their critical analyses of those conclusions into any publications I write from the dissertation research in Hyderabad.

in the U.S. (or within more ‘modern,’ elite circles in India)? How might these Hyderabad practices of community mobilization reimagine the blurriness of private-public spaces and the ways in which hierarchies of place (developed/undeveloped) and of class (rich/poor) might mask intimate abuse in its more ‘civilized’ forms and settings? My comparative analysis of Seattle and Hyderabad thus evolved through an iterative process of asking questions back and forth between the two sites. This dialogue between sites opened up new questions, insights, and theoretical pathways.

In 2013, I spent the month of May in Hyderabad, visiting the NGO offices, meeting people there and seeking their input, as well as gauging their interest in my project. Combining this experience and input from Hyderabad, with my earlier discussions of the project with API Chaya staff in February and March of 2013, I proceeded to fully develop my research design. Initially, I conceived the project as multi-sited research, very conscious of the potential pitfalls of comparing violence against women in differently located South Asian Muslim communities, which might be *mis*-read as essentializing violence within the cultural and religious commonalities of the research communities.¹⁴ Following these initial conversations with activists and counselors working in anti-violence movements in each city, however, I recognized the real possibility for a more critical comparative analysis between these organizations and movements. Considerable variations distinguish the conditions of life for Muslim communities in Hyderabad

¹⁴ By looking at these two locations together, and particularly at Muslim communities at each site, I do not mean to fuel the misconception that rates of domestic violence are higher among Muslims, or among South Asian immigrants, or in India. While there is variation in available data, the majority of available statistics show little variation by religion in the U.S. or India, or by ethnic group in the U.S. The comparison does not, therefore, seek an ethnic, religious, cultural, or any other reason to explain some pattern of higher rates of abuse in the communities my research focuses on – as there is not evidence documenting such a pattern or connection between the two communities.

versus South Asian Muslim communities in Seattle (of state-society relations, citizenship rights, access to economic resources and opportunities, and formations of ‘family’ and ‘community’).

Yet, through the lens of anti-violence social movement emerged parallel struggles: with insufficient or abusive state mechanisms of response to intimate violence; with desires to ‘empower women as women’ while supporting their distinctive identities and experiences of intersectional oppressions; with efforts to work within and on behalf of communities not always willing or able to address domestic violence; and with imagining and actively working toward peaceful alternatives to a whole host of violent social relations, including domestic abuse.

My comparative lens took shape around three primary research questions. First, what are the conditions of modernity that we expect will mitigate violence? Why does ‘culture’ persist as an explanation for violence among certain groups? Second, How does response to domestic abuse take shape within Muslim communities facing various kinds of exclusions (i.e. based on religion, racialization, class status, gender, & age)? And third, How and why is ‘peace’ deployed as a response to domestic violence, or as a mode of violence prevention? Each of these questions grew out of my preliminary findings and experiences in both Seattle and Hyderabad, and offered a means of comparing the two sites without slipping into ‘culturalist’ explanations of intimate gender violence that blame some homogenized “South Asian” and/or “Muslim” culture for a phenomenon that is decidedly ‘cross-cultural’. All of these questions also require nuanced attention to and interrogation of social relations as they intersect with institutional structures and political processes, both within and beyond social movements.

Fictions, Failures, Feminisms

Grappling with the politics of this comparative work, and the potential consequences of my closer collaborative relationships in Seattle, I confront my own particular realities of what

Kamala Visweswaran (1994) draws out as the *fictions* and the *failures* of feminist research practice. First of all, Visweswaran offers both a troubling *and* liberating notion of ethnography as a fiction – a *partial* narration of the world that cannot hope to capture an objective (or even sufficiently complex subjective) reality. She writes: “...ethnography, like fiction, constructs existing or possible worlds, all the while retaining the idea of an alternate ‘made’ world. Ethnography, like fiction, no matter its pretense to present a self-contained narrative or cultural whole, remains incomplete and detached from the realms to which it points” (Visweswaran 1994, 1). This troubles my feminist ethical commitments – to collaboration, communally produced knowledge, action-oriented research (Swarr and Nagar 2010; Mohanty 2003; Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007) – because partiality and detachment suggest that despite one’s best efforts, there must always be voices, ideas, and everyday experiences left out. I struggle with *which ideas* I will inevitable fail to capture or *whose voices* I cannot access or include in my analysis and in the spaces of collective voice I have worked to create in this project. For example, my focus on organizational spaces limits my view of more informal spaces of meaning-making around and response to intimate and structural violence.

Visweswaran and many feminist scholars exploring these questions (England 1994; Staeheli and Lawson 1995; Richa Nagar and Ali 2003) also point to the way in which emphasizing this partiality and situatedness of all knowledge is a feminist intervention and a political act. Thus, while I take seriously the significance and meaning represented in all the narratives that flow through this project – those of my collaborators, interview participations, and those I have myself constructed – I also cannot claim that I have, or ought to, construct a totalizing narrative from these stories. The story that I tell in the following pages is a partial narrative, one which draws upon various (and sometimes contradictory) constructions of our

existing world and which is very much invested in imaginings of alternative constructions of everyday life and social relations.

The inevitable *failures* that accompany this project – including the small and large ways in which I have failed to fully enact the principles of collaborative praxis described below – become something other than blemishes on an otherwise perfect skin or the missteps of a junior scholar. Nor do they detract from the significance of my findings. Rather, my failures actively acknowledged, re-shape my collaborative feminist praxis and force me to continually work through and beyond my stubborn, desire to tell *the whole story*. Part of my internal struggle as a scholar-activist engaged in collaborative, cross-border research (the whole while steeped in my own privileges) is to grapple with these failures so that I might engage in the kind of “reconstituted feminist project” Visweswaran presents us. One in which “the practice of failure is pivotal,” and through which we must struggle, *not* to recuperate our failures as future successes, but instead to embrace, with all its discomfort, “the acknowledgement of failure through an accountable positioning” (1994, 99). So, while I seek to build alliances through dialogue and mutual respect and trust, I do not expect that my failures of the past will be ‘fixed’ or retroactively made successful through future engagements or improved collaborative processes.

Telling Feminist Stories

The research framework and methodologies described above emerged not only in real-time conversation with the organizations and individuals with whom I collaborated for this particular project. My approach and the ethical and political considerations centered within that approach grew out of much longer term relationships – to peoples, places, and social movements. My entry into this dissertation research follows a longer arc of engagement with anti-violence work in activist and academic spheres, and the histories of those engagements thread through this

project. My research questions and the theoretical fabric of my arguments emerge from and depend upon these relationships and histories. I include this foray into my own narrative in order to make myself visible not as the expert researcher, nor as the anxious, navel-gazing feminist scholar, nor to ‘authenticate’ my voice or my right to tell the set of stories that follow. Rather, as Claire Hemmings’ insists, “how feminists tell stories matters,” including or perhaps especially, how we tell stories about ourselves and about feminism (2011, 1). My own story shaped this project in significant ways, and those ought to be visible and open to interpretation and critique, alongside the stories I’ve curated of anti-violence activists and advocates in Seattle and Hyderabad. This imperative also arises from a critical engagement with my own positioning as a storyteller, which is not only a highly privileged one (as a white, U.S. born, professional class, straight, non-disabled, non-Muslim, cisgender woman), but also one that follows the kinds of histories of dogmatic and/or imperialist Western feminist storytelling that Hemmings seeks to demystify in order to think about feminist storytelling in new, radical ways (2011, 2).

My own narrative therefore serves three primary purposes as an entry point for the arguments that follow in chapters three through five. First of all, it places me squarely within this text, among the subjects and narratives that circulate through my analysis and arguments. Including my story acknowledges the continuing relevance of my positionality in this work, including the privileges of whiteness, advanced education, professional class status, and U.S. citizenship. My story and the privileges I embody are part of the dialogue of my research and writing processes (England 1994), and significantly impact the differential risk of my engagements with power as compared with many of my collaborators and research participants. Attention to my narrative also gives substance to the feminist narratives that drive my own identity and investment in this project, as the latter cannot be entirely disentangled from the ideas

generated in this text. Secondly, the history of my journey to this research is the ‘back story’ to the current collaboration I am engaged with at API Chaya. The trust and familiarity built up during previous years of volunteering with the organization substantially and legitimately influenced the willingness of current organizational staff to work with me on this project. And third, my own narrative also delineates the degree to which my understandings and theories of gender violence, power and oppression evolved not only in feminist classrooms, but were also shaped significantly by my experiences with and learning from (API) Chaya’s direct service and mobilization work.

Nearly fifteen years ago, in 2001, I began academic study in South Asian Studies and Women Studies as an undergraduate at the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle. In 2003, I started training and volunteering with non-profit organizations working to support survivors of intimate violence and to mobilize communities to end such violence. I first traveled to India that same year. During an initial three-month study abroad in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, and during five additional periods of study and/or research in India between 2003 and 2011, I moved between formal learning settings and community centers, women’s resource centers, and NGO offices. From the beginning of my engagements with issues of gender violence, power and oppression, the worlds of academia and activism were intertwined. In the years since, I have regularly crossed between the spaces of activism, organizing, and social service provision on the one hand, and those of academic institutions and scholarly training on the other.

During my participation in training for new Chaya volunteers in 2003, I had ample opportunity to connect their vision and work with the anti-racist feminist theories I was learning in Women Studies classrooms. This training featured workshops led by representatives from two other Seattle area nonprofits – the Northwest Network for Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and

Gay Survivors of Abuse (the Northwest Network) and Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), a black feminist organization that helped to found the Incite! collective of women of color against violence. Staff at both the Northwest Network and CARA were vital allies during Chaya's transition from an informal support network into a formal nonprofit organization in the mid-1990s and in fact Chaya's founders had modeled key elements of their work and organizational philosophy after these two organizations.

This was my first real introduction to a grounded and politicized concept of intersectionality. In reading and discussing early theories of intersectionality and interlocking oppressions forwarded by women of color, especially Black feminists such as bell hooks, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill-Collins, I had understood the political utility of a concept that attempted to make visible the complex identities and modes of oppression operating in women's lives, and the ways in which segmented analyses of power (i.e. as operating distinctly through patriarchy or through race) relegated women of color's experiences to an unintelligible space. When I began working with (API) Chaya, however, I began a decade-long (and on-going) process of learning what this all means 'on the ground', for individuals and communities subjected to multiple forms of power and oppression, and who experience and narrate these encounters in different ways depending upon their identities and social locations. Through these experiences I also learned about the limitations that privilege can place on one's view of the world – hiding from view the everydayness of oppressions.

In the first few years at Chaya, I had several roles – as an Advocacy Committee member, supporting the work of Chaya's advocates and their direct service work with survivors; staffing the Helpline, answering calls from participants, family or friends, and other service providers regarding Chaya services or specific work with individuals; compiling activist and academic

sources on domestic violence in diverse South Asian American communities; and assisting with administrative and fundraising work. In my discussion of the key elements of my feminist praxis below, I categorize these experiences primarily as service and mentorship – as volunteer work that I engaged in primarily to support the mission and daily operations of the organization, and through which I learned immensely about the issues that occupy this dissertation. I want to be clear, however, that while not overtly collaborative or research-focused, these years of service and mentorship laid a vital foundation – both for my current collaborations with API Chaya, and for my own becoming as a feminist person, scholar, and activist. My current processes of meaning-making around gender violence and response, though deeply engaged with the theory and empirics of this current project, are also built upon this foundation and infused with these early experiences.

My more recent work with API Chaya, beginning around 2011, links-up more directly with the current collaboration informing my dissertation research. Sarah Rizvi (who was an advocate at the time) and Farah Abdul¹⁵ (who was the Peaceful Families Taskforce Program Coordinator at the time) invited me to assist them with a new research project that the Peaceful Families Taskforce (PFT) was just beginning to plan. The PFT forms part of API Chaya’s community mobilization work, and specifically engages in education and awareness raising in Seattle area Muslim communities. In this work, the taskforce forms relationships with specific

¹⁵ I use Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi’s real names when discussing our collaborative work together, because they have offered their permissions to do so, and because they are also named co-authors of a section of this dissertation. I do not use any API Chaya staff members’ or volunteers’ names in relation to direct quotations or narratives in the body of the dissertation, and all public officials are referenced by their office of employment or position, but not by name. All names, including the organizations, have been anonymized for the Hyderabad research, because I did not have permission to use the organization’s names, and while some participants offered permission to use their names, it was not possible to do so without revealing an organizational affiliation and this made some field staff, who wished to remain completely anonymous.

masjids (or mosques) and masjid members, and creates educational materials that simultaneously draw upon Qur'anic models of peace and API Chaya's vision of how community members can best support survivors and respond to domestic violence. Since its founding in 2003, the PFT has been led by a part-time (API) Chaya staff member (or leadership was included in the full-time Community Mobilizer staff position), and then run primarily through the efforts and commitments of a core group of volunteers, a majority of whom were/are members of the same masjid communities that the program serves. When I became co-lead of the PFT community-based research project, 'The Role of Masjids in Building Peaceful Communities,' in 2011, the PFT core (including Sarah, Farah, and three longtime volunteers) had already sketched out their reasons for doing the research, what information they hoped to gain through it, and how they saw this serving both masjid communities and the future work of PFT with those same communities.

As co-lead of the research project (from February 2011 to August 2013, and May 2014 to August 2015), I have volunteered about 10-20 hours per week working closely with Farah on a range of tasks, including: research design and planning; application and modifications to the UW Institutional Review Board for human subjects research; multiple trainings, and then monthly meetings, with a team of volunteer interviewers; community outreach and interview participant recruitment; creating and updating publicity materials, including a research project website; conducting interviews; and coding and analyzing interview transcriptions. I will remain involved moving forward, with writing reports and articles on the research findings, and planning community 'report back' meetings to open conversations at masjids regarding the research results and future work together on violence response and prevention. This work is a mixture of administrative tasks and research responsibilities. As this is a community-based, *team* research project, each stage of the research work (from design and interviewing, to coding, analysis and

writing) involves (sometimes extensive) dialogue, group decision-making, and co-writing and group editing.

In the spring 2012, during a microseminar with Richa Nagar and Amanda Lock Swarr, I began to think more seriously about incorporating my work with API Chaya and PFT into my dissertation project. After first discussing the possibilities with Sarah Rizvi, with her support, I approached API Chaya's director and program managers about the idea of linking my dissertation research up with their work and our work together. We engaged in a critical dialogue about the possibilities, and fleshed out some steps and practices that would be necessary to the success of this new collaboration. I then later took these key points and a summary of the project's key interests to a full staff meeting for discussion and questions. Through this process, while many questions emerged, managers and staff present for these meetings expressed support.

My involvement with the Hyderabad women's organizations then formed in relation to this emergent project. One of the volunteer researchers on our PFT project visited Healthy Families while in Hyderabad for her own research, and altered me to their work and their peace-building focus (given the parallels she saw to PFT's work in Seattle). During my initial time in Hyderabad, I visited many of HF's *basti* centers and got to know their senior staff. HF is a newer organization, founded in 2011, by two non-Muslim women who were new to the field of anti-violence work. However, they hired several senior managers and counselors with long-standing histories of women's advocacy and peace-building in Muslim communities and empowered them to shape help shape the programs and to guide the field workers. HF then hires Muslim women who are part of the *basti* neighborhoods where they work to do the daily work of canvassing, initial counseling, awareness raising, and to visit schools and present on gender equity and

violence issues. This work stretches across several Hyderabad and employs a larger number of front-line field staff (in fall of 2013, this was at around 80 women between their four centers).

OCWRC, in contrast, was founded in 2002 and has a long history of embedded, if not uncontested, work in the Old City. The founder, Rabia, was born and raised in the Old City neighborhood where OCWRC's office is located, and though she now lives in a more middle-class area of the city, her family roots in this area are meaningful to her and their work. This in part accounts for OCWRC's focusing of their energy in the communities surrounding their office. They employ around 20 women from these same nearby neighborhoods, all but one of whom are Muslim. I was introduced to Rabia through an acquaintance at another city-wide women's NGO, and after an initial interview and visit to the OCWRC offices, Rabia quickly took me up on my offers of service work. As a result, I spent several days a week with her at the OCWRC offices or her home. Through these interactions I came to understand that while they do not often use the term, OCWRC takes a more explicitly feminist stance in their work, even as they also see and work to address other forms of inequality in addition to gender. Whereas Healthy Families distances their language and organizational character from 'activist feminist' approaches in favor of building peace, women's empowerment, and familial harmony through strategies intentionally meant to draw men into these processes by listening to them and trying to avoid making them defensive or fearful of their work. These varying formations of anti-violence movement, which are described in greater detail in the chapters that follow, each draw out some key practices and possibilities for transforming social relations of inequality.

Meanings and Practices of Collaborative Feminist Research

Building upon these brief histories of my engagements with API Chaya, OCWRC, and HF I move now to unpacking the key elements of collaborative praxis animating those

relationships: service, alliance-building, and accountability and reflexivity. While I take these themes up in separate sections below, there is considerable overlap between them in practice. As the following examples illustrate, none of these practices takes the same form in Seattle as it does in Hyderabad. There is significant variation across my experiences in the two cities, and across my relationships with the two different NGOs in Hyderabad.

Service

Service work begins from an interest in and commitment to the work of a particular organization or movement.¹⁶ Service plays a vital role as one *means of listening to and learning from 'on the ground' knowledges*, whilst working to build a reciprocal relationship with an organization or with individual actors within an organization or movement. Here I draw upon Laura Pulido's "FAQs for Scholar-Activism," (2008, 350-56) to insist that reciprocity cannot be determined by only one collaborator, and that university-based researchers must be especially careful not to presume what will be most helpful to their community-based partners. A parallel, and vital, concern for scholar-activists is how to refrain from being only a drain on staff time, or a distraction in the midst of the daily struggles of under-funded organizations and under-paid staff. As an entry point to alliance building, service requires that university-based scholars seek opportunities to reciprocate the contributions that community-based collaborators make to academic projects and in mutual research ventures. And yet, academic partners often assume that their expertise and skills as researchers are necessarily the most useful contribution they can offer. A service orientation upsets this dynamic, instead seeking a more humble entry point for university-based scholars, so that they might work with their partners to determine what

¹⁶ This investment in NGOs and their work does not mean, however, that I'm always 100% in agreement with their philosophies or practices, any more than I am with the academic institutions to which I am committed.

contributions each will make to establish a reciprocal collaboration. Inherited power relations between academic researchers and marginalized communities also often place a greater onus for accountability and reciprocity onto those researchers who occupy more privileged, ally positions (S. Hunt and Holmes 2015). This means that determinations of service needs and work must follow the lead of organizational staff or movement-based actors.

In my own experience, much like that described by Pulido (2008), organizations often find it most helpful, and least disruptive, to plug untrained persons into their administrative support work. Even for those of us with extensive training in the issues at hand, an organization may still need filing done and phones answered more than they need an additional person working directly with their programs and participants, or more than they need someone to conduct a workshop on research methods and design for their staff (though they may also appreciate this sharing of skills and knowledge). Of course all engagements in a collaboration will not be in service to the immediate needs of the community-based organization. However, a willingness to be in service to that organization or work is vital, as it also helps to upset the power dynamics between university based and community based research partners. As Trauger and Fluri (2014) write,

“Service research is a framework that identifies research participants as agents embedded in a landscape of power, within which the researcher is only one actor in the production of knowledge. Taking this place in the research process enables us to engage in collaborative projects while acknowledging that we occupy partial, active, and subjective positions in the research...Knowledge production becomes a collective and relational process, albeit fraught with conflict, unpredictability, and ‘indefiniteness’ (Prawat 1992), which make democratic or egalitarian processes and practices essential” (36).

In my praxis, I find this concept of ‘service research’ useful when paired with a basic understanding of service as any form of work that furthers the goals of the organization and/or

collaborative project and helps to create reciprocity amongst all partners. In Seattle and my longer-term work with API Chaya, service has been and remains foundational. Through volunteering I also formed relationships of trust, respect and friendship with a number of (API) Chaya staff members, which are crucial to the success of our current collaborations. This service orientation thus positioned me to take seriously the organization, and the broader anti-domestic violence movement, as a site of knowledge making, and my colleagues within these as knowledge and *theory* producers. My demonstrated commitment to the organization also allowed me access to and participate in critical conversations about the complex issues API Chaya staff negotiate on a daily basis, and the contradictions and conflicts that arise in that work. For example, this vantage point allowed me to see and understand the complex and varied reactions that API Chaya staff have to their organization's engagements with the criminal justice systems (CJS). As a participant in numerous trainings, a member of the Advocacy Committee at Chaya from 2003-2005, and an office volunteer over the years, I've learned immensely from feminist, anti-racist critiques of the prison industrial complex and the limitations and harm done by the CJS in survivors' lives and particularly in communities of color and immigrant communities. I've also been part of many informal conversations around the necessity of relying on the CJS at times – for survivors who need protection orders or want to press charges against their abusers. These internal conversations and debates shaped my own interests and fueled the framing of this dissertation research as a qualitative project interested in violence response, institutional practice, and community mobilization. The contentious question of inadequate and/or violent criminal justice measures remaining the primary mode through which both U.S. and Indian society 'respond' to domestic violence led me to the research questions framing this project.

While a number of my colleagues at API Chaya are interested in the potential of my dissertation research to contribute to their ongoing work and to broader understandings of violence response and peace-building in the U.S. and India, they are also extremely busy with the work of running programs and supporting individual survivors and communities. My interests also fall into the realm of prevention and long-term change, which they include within their vision and practices, but which does not always have direct funding. Thus ideas coming out of these kinds of explorations are not always directly actionable from an organizational perspective. While my colleagues at API Chaya were comfortable with this, it does reflect the ways in which this particular project does not meet the requirements of participatory action research (Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007).

In a similar, though obviously much more truncated sense, my offering of service in Hyderabad also proved important, if ‘failed’ at times. In the more concentrated time I spent there, I found ample opportunity to build reciprocity with OCWRC through service work, while at Healthy Families this proved more difficult. In introducing myself to each organization, I explained that I wanted to learn from their work, to seek their input on which key issues I should concentrate on in my interviews, and I emphasized that I wanted not to just take their time for this proposed collaboration, but also to provide whatever support I could to their organization. I pointedly said this might relate to the research or draw from my skills as a university-based scholar, but that it also might just work they needed done, for example in their offices or on websites or funding reports. I offered service, and especially with OCWRC, I think this was meaningful in demonstrating my interest and commitment in building a long-term relationship with the organization beyond this particular research project. I worked on a research project that OCWRC was conducting with a local research center, I helped to write and edit a number of

reports, I helped to plan and participate in a candlelight vigil protesting a recent kidnapping and rape, and I spent hours in conversation with Rabia, OCWRC's founder and Director, on the directions and strategies of their work.

This time spent at OCWRC, contributing in some way to their work, was also about building reciprocity in a situation where it seemed entirely unexpected by my would-be collaborators. From my first contact with OCWRC and Healthy Families, I got the impression that both organizations had students and researchers regularly contacting them to visit the organization and interview their managerial staff. They welcomed me with open arms and offered me access and information with little expectation that I would do much more than take the information I needed and depart. As time, distance, and busy schedules have made it difficult to maintain close relationships with OCWRC and HF, there is a truth to this – I have not yet had an opportunity to return to Hyderabad to further discuss my research findings with these organizations. While I intend to do so soon, in many ways, the intentions of researchers seemed of little consequence to the daily work of OCWRC and HF. This has also been an important lesson.

While I offered service to support HF's work as well, they did not need my assistance with their projects at the time. They did not have many tasks suited to my short-term tenure there and had recently hired new staff and had most things covered. We decided that it would perhaps be most helpful if, later in my work, I spent some time culling my interviews with Healthy Families' field workers to report out information on the successes and challenges they identified in their work. This is something I will shortly send to HF. However, some recent changes in the organization may now make this information less relevant to their current trajectory. Time and distance create substantial challenges to collaborative work of course (Richa Nagar 2015), but

this also reflects a ‘feminist failure’. Setting up my project as I have – working with three different organizations on two continents – set significant limitations on my service time in Hyderabad. It also made it more difficult to tailor the research to shared issues of concern that would benefit all of the organizations’ work equally. In this way, my research does not in all cases meet the standards of a policy-oriented or direct-action PAR (Kendon, Pain, and Kesby 2007), as the actionable results are of more or less value to my different organizational partners.

This example illustrates just one potential limitation of service-oriented feminist scholarship. To begin with, service research may seek to subvert some of the power carried by the university-based researcher, yet it can never ‘correct for’ such power imbalances or equalize access to the halls of expertise. And, even the most basic service tasks may not always be needed by an organization with which one wishes to collaborate. Time also always remains a big question mark. For my relationships with OCWRC and Healthy Families in Hyderabad, the question was what kinds of service and partnership were possible within a shorter period of time (my 5 months of dissertation field research there) and what might be built over the longer term (through ongoing contact and hopefully future work together). I accepted the impossibility of a fully collaborative praxis with these organizations for my dissertation work, I tried to remain attentive to the politics of research relationships and worked to upset hierarchies of expertise, and attempted to create openings and to lay a foundation for potential longer term work together.

Alliance-Building

I understand collaboration as the unstable project Swarr and Nagar (2010) suggest in the opening quotation. In my own work, I deploy the language of collaboration to describe a set of interlinked projects of alliance building across university and community spaces, which seek to decenter academic expertise and to create ethical pathways for recognizing *all* knowledge as

“communally wrought” (Mohanty 2003) and for co-producing theory on terms set by all those involved with a particular project or research study. This is something I attempted, but which was not entirely successful.

In my own alliance-building, ‘ally’ship is essential. Evoking Harsha Walia’s distinction between ‘striving for’ and ‘claiming’ allyship, I emphasize the former not only because ‘striving’ marks the incompleteness and persistent struggle of alliance building, but also because it resists the power move of ‘claiming’ a complete or static status as ‘ally’. I evoke and practice this striving for allyship not to establish my own authenticity or to discard my privileges. Quite the opposite – my praxis (including foregrounding collaborative knowledge production in this dissertation) actively seeks to grapple with my privileges and the power dynamics they create in the research process. Yet part of an intentional engagement with privilege is not letting my story, or my ideas, or my positionality dominate the conversation.

Alliance-building involves the kind of “differential coalitional consciousness” Chela Sandoval describes as central to U.S. third world feminism (Sandoval 2000, 61–63). Sandoval’s fusion of U.S. and ‘third world’ feminist epistemologies fits closely with this project. She describes a ‘differential coalitional consciousness’ also as a “specific methodology that can be used as a compass for self-consciously organizing resistance, identity praxis, and coalition under contemporary U.S., late-capitalist cultural conditions” (Sandoval 2000, 61). Karma Chávez (2013) expands this analysis around the idea and practice of coalition – offering the “coalitional moment” as an analytic. She writes: “A coalitional moment occurs when political issues coincide or merge in the public sphere in ways that create space to re-envision and potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries... Analysis of coalitional moments provides opportunity to witness activists’ creative rhetorical crafting, which sometimes points in the directions of inclusion and

utopia but also shows how activists inventively draw resources toward building alternative rhetorical imaginaries and possibilities for liveable lives” (Chavez 2013, 8–9).

In this way, coalitions and the coalitional moment link my methods and theoretical analysis. For South Asian Muslim communities in the U.S. and Muslim communities in India, the complexities of lived experiences of violence and community organizing against it have necessitated the kind of strategizing and theorizing I am calling plural resistance. Within these spaces of ‘coalitional thinking’, alliances are forged beyond the imagined boundaries of religious or ethnic community (i.e. with other immigrant groups, with low-caste advocacy groups,¹⁷ with interfaith organizations, etc.). But alliance-building also operates *within* the boundaries of ‘community’ – across age, class, gender, education, etc. with Muslim communities or South Asian American communities. It is vital to position my own efforts at collaboration and alliance within the webs of coalition and solidarity described throughout this dissertation. This both humbles and reinforces the importance of collaborative praxis in this project of collective knowledge production.

I never intended my own alliance building with API Chaya, Healthy Families, and the OCWRC to encompass the entire scope of those organizations’ work, which of course would not be possible. However, in Hyderabad I was confronted with the particular dilemma of how best to negotiate forming multiple organizational partnerships within a field of existing relationships and shifting alliances between women’s and social justice organizations in the city. The path I have chosen thus far, and will likely diverge from in the future, raised some ethical dilemmas and is perhaps one of the larger ‘failures’ of my feminist collaborative praxis. OCWRC and Healthy

¹⁷ Such coalitions between Muslim and low-caste Hindu groups are a relatively recent phenomenon in urban centers in India.

Families both have staff members with long histories of women's activism in Hyderabad and these ties at times put the organizations in separate spheres of anti-violence work. Vaguely aware of these divisions, I began learning about both OCWRC and HF's work and found good fits for research partnership with both organizations. During the course of my time with each, I did not give detailed information about my involvements with the other organization. While this partly followed IRB confidentiality protocols (of not revealing research participants' information/involvement), I made a strategic decision not to 'ruffle feathers' by sharing that I was also spending time at an organization in a different 'camp'.

I continue to grapple with this ethical dilemma of forming partnerships without completely open dialogue about one's related commitments and alliances. Yet as someone who is still largely an outsider or newcomer to the Hyderabad anti-violence movement, I find it necessary to maintain some autonomy as an actor, even one working in coalition(s), so that I might better learn the history of women's and feminist work in the city as I negotiate my own identity in this political field. At the same time, my intellectual, ethical and political interests draw me to each organization in different ways, and I find it troubling to consider abandoning or even distancing myself from either partnership. I am as yet unwilling to 'choose between' these two organizations not only because I want to, and can, remain 'unaligned' in the political field of Hyderabad women's organizations, but also because they each present unique visions of coalition, solidarity, and peace-building, which I hope to continue to explore alongside staff at each organization.

Accountability & Reflexivity

Recent feminist engagements with accountability and reflexivity in research process emphasize moving beyond concern with the researcher's positionality based in individual

identity, and toward a deeper concern for the meaning/lessness of academic knowledge production for people's everyday struggles (Richa Nagar and Ali 2003). The tendency in feminist scholarship to critically engage with one's privilege and positionality arises from a political intention to subvert the 'god trick,' through which social scientists have traditionally asserted their power as experts and claimed ownership over knowledge-making processes (Haraway 1988; Trauger and Fluri 2014). Yet, in the process we sometimes instead deploy what Audrey Kobayashi has called the "goddess trick," referring to the extent to which it is a privilege to be able to name one's privilege.¹⁸ For this reason, I choose here to emphasize accountability in my critical feminist praxis in order to move beyond the 'navel gazing' and paralysis-inducing tendencies of discussions of positionality. I continue to grapple with my privileges and find it important to name and be present with them, yet I seek means of doing so that do not always re-center my voice or my ways of knowing (England 1994; Rose 1993; R. Nagar 2002).

Centering accountability brings positionality and allyship into the conversation as processual, and primarily as objects of reflexivity. Self- and collective reflexivity are key components of collaborative praxis, as they allow partners in research and activist movement to sort through the power dynamics that arise from their differential privileges and oppressions, as well as to celebrate the political and emotional ties that unite them. While mutual care and respect are integral to these relationships, I echo Hunt and Holmes (2015) in emphasizing that "allyship requires *accountability* on the part of members of the dominant group and is not predicated on reciprocity by those who are marginalized" (162). As the collaborator entering with university credentials and whose career and credentials would be directly advanced by the

¹⁸ Kobayashi, Audrey, Graduate Student Affinity Group (GSAG) Plenary, April 21, 2015 at the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting in Chicago, U.S.A.

completion of the project itself, this put me in a position that required my own heightened awareness of the everyday practices that constitute my striving for allyship and through which I seek to hold myself accountable for the assumptions and (re)formations of power underlying my privilege.

The vital role of accountability and reflexivity came into play during the research design stage of the PFT research project. After a number of dialogues among PFT core volunteers and Farah's completing a preliminary literature review, Farah and I spent a few weeks pulling together the primary interests and issues of the research into a project overview, research questions, and a preliminary transcript of interview questions. We then sent this out to our research team for their comments. At that point, one research team member and longtime PFT core volunteer, contacted Farah and Sarah to raise some questions and concerns regarding my role and ownership in this community-based project. Farah met one-on-one with the team member to discuss her concerns, and then Farah and I discussed the issues raised, followed by another conversation with Sarah. At first, I struggled with how to react to these questions and concerns without 'taking them personally'. I was not well acquainted with the particular team member raising them – because I was new to working with PFT at that time (having done most of my prior work with (API) Chaya's advocacy program) and because her other commitments had prevented her from attending the last few PFT team meetings before she raised these concerns. Her questions raised legitimate concerns about my role in the project: she wanted to know how strong a role I had in shaping the project's direction, and how much control/ownership I would have over the data produced by it, and especially if our undergoing an IRB process, with my name as the Principle Investigator on our application, would mean that the UW had some claim to our findings. These questions arose from a concern over power dynamics

and the mis-representation of Muslim communities, as well as her knowledge of research processes and university bureaucracies. They also drew attention to the fact that whatever my commitments to API Chaya or PFT, my privilege included an exemption from the potential repercussions of our research for Muslims communities that are always under scrutiny in relation to questions of violence. Farah, Sarah and I spent many hours brainstorming and writing out responses to the various questions and concerns raised, and situated those responses as the starting point of a conversation we wanted to keep open. Anticipating that others may have similar questions of my involvement, we also produced an exhaustive ‘Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)’ document, which addresses the history of PFT and API Chaya, the purpose of our project (to work with and support masjid communities in addressing domestic violence, not to label them as violent), my role in the work, and the meaning of our associations with the University of Washington. This is available on our website, has been mailed to all area masjids, and is regularly part of our publicity and interviewee recruitment for the research.

As it turned out, the team member raising the concerns was satisfied with our answers to her questions (which emphasized my role a team member and facilitator, and not as taking over or controlling the project and resulting data), as well as to the steps we took toward general transparency and accountability to the community for our process and my involvement in it. However, the issues raised in this situation cannot be entirely ‘resolved’. Histories of university-based researchers claiming ownership over community knowledge remain salient, and in these research relationships I always carry the privilege of my university affiliations (which carry with them a presumption of ownership over knowledge or of expertise). Finally, as someone who does not belong to a politically or spiritually defined Muslim community, my stakes in the knowledge produced through this work will always be different from my collaborators at API Chaya.

Navigating an Impossible Space

These components of my feminist praxis – service, alliance-building, accountability & reflexivity - profoundly shape the pages that follow. From this vantage point, I am able to recognize and to value the collective energy and collective knowledge that circulate through all my thinking and writing, even that which is technically ‘single authored’. At the same time, I have gained a deep respect for the transformative potential of ‘theorizing from the margins’. Here I elaborate on Swarr and Nagar’s (2010) discussion of ‘grounded knowledges’, and also draw upon Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) and Silvey and Lawson (1999), to articulate the theoretical power and purpose emergent within social movements addressing the dual violence of domestic abuse and racialized or class-based oppression. My experiences working with API Chaya, OCWRC and Healthy Families taught me that starting our intellectual inquiries of violence from the *theorizing* of community-based women’s organizations enriches the insight and purpose of such research. I specifically do *not* mean that we take their knowledge-gained-through-experience and filter it through the ideas of ‘real theorists’ in the academy. I mean that we value this knowledge as theory, and thereby re-value activists, advocates, and agitators as not only the subjects of theory, but also as theorists in their own right. Of course, this does not preclude critique of or disagreement with movement-based theory. And this theory ‘from the margins’ often remains entangled with academic feminism, as my own praxis demonstrates. However, a sometimes subtle, but significant shift takes place. Rather than asking ‘what can I learn from observing grounded anti-violence movements?’, the question

becomes, ‘what can we learn together?’ And more specifically, ‘what can I, as a university-based scholar and researcher, commit to mutual efforts to advance both knowledge and social change?’

I think of this as part of *taking responsibility* (S. Hunt and Holmes 2015), without taking credit for all the pieces of this process that are ‘communally wrought’. What this means is that I orient my scholarship toward action (Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007), and that I seek collaboration as a means of holding myself accountable and of bringing my own perspective into dialogue with those of other knowledge-makers, whose daily work is grounded in anti-violence and anti-oppression struggle. I also evoke the idea of ‘taking responsibility’ to emphasize that while I wish to foreground the many collective aspects of this project, I am responsible for the arguments and orientation of this dissertation. This does not mean I am ‘taking credit’ for the knowledges produced with others or by the organizations with which I have partnered – and in fact I have clearly delineated those spaces where theory arises from my colleagues’ work and writing, and where we co-authored ideas and text. Rather, what it does mean is that my collaborators are not responsible for the areas of my own thinking that cross between their work and other organizations, or where I bring this all together in conversation with the feminist and geographic literatures that we didn’t read together.¹⁹ This is important, because centering theories and knowledge produced together and decentering ‘single author/expert’ models of scholarship is not the same as diffusing responsibility for the politics of producing an intellectual document such as this one. We all retain the right of critique, and over time I imagine they may have different ways of speaking back to what I have written, or different things to say as their

¹⁹ The literature directly discussed in the portion of Chapter 5 written with Farah and Sarah all draws from pieces that we did all read together and analyzed in relation to our theorizing of community based up on API Chaya and PFT’s work.

own work evolves. The invocation of responsibility on my part is therefore meant as an opening, not a closure.

Wrapping up the introduction to her book *Poverty Capital* (2012), which details the complexities of ‘the democratization of development’ as it works hand-in-hand with the neoliberal reform of empowerment and of the everyday lives of the poor, Ananya Roy insists that our response to these complexities must be equally nuanced and fraught. She holds that academic and activist work on poverty, women’s empowerment and social justice (her own work included) must navigate “the impossible space between the hubris of benevolence and the paralysis of cynicism” (Roy 2010, 40). She offers this not as an easy path, but as a necessary struggle, the only alternative being to cede the grounds of social transformation to the disciplining logics and inevitably hierarchical structures of global capital. With this advice in mind – and the simultaneous inspiration and warning that it carries - I offer both my evolving praxis and the forth-coming intellectual arguments as faithful, if sometimes failed, attempts to navigate this ‘impossible space’. While I will not position myself as a benevolent savior, I cannot bow to the cynicism that teaches us that violence is normal – that it is everywhere, in everyone, and a ‘natural’ part of being and of social relations. Nor am I willing to cede the grounds of social transformation to those who would justify violence against ‘them’ [here: men or Muslims] as a ‘cost’ of preventing violence against ‘us’ [here: women or the West].

Chapter 3. Beyond Culturalism: Modernity & Domestic Violence

“Much of what we understand of [culture] comes from the formulations of Western colonialists and the participation of colonized people in accepting these formulations. As a result, we have come to understand cultures to be very stable patterns of beliefs, thoughts, traditions, values, and the things that are handed down from one generation to the next to ensure the continuity of these systems...It is important to shift our understanding away from totalizing culture to illustrating its diversity, contradictions, contrasts, ambiguities, and the interconnections between various internal systems that structure power.”

~ Sujata Warriar²⁰

Narratives about intimate gender violence in Muslim communities too often rely upon simplified, static notions of ‘culture’ that pathologize non-Western peoples and places as inherently prone to violence. In this chapter, I unpack the first of three intertwined arguments, which together reject simplified ‘cultural explanations’ (Narayan 1997) for domestic violence by demonstrating the complexity of intersectional inequalities underlying violence in Muslim women’s lives and the plural modes of resistance women’s anti-violence organizations operationalize. This first thread takes up the question of ‘culture’, and particularly the abstraction and homogenization of ‘South Asian culture’ and ‘Muslim culture’ within *culturalist* narratives. Culturalism refers to the politicized emphasis on religious or ‘traditional’ practices and mindsets as a simplified causal explanation for violence against women. I disrupt culturalist narratives by

²⁰ From “Culture: What It Is, Who Owns It, Claims It, Changes It,” written by Sujata Warriar, last accessed 9.27.2015 on http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/Warrier.pdf. Warriar founded Manavi, a South Asian women’s anti-violence organization in New Jersey, she is a member of Steering Committee of the Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence and former Director of Health Care Bureau, State of New York, Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Warriar is a nationally recognized expert on culture, immigration and domestic violence.

asking the following research questions: what are the conditions of modernity that are expected to mitigate or end violence? And, to what extent are these dependent upon polarized understandings of Western v. non-Western “culture”? How do people living and struggling against violence narrate “culture” in their work?

In answering these questions, I employ Sangari’s (2008) theorization of *culturalism*, which describes a particular logic and set of discourses that homogenize and pathologize the social worlds of non-Western places and peoples and attribute gendered violence and oppression to ‘timeless’ traditions and anti-modern sentimentality. This conception builds upon and parallels a number of feminist critiques, most notably Mohanty’s (1991) analysis of the construction of the ‘third world woman,’ in Western feminism and international development discourses, as a victim requiring rescue. Abu-Lughod (2013) discusses this misframing of culture in recent histories of Islamophobia, which employ a “clash of civilizations” narrative to “tell us there is an unbridgeable chasm between the West and the ‘Rest.’ Muslims are presented as a threatening culture – the most homogenized and the most troubling of the Rest. Muslim women...symbolize just how alien this culture is” (6). In tracing representations of ‘oppressed Muslim women’ in service of international interventions in the Middle East and South Asia, Abu-Lughod points to the 1990s shift in U.S. feminism from domestic to global issues (2013, 7). The resulting U.S. and European influence in setting agendas for ‘global feminism’ too often falls prey to culturalist narratives and reconstructs the legitimacy of white, liberal feminism through discourses of universal human rights that position Western feminists as the saviors of ‘third world women’ (Chowdhury 2009). These culturalist narratives not only reproduce problematic representations of ‘third world’ or Muslim women, they are also deployed to authorize state violence (Mohanty, Riley, and Pratt 2008; Fluri 2008; Hodgson 2011b).

Drawing upon the experiences of dozens of front-line anti-violence workers in Hyderabad and Seattle, I demonstrate the ways in which anti-violence movements in each place *disrupt* culturalist narratives through complex engagements with multiple forms of violence and oppression. Their peace-building work points to the need to reimagine ‘culture’ as a dynamic and diverse set of social relations and practices. Such a shift suggests possibilities for assembling cultural resources *and* cultural critiques as tools for confronting power and structural inequality, and for setting a path toward long-term prevention of violence and discrimination – thereby deploying culture in contextually accurate and intellectually productive ways, rather than as a politically-loaded, yet simplified causal explanation of gender violence.

Rabia, the founder and director of Old City Women’s Resource Center, told me over several conversations about the multiple dimensions of violence in the lives of poor Muslim women living in Hyderabad’s Old City. About limited hospitals and how even wealthier Muslim women doctors who lived outside the Old City did not want to venture into this impoverished area to treat patients. Farida and many of the field staff she manages at Healthy Families told me of the significant role that poverty plays in shaping Muslim women’s lives in bastis – making them vulnerable to exploitation and limiting their access to everything from education to formal justice systems. Anam and several advocates and mobilizers at API Chaya in Seattle described how immigrant survivors can be socially isolated, are often re-traumatized through encounters with the U.S. criminal justice system, and cannot access public resources for housing, food, or transportation. While each of these women explained how ‘culture’ can enter into domestic abuse and how their organizations directly respond to this, their narratives paint far more detailed pictures of the multiplicities of violence, precarity and suffering in the diverse lives of Muslim women in Hyderabad and Seattle.

API Chaya, OCWRC, and HF each follow their own distinctive paths in navigating these complex fields of power within which they and the Muslim women they serve are embedded. However, in the face of this precarity of Muslim women's lives, all three organizations seek to 'create peace' within families and communities, and to do so by embedding their work within neighborhoods, faith centers, or other community spaces. They draw upon cultural resources – such as religious teachings and social support networks – to forge a peace-building path through webs of intimate and structural violence. Feminist critiques of particular cultural practices, such as the 'misuse' of religion or fabrication of 'convenient' 'traditions', as well as rejection of the hegemony of cultural (or 'community') sanctity also enter prominently into the anti-violence organizing of all three women's collectives.

In Hyderabad, OCWRC and HF address domestic abuse through counseling and alternatives to legal action, understanding this path as both practical and demanded/needed by the women they serve. In seeking this peaceful path, then, OCWRC and HF aim to empower women based in part on women's own definitions of empowerment. However, the emphasis on counseling and keeping families together – even for practical reasons that actually aim to reduce violence and precarity in women's lives – also risks the reproduction of patriarchal logics of family structure, gender roles, and marital sanctity. In Seattle, API Chaya and their Peaceful Families Taskforce (PFT) work with community and cultural institutions to seek support for survivors and peacefulness in all families; sometimes unintentionally reinforcing singular understandings of 'the community'; and constantly navigating the complex relationships of power that extend beyond a survivor vs. perpetrator dichotomy into communities' internal diversities and hierarchies. In their anti-oppression work – with Muslim communities, as well as queer and transgender youth, labor unions, and disability justice movements – API Chaya also

operates on what might be considered the ‘radical’ edge of the communities they serve. In the work of API Chaya, OCWRC and HF, organizational intentions and actions reveal the inaccuracies and dangers of culturalist narratives that homogenize, fix, and distort the meaning of ‘culture’ in relation to gender violence in South Asian Muslim communities. This is true also of their own sometimes problematic deployments of ‘culture’, which reveal contradictions and conflict within anti-violence movements, yet provide another argument against culturalism by demonstrating how defensive reactions to racism and Islamophobia can inadvertently become complicit with the same structures of power underlying these processes of othering.

In part, the necessity for recuperating ‘culture’ and ‘community’ arises in response to marginalization experienced by groups who face systemic oppression. State institutions not only fail to protect Muslim communities, but state agencies/agents also participate in political and structural violence that targets marginalized social groups. Such communities find themselves isolated from mainstream resources for addressing domestic violence and may draw upon community-based strategies and relationships, as well as cultural teachings, to resist gender violence.²¹As is evident in the experiences of immigrant and/or women of color in the U.S. and Muslim and low-caste women in India, the failure of state mechanisms of ‘protection’ reveals the insidious persistence of institutionalized racism, Islamophobia and casteism. The experiences and resistance of marginalized women also provide acute examples of the limitations – perhaps the impossibility – of criminal justice solutions to intimate violence, which largely fail women across their diverse positionalities. Most significant for the chapter, however, are the ways in which Muslim women’s experiences contesting violence demonstrate the underlying violence of

²¹ The complexities of how each of my community partner organizations navigate criminal justice systems and plural resistance based in Muslim ‘community’ will be discussed in much greater detail in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

‘modern’ (Western) notions of justice and rights that legitimize the violent destruction of ‘other’, ‘premodern’ cultures to ‘save’ women, who are categorically represented as passive victims. Culturalism not only misunderstands the complex dynamics of violence in women’s lives, it actually becomes a conduit of violence.

My comparison across anti-domestic violence movements in Seattle and Hyderabad provides an analytical frame for interrogating structures of power and notions of modernity – one in which the relationship between a so-called ‘developed’ place and so-called ‘developing’ place is not presented as a natural opposition, nor as a comparison between distinct locations on a linear trajectory toward modernity. The juxtaposition instead offers a frame for unraveling culturalism and for questioning the stories circulating in dominant media and public discourses about what and who is modern, and the work that these narratives do in authorizing dominant notions and practices of Western modernity, which rely on gendered, racialized and sexualized power relationships and the continual justification of ‘legitimate’ violence, which is mostly directed at ‘othered’ or marginalized subjects (Mohanty 2011; C. Reddy 2011; Hodgson 2011a).

My collaborative, comparative praxis aligns with the political work of anti-racist feminisms in the U.S., India, and globally that insist upon careful and vigilant scholarship in a contemporary climate of unabashed Islamophobia. The questions raised in this chapter’s analysis emerge from and return to my on-going dialogues as an active participant striving for allyship in anti-violence struggle. My longer-term study in India and decade-long involvement with API Chaya taught me to ask these kinds of questions, and this current project has been refracted through those experiences and insights, catalyzing new theorizations. At the same time, this comparison also allows me to ask new questions at each site – as the particular power geometries of each place offer unique landscapes for violence and peace-building. To this end, my praxis

centralizes the perspectives of front-line anti-violence workers, highlighting the *theoretical* insights emergent at intersectional sites of struggle (hooks 1997; Crenshaw 1991).

In their anti-violence praxis, OCWRC, HF and API Chaya approach domestic abuse as embedded within complex and intersecting social institutions, including family, kinship and community networks, state bureaucracy and legal infrastructure, and labor markets.²² In distinctive ways, each organization navigates the precarity Muslim women face by supporting them in negotiating familial, state, and economic structures that condition their status and mobility, as well as the possibilities for their ‘empowerment’. OCWRC and HF’s varied narratives and programs share some features, including an understanding that women’s vulnerability to intimate violence in Hyderabad is closely linked to economic inequality and structural violence. API Chaya, on the other hand, finds that South Asian Muslim women’s vulnerability, while complex, often hinges on factors related to immigration – including precarious legal status in the U.S., language barriers and isolation. In subsequent chapters, I detail the ways in which all three organizations, in Seattle and in Hyderabad, find that systemic forms of violence structure Muslim women’s vulnerability to intimate abuse. Their various theorizations of complex webs of inequality and precarity fuel practices of *plural resistance*, through which anti-violence workers contest intimate and systemic forms of violence simultaneously. Multi-scalar peace-building works toward short and long-term prevention of domestic abuse, but also to address forms of structural and state violence that subaltern, Muslim families and communities are subjected to in everyday life. Contradictions emerge in these organizational narratives, and their plural resistance sometimes involves strategic compromise -

²² I draw here on Kabeer’s (2003) typology of social institutions, articulated within her analysis of women’s empowerment and development.

for example, by working *within* social institutions like marriage, which often constrain women's agency. While plural resistance is not seamless, these practices work against culturalist narratives that represent Indian, South Asian, and/or Muslim women as primarily victims – of their culture, their religion, and their 'underdeveloped,' 'pre-modern' men. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding these intricacies of power and violence emergent in the visions and practices of anti-violence organizations working with marginalized Muslim communities in Seattle and Hyderabad.

My research collaborations with API Chaya, OCWRC, and HF suggest that the host of culturalist narratives positioning Islam and Muslims *outside of* history, modernity, and democratic society are in fact products of "encounters with modernity itself" (P. Chatterjee 2004, 7). These discourses emerge from histories of imperialism, geopolitical maneuvering, and development paradigms based in Western notions of progress, rights, and 'justice'. Rather than 'premodern' or the 'anti-modern', then, the heterogeneous and shifting social worlds of Muslim communities are better understood through postcolonial theories of regional modernities (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003), or what Chatterjee calls 'the heterogeneous time-space of modernity' (1993). Culturalism emerges in no small part through 'secular'²³ forces in political and civil society who construct their own moral and social superiority through this process of othering, one which also rests upon the sorting of Muslims into binary categories of bad/good, extremist/liberal, threatening/redeemable, enraged/peaceful, brazen/apologetic. As such, I suggest that such encounters take shape not only through the 'war on terror' and related political

²³ Here I mean to signal two things – both that claims to secularism often work to erase their historical and ideological basis in dominant religious worldviews (i.e. Hindu and Christian in the case of my research in India and the U.S. respectively); *and* that secularism looks quite different in different places, and this is particularly true for India and the U.S. I will elaborate this distinction in Chapter 4.

projects of nation-building, cultural projects of ‘civilizing’ or economic projects of capitalist ‘market-building’. Rather, culturalist narratives also arise through less combative attempts to understand and to embrace ‘good Muslims’, including multiculturalist discourses and policy initiatives that work to assimilate some ‘good’ Muslims into liberal, secular democracy. Global feminist movements against gender-based violence also contribute to this othering, both through an insistence upon ‘saving’ Muslim women *and* through development discourses of ‘empowerment’ that require assimilation to Western notions of the ‘modern’ and the ‘free’ (Abu-Lughod 2002, 2013).

My research in Hyderabad and Seattle suggests that truly disrupting culturalist narratives demands an epistemological and discursive reorientation toward ‘modernity’. This begins from a critique of Orientalism and imperialism, but must also work to dislodge Western, liberal, Enlightenment ideals as the normative terrain of modernity and to take seriously the multiplicity of modernities, which is decidedly different than suggesting that there is (imperialist) Western modernity and ‘*other* ideas of the modern’. This is also a *geographical* reorientation, which de-centers ‘the West’ as the default, normative site of modernity and emphasizes relationality in how we investigate and understand what it means to be ‘modern’. As Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal (2003) suggest, ideas of and aspirations toward a multiplicitous modernity still hold significant meaning for peoples struggling (against inequalities) to build better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. In this way, reorienting ‘modernity’ and provincializing the West (Chakrabarty 2000) offers a counter-narrative to a singular liberal modernity, while at the same time acknowledging the multiple, grounded, grassroots meanings of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ that animate social movements and struggles for equity and justice.

My analysis in this chapter extends feminist engagements with power, difference, violence, and modernity by centering the theoretical contributions of my community partner organizations in Hyderabad and Seattle. I begin by unpacking ‘culture’ as a concept and social phenomenon. Next, I move to explaining the politically purposeful usage of ‘culture’ within *culturalist* narratives and trace the roots of global circulation of culturalist narratives in the contemporary period. Drawing upon my participant observation and interview data, I demonstrate the ways in which anti-violence organizing with marginalized Muslim communities reveals and disrupts culturalist assumptions. I conclude by returning to the larger goal of this chapter – to argue for the crucial work of reframing and re-politicizing culture in anti-violence struggles. This reframing acknowledges that historically and place-specific cultural practices intertwine with regional patriarchies and structural violence, but refuses the conflation of ‘local/exotic culture’ with gendered oppression among non-white, non-Western peoples and places.

Culture

Culture describes complex mixtures of social networks, institutions, norms and rituals, and might refer to diversities of language, artistic expression, and belief systems. This kind of ‘culture’ – as Mamdani puts it: ‘the culture studied by anthropologists – face-to-face, intimate, local, and *lived*’ – rarely enters into the kinds of ‘culture talk’ that construct and politicize hierarchies of difference for geopolitical ends (2004, 17). Benhabib emphasizes relationality in describing cultures as ‘complex human practices of signification and representation, of organization and attribution, which are internally riven by conflicting narratives’ (2002, ix). Rather than pre-given or ‘pure’ social formations, ‘cultures are formed through complex

dialogues with other cultures’ and such formative conversations often emerge between internally differentiated groups within a particular culture (Benhabib 2002, ix). Culture describes heterogenous, contested, and constantly shifting social formations.

The power to define and deploy ‘culture’ in geopolitics, however, is not even. Benhabib expresses an ethical investment in a ‘moral and political universalism,’ which she sees as key to ‘deliberative democracy’ and as reconcilable, when ‘properly interpreted’, with the ‘democratic negotiation of certain forms of difference’ (2002, xi). But the grounds of “negotiating” difference are not equal within a paradigm of Western liberal modernity that universalizes its own values as if they were abstracted ethical concepts devoid of histories or power relations. In this same sense, one cannot guarantee that political and moral universalism will be “properly interpreted”, especially when partial interpretations often best serve the maintenance of hierarchical power structures. While Benhabib’s vision of universalism seeks a more neutral grounds for these moral and ethical imperatives, this fails to sufficiently account for how moral universalism has been deployed against non-Western cultures, peoples, and values within discourses and policies ranging from development to counter-terrorism.

Political and moral universalism also operates through international conversations about human rights, positioning modernity and its framing of individual rights outside of, and actually in opposition to, ‘culture’ (despite that fact that such universalism is itself a cultural production). Levitt and Merry (2011) point to how a tendency in human rights discourse to locate culture ‘out there’ (as geographically and ideologically separate from the West) fuels misconceptions around presumed conflicts between culture and rights. Images that project culture as opposed to rights circulate widely and are heavily reliant upon the figure of the oppressed woman. “This framing, in which rights are the heroic weapon that frees women from an oppressive ‘traditional’

culture...misunderstands how rights and culture work and instead builds on imperial narratives of the civilizing process and the transformation of ‘backward’ society” (Levitt and Merry 2011, 83). While Western investments in modernity/ization presume the rational and moral superiority of purportedly universal notions of freedom, justice, and human rights, these ideas are of course themselves cultural productions with (often bloody) histories of partiality in the West (Mohanty 1991; Lowe 2015).

Debates around culture and women’s rights also often feature discussions of multiculturalism and cultural relativism. Abu-Lughod takes up these questions through her analysis of the ways in which Muslim women, and particularly those who veil (‘women of cover’), are caught between culturalist narratives seeking to ‘save’ them, and multicultural discourses claiming non-interference whilst yielding to existing hierarchies of power. She writes:

“How are we to deal with difference without accepting the passivity implied by...cultural relativism...that says it’s their culture and it’s not my business to judge or interfere, only to try to understand. Cultural relativism is certainly an improvement on ethnocentrism and the racism, cultural imperialism, and imperiousness that underlie it; the problem is that it is too late not to interfere. The forms of lives we find around the world are already products of long histories of interactions” (Abu-Lughod 2002, 786–7).

Anti-violence work in Hyderabad and Seattle reveals that distinguishing between culturalism, multiculturalism (or cultural relativism), and Muslim women’s own descriptions of their cultures and faith practices is vital. Heightened attention to Muslim women’s dress and veiling since 9/11 is often read through these polarized discourses (Tarlo 2010). On the one hand, a culturalist reading of veiling expresses concern for ‘Muslim women’s oppression’ and reproduces Orientalist and imperialist assumptions about Muslim women’s victimization. On the other hand, a multiculturalist assumption that veiled women represent ‘the Muslim community’ [read: the

faithful], while unveiled Muslim women represent liberated, secular, modern Western society [read: the assimilated], reproduces stereotypes that homogenize and bifurcate Muslims into more or less threatening categories (i.e ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims). Both of these narratives around culture position visibly Muslim women outside of modernity – assuming they have either bowed to the domination of their men and their religion, or that they are defiant in their faith, and therefore threatening (Tarlo 2010, 3–5). Muslim women’s agency disappears in these perspectives, yet for decades feminist scholars have documented the forms of agency Muslim women exercise *through veiling*. Hanna Papanek (1982) documented the ways in which the burqa became a form of ‘portable seclusion’ for Muslim women in Pakistan, affording them greater mobility and access to the social, political and economic worlds beyond their homes. In Hyderabad, while many speculate on the meanings of the increased numbers of burqa visible in the urban landscape, these may well reflect women’s *increased* mobility (Alam 2012) and Hyderabadi Muslim women’s own statements suggest that veiling is not the crux of their equality (Suneetha A 2012). The women I knew at HF and OCWRC rarely, if ever, mentioned burqa in relation to gender oppression or domestic violence in Muslim women’s lives. In Seattle, I have observed the huge diversity of reasons that Muslim women choose (un)veiling.

In one dominant vein of liberal progress narratives, the supposition of a conflict between culture and rights, and particularly the gendered dynamics of this assumed clash, form a crucial node of culturalism. In this way culturalism relies upon an understanding of patriarchy as singular across space and more or less *severe* in some places. Kabeer (2003) counters this notion of a universal patriarchy with the critical concept of *regional patriarchies*, which captures the geographic specificity and variation of patriarchal logics and practices across regions. This place-based understanding of patriarchal structures forms a crucial basis for countering

culturalism. On the other side of the coin of liberal secularist characterization of modernity, multiculturalism and cultural relativism may resist the imperialist tendencies of ethnocentrism. Yet they also construct ‘other’ cultures whose values and practices are always understood as different from normative (white) Western ideas of justice and rights. These too often become pathways for patriarchal collusion or means by which dominant groups in each ‘culture’ ally to support one another’s hegemony. The presumption of homogeneity within a culture remains, and is typically defined by the dominant group within that ethnicity, religion, etc.

Structural Inequality, Racism, and Cultural Visibility

While these different discourses around culture, gender and violence may diverge from one another in significant ways, they all maintain the supremacy of culture as a central point of analysis. This claim obscures the substantial role of structural inequalities, at both local and global scales, in shaping women’s everyday lives, producing precarity in the lives of South Asian Muslims in Seattle and Hyderabad. Precarity describes an unpredictable, insecure state of being that manifests in everyday life both materially and psychologically. Judith Butler’s (2003) recent theorization of ‘precarious life’ suggests that the precarity of all life – and our fundamental interdependence and ability to be ‘undone’ by one another – “imposes an obligation upon us” (Butler 2009, 6) and offers a point of departure for a new politics of global community (Butler 2004, XII–XIII). Yet, as Butler suggests (2003, XII) and recent scholarship on ‘the precariat’ demonstrates (Standing 2014), precarity is not evenly distributed in our contemporary world. Precarity and violence are intimately intertwined. Precarity intensifies due to subjection to many forms of violence – the ‘war on terror’, representational violence, electoral and rights-based disenfranchisement, and Islamophobia that segregates Muslims and limits access to health,

educational, and basic survival resources. Living in a state of precarity also *produces* violence in Muslim women's lives – depending on their diverse circumstances violence might be experienced through hunger, fear, indignity, illness, humiliation, labor exploitation, or police abuse. Structural violence draws attention to the heightened conditions of deprivation, injury, and psychological suffering that shape the lives of those subject to a differential burden of precarity.

API Chaya, OCWRC, and HF all find that the survivors they work with experience violence from many sources - through financial precarity; resulting from their degraded status as immigrants or Muslims; through their reduced rights-bearing capacity as unequal citizens or migrants. These forms of structural violence are taken up in detail in the following chapter, but the significance of multivalent forms of violence in Muslim women's lives across places and histories shapes my analysis of culture/alism as well. Structural violence undergirds culturalist explanations of gender violence as a problem of demonized, foreign cultures (i.e. Indian, South Asian, Muslim cultures) in two primary ways, each of which hinges on *visibility*. First of all, the mundanity of structural violence serves to erase the contours of its operation. Merry describes this systemic violence built into unequal structures of power as inclusive of “poverty, racism, pollution, displacement, and hunger” and highlights the status quo of these forms of violence, which are “usually concealed within the hegemony of ordinariness” (2009, 5). The materiality of structural violence – hunger, bodies broken from laboring, ill health and premature death – as well as the trauma of structural violence – indignity, shame, dehumanization – may be visible as distinctive realities. Yet even these often fade into the background as statistics or become buried under the weight of massive suffering in the world. The invisibility of structural violence, however, also hinges on its very definition – that we cannot easily identify a single actor

committing this violence against another single actor (Farmer 2004). Domestic abuse, on the other hand, often involves easily identifiable perpetrators of violence – an intimate partner, such as a husband, and/or members of that husband’s family (i.e. mothers, fathers or brothers-in-law).

This contrast raises the second issue of visibility, another way in which structural violence shapes our understandings of culture, gender and intimate abuse. *Landscapes of structural violence* – impoverished urban settlements, detention centers and prisons, crowded neighborhoods with meager homes stacked together, political forums and media outlets debating the humanity of ‘Muslim terrorists’, mosques covered in hateful graffiti, the halls of U.S. high schools where young Sikh men are taunted and assaulted for wearing ‘turbans’ – *often produce spaces (both material and ideological) within which interpersonal violence becomes starkly visible*. Images of protestors in Ferguson or Baltimore throwing, burning, screaming are immediately recognizable as violent, while the ‘orderly’ detention of massive numbers of black men and their disenfranchisement from democracy and society may appear *unjust* to many, but because these actions are systemic and are built into the everyday operation of institutions charged with ‘public safety’, they are less visible as *violence*, especially when viewed on a ‘case-by-case’ basis.²⁴ Similarly, while everyday life in poor urban settlements or (the constant threat of) detention or the *fear* invoked by Islamophobic hate crimes and communal violence – while these realities may be upsetting or unjust, even on a case-by-case basis, the violence they produce is far less recognizable as such in comparison to the explosions of terrorist bombs or the beheading of a Muslim woman by her ‘dishonored’ husband or father. In these instances, structural violence fades into the background even as it creates *a heightened visibility of physical*

²⁴ To be sure, African American men are also subject to obscene levels of physical, interpersonal violence, including at the hands of police.

violence within the spaces it produces and sustains. While the histories are different and important, comparable logics of racism link the criminalization of black men to the extent that their use of violence is expected, hypervisible, and *characteristic* (D. Wilson 2005; M. Alexander 2012) and the production of the ‘violent Muslim man’ through discourses of terrorism such that ‘Muslim rage’ and Muslim men’s use of ‘honor killings’ are anticipated, sensationalized, and commonly attributed to cultural character (Bhattacharyya 2008). Women of color scholar-activism in the U.S. often points to such linkages between structural violence and the visibility of gender violence across differently marginalized communities (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006).

From Culture to Culturalism

The deeply political focus upon culture that elides structural violence and dominates conversations about ‘Muslim women’ is not itself a ‘timeless’ discourse or a ‘natural’ point of interest. Rather, culturalist narratives grow from several root structures, each nourished in the soil of specific times and places. The deeper roots extend back to colonial logics of the 19th century. More recent root systems draw from post-Cold War geopolitics and development reasoning. In discussing the post-Cold War shift toward ‘culture talk’ in Western imaginations of geopolitics, Mamdani describes how this cultural bent influences post-9/11 discourses: ‘It is no longer the market (capitalism), nor the state (democracy), but culture (modernity) that is said to be the dividing line between those in favor of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to terror’ (2004, 18). The post-Cold War period also coincides with the revitalization of U.S. feminism through the turn to the global (Farrell and McDermott 2005), and heightened attention to gender and ‘women’s empowerment’ within mainstream development institutions and

development discourses (Kabeer 2003, add World Development report 2012). This shared historical moment partially explains the movement of revitalized culturalist discourses across geopolitical forums, global feminist initiatives, and development policy agendas.

As Mamdani suggests, the spread of ‘culture talk’ charts two paths of Western intervention in the non-West – one concerned with reform, the other with destruction. In the ‘two contrasting narratives of Culture Talk...[o]ne thinks of premodern peoples as those who are not yet modern, who are either lagging behind or have yet to embark on the road to modernity. The other depicts the premodern as also the antimodern. Whereas the former conception encourages relations based on philanthropy, the latter notion is productive of fear and preemptive police or military action’ (Mamdani 2004, 18). The first leaves room for multiculturalist discourses that argue for internal reform, often around minority rights. The second opens space for more interventionist development or state-based actions that aim to force certain ‘archaic’ cultures to grant women and minorities ‘freedom’ and rights.

This turn toward culture in geopolitics and development rests on certain associations between culture, gender, and violence. Abu-Lughod (2013) draws upon over a decade of ethnographic work in Egypt to lay out the many reasons it is problematic, even dangerous, to suggest that all Muslim women ‘need saving’. She points to the homogenizing influence of discourses that assume ‘all Muslim women’ share a particular form of religious or cultural oppression. Examples from Abu-Lughod’s own years of forging relationships with diverse Muslim women reveal the inaccuracy of this assertion. Her ethnographic examples also demonstrate that an obsessive focus on culture erases the everyday realities of Muslim women’s lives, including manifestations of structural violence. Abu-Lughod suggests that global conversations about ‘Muslim women’ rarely show interest in actual, live human beings, but are

rather more concerned with the generalized label and the categorical relationship between ‘Muslim women’ and il/legitimate violence.

Labeling Muslim communities as particularly violent toward women exemplifies what Kumar (2010) describes as the narrowing of the range of views on Muslims and Islam in the post-9/11 era. She describes this political shift as led by the Bush II administration’s adoption of the ‘clash of civilizations’ logic previously eschewed by the Bush I and Clinton administrations between 1988 and 2000. As Kumar argues, this ‘resurgence of Orientalism’ relies heavily upon hegemonic Western discourses espousing a homogenous, violent, anti-modern, irrational, woman-hating Islam, which forms the foundation of a “culture” shared by all Muslims. Even when these discourses do not reject *all* Muslims, the ‘culture talk’ they employ splits Muslims into categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and emphasizes the premodern culture that “good Muslims” must abandon or internally reform (Mamdani 2004). In recent years, governmental and media discourses have woven such culturalist narratives into counter-terrorism rhetoric and used the “treatment of women” in “the Muslim world” as further justification for the necessity and legitimacy of the “war on terror” (Fluri 2008). Within mainstream Western media, this concern for the welfare of (the category) ‘Muslim women’ often emerges in the political rhetoric of leaders or commentators calling for more decisive and widespread action ‘against radical Islam’ or simply ‘Muslim violence’ (Abu-Lughod 2013).

A 2014 CNN interview with Reza Aslan,²⁵ a writer and religious studies scholar, demonstrates the difficulty of bringing complexity to a politicized conversation within which those who object to the demonizing of Islam and Muslims become labeled as ‘Muslim

²⁵ CNN interview with Reza Aslan, conducted by anchors Alisyn Camerota and Don Lemon, took place on September 29, 2014. Last accessed September 27, 2015 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzusSqcotDw>

apologists,' or simply 'angry Muslims' themselves.²⁶ CNN anchors, Don Lemon and Alisyn Camerota, interviewed Aslan following political commentator Bill Maher's provocative response to emergent debates around appropriate Western response to ISIS, an extremist militant group operating in Iraq and Syria and claiming the divine sanction of Allah and proclaiming a worldwide caliphate, or Islamic government. Maher launched into a tirade about political conversations dominated by attention to ISIS, which he said in effect ignore the 'commonality' of violence in 'the Muslim world', especially against women and minorities.²⁷ The Monday following Maher's comments, on September 29, 2014, CNN brought Aslan on the air to reply to Maher.

During most of the eight-minute interview, the onscreen banner reads "Does Islam Promote Violence?" All of Lemon and Camerota's questions for Aslan presume that there is a unique pattern of violence against women in Muslim societies, which therefore raises the 'logical' question of whether or not such violence is inherent to the faith. Camerota opens the segment with the following provocation: "Defenders of Islam insist that it is a peaceful religion. Others disagree and point to the primitive treatment in Muslim countries of women and other minorities." The assumed confrontation of Islam and its 'defenders' with those who care about the "primitive treatment...of women" sets the tone of the interview. As Aslan proceeds to debunk the idea of '*the Muslim world*' as a real place, and to describe the vast spectrum of women's rights across diverse Muslim countries, his interviewers interrupt to reassert this

²⁶ Following the CNN interview analyzed here, for example, another CNN news anchor, Chris Cuomo, drew attention by criticizing Aslan's "angry tone" and suggesting this tone shows why people are sometimes "fearful" of Islam. (Clip of Cuomo on CNN and story about his comments accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/03/chris-cuomo-reza-aslan-tone-muslims_n_5928464.html on September 27, 2015.)

²⁷ Maher made these comments during his own program, "Real Time with Bill Maher," on an episode that aired Friday, September 26, 2014.

‘common sense’ understanding of Muslim violence. Lemon insists, “But Reza let’s be honest though, for the most part it’s not a free and open society for women in those [Muslim] states.” Reza continues to insist that the 1.5 billion Muslims in the world cannot accurately be “painted with a single brush” and points to the role of such generalizations in representational violence: “You know, this is the problem, that these kinds of conversations that we’re having aren’t really being had in any legitimate way. We’re not talking about *women* in the Muslim world, we’re using two or three examples to justify a generalization. That’s actually the definition of bigotry.”

Despite his repeated attempts to reject the basis of the conversation in false presumptions of ubiquitous and aberrant Muslim violence, the interviewers appear confounded and Camerota finally asks, “So in other words...I just want to be clear on what your point is because I thought you and Bill Maher were saying the same thing. Your point is that Muslim countries are not to blame. There is nothing particular, there’s no common thread in Muslim countries, you can’t paint with a broad brush, that somehow their justice system or Sharia law or what they’re doing in terms of stoning, and female mutilation...is different than in other countries like Western countries?” Aslan again responds by clearly distinguishing between the specific use of “barbaric practices” by certain states or societies (he gives Iran and Saudi Arabia as examples) – which he asserts must be condemned, and the representation of *all* Muslim societies as violent by association. Aslan’s 2014 CNN interview reproduces a debate that’s been had in numerous forms since colonial expansion took up its ‘civilizing mission.’ The contours of the conversation exemplify the persistence of culturalist narratives that serve geopolitical ends (in this case, the status quo of ‘legitimate’ Western dominance).

Culturalism, as Sangari explains, ‘conflates religion and patriarchies with “culture,” and turns acts of violence into religion-driven third world pathologies or customary/sacred traditions’

(2008, 2). ‘Transnational’ comparisons of violence against women often remove cultural factors from historical and place-based contexts and deploy ‘culture’ itself as the primary cause of intimate violence in non-Western, ‘undeveloped’ places (Abu-Lughod 2013; Hodgson 2011a; Mohanty 1991). Many feminist scholars critique these problematic explanations of gender violence (Narayan 1997; Hasan and Menon 2005; Levitt and Merry 2011). As Narayan (1997) and Sangari (2008) point out, while “cultural explanations” may find purchase in sensationalized accounts of intimate violence, such logics fail when confronted by diversities within religious or ethnic communities, and parallel stories of gender violence cross-cutting many communities and places.

Feminist theories of complex inequalities, interlocking oppressions, and intersectionality (Coomaraswamy and Perera-Rajasingham 2008; Sunder Rajan 2003; Kannabiran and Singh 2008; Purkayastha 2012; Crenshaw 1991; Hill Collins 1990) disrupt these kinds of simplified accounts of culture. Recent engagements with intersectionality in feminist geography (Valentine 2007; McDowell 2008; Nightingale 2011) point to the range of inequalities women experience in their daily lives and suggest intersecting power structures at multiple scales, which relationally produce differentiated subjects *and* social institutions. This kind of spatial analysis, also advanced in a number of other areas of feminist geography such as intimate geopolitics (Pain and Staeheli 2014), critical race theory (McKittrick 2006; McKittrick and Woods 2007; Pulido 2006; Pulido 2001; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Kobayashi 1994; Kobayashi 2005), critical transnational feminist praxis (Swarr and Nagar 2010), and the global intimate (Mountz and Hyndman 2006; Pratt and Rosner 2012), moves intersectional thinking beyond identities and bodies into the realm of ‘power geometries’ and the systemic, dynamic, relational operation of power across space (D. B. Massey 2005). Yet despite extensive feminist critique of the

demonization of culture, in the post 9/11 political milieu, culture, and by extension religion, have become lightning rods for representing gender violence in Muslim majority places/communities.

Culturalism & Modernity

The common thread in these versions of ‘culture talk’ is the presumption of a singular modernity, defined by the political philosophies and social relations of (white, Western) liberalism. Many post-modern and post-structuralist critiques understand the very idea of ‘modernity’ and processes of modernization as either inherently violent, or as partially constitutive of forms of violence popularly associated with ‘tradition’ or the failure to modernize (Kapadia 2002). Others articulate modernity as plural and dynamic (Paz 1990; Pred and Watts 1992) and these multiple or regional modernities as particularly distinctive in formerly colonized places (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003; P. Chatterjee 2004), and in the relations of post-coloniality that mark contemporary development and globalization (Appadurai 1996; Grewal 2005).²⁸

The centrality of ‘culture’ in struggles over the meaning and the making of modernity is well established (Bhabha 1994; Narayan 1997; Chakrabarty 2002), and emerges even in historical analyses primarily interested in the expansion of global capitalism (Pred and Watts

²⁸ I am not suggesting that acknowledging multiple modernities means *accepting* that modern ways of life sometimes come with violence, intimate or otherwise. This would basically reproduce a multiculturalist logic with all the attendant problems that feminist, critical race, and queer theorists critique. Rather, I mean to emphasize that modern life – imagined and lived in multiple forms – has no straightforward relationship to violence or to gender. For example, while the vocal rejection of violence against women characterizes contemporary Western discourses of modernity, so too does an (passive or active) acceptance of heightened inequalities and extreme manifestations of structural violence. Uncovering those relationships between regional modernities and intersectional forms of power and violence is a necessary step toward resisting all forms of violence.

1992). This relationship between culture, modernity, and capitalism figures into my argument that early 21st century (re)configurations of culturalism rely upon a particular historical, place-based confluence of ideas and processes that positioned *imaginings* of ‘oppressed Third World women’ at the heart progress narratives. The form and power of the contemporary Western, liberal notion of modernity/ization emerged in European Enlightenment thinking and took imperial form as the hand-mate of economic policies meant to secure the resources necessary for capitalist growth centered in Europe, and eventually, the United States. During the early colonial period, from the mid-15th century through the 17th century, merchant capitalism dominated global trade and the extraction of resources from colonized places, with little attention given to the internal development of these territories (Hoogvelt 1997, 17). The turn of the 19th century brought a period of formalizing colonial power, during which European empires worked to solidify and protect relationships of extraction by establishing direct political control and administration. In India, for example, less formalized mechanisms of political domination and merchant imperialism under the British East India Company were transformed into an extensive colonial administration (the ‘British Raj’) and direct political subjugation across the subcontinent. While this shift into an era of ‘liberal colonialism’ included building basic infrastructure, such as railroads, these modernizing investments were primarily geared toward increasing the efficiency and profitability of resource extraction from the colonies, which fueled industrialization in Europe and the U.S. (Bardhan 1984).

Along with this shift to formal political control came a more formalized investment in the social mission of imperialism, to ‘civilize’ those peoples and places under colonial rule (Jarosz 1992; Craggs 2002). This shift to liberal colonialism, then, firmly established the marriage of *economic logics* of modernity (that is, the importance and inevitability of the expansion of

capitalism within and across places) to *social logics* of modernity (that is, the need to spread morality and the proper organization of social life). The latter involved re-shaping the intimate and social lives of colonized subjects, including everything from spiritual belief and practice to personal dress and comportment, from normative gender relations within households to appropriate relationships within class hierarchies (N. R. Hunt 1990; McClintock 1995). Social modernization also worked through legal and political transformations, in many cases re-defining rights, subjecthood, and appropriate conduct within civil society (Sangari and Vaid 1990; P. Chatterjee 1993; Peet and Hartwick 2009). While the implementation of the ideals of social modernity of course varied considerably across colonial projects and colonized places, a common logic operated. Based in 18th century Enlightenment ideals of technological innovation and rational expertise, this logic was organized around a linear notion of progress achieved through the application of universal scientific knowledge. As such, Enlightenment universalism posited objective knowledge of a singular, stable ‘Truth’ as the basis for economic and social modernization. The presumed accuracy and objectivity of rational and scientific thought succeeded in dislocating Enlightenment philosophy from its historical and place-based origins, thereby securing the superiority of European culture and society on an abstracted, universalized scale of progress toward modernity (Cowen and Shenton 1996; Lawson 2007b, 36–37; Peet and Hartwick 2009). Enlightenment universalism thereby resolves a central contradiction of Western liberal modernity – that is, that what is decidedly a ‘view from somewhere’ can perceive and understand life on a universal plane, one absent the complications of history and geography.

Throughout the formal or direct colonial period,²⁹ colonized subjects contested such projects of social modernization, resisting the authority of European powers to determine what and who is modern. In fact, culturalist logics evolved not merely as extensions of imperialist Enlightenment thinking, but rather on the *contested* grounds of liberal colonialism's 'civilizing mission,' often through a dialectic of imperial and nationalist reform efforts. In India during the 19th and early 20th centuries, such debates took place largely among elites but shaped the broader society as ideas of a 'modern India', and especially of the modern Indian woman, took form and persisted in nationalist narratives. The "woman question" preoccupied colonial accounts of Indian culture, as well as nationalist debates around modernization in independent India (P. Chatterjee 1993). Colonial logics and propaganda twisted the troubling realities of women's suffering to justify, to both Indian and global audiences, continued British occupation of the subcontinent (Sinha 2006). Hasan and Menon point to the colonial period in historicizing Muslim women's continued invisibility in India. They draw attention to the dominance of religious association when Muslim women do become visible in the public sphere, and to the resulting dogged persistence of stereotypes and misinterpretations of "Muslim women" in India (2004, 1–8). As Ramamurthy describes, the woman question continued to shape nationalists' assertions of a particularly Indian modernity:

"Often, nationalisms appeal to invented 'traditions' to assert difference and inspire feelings of belonging, but insofar as nationalism is a form of modernity, nationalism in the colonies had simultaneously to assert its difference from Western modernity, which was, after all, the modernity of the colonizers. In India, the struggle to reconcile the desirable aspects of

²⁹ I refer to the period from the mid-15th century through the mid-20th century. I designate this as a period of 'formal' or 'direct' colonization, as it was marked by exploration and political imperialism involving the claiming and consolidation of territories, along with the subjugation, enslavement and genocide of indigenous inhabitants of such territories. As many have argued (Gregory 2004), imperialism continues to operate in contemporary geopolitics, and on every continent, settlers continue to claim and occupy the un-ceded territories of indigenous peoples.

Western modernity with the need to assert Indian difference was addressed through processes of gendering” (Ramamurthy 2008, 150).

These conversations linking women’s status and gender to distinctive meanings of national modernity continued in the post-independence period, particularly through development conversations (Sen and Grown 1987; Mohanty 1991; Kabeer 1994). In recent decades, such debates have been reinvigorated within both state and civil society spaces. During the 1990s, intensified neoliberal globalization challenged the sovereignty of the Indian state. As Oza (2006, 2) demonstrates, nationalists responded to “the loss of autonomy by establishing India’s independence and cultural difference from the West” and did so “by fortifying rigid gender and sexual identities”. Amidst these (post)colonial debates, Indian feminists have challenged various forms of patriarchy and gender violence (R. Kumar 1993; Gangoli 2007; Kannabiran and Menon 2007), *and* the construction of imperialist forms of anti-violence (Sinha 2006; Narayan 1997). Such debates and narratives mark moments of (re)formulation of what Mrinalini Sinha calls *the imperial social formation*, or “the imperial ordering of modern society” (2006, 17). Through this concept, Sinha aims to incorporate a “transformative dimension” in our understandings of how imperialism shaped/s ‘modern society’ and to traditional definitions of ‘social formation’:

The imperial social formation, as a preferred term for the describing the modern society that we have inherited around the world, is meant to reframe the traditional concept by drawing attention to the following points: (1) the historical role of imperialism in assembling different societies into a system of interdependencies and interconnections; and (2) the uneven effects produced by the simultaneous connections and distinctive constitution of societies in a globally articulated imperial system. (Sinha 2006, 17)

In pointing also to “the irreducible and generative role of culture as a dynamic social process” (17), Sinha is deploying imperial social formation as a conceptual tool to think about

cultural, political, and economic relations *together*. As such, this heuristic offers a means of complicating notions of cultural practice historically and in the contemporary moment, thereby contesting the kinds of simplistic culturalist tropes that operate simultaneously as ‘relics’ of colonial discourse and as living, dynamic constructions of the present.

In this way, Sinha’s theorization makes way for more complex understandings of the modern in relation to culture, religion, and social status. These more careful analyses point to regional patriarchies and regional modernities, as well as help to explain the kinds of ‘contradictions’ that contemporary realities present to homogenized, ahistorical understandings of gender and culture. For example, Abu-Lughod (2002, 786) explains that while Muslim women’s head coverings may be interpreted as ‘anti-modern’ in the West, they are in fact, at least in one sense, markers of modernity: “the modern Islamic modest dress that many educated women across the Muslim world have taken on since the mid-1970s³⁰ now both publicly marks piety and can be read as a sign of educated urban sophistication, a sort of modernity.”

Imperial social formation also links the historical roots of culturalism as it operates in India and in the U.S. Culturalist narratives circulating around “the treatment of women” in South Asian and/or Muslim American communities also revives a colonial history – in this case, the racialized politics of Orientalism and xenophobia that continue to play out in the context of white settler colonialism in the U.S. and Canada (A. Smith 2006; Holmes, Hunt, and Piedalue 2015, 549). Early South Asian migrants to the U.S. and Pacific Northwest faced ostracization, housing and job discrimination, and sometimes physical attacks. This reception was often felt more acutely by Sikh men, but clearly had a racist character (Bhatt and Iyer 2013). Between 1882 and

³⁰ Abu-Lughod refers specifically to head/hair coverings such as hijab and chador, which are among many styles of ‘coverings’ (including burqa) and which have become popular among professional and working class women employed outside the home.

WWII, the Asian Exclusion Acts created severe limitations on South Asian migration, which meant that primarily men entered for labor and were not allowed to bring their wives and children with them. Following the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 (also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act), restrictions on migration from Asia were loosened and a new wave of South Asian migration commenced, including greater numbers of women. Muslim migration to the U.S. began with forced migration of African Muslims, who were kidnapped, enslaved and later sold in America. Between the late 1800s and WWII, Muslims migrated to the U.S. from across the world, but in small numbers. Following the lifting of immigration restrictions in 1965, these numbers grew. While many early Muslim immigrants downplayed their religion, during the 1960s, as more recent immigrants arrived to teach second and third generation Muslim Americans about their faith, a period of ‘religious awakening’ solidified a multi-ethnic ‘Muslim American’ identity (Curtis 2009).

The experiences of ethnically diverse Muslim Americans, and that of diverse South Asian American communities, became intertwined following the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent launch of a ‘global war on terror’, which included counter-terrorist efforts on domestic soil. Following the passage of the USA Patriot Act in October 2001, then U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft oversaw the detention of approximately 1,200 South Asian, Arab, and Muslim men for suspected terrorist ties, often without releasing detainees’ names, without charging them with crimes, and without allowing them access to lawyers (Curtis 2009, 99–100). Curtis quotes an anonymous Muslim American activist who suggests that most non-Muslim Americans at the time were probably asking themselves, “If the government doesn’t trust these people, why should I?” (Curtis 2009, 100). And indeed, this period also saw rising hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. As U.S. war on terror political rhetoric turned to

‘saving Afghan women’ from the Taliban, suddenly the question of Muslim treatment of women re-entered popular consciousness and continues to spark political and civil society debate. The 2014 CNN interview with Reza Aslan analyzed earlier is only one example of this resurgence. Thus, for many South Asian Muslims living in the post-9/11 U.S., culturalism intertwines with generations of anti-immigrant sentiment and virulent Islamophobia.

Scrutiny of women within Muslim and/or South Asian communities also feeds off of the rhetoric of ‘model minorities’ and of multiculturalism, which some South Asian Americans have participated in as part of claiming ‘cultural authenticity’ within assimilation processes woven into U.S. nation-building (Rudrappa 2004). As Das Gupta demonstrates, the reticence on the part of “the South Asian mainstream” to discuss issues like domestic abuse and homosexuality (amongst a host of other ‘problems’ that also effect their communities) partially lies in the fear of drawing negative attention to their immigrant community. “Putting up a wall of denial is their way of countering the racism inherent in treating immigrant communities of color as potentially troublesome” (Das Gupta 2006, 58). Yet, attempts to exemplify and claim ‘model minority’ status erase socioeconomic disparities between diverse groups within the category ‘South Asian’ and simultaneously bolster racial prejudice against African Americans and Latinos. This way of finding belonging within a national U.S. ‘culture’ also reproduces (white) heteropatriarchy through the control of gender and sexuality within the imperative to present a ‘model’ immigrant group (Das Gupta 2006, 58–9). Even as these assimilation processes can contribute to homogenization and policing of ‘legitimate’ South Asian ‘culture,’ they also reveal the instability of culturalist logics: racism and xenophobia fuel consolidation and internal policing of South Asian cultures – thus culturalism *produces* the very imagination of ‘culture’ that allows its ‘rational’ continuation as a discourse.

Discussions of gender violence and culture have been highly politicized within political rhetoric. Contemporary narratives of culturalism, rooted in colonial and post-Cold War histories, reproduce and reconfigure debates around ‘the woman question’ in India and Muslim/South Asian ‘treatment of women’ in the U.S. Manifestations of Islamophobia vary considerably in each place, yet they fuel parallel culturalist narratives. A transnational comparison of these discourses, as well as the anti-violence struggles that contest them, both disrupts culturalist account of gender violence and reveals their persistence in mainstream media.

Transnational Patterns: Contemporary Culturalism & Islamophobia in India and the U.S.

Despite decades of extensive feminist critiques and active anti-violence movements in India, mainstream Western media continue to represent gender violence in India as a socially sanctioned, culturally derived problem. Such coverage distorts kernels of truth in order to present spectacular stories that “could only happen in India,” despite the disturbing reality that they are indeed happening everywhere. Parallel forms of culturalism labeling Muslims as inclined toward gender violence also continue to circulate despite vocal and detailed rebuttals. These distortions and ‘culture blaming’ also travel with diaspora communities, and those that are ‘visibly’ South Asian or ‘visibly Muslim’ are met with suspicion (for men) and pity (for women) in many Western countries. In these contexts, visibility may link to clothing and specific cultural or religious attire, including head-coverings such as hijab and the *dastaar* worn by Sikh men, which has been often mistaken for a Muslim ‘turban’ in volatile post-9/11 Islamophobic rhetoric and physical attacks. However, within this reinvigorated Islamophobia, race and skin color feature heavily in the ‘visibility’ of South Asian and Muslim communities in the U.S. In fact, hate crimes and vitriolic political discourse accompanying the ‘war on terror’ demonstrate the

emergence of a distinctive anti-Muslim racism in the U.S. and Europe, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. For Muslim communities in Hyderabad and South Asian Muslim communities in Seattle, these geopolitical and social debates around culture and violence intersect with local anti-violence movements, which build peace by simultaneously rejecting culturalist discourses that demonize their religion and cultures, and refusing to accept patriarchal control *within* their communities. In this way, organizers bring together cultural resources and critiques of certain cultural practices to chart a path forward for long-term prevention of domestic abuse.

India & Hyderabad: Development, Culture & the ‘Misuse’ of Religion

My research in Hyderabad sits at the confluence of broader culturalist narratives that associate domestic violence with ‘premodern’ Indian and ‘premodern’ Muslim culture. Hyderabadi anti-violence organizations working with impoverished Muslim communities contest culturalist narratives through their more complex understandings of and resistance to intimate abuse. Field workers identify the *misuse* of religious teachings as a problem with the structure of patriarchy and other systemic inequalities experienced by women. Tracing these complications of culture here, I then pick up this thread in chapter four, by exploring how field workers identify structural violence as shaping women’s vulnerability.

Within India, public discourses also construct more specific ‘cultures of violence’ – amongst the poor, or Indigenous peoples, or Muslims – which similarly associate more extreme and rampant gender violence with ‘less developed’ social groups. Interest in ‘community’³¹ –

³¹ As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5, my analysis of ‘community’ negotiates a middle-ground between romantic invocations of social cohesion/belonging and claims to homogeneity within an identity-based politics. Partha Chatterjee’s (2004) theorization of civil

typically referencing religious affiliation, but sometimes caste³² – significantly shapes discussions of violence and women’s rights in the public sphere. Based in colonial jurisprudence, the Indian Constitution guarantees “community rights” through separate personal law codes for Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsees. These laws primarily affect women, as they govern “family matters”.³³ While religious codes operate for all communities, in political debates and popular media Muslim women are portrayed as being more adversely affected (Sunder Rajan 2003; Gangoli 2007). Hasan and Menon argue that the presumed supremacy of personal law in determining Muslim women’s status ‘ends up essentializing religious and cultural traditions’ (2005, 3).³⁴

and political society includes critical analysis of debates around ‘community’ in India since (and before) independence. While he acknowledges the complexity of imaginings and usages of ‘community’, he also points to the need to engage with social formations using or being labeled with the term, particularly in light of failures of the universalist ideals of nationalism to produce equity in reality, and in fact the ways in which universalisms often cover the perpetuation of inequalities through state structures of governance. My analysis of community builds from this debate (later featuring interventions from John and Deshpande (2008) and Baviskar and Sundar (2008)) to consider two pressing reasons for theorizing ‘community’ in Indian political and social life: (1) recent processes of profound disenfranchisement of Muslims in India (John and Deshpande 2008), building upon longer histories of deprivation and alienation, suggest the political importance of marginalized identity in struggles for equity, and (2) the unique social formations that women’s grassroots organizations build upon to create social and political space for changing normative relations of inequality (around gender, religion, class, etc.).

³² While ‘community’ is label used for both religion and caste in different contexts, I use it primarily to refer to religious community. I also do not mean to conflate these two forms of community, which each experience marginalization in India, but in very distinctive ways. An accounting of the experiences of low-caste Hindus is outside the scope of this dissertation.

³³ More detailed discussion of communal politics and law in India feature in the next chapter’s analysis; Chapter 5 focuses on deeper engagement with the idea of ‘community’ in both Seattle and Hyderabad.

³⁴ See also Nivedita Menon (2014) for an accounting of the debate in India around a Uniform Civil Code for all religions, and why feminists largely oppose this code. Current political leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have revived the issue as a means of presenting themselves as secular and pro-woman, while many feminists challenge the Hindu nationalist ideologies behind their support of the code.

My research participants in Hyderabad spoke about common associations between Islam and the abuse of women, most of the resulting conversations followed two primary threads – one being an insistence upon the ubiquity of violence in (almost) all homes, and the second being an emphasis upon the “mis-use” of religious or cultural norms within patriarchal structures. Farida described both of these issues to me. Still wearing the long black robe of her burkha over a colorful sari poking out near her ankles, and with her head covering pulled off to rest around her shoulders, Farida spoke confidently about Muslim women’s experiences in the Old City and the various basti neighborhoods that Healthy Families’ field workers canvass daily. As a senior counselor managing dozens of field staff, Farida draws upon over fifteen years of experience as a vocal and visible advocate for peace both within families and between religious communities in the city. In the course of our conversation on a relatively cool September morning in HF’s Falaknuma office, Farida articulated a number of differences in women’s experiences of violence in Hyderabad. Yet, she also insisted:

“Domestic violence is such a prominent aspect of almost every home that women are able to empathize and understand it at a deeper level – there is equality at that level – of violence. Thus the community ladies understand the importance of curbing this violence and usually the courageous ladies try to stop the violence, but there are some ladies who think it is not their problem so they just avoid getting involved, especially when there is a possibility of an abuser saying that ‘this is my problem and why would you want to get involved?’”

Farida spoke of women’s deeper understanding of gender violence as a form of shared oppression, but also as a common experience that some women rally around to resist patriarchal structures. Yet her narrative of (anti)violence does not slide into a romanticized account of sisterhood, nor of community. Rather, Farida articulates the complex intersections of community spaces, shared gender identity, familial obligation, and patriarchal distortion of religious and

cultural practices. In explaining the latter, she describes patriarchal dominance exerted by a ‘community of men’ who bind women to a system built upon misinterpretations of faith that benefit male power:

There are different kinds of violence – majorly the problem is with the system. System of four marriages, of talaq (divorce), purdah (veiling) – they misuse all of it. As they say, a community of men - they do as they please. They use the system for their own convenience. They listen to half of what Quran says and leave the rest. They go for four marriages because it is in Quran but they do not pay attention to what the Quran says about how you as a husband should treat all of them [wives] equally. Which means this is not religion they are following – they [men] just take up whatever suits them and leave the rest. For instance, Quran says, if the woman has ten bad qualities and even if she has two qualities which are good, according to Quran he should lead a peaceful life with her but that is not what they do. This is misuse of religion and this is the problem of the system.

Men are using religion for their convenience. We do not have dowry system at all but still they ask for dowry and if it is not given, the wife is beaten up, killing her, throwing her out of the house. We consider having a girl child to be equal to heaven. But now what is happening is, for a boy child, men go for second marriages. So this is absolute misuse of religion.

While Farida describes the religious and cultural practices that a ‘community of men’ misuse in order to justify oppressing women, she repeatedly emphasizes that these are not ‘pure’ or legitimate cultural/religious beliefs or actions. Rather, she describes how HF counselors work to re-educate those who mis-use Islam, drawing on religious teachings to correct them:

Yes, we do talk about religion. For instance in marriages we talk about – ‘for your own convenience, you take half ayat [Qura’nic verses] and leave out half ayat.’ In Islam any kind of violence...is prohibited so we make them understand in that way. So when we are dealing with Muslim communities, we talk about religion and make them understand that we don’t have it in our religion so do not do it...

...but basically every religion teaches us to respect women, which religion teaches anything opposite?!

Thus, even when serving some Hindu families, HF works to promote interpretations of religion that support equal respect for women. As Bushra put it, this is creating change by *“talking about the real interpretation of Islam”*. She explains that Islam *“gives very democratic, liberal ideas, but no one knows about this...[because] others are giving their interpretation through male privilege”*. The important thing is therefore to talk about “true Islam” in many different settings.

This use of religious teachings as a resources in familial counseling and peace-building emerges in practice – through Farida’s leadership and tutelage of younger field staff – but is also institutionalized within HF through their training manual. This document articulates the usefulness of Qura’nic teachings of peacefulness and mutual respect within marriage, and emphasizes that Islam does not condone violence against women. In response to the question/section heading “What is the Islamic Stance on Violence Against Women?” the manual reads: “Under no circumstances is violence against women encouraged or allowed. The holy Qur’an contains tens of verses extolling good treatment of women.” This section then goes on to directly respond to Qur’anic verses that have been “abused” and “misquote(d)”.³⁵ To promote this message, the manual actually draws heavily from the writings of Sharifa Alkhateeb, whose work also inspired the formation and underlying philosophy of (API) Chaya’s Peaceful Families Taskforce in Seattle. Alkhateeb was a prominent activist for Muslim women’s rights in the United States and the founder of a national organization, the Peaceful Families Project, which works within Muslim American communities by drawing on faith-based teachings and practices to reject gender violence and support survivors.

At OCWRC, everyday engagement with Muslim communities relies more upon social and cultural ties than on explicit discussion of religion. This approach derives largely from

³⁵ Drawn from the Healthy Families’ training manual, published by the organization in 2012.

Rabia's early experiences with push-back around how their work might portray Islam, which will be discussed in more detail in the section below on 'cultural collusion'. While OCWRC draws less on religion and more on community networks and ties, in doing so they also demonstrate the combination of cultural resources and cultural critique in their anti-violence work. In their daily work, OCWRC staff draw upon their own social networks and social relationships established within basti neighborhoods to open conversations in door-to-door canvassing and to forge new social linkages by forming women's groups in different neighborhoods. Rabia described to me that people associate OCWRC with Muslim communities, and that this makes many Muslim women and families feel comfortable coming to them for help in situations of gender violence. Muslim social identity thereby figures into their organizing, even as they also serve low-caste Hindu women. While staff narratives repeatedly critiqued particular cultural or religious practices that are used to abuse women (such as customs around multiple marriage, divorcing wives, and dowry), many presented this as the particular challenges of their work with Muslim families in the Old City, but also insisted that domestic violence is everywhere, and is not only a problem for Muslims or poor people. Taalia is a short young woman who takes charge of things. She takes her work seriously and is not shy about sharing her critiques. She asserts that:

"Violence is everywhere and in every caste³⁶ ...in Islam the four-marriage system is approved, but this is misuse of the religion – they don't understand the conditions in which one is allowed to re-marry, instead they just blindly marry several women for their own convenience."

Here Taalia's narrative, based in her work at OCWRC and her own life experiences, mirrors Farida's explanations of how local patriarchies inflect religious practices, such that men exert

³⁶ Caste here may refer to both the Hindu caste system, as well as the distinctive forms of caste that operate within Muslim communities in India.

their power by bending religion for their convenience. Both women express an explicit difference between faith or culture, and misguided interpretations of these that oppress women. Taalia and her fellow field staff at OCWRC also offered narratives paralleling the canvassers of HF – describing domestic violence as a problem rooted in patriarchal structures and in financial precarity, and distinguishing these systems or men’s abuse of power from correct religious or cultural practice.

The U.S. and Seattle: Immigration, Culture, and Community Organizing

In the U.S., peace-building work in Muslim communities confronts a range of culturalist narratives that associate gender violence with the ‘premodern’ practices of both Muslims (as a homogenized, global mass) and South Asians (as a similarly homogenized cultural ‘other’). Often representations of gender violence in Muslim-majority countries or in South Asian countries cast a shadow of suspicion upon South Asian Muslim communities in the U.S. and lead to everyday microaggressions through which South Asians and Muslims are repeatedly asked to defend their culture and to speak on behalf of hugely diverse communities. In their work, API Chaya and PFT staff and volunteers take-on the stereotypes that prop-up culturalist narratives of Islam *and* South Asia, and work to differentiate between the mis-use of religion and culture, and the positive cultural resources that offer alternative paths for those that want to retain cultural belonging while rejecting violent practices.

Mariam, a former Chaya advocate for survivors and former community mobilization coordinator with PFT, described to me how mis-representations of Muslims and Islam create tensions in the work of organizations like (API) Chaya and PFT, which serve culturally specific communities but do not want to fuel stereotypes of these same communities as uniquely

oppressive of women. For example, in their trainings with service providers in mainstream social services and government offices, Chaya and PFT confronted this tension around what is often referred to as “cultural competency” in the U.S. anti-domestic violence movement. As Miriam put it, the challenge with such “culturally specific trainings” was to undo myths and stereotypes, whilst conveying the particular situations and needs of survivors of abuse in South Asian and Muslim communities:

“On the one hand, a big part of the training is – “Look, don’t stereotype our communities” and [we didn’t want to] pigeon hole them into thinking...our women are more oppressed than white women. But at the same time we have an agency that’s specific to us...It was really hard to know how to do that without being culturally specific and yet trying to get the message across that there is nothing really inherently unique here in terms of abuse. It’s just the circumstances are a little different, that’s it. They manifest differently.”

Mariam described, as did all of those who served violence survivors at (API) Chaya, the complex circumstances of immigrant women (and also often second or third generation women born into migrant families). These survivors face language barriers, isolation from wider society as newly arrived immigrants who often cannot drive or work legally in the U.S., and are often removed from their extended families and the social network supports they (or their parents) relied upon in their home countries.³⁷ For South Asian and Muslim survivors in the U.S., they also must contend with the fact that few service providers or public resources (including and especially the criminal justice system) understand the specific cultural or religious practices that men may (mis)use to abuse women. Therefore API Chaya provides culturally-specific services, geared

³⁷ A huge issue confronting API Chaya in their work with immigrant survivors is the precarity of women who come to the U.S. with VISAs that depend upon the work and legal migrant status of their husbands. The complexities of this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The shifting formations of community through migration will be taken up in Chapter 5.

especially for immigrant and refugee needs, and works to educate service providers and a wider public on the differentiation between the culturally specific needs of survivors and ‘culture-blaming’ when it comes to domestic violence in those same communities.

As a community-based organization, API Chaya has built expertise for best serving the needs and everyday realities of immigrant families and specific ethnic communities. This derives from nearly two decades of working with and on behalf of these communities. Most of the staff working directly with community members carry hybrid experiences and identities – as anti-violence workers and as members of the ethnic and religious communities they serve. These dual identities mean that API Chaya works *from* community needs and understandings, and brings expertise and insights on anti-violence organizing *back to* these same spaces and conversations. In this kind of community-embedded work, (API) Chaya staff learned over time that in order to mobilize people to address domestic violence, they needed to build and maintain relationships of trust and respect with various community members and leaders. One of the ‘founding mothers’ of Chaya, Seema explained this to me as a process of creating safe and productive spaces for conversations and community-based action in response to the realities of domestic abuse:

“Our work is to get our community members to really understand the realities and grasp the complexities of the issue, and to create spaces for them to do whatever they would like to do within those spaces. And creating the space was the biggest piece of it. For safe conversation and for people to say ‘okay, I can come here and I know I can say what I think and I’m not going to be judged for it and I can put my brain to work’ ...

...One of the things I’ve learned over time is that we do best when we approach the work with love and compassion. I know it sounds a little hokey, but if you approach the work with love and compassion and understanding rather than out of anger and guilt and negative feelings, you go a much longer way in reaching people because people feel that intuitively and on a gut level. And I think Anam’s been able to build a cohort of [PFT] volunteers and people who support this work because of that, because that’s the approach she’s used. And I think organizationally

too we've done that. And whether we've named it or been intentional about it, I think that's how the organization really grew."

Seema references, in this last bit, Anam's work with the Peaceful Families Taskforce since co-founding the program in 2003. Along with two co-authors from API Chaya, I discuss this process of building relationships with and spaces for community in greater detail in Chapter 5. The idea of compassionate and open dialogues, which Seema describes as foundational to Chaya's formation and development of their community mobilization program, forms the basis for PFT's organizing, at least in part, *through* cultural and religious institutions. This includes some formal institutions such as leadership structures of masjids (or mosques) and community centers, but also less formal social networks (of kin, friends, masjid community members) and shared spaces (often in homes or at special events). PFT draws upon Qura'nic teachings on peace and mutual respect in families as their approach to opening conversations about domestic violence within these spaces. PFT's program brochures – one for imams, another geared toward 'friends of survivors' with advice on offering support, and a third directly addressed to survivors – reference Qura'nic verses and explicitly signal the ways in which Islamic teachings promote peacefulness, mutual respect, and non-violence in families. These materials also explicitly discuss the strength that many find in prayer, understanding that this may well be a vital resource for survivors or their support networks as they work to stop the abuse and find the financial, legal, and/or social resources they need.

This choice to draw on religious teachings – and to situate anti-violence conversations within significant spiritual events, such as through PFT's yearly Ramadan outreach campaign – does make these difficult topics easier to discuss for those who are not accustomed to open dialogue about intimate relationships. However, API Chaya and PFT take this path in large part

to show the respect that they hold for the communities they work from and with. In my recent years working with the PFT on a separate community-based research project (on the role of masjids in building peaceful communities), I took part in a number of conversations where staff and volunteers reflected upon the importance of making cultural connections in this work. We discussed the ways in which drawing upon existing cultural resources demonstrates respect for the fact that some masjid members define their worldviews and selves through spiritual belief, and for others who find belonging and strength through cultural and community connections. This approach also recognizes the need for community-embedded approaches that show respect for groups of people and religious institutions facing considerable (often negative) scrutiny in the mainstream press and in political rhetoric and debates.

In interviews with current and former staff and volunteers with API Chaya and the Peaceful Families Taskforce, several participants discussed the importance of cultural spaces and resources, or in the case of my longer-term collaborators, they often referred back to our shared conversations over the years about this aspect of the work. Miriam described the benefit of small, close-knit cultural communities: “It’s nice to be able to have people in all these different arenas where you need assistance,” referencing the ways in which “community assistance” helps survivors to access much needed resources, whether that be legal assistance, financial support, or other social services. As an example, she explained that her husband, a lawyer who is well educated about domestic violence and connected to advocacy work, serves as a resource for Muslim families and communities on a pro bono basis. Miriam also talked about *zakat*, a obligatory annual charitable donation or religious tax mandated for all Muslims as one the Five Pillars of Islam. She said that this idea of “...having a pot of money that everyone gives to that’s for the community” is “pretty strong in Seattle area Muslim communities.” She and Anam both

pointed to some masjids offering zakat as a resource for women and their children in situations of abuse. Zakat is often collected at masjids and both imams and masjid boards decide how to distribute the money to those in the community who are in need. In this way, zakat is an institutional resource based in spiritual belief, which can help to meet the practical needs of survivors, as well as offering a tangible signal of community support.

While API Chaya and PFT staff recognize and draw upon the cultural resources of South Asian/Muslim communities in organizing against domestic violence, those I interviewed do not hold romantic views about culture or community. Along with several other South Asian Women's Organizations (SAWOs) in the U.S. (Das Gupta 2006), API Chaya works to counter pockets of their communities that claim homosexuality or queer identity are 'not South Asian' and merely evidence of 'corruption' of South Asian culture by Western extravagance. In parallel to OCWRC and HF's work in Hyderabad, API Chaya staff also see the ways in which abusers twist cultural practices or religious teachings to control women and to justify domestic violence. They point to these as misinterpretations and work to distinguish between cultural practices within which South Asian women often have agency, and those that become patriarchal tools of abuse. For example, recent attention and debates around "forced marriage" as a backward cultural practice have put API Chaya staff in the position of articulating – in public forums and trainings for state agencies and mainstream service providers – the distinctions between "forced marriage" and arranged marriage. The two are often conflated in popular understandings, and even by mainstream feminist anti-violence organizations. Untangling this culturalist linkage requires both a refusal of discourses that demonize all South Asian marriage practices, and a critique of the very real occurrences of forced marriage, which often include men claiming the practice has cultural sanction. Given these complexities, API Chaya and PFT navigate several

tensions around culture and violence – they serve culturally specific communities and educate others about those communities needs, but they insist that domestic violence is not a ‘bigger’ problem in ‘their culture’, whilst also articulating critiques of practices that deploy culture in defense of oppression. In serving South Asian Muslim communities, PFT draws upon cultural resources and strengths to articular and organize peace-building and to reject domestic abuse. Their work also begins from several important cultural critiques, but they build these into their work in *care-ful* and intersectional ways.

Strategic Cultural Engagements

Negotiating the contradictions of ‘culture’ for women, especially survivors of violence, is an everyday reality for women’s organizations working within marginalized communities. Anti-violence workers in Hyderabad and Seattle all described, in some degree or form, the ways in which they worked *with* some elements of current cultural practices, as well as *against* some other elements. At times, working with culture was strategic – in the case of Healthy Families and Old City Women’s Resource Center supporting women who were aware of how few, if any, options they had for a secure, safe, or survivable life outside of the social institution of marriage. At other times, in both places staff would utilize cultural resources such as Quran’ic verses proclaiming respect for women, or religious mandates and cultural practices valuing service, community, and providing for those in need. Yet negotiating ‘culture’ – both of the diverse and dynamic realities of social formations dubbed ‘culture’, and of the homogenized label put onto ‘South Asian’ ‘Muslim’ communities - sometimes also meant that OCWRC, HF or API Chaya staff *contributed to* constructions of their communities as culturally homogenous or as ‘cultural others,’ or that they avoided certain forms of public cultural critique.

Miriam touched upon this when she described the difficulty of being an organization created to serve a culturally specific set of communities (that fall under the banner of ‘South Asian’) and working to educate mainstream organizations or government agencies about the necessity of ‘cultural competence’ in serving the needs of survivors. Communicating some common cultural attributes can be vital – not only to assure that survivors have appropriate food or a quiet place to pray, but also because misunderstandings of cultural characteristics can be devastating. Anam described to me a very traumatic situation where a survivor – a woman who had recently immigrated from India to the Seattle area – was working with a victim’s advocate³⁸ in the King County court. The survivor was under extreme stress – leaving her abusive husband, trying to find a way to support her child, and enduring drawn out court proceedings – and she told this court-based advocate that she ‘just wanted to kill herself’. This statement – not an uncommon way of expressing distress in India – was meant to express being at ‘wit’s end’ and feeling hopeless, and was not connected to any real thoughts of suicide. Yet the statement triggered a call to Child Protective Services, who immediately took custody of the survivor’s child. When the survivor came to API Chaya, distraught, they were fortunately able to communicate on her behalf, to explain the cultural context for her statement, and to assist in the relatively swift return of her child. But these types of situations are exactly what organization’s serving culturally specific communities want to avoid – the retraumatization of victims of violence at the hands of criminal justice systems meant to protect them and provide justice.

³⁸ I need to distinguish – earlier! – that advocate in the U.S. means an NGO staff trained to support survivors through trauma, etc. and that in India, an advocate is a lawyer, so those do this support work with survivors are usually referred to as counselors. Counselor is not used in the U.S. because there are laws/regulations restricting who can use the label in this kind of work and certification requires education/training, etc. as formal mental health/trauma/substance abuse counselor.

These experiences – of survivors and advocates working with them – create an imperative for communicating the necessity for ‘cultural competency’ when it comes to supporting diverse survivors of domestic violence.

Sujata Warriar, whose words opened this chapter, has become a nationally recognized expert on cultural competency and has conducted trainings for both law enforcement and government agencies and mainstream organizations across the country. Sujata is also a leader within the national community of SAWOs and founder of Manavi, a nonprofit serving South Asian survivors of abuse in New Jersey. When she does trainings with SAWOs and other Asian American community-based organizations, Sujata draws upon the work of Uma Narayan (1997) to help unpack ‘culture’ and the positions that members of ‘other’ cultures find themselves in when serving as ‘representatives’ of their communities. She writes:

Most of us have been asked to present what domestic violence looks like in a particular Asian community. We get up and give a nice list of what it looks like. We give people lists of what they can do if they have encountered a Chinese woman, or a Korean woman, or a Cambodian woman; and we go away feeling pleased. These are the rainbow-colored panels that we have all been a part of. That is not to say that these lists do not have some value. But we must critique our presentations, examine our assumptions, and not connect back into a totalizing notion of culture. These totalizing notions of culture are in fact idealized pictures of our traditions; and as we know, traditions have both nurturing as well as oppressive elements. (Warriar 2015, 2).

She goes on to describe the different positions that community-based advocates often find themselves in— as **emissaries** projecting the best of their cultures to counter Western colonialist presentations, but in the process denying the realities of oppression in their communities; as **mirrors** that project back the realities of gender violence also happening in Western culture, but in the process becoming “trapped within the Western gaze” and being defensive even of problematic cultural practices; or as **authentic insiders** who “claim knowledge about our

culture, offer explanations, critique traditions, and engage in struggles for change” and thus complicate the picture of ‘culture’ but also often project a “single voice” on behalf of a “diverse whole” and create a “we” that appears “monolithic and seamless” (Warrier 2015, 2–3; Narayan 1997).

This last position sounds most appealing, as it does offer some nuance on culture, and draws on both the ‘nurturing’ elements of community as well as critiquing the oppressions that operate in distinctive ways through immigrant and culturally specific communities. Yet Warrier points to the issues with the ‘authentic insider’ position, and these are considerations that API Chaya staff confront in their work. For example, Miriam pointed out that the many diversities of spiritual practice within Muslim communities can be lost when trying to represent ‘the community’ or to work with leadership within masjids or community centers. These diversities can often translate into hierarchies as well – of who is more or less (legitimately) Muslim, and those hierarchies can be difficult for PFT to navigate, or even to be fully aware of at times. However, the combination of cultural resources and cultural critique employed by API Chaya and PFT *does* involve the kinds of reflection that Warrier (2015) calls for in challenging ‘totalizing culture’ and rejecting the presumption of authenticity that imagines advocates and community organizers as “true natives”. In fact, as discussed in the co-authored section of chapter 5, API Chaya’s visions and practices for engaging community in anti-violence work directly confront the complications. Their anti-violence model, based in survivor self-determination and empowerment, challenges cultural homogeneity or one-size-fits-all ‘fixes’. Similarly, API Chaya’s innovative visions for community empowerment challenge homogenous solutions or “totalizing culture,” by developing dialogue-based processes that draw upon community’s shared cultural and religious resources to address domestic abuse. This idea

challenges the notion of singular culture by prioritizing the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference with Muslim communities, as well as processes that include but do not rely upon community leaders alone. At the same time, it shows respect for the strength and centrality of community/cultural/religious identity in the lives of many survivors and community members more generally.

In Hyderabad, OCWRC and HF also confront the contradictions of ‘culture’ in relation to gender violence, and staff at both organizations experience pitfalls in this negotiation. In their work then can end up reifying the same cultural institutions that they claim have been corrupted through male dominance. Much of this revolves around organizational efforts to deal ‘practically’ with the realities of poor women’s precarity in the city, which both resist *and* reproduce patriarchal logics of family structure and gender roles. Both OCWRC and HF counsel not only women, but entire families. This model is central to HF’s peace-building work. One afternoon, I sat with a group of HF senior staff as they discussed how best to support survivors of abuse, when leaving their marital homes was rarely a viable option for women. One senior counselor present, a well-educated, middle class Muslim woman living outside the *bastis*, described the limitations for women in finding physical, social and financial security outside the bounds of marriage and family. Aisha and several other staff articulated a ‘practical’ reality that women may well be safer in marriages, even abusive ones – because of the restricted mobility of women in public spaces and their limited access to jobs and housing. The unfortunate reality of women’s vulnerability in public spaces and as independent from husbands or families came up repeatedly in my conversations with HF and OCWRC staff. Even for more women with more education and separate incomes, the expectation is that marriage and family *protect* women from violence. Bushra, a senior staff at HF who comes from a lower middle class, well-educated

Muslim family, summarized this concern in describing her own father's fear about her not marrying – she said that he worried about her if she was unmarried *“Because we are living in a society where marriage is the only option for a woman to be safe.”* Unmarried or divorced women in poor neighborhoods face not only economic insecurity and difficulty finding work, housing and food, but are also often targets of harassment and physical attacks. HF managers suggested that peacefulness in the home, built on mutual respect and coupled with education and awareness of their rights, offers women some empowerment within spaces that may well be the safest available to them.

In my interviews with field staff, I found more varied interpretations of this tension. A number of women doing counseling work with families emphasized the process as one of ‘fixing marriages,’ teaching communication and cooperation. Several staff emphasized teaching men to see women's points of view and to listen. Others insisted that all family members must compromise to maintain the marital relationship, including women who had faced abuse. For example, Hafizah emphasized compromise in the face of violence: *“In case if the other person is being violent, one should be meek to handle the situation but if both the parties are violent then it goes out of hand. It is important to be mature.”* In another instance, Amani explained that her family became more supportive of her work at HF (which they were initially skeptical about) when they learned the details of her new work. She said they realized her work was important because *“even our Islam supports uniting a couple rather than separating them.”* While linkages to cultural or religious values and institutions (such as marriage) sometimes served strategic purposes, such as quieting the fear of skeptical family members, they also sometimes meant holding back direct or harsh critiques of those same institutions. Some of these strategic or ‘practical’ narratives bore a strong resemblance to patriarchal notions of women's

accommodating nature or the supreme sanctity of marriage. This risks (re)imposing restrictive forms of community upon women, something Indian feminists have critiqued for decades.

Ultimately, however, organizational managers and most field staff at Healthy Families described their work in terms of following the decision-making of each survivor – whether she wants to remain with her husband, or wants to separate, seek divorce, or bring formal legal charges. While in most cases using the police and courts is a “last resort” for survivors, Maneesha, a founder and senior manager at Healthy Families, explained that if a survivor wants to press charges or go to the police, they support her by providing legal advocacy. This happens in very serious situations or whenever this is the desire of the survivor. Maneesha says, “...if she is at a risk of death, police are [a] resort we have to go to” and “if the girl doesn’t want to be in the family, we won’t put her in the family, but at least she has to be safe and we work towards solutions for that.”

On the one hand a ‘practical’ need to ‘fix’ marriages at times means that staff do not directly confront marriage as a cultural institution that can also be oppressive to women. While on the other hand, the everyday realities of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence in India also lead to an avoidance of religion at times. Rabia explained to me that while their reputation as a Muslim organization often made Muslims feel comfortable coming to OCWRC, that in general in their work, they “stay away from religion” as an explicit topic. This is to avoid conflict with male political and community leaders who see talking about women’s rights in Islam as ‘anti-Muslim’.³⁹ But the choice also stems from early experiences such as the Indian government initially (and repeatedly) denying OCWRC’s petition for a certificate to receive foreign funds,

³⁹ The alternative routes used by OCWRC to address both patriarchy and marginalization of Muslims will be discussed in Chapter 5.

because they feared that their work with Muslim women might be perceived to be ‘against the community’.

Rabia also explained that OCWRC stays away from explicitly taking on religion because if they talk about Muslim women’s liberation, then Hindu nationalists “will come forward” and they don’t want that association or to fuel anti-Muslim hatred or violence. While I was living in Hyderabad in the fall of 2013, a young woman was abducted from a local college and held captive by a man (who turned out to be a college employee), who repeatedly raped her. When the young woman escaped his captivity and returned home, her parents approached police and media. OCWRC staged a candle light vigil to raise awareness about this attack as an exemplar of rising rates of rape in the city. While we were planning for this event, Rabia explained to me that our slogans for the posters should be careful not to mention religion. It seemed that the girl was Muslim and her rapist Hindu. But Rabia explained that publicizing this would only fuel communal tensions and lead to more violence, which would not progress their efforts to end sexual assault. OCWRC’s avoidance of overtly religious engagements, and both OCWRC and HF’s strategic investments in the institution of marriage, all might be viewed as forms of ‘strategic cultural engagement’ or as ways in which these organizations fail to challenge those elements of cultural practice that are often highlighted in *culturalist* narratives of Muslim women. While in fact, they highlight the intersecting and relational forms of oppression that extend beyond culture to systemic inequalities based on gender, class, and ‘community’ (all of which will be taken up in the next chapter through examination of structural violence in Hyderabad and Seattle).⁴⁰ While there are important questions to ask about the effects of these

⁴⁰ I refer here to the use of ‘community’ in India to designate religious communities – most often Hindu and Muslim, as well as sometimes caste community.

strategic choices, the contexts informing them still point to the feebleness of culturalist portrayals of gender violence in Muslim families. Factors far beyond the spaces of the home or the dictates of religion also influence these strategies. And they can, in fact, be seen as reactions to effects of culturalist discourses that fuel communal hatred, such as violence and discrimination against Muslim women and men.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Culture?

I share the sentiments of all those who want to see a world in which women do not suffer as much as they do now – whether from hunger, poverty, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, or practices that compromise their health or dignity. Anyone concerned with women’s well-being must pursue moral and political ideals, however utopian. Yet as a scholar and someone who has lived with the kinds of women most often held up as prime and even exceptional examples of the grossly oppressed, I insist that we must analyze carefully the nature and causes of women’s suffering. (Abu-Lughod 2013, 11).

I have argued that ‘culture’ is far too complex and *live* to be solely an obstacle to women’s ‘freedom’, agency, equality, and safety. Yet the ‘culture talk’ and ‘culture v. rights’ debates of our current historical moment construct culture as something ‘out there,’ a problem primarily in non-Western, undeveloped, ‘premodern’ societies. The rhetoric of a ‘clash of civilizations’ fuels a reinvigorated Islamophobia that directly impacts, and often devastates, the material lives of diverse communities of Muslims across the world. Culturalist narratives, circulating through mainstream media, popular discourse, development discourse, and some academic research, represent ‘Muslim women’ (and ‘Indian women’ and ‘Third World women’) as a homogenized category of victims.

But grappling with the problem of culturalism does not mean abandoning critiques of regional patriarchies, nor analysis and action against gendered violence. Rather, as Sangari notes,

culturalism ‘complicates feminist attempts to critique violent practices’ (2), and necessitates a more careful and attentive feminist response to both the ubiquity and the particularities of gendered violence. My collaborative research findings build on critical race and postcolonial feminist theorizations that disrupt culturalist narratives and demand deeper understandings of the complex social relations surrounding intimate violence. Many of my interview participants struggle with, and refute, representations of domestic violence in their communities as solely or primarily a cultural or religious problem. They draw together cultural resources (including religious scripture and social network supports) with their own critiques of particular practices that some men defend as ‘cultural’ (such as forced marriage or physical abuse). Rather than ceding the ground of culture or religion to conservative interpretations, API Chaya, OCRWC and HF work to re-educate those persuaded by some men’s ‘misuse’ of religion to justify violence. They reject violent practices, but not the whole of their diverse cultures, which may offer sources of strength as well. As such, their engagements with culture, religion, and community don’t fit into a binary of romantic vs. cynical; rather, they approach these negotiations with a mix of pragmatism, strategic engagement or avoidance, and/or compassion.

As will become clear in chapters four and five, these (partial) reclamations of culture and religion, and repurposing of religious-cultural resources, are part of broader efforts to support women’s immediate needs and to build alternative, liberatory systems and social relations. While this does not amount to an outright rejection of ‘modernity’, or even of ‘Western liberal modernity’ entirely, the alternative visions and practices do suggest re-formulations of what it means to be modern (for women and families, and in relation to faith). This arises partly in response to the intersecting forms of systemic violence Muslim women negotiate, including uneven development and Islamophobia. While attention to the (legitimated) violence of Western

liberal modernity serves to disrupt culturalist narratives and to provincialize the West to some degree, it is important to always keep the peace-building and resistance work of women's organizations within the frame of view. This not only reveals the simplifications of culturalism, it also centralizes the agency of women even in the context of vast inequalities (of class, gender, religion).

In resisting violence, these organizations reject its varied and relational forms. Staff at OCWRC and HF identify financial precarity and spatial exclusion as sources of violence in Muslim women's lives. They point to how structural violences makes abuse in *basti* communities more visible, and makes Muslim women more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Plural resistance means rejecting all these forms of violence. Both organizations forward the idea that women's everyday lives and social status benefit most from building peace in intimate and public spheres. Peace-building as plural resistance reimagines "anti-violence" as everyday practices that address patriarchies, Islamophobia, and uneven development together. In the following chapters, I draw upon these narratives and practices of anti-violence workers in Seattle and Hyderabad to complete the second (structural violence) and third (plural resistance) pieces of my intertwined argument.

Chapter 4: Structural Violence & Vulnerability

“I do not know how many feminists who felt good about saving Afghan women from the Taliban are also asking for a global redistribution of wealth or contemplating sacrificing their own consumption radically so that African or Afghan women could have some chance of having what I do believe should be a universal human right – the right to freedom from the structural violence of global inequality and from the ravages of war, the everyday rights of having enough to eat, having homes for their families in which to live and thrive, having ways to make decent livings so their children can grow, and having the strength and security to work out, within their communities and with whatever alliances they want, how to live a good life, which might very well include changing the ways those communities are organized.”

*Lila Abu-Lughod*⁴¹

“I suggest that we need to examine the possibility of a ‘bio-militarisation of the body’ that occurs within neoliberal, securitised regimes. A bio-militarised body is one that must survive under conditions of perpetual control and surveillance, is subject to the constant material and symbolic violence enacted by the state, and lives in constant fear of being arrested or incarcerated. A bio-militarised body lives under a constant state of dispossession and with a lack of basic civil rights evident in the dissolution of citizenship in occupied or securitised zones. It is always particular dispossessed bodies – indigenous, immigrant, Muslim, raced, classed, and gender-marked bodies – that are...bio-militarised, never generic ones.”

*Chandra Talpade Mohanty*⁴²

As my analysis of culturalism revealed, mainstream discourses around domestic violence in Muslim communities misunderstand or ignore how structural inequalities shape domestic abuse. I now shift attention to the violence arising through systemic inequalities, including the

⁴¹ Lila Abu-Lughod, 2002, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 104 (3), 787.

⁴² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 2011, “Imperial Democracies, Militarised Zones, Feminist Engagements,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 46 (13), 78.

ways that structural violence increases the visibility of violence against women within impoverished urban settlements or immigrant communities while simultaneously obscuring the very role processes of impoverishment and Islamophobia play in producing violence. The complex realities of intersecting webs of violence in women's lives present a challenge to feminists, as Abu-Lughod articulates, to consider the ways in which global economic and political regimes shape vulnerability. Meeting such a challenge requires a shift away from prescriptive ideas of social change – through which white/middle-class/Western feminists tell Muslim women what their empowerment looks like. Instead, feminists need to look *toward* more self-determined modes of women's empowerment that don't presume shared understandings of ideas like "freedom" or "choice," and that actually create space for a more plural field of "empowerment" within which marginalized people define their own conceptions of the changes that are needed for them to thrive. This does not mean "giving voice" to marginalized women to "participate in" creating more "multicultural" or "inclusive" definitions of pre-determined values (like "choice") that dominant, mainstream Western or global feminisms have adopted from Western liberalism (Hodgson 2011b). Rather, it means a systemic shift that takes seriously women's own ideas of what they need and want and how they go about creating change, which may involve strategic alliances with patriarchal structures (such as heteronormative marriage) within practices seeking transformative change.

A keener understanding of the "neoliberal, securitised regimes" that (re)produce structural violence in Muslim women's lives paves the way for pathways of anti-violence that encompass more than interpersonal relationships and individual behaviors. As Mohanty suggests with "the bio-militarised body," state and structural violence also have intimate geographies. Therefore, anti-violence work that recognizes the operation of violence across different scales

(i.e. bodies, homes, communities, neighborhoods, nation-states, geopolitics, global development and capitalism) is better equipped to respond to the ‘global-intimate’ (Mountz and Hyndman 2006; Pratt and Rosner 2012) of both domestic and structural violence.

Postcolonial feminist scholars, Abu-Lughod and Mohanty foremost among them, insist that intimate gender violence too often becomes a screen that hides severe forms of deprivation, suffering, and injury that structure the lives of marginalized women. In the pages that follow, I draw out the contradictions of violence and (in)visibility further, attending to the daily realities of structural violence and precarity in the lives of Muslim women in Hyderabad and in Seattle South Asian communities. I maintain that this is not an either/or question – responding to intimate acts of gendered violence *or* to the systemic violence of poverty, racism, and xenophobia. Rather, my findings suggest that these forms of violence intertwine in everyday life, and that systemic violence shapes Muslim women’s vulnerability to intimate abuse. Removing the screen to reveal the realities of structural violence disproves the basic premises of culturalism, which actually works to produce *more* violence in Muslim women’s lives, rather than ‘saving’ them from domestic abuse.

Culturalism’s elision of structural violence – particularly of economic inequalities and Islamophobia in this case – covers over these forms of systemic, institutionalized violence, which are produced by structures of domination (Anglin 1998). In pointing to “gendered structures of violence,” Anglin (1998) and the authors’ writing for a special issue of *Identity* on ‘Feminist Perspectives on Structural Violence,’ draw out the ways in which the globalization of capitalism fuels “the logics of exclusion and domination” that underlie modern state governance through the deployment of difference within “new technologies of power” (146). In this way, Anglin crystalizes a long history of feminist critique that may not employ the language of

“structural violence,” but consistently has worked, along with critical race scholarship, to uncover the violent effects of systemic and institutionalized inequalities. I draw upon this scholarship, as well as that of Paul Farmer (1996, 2004, 2005) and Akhil Gupta (2012) in later sections, in order to theorize the systemic forms of violence evident in Hyderabad and Seattle, including uneven development, spatial dispossession, Islamophobia, and state violence.

In my analysis, structural violence can also be understood as those processes that produce heightened precarity in the lives of Muslim women. Precarity describes something more than a structurally produced vulnerability to the effects of economic inequality, to the indignities and suffering of poverty. All of us, as we are bound to one another through interdependencies of care, survival, and thriving, are subject to precarity. Yet, landscapes of social and political inequalities underpin uneven distributions of resources and rights, such that some lives become far more precarious, in both an everyday sense of struggles for biological and social survival, and in the sense that they are lives at far greater risk of premature death through events of direct violence (such as hate crimes, genocides, or war). In this sense, it is important to clearly distinguish between precariousness and precarity. As Butler writes (2009, 25-6):

“Precariousness and precarity are intersecting concepts. Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed. In some sense, this is a feature of all life, and there is no thinking of life that is not precarious-except, of course, in fantasy, and in military fantasies in particular. Political orders, including economic and social institutions, are designed to address those very needs without which the risk of mortality is heightened. Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection. Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized precariousness for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence who often have no other option than to appeal to the very state from which they need protection. In other words,

they appeal to the state for protection, but the state is precisely that from which they require protection.”

In this analysis, Butler also acknowledges that while most contemporary instances of violence have some relation to the political formation of the modern state, this is not to say that all violence “issues from the nation-state” (2009, 26).

Yet state (in)action shapes both domestic and structural violence, as anti-Muslim racism & Islamophobia produce precarity for Muslim communities in both countries, and deploy representations of ‘their violent nature’ to legitimize violence against them. The Indian and U.S. state each play significant roles in the production of both community-wide precarity and gendered vulnerability. In addition to the active state violence of the ‘war on terror’, state agencies and actors become complicit in forms structural violence targeting Muslims, often through *anti-violence* rhetoric and policy (both in counter-terrorism and against domestic violence). I unravel these contradictions of (il)legitimate violence by first examining the role of the ‘secular’ state (including the developmental state in India and the security state in the U.S.) in constructing belonging and exclusion for othered Muslim communities. Next I move to outlining how regional patriarchies interweave with other forms of structural violence in Hyderabad and Seattle.

Structural violence provides a theoretical frame for unpacking the ways that material and embodied manifestations of inequalities enact violence, showing how suffering and brutality provide evidence of the structured and relational production of differential deprivation and thriving. In this way, attention to structural violence provides a counter-narrative to culturalist accounts of intimate abuse in non-Western places and communities (i.e. India, Muslim communities, racialized immigrant communities). My empirics reveal the ways in which

regional patriarchies (as systemic forms of oppression) interweave with three additional forms of structural violence: (1) uneven development and geographic exclusion in urban space; (2) rhetorical, political and legal dispossession through Islamophobia; and (3) insecurity vis-à-vis the state, particularly in relation to criminal justice response to domestic abuse. First, I consider how uneven development and financial precarity intersect with Islamophobia to shape the lives of Muslims in Hyderabad and the peace-building work of OCWRC and HF. While economic inequality plays less of a role in producing precarity for South Asian Muslims in Seattle, I discuss how Islamophobia in the post-9/11 era intensifies as anti-Muslim racism in the form of both representational violence and physical attacks. Finally, I unpack the broad category of ‘state violence’ through comparative analysis of state anti-violence efforts in India and the U.S. In this a section analyzing Hyderabad and Seattle together, while I discuss the significant differences in state formations in each place, I draw the two together to showcase the parallel ways in which women’s peace-building work in each city grows out of attempts to build alternative systems to address domestic abuse given the overall failure of criminal justice systems and their authorization of state violence against marginalized peoples.

In Hyderabad, uneven development in urban space and the systematic marginalization of Muslims coalesce in the geographic exclusion of the majority of Muslims from wealthier areas of the city, which particularly limits women’s access to health care, education, and paid work, compounding their vulnerability to multiple forms of violence. The rise of Hindu nationalist ideology and political power in the past thirty years has fueled communal tensions and violence, creating an environment of fear and insecurity for Muslim communities. In this way, Islamophobia takes shape as the political and legal dispossession of Muslims and the rhetorical construction of a ‘Hindu (only) nation’. In Seattle, this first form of structural violence – uneven

development and geographic exclusion – emerges quite differently in relation to domestic violence. As a whole, South Asian Muslim communities in the U.S., while economically diverse, do not face the same degree of impoverishment and economic marginalization as Muslims in Hyderabad and India as a whole. Survivors of domestic violence often do face significant economic hardships, particularly immigrant women who wish to leave their abusive partners but may not have the ability to work or access social services due to their immigration status. However, relative class privilege mitigates this form of structural violence to some extent for South Asian Muslim communities in the Seattle area. For this reason, my empirical findings from Hyderabad figure more prominently in this portion of my argument. In Seattle and the U.S., spatial exclusion for Muslim communities primarily takes shape through Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, which fuel the political dispossession of and xenophobic attacks (both rhetorical and physical) against South Asians (both those who are Muslim and those perceived to be Muslim). For South Asian Muslims living in Seattle, structural violence operates through political rhetoric, state policies, and federal legislation that enact spatial dispossession based on racialized categories of difference. This exacerbates precarity for immigrant survivors of abuse, whose access to state ‘protections’ and support is further curtailed by efforts to “secure” U.S. borders against terrorism.

My collaborative, comparative analysis of anti-violence NGOs in Hyderabad and Seattle in this chapter extends through an examination of the distinctive state formations of violence response in India and the U.S. While state formations are quite different in each place, in my analysis of the third form of structural violence – insecurity vis-à-vis the state – I bring the two cases together to highlight the parallel evidence from Hyderabad and Seattle that demonstrates the significant limitations of criminal justice systems as modes of response to intimate abuse,

especially within marginalized communities. What might be termed ‘state anti-violence’ produces precarity for marginalized Muslim communities in unique ways in each place, but nonetheless reveals parallel situations of negligent, and at times culpable, state *violence*. Structural inequalities based in class, religion, gender, and race intertwine to produce violence in Muslim women’s lives through both failed and successful state attempts to “protect” them from violence in their intimate relationships. ‘The state’ is a multiplicitous entity very much at the center of contemporary imaginings of response to domestic violence. This includes various aspects and agencies of the state – the criminal justice mechanisms specifically charged with addressing domestic violence as a crime, government agencies and social services that survivors’ utilize, political rhetoric and policy-making, and individual actors in these bureaucracies. I combine a critical analysis of the limitations of these state mechanisms of response to domestic violence – particularly in their ability to create the conditions for long-term prevention and change, with a nuanced examination of the uneasy partnerships between NGO and state actors as their interests intersect in supporting individual survivors of violence. Despite the diversity of ‘the state’ and the “double agency” (Roy 2012) of a number of individual state actors, however, I document a pattern of state (or state-sanctioned) actions that promulgate state dispositions toward a status quo of “domestic-violence-as-reality” in marginalized communities in both the U.S. and India. These critiques of criminal justice systems in both India and the U.S. pave the way for alternative modes of response to intimate abuse in Muslim communities in Hyderabad and Seattle.

In the following and final chapter, I elaborate upon these alternative modes of response to intimate abuse – tying together my argument through an analysis of peace-building in Hyderabad and Seattle as forms of plural resistance that contest domestic and structural violence

simultaneously. I will demonstrate that beyond the important interventions of disrupting culturalist narratives and making visible the everyday, systemic violence of poverty and Islamophobia, my collaborative research in Seattle and Hyderabad demonstrates that women's multi-scalar peace-building work responds to these complexities of violence. Women's NGOs working with(in) marginalized communities to address domestic abuse identify the complex webs of violence shaping Muslim women's lives, particularly systemic forms, and they employ practices aimed at undoing multiple, intertwined forms of oppression and violence. In this way, my analysis in chapter five – including co-authorship with API Chaya colleagues Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi – works to re-establish the agency of Muslim women within my broader argument. Through their visions and enactments of peace-building, Muslim women in Hyderabad and South Asian/Muslim⁴³ women in Seattle offer critical insights for rethinking the tactics and underlying ideologies of mainstream feminist anti-violence movements. These forms of plural resistance do not arise in a vacuum, but rather in relation to systemic forms of violence. In this way, my analysis of structural violence re-writes both narratives of culturalism and 'plucky resistance' by framing plural resistance as always in relation to multiple axes of structural violence.

Legitimate Violence, Nationalism & the State

“The assumption in narratives about the elimination of human suffering is that moral progress is advanced when the violence of military conflict and

⁴³ I use this notation of South Asian/Muslim to mark the ways in which these are both distinctive and overlapping categories in my analysis. For example, many non-Muslim South Asians (particularly Sikh men who wear traditional head coverings or 'turbans') experiences the effects of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. In the case of anti-domestic violence movements, most of the staff and volunteers working with API Chaya's Peaceful Families Taskforce are Muslim, as are some advocates working directly with survivors. However, current and former staff of (API) Chaya have diverse religious backgrounds and spiritual practices.

dictatorial repression gives way to the nonviolence of international diplomacy and democratic politics, when harsh physical punishment of convicts gives way to humane confinement, when war gives way to peace” (Asad 2015, 391).

As I argued in chapter 3, (multi)culturalism has played a significant role in the contemporary nationalist imaginations of both India and U.S., as well as held sway in international development conversations around human rights and women’s rights. Multi-culturalism attempts to reconcile difference with rights discourse – to project national unity *with* a face of diversity – and thereby to prioritize the inclusion of diverse peoples into a whole, that while defined by its multiplicity, remains grounded in loyalty to the democratic state (Mitchell 2004). Multi-culturalism presumes that the democratic state is equally accessible to and reflective of the diversities contained within the nation-state. And a (perhaps unintended, though inevitable) consequence of multiculturalism as a nationalist strategy and discourse is the *exclusion* of those subjects who actions or existence challenge the supremacy or neutrality of the ideals of Western liberalism through which the secular state claims inclusivity and just governance. In this way, for Muslim subjects in India, and South Asian Muslim subjects in the U.S., belonging and exclusion are constructed as a choice – each nation projects a secular imagination that *can* include Muslim citizens, and the onus is put upon those subjects to claim their own belonging within the nation – to prove themselves worthy of inclusion. In this way, the stark realities of precarity and structural violence experienced by Muslim communities becomes naturalized through multi-culturalist assumptions of differential thriving. In India, inter-generational poverty among Muslims is linked to unchecked population growth, the disempowerment of women, and/or general cultural ‘backwardness’ (R. B. Bhagat 2001; R. b Bhagat 2013; Gill 2007). In the U.S., immigrants (who enter the country legally) are offered

inclusion through assimilation, and any ‘problems’ within those communities – including domestic abuse – are deemed “cultural,” and present a challenge to the ‘offer’ of inclusion.

Lowe (2015) examines the colonial archive in order to “understand the processes through which the forgetting of violent encounter is naturalized, both by the archive, and in the subsequent narrative histories” (2-3). She does this to dig more deeply into what she called “the economy of affirmation and forgetting that structures and formalized the archives of liberalism, and liberal ways of understanding” and argues that:

“This economy civilizes and develops freedoms for “man” in modern Europe and North America, while relegating others to geographical and temporal spaces that are constituted as backward, uncivilized, and unfree. Liberal forms of political economy, culture, government, and history propose a narrative of freedom overcoming enslavement that at once denies colonial slavery, erases the seizure of lands from native peoples, displaces migrations and connections across continents, and internalizes these processes in a national struggle of history and consciousness. The social inequalities of our time are a legacy of these processes through which ‘the human’ is ‘freed’ by liberal forms, while other subjects, practices, and geographies are placed at a distance from ‘the human’” (Lowe 2015, 3).

This histories underlie contemporary forms of state violence – including the production of poverty as a form of structural violence. As Akhil Gupta’s (2012) work demonstrates in India, while corruption may be a problem with state bureaucracies, it is not only corruption or a lack of care that subject poor citizens to continued structural violence. Rather, it is in relation to the *proper* functioning of the state – when it acts in its capacities of development (and security in the case of the U.S. (C. Katz 2007)) – that precarity arises for particular dispossessed populations (i.e. those that are expendable and/or a threat to the ‘nation’). This is also the paradox of state-sponsored anti-violence: that various state efforts to “fight” violence, from counter-terrorism to border-control to criminal justice responses to domestic abuse, not only deploy legitimated forms

of direct violence, but also rely upon representational violence to dehumanize ‘the enemy’ (i.e. terrorists, ‘illegal’ immigrants, abusers). These same state institutions charged with “protection” also become complicit in the (re)production of structural violence. Structural violence describes the mundane forms of suffering, injury, and loss that fade into the everyday (Merry 2009), making it difficult to tease out ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ from the jumble of actors, institutions, and inequalities. Yet there is an identifiable, if dynamic, relationship between state-sponsored anti-violence and intensifying precarity and structural violence in the lives of Muslims in Hyderabad and South Asian Muslims in the U.S.

Lubna Chaudhry extends Gupta’s theorization of structural violence beyond the terms association with suffering that results from poverty and economic inequality. While Gupta provides an intersectional accounting of poverty and the differential effects of state production of structural violence upon marginalized groups such as women and low caste people, Chaudhry argues for multiple axes of structural violence. Drawing upon feminist and anthropological extensions of structural violence (Anglin 1998; Uvin 1998; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), she uses the concept to include the effects of poverty as well as “the unequal distribution of suffering and brutality due to additional measures of social stratification, such as ethnicity, religion, gender, and age” (Chaudhry 2012, 219). For her own work with survivors of communal violence in Karachi, Chaudhry finds that everyday intersections of identity are mediated by structural violence emerging from “the shifting geopolitics of social stratification in a Third World urban centre” (2012, 195). In this way, Chaudhry extends analysis of structural violence in post-colonial South Asia toward a more spatialized theorization of intersectionality that not only traces the differential effects of poverty for different groups of people, but actually considers other axes of inequality as they intersect with poverty and create structural effects (i.e.

violence). These understandings of legitimated state and structural violence provide a basis for exploring the particular manifestations of structural violence in Hyderabad and Seattle.

Structural Violence, (In)Visibility & Spatial Dispossession in Hyderabad

If patriarchal systems are seen as structurally related to other axes of social division, rather than as autonomous or self-sustaining or epiphenomenal, then violence can be understood, at one level, as a connective tissue between patriarchal systems and other social structures: as a volatile node of containment, socialisation, or status quoism... (Sangari 2008, pg. 3)

In 2006, the Sachar Committee, commissioned by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, released a startling report characterizing the widespread discrimination and disadvantage suffered by Muslims in India.⁴⁴ The committee found that Muslims lagged behind other constituencies on almost all development indicators (education, employment, morbidity, etc.) and face higher rates of poverty. This data followed several smaller-scale reports from the 1980s onward, which document an ongoing decline in the socio-economic status of Muslims (Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012, 2–3). Research on the rise of Hindu nationalism in the past twenty five years, as well as on communal tensions and violence during this period, documents the social and political discrimination against Muslims within popular discourses and political rhetoric that excludes them from the authentically Indian [read: Hindu] nation (Hansen 1999; Hansen 2002; Jaffrelot 2005; Brass 2003; S. Kumar 2013). The Sachar Committee Report (SCR) provided a systematic accounting of the significance of *material* deprivation in the lives of Muslims (including lack of employment, housing, finance/credit, etc. and direct discrimination of access

⁴⁴ This was the first attempt by the Indian government to holistically assess the status of Muslims in India since independence in 1947.

in these same areas). The SCR and the debates it sparked, also showed that privileging identity and symbolic-cultural issues within ‘minority’ protection strategies, such as multi-culturalism, has clearly failed to create equality and well-being for Indian Muslims (Ali 2010, 65).

Hasan and Menon (2005) discuss the way that political discourses favor cultural difference as the dividing line between religious communities, which plays a significant role in the continued subjugation of Muslim women. As Hasan and Menon demonstrate, this focus ‘has left socio-economic status and gender under-examined in relation to Muslim women,’ and yet their recent survey data shows the much greater influence of poverty on Muslim women’s status (2005, 4-6). My empirical findings in Hyderabad also demonstrate this significance of economic inequality and material deprivation for Muslim women, and showcase the significance of the structural intersections of patriarchies with other systemic forms of social division. Gender violence cannot be separated from these structural inequalities that divide and exploit. For many Muslim women in India, depending upon the conditions of their diverse lives, gender violence may form a ‘volatile node’ (Sangari 2008) of intersection between multiple forms of control, exclusion and deprivation. In Hyderabad, I found that structural violence and spatial exclusion⁴⁵ produce significant precarity for Muslim women, which can increase their vulnerability to intimate partner violence.

As a formerly Muslim principality, Hyderabad has a larger percentage of Muslim residents than any other city in India (over 40%). While in earlier periods Muslims were more spread out within the city and suburban areas, increasing communal violence in the 1980s and 1990s led many Muslims to seek refuge in the Old City, where a concentrated community

⁴⁵ Another area of violence that is significant, but beyond the scope of my study, is *intra*-community violence – specifically that exerted by powerful local politicians in *bastis*, who control land and labor to large extents.

offered security. Currently, a majority of Hyderabadi Muslims live in the Old City, in other basti communities, or in smaller middle-class enclaves (N. A. Rao and Thaha 2012). The Old City is densely poor – with aging or non-existent infrastructure, poor sanitation, crowded neighborhoods, limited and mostly poor quality schools, a dearth of state-provisioned social services, few medical facilities, and few living wage jobs. Discrimination against Muslims in finance, housing, and employment has also been documented across the country, including in Hyderabad (N. A. Rao and Thaha 2012). Economic development – in the form of government provisions, amenities flowing from economic growth, and infrastructure renewal – has largely benefited Hyderabad’s ‘New City’ and elite neighborhoods linked to the successes of the IT industry (N. A. Rao and Thaha 2012, 201).

The everyday life of a majority of Hyderabadi Muslims is characterized by structural violence and spatial dispossession. As a characteristic built into systems of power, structural violence emerges from inequalities and increases as such gaps widen. In this case, structural violence takes shape at the intersection of uneven development and Islamophobia, where Muslims experience continued impoverishment, resource deprivation, and suffering due to systematic discrimination. Regional patriarchies interweave to heighten the vulnerability of Muslim women within these webs of violence (Hasan and Menon 2004; Alam 2008). Geographic exclusion from development in urban spaces limits women’s access to vital resources, such as adequate nutrition and health care, as well as access to resources that would supposedly improve their ‘development’, such as education and paid work. Rabia, the director of OCWRC, explained that this general segregation of the city – with Muslims living predominantly in the Old City for safety sake or because they are trapped there by poverty – has been compounded by the adverse effects of globalization. She has witnessed, over the past

twenty years, how development of certain areas of the city, particularly extending into the ‘outer ring,’ has further crowded the *basti* areas, for example by displacing villagers then have nowhere else to go, and push into the *basti* neighborhoods where mostly Muslims live. As Gupta (2012) demonstrates, structural violence also involves a biopolitical dimension, often arising from the very structures of governance meant to provide for the poor and marginalized. These are the conditions of structural violence within which Muslim women’s experiences of domestic abuse and resistance are embedded. The field staff I interviewed at OCWRC and HF who organize against intimate violence also confront this multivalent precarity and dispossession.

The majority of my interview participants in Hyderabad worked as ‘field staff’ for Old City Women’s Resource Center (OCWRC) or Healthy Families (HF), canvassing the *basti* neighborhoods where they also lived, or serving women who sought them out in their second jobs in beauty shops or food stalls. Most field workers live in the same conditions of structural violence as the women and families they support in their anti-violence work (though often with the benefit of greater access to formal schooling). In sharing their experiences – from their work as well as their own lives, a considerable majority of these participants emphasized the significance of financial precarity in the *bastis* and as a factor in domestic violence cases. They described how lack of family income created suffering in women’s lives, as women struggled to feed their children and provide for basic living necessities with the meager and often inconsistent incomes of their husbands. They described situations where men waste their earnings on alcohol, and called this failure to provide for their families “economic abuse”. Many field workers also explained that financial difficulties fueled women’s vulnerability to domestic abuse or hindered their opportunities for escaping. They attributed heightened family conflict to the stress of “financial troubles,” which increased pressures on men to provide and on women to make ends

meet for their families. Since poor, single women (particularly those with small children) find it nearly impossible to secure employment or housing, women experiencing abuse rarely seek divorce or leave their marital homes.

Fatima explains that Muslim women stay mostly in the Old City, adding: “one woman...tried to go the bank in a wealthy neighborhood. They would not let her in. She was wearing burkha and they thought she did not belong there.” The precariousness of structural violence, which is experienced by all those living under these conditions, also involves gendered spatial exclusion. While Muslim men have some degree of access to other areas of the city, Muslim women’s mobility is more likely to be contained within her basti neighborhood. In this way, regional patriarchies intersect with structural violence to significantly reduce women’s access to health care, education, and paid work.

Talking about the causes of domestic violence, Taalia describes the precarity of Muslim women’s lives in the Old City. She replies: *“According to me, first is poverty, second lack of education, and third, no mobility...Because of no mobility, there is no education and when you have a good educational background, you are bound to do some good work.”* She goes on to explain that when women do work, it is “menial labour” and that *“When she goes out for work and in case something happens to her on the road, she herself is held responsible for it as she chose to step outside instead of staying home – this is another kind of violence.”* I heard this narrative in several interviews, but also in the course of participant observation with HF and OCWRC. Staff described how Muslim women – both those they served as field staff and women in their own lives and families – face different combinations of poverty at home, lack of education for higher paid work, and restrictions upon mobility either to the home or the basti neighborhood – because their families fear for their safety and because men seek to control their

movements to protect family honor. In the case of mobility – anxieties for women’s safety outside the home are fueled by increased communal violence in the city in recent decades, but also reflect a ‘solution’ to anti-Muslim violence that reinforces gendered and sexualized notions of family honor and punishes women based upon their particular vulnerabilities to violence.

Structural violence and uneven development within Hyderabad serve to prop up culturalist explanations of Muslim violence and ‘treatment of women’ by shaping women’s vulnerability to gender violence, but also by increasing the *visibility* of violence in basti spaces.

In comparing violence between the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ cities of Hyderabad, Anees responds:

“There is no family where there is no violence, at least verbal violence exists. In slums, the issue becomes big and exposed. But in apartments, the domestic violence gets hidden as it becomes an issue of status and it spoils their image.”

Others echoed Anees:

Saba, also a HF field work, explained: *“Even in rich families, domestic violence happens but it is invisible.”*

I asked Bahar, who works at OCWRC in the Old City why there is domestic violence in some families and not others, and she responded: *“It is absolutely impossible that there is no domestic violence. It is just a matter of it happening behind the screen in some cases and out of the screen in others. In upper class families it happens inside the house whereas in the middle/lower class families, it happens outside [and is] therefore visible.”*

These women’s assertions about (in)visibility were given as context for their descriptions of the commonality domestic abuse within the *bastis*. They present the idea of heightened visibility of domestic violence impoverished neighbourhoods, as well as the idea that poverty produces vulnerability to domestic abuse and makes situations worse for women (more on this below).

They did not narrate this as a simple matter of *poor families* being more violent. Structural

violence increases the suffering and overall exposure to violence for Muslim women, but many of my interview participants were quick to clarify that domestic violence is everywhere. Aisha, a senior counsellor at HF and a Muslim woman from an upper class family, also described the greater degree of silence and secrecy surrounding abuse within wealthier families. She gave one example, where she and another counsellor intervened to provide support to a friend, a woman also living in a wealthier area of the city. Aisha described how they eventually involved the woman's parents, who decided to take the case to the police. But after all of this, Aisha explains, of course *“they hushed up the whole thing.”*

This heightened visibility of domestic violence in Muslim basti families, though directly correlated to their spatial exclusion and impoverishment, better fits simplified narratives of the ubiquity of ‘Muslim violence’ than the complex story told by women engaged in anti-violence work. Culturalist explanations rely upon this visibility – of violence, but also of Muslim women. In Hyderabad, Muslim women commonly wear burkha, especially in the Old City. And while many of them discuss the mobility that wearing a burkha allows, popular culturalist tropes in India associate this dress with a lack of freedom or agency. Despite their attempts to draw attention to socio-economic issues, local activists find that the popular conversation continually returns to burkha and other ‘cultural’ matters (Suneetha, A. 2012). This demonstrates the contradictions of Muslim women’s (in)visibility, discussed by Hasan (1998, 72): “The economic invisibility of Muslim women must be viewed in conjunction with their high political visibility...in the debate about...secularism versus communalism, and modernity versus communitarian traditions”.

Trapped within spaces of poverty, Muslim women often cannot access the resources they need. The financial precarity facing Muslim communities plays a significant role in the work of

women's anti-violence organizations in Hyderabad. Time and again, field workers explain to me that "financial problems" fuel domestic abuse. They describe their own struggles and those of the women they counsel. In these narratives, poverty looms large.

Neelam, a thin middle aged woman, often looks very tired until she turns her attention to you and her face brightens. While her posture may continue to project fatigue, she greets me warmly each time I see her and asks how I am getting along. Neelam's two daughters, also recently began working at Healthy Families and the three travel into the center together each week. They live in a peri-urban area just on the outskirts of Hyderabad, where Neelam has started an NGO that does vocational training for women. As women came for training and told of their experiences with domestic violence, Neelam decided she should be more educated on abuse and on women's rights, so she took up this second job with Healthy Families. In her assessment, families with more education are better able to solve their problems without violence, but she links this to economics. She says, *"Mainly when you are financially stable, problems do not arise."*

I chatted with Amina and Salma together, sitting in the breezy upstairs office of the Healthy Families' Falaknuma office. Both young women echo their fellow field staff - emphasizing "poverty" and "financial crisis" as main causes of domestic violence in their experience doing this work. They also add that they think education of both husband and wife helps a couple to handle conflict "maturely". Amina explained how economic hardship effects families:

"Cost of living has increased and the income is real low, this is one of the reasons [for domestic violence] and even if the man earns, he spends half of it on alcohol. And women are not allowed [to go] for education or working. They insist that ladies should be home and cook because the situation outside is bad. This is what is happening in the Old City. This single income by the man in the family is not sufficient for all the members

in the family. This is resulting in fight between the couple...Peace is brought into a family through not dealing with any kind of tensions like financial crisis... even if there is some sort of financial crisis then women should also be allowed to go out to earn..."

A co-worker of Amina's at the Falaknuma center, Naziah, also points to the influence of financial instability: *"Generally, pretty much every home which is affected by domestic violence has financial crisis as one of the main causes. For that, it is necessary for the society to create employment for people who face financial problems."* Amina and Naziah, and many of their fellow field staff, recognize that poverty greatly affects familial dynamics – producing extreme stress for both men and women, and often trapping women within volatile homes. Amina explains that within the financial precarity of life in the Old City, women's options are restricted by male authority. Men fail to provide sufficiently for their families, but then families will not allow women to work – they fear for women's safety outside the home and neighborhood, but also expect women to meet their obligations of social reproduction. Amina recognizes the many factors at play (i.e. poverty, alcoholism, patriarchal control, unsafe public space for (Muslim) women), and how they are interlinked. Yet she does not accept this as an inevitable scenario – she suggests that rather than containing women in unsafe homes (experiencing structural violence and domestic violence), families and society should allow women opportunities to earn income and create a better life for their families. Naziah, in a similar vein, does not accept that poverty must remain the status quo, thereby maintaining women's vulnerability. She instead insists that economic inequality should be addressed – that 'society' must create employment opportunities for those in need. Both women challenge existing structures – offering changes that they believe will make women safer by creating greater financial stability in their families. Their words offer examples of an underlying problem that Rabia identified – an organization like hers

(OCWRC) cannot address gender violence in a vacuum, because issues of caste and especially class are always present – she told me “*nothing moves*” without them, meaning that caste and class affiliation often define survival through informal social networks and even formal institutions of government.⁴⁶

Yet Muslim women do move within this fabric of everyday life – navigating structural violence and regional patriarchal norms, and strategizing their own survival and well as that of their children and families. The overwhelming choice of women served by both OCWRC and HF is to stay within their marriages and marital homes. Both organizations provide information about women’s legal rights and legislation such as the 2005 civil law - the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) and an earlier criminal law code, such as 498A, that can assist with cases of domestic abuse and dowry harassment. They also escort women to police stations if the women wish to file a case or seek police intervention in their homes. However, these cases are rare for both organizations, as most survivors they support do not want to risk the even greater violence and precarity of life as poor, single women. In addition to the conversation I had with senior staff at HF – described in Chapter 3 – a number of field workers also explained to me that Muslim women living in *bastis* have few, if any, options for survival and safety outside the home, let alone a flourishing life.

Amina tells me that as a mother of five, with a youngest child who is only 4 years old, it can be difficult for her to be away from home. In fact, when she took a job with HF, her mother-in-law initially complained about her working outside the home. But Amina explains that after

⁴⁶ Once again, it is important to emphasize that while Muslims experience structural violence through class, and may also through castes within Indian Muslim communities, this is not the same as the Hindu caste system and should not be conflated with the experiences of low-caste and formerly ‘untouchable’ (now Dalit) people in India.

she showed her mother-in-law that she had “money in hand” and that her salary would improve life for the family, her family is now happy about her work. As she tells me of her own experiences negotiating familial obligations in the home, Amina also insists that divorce is not a viable option for most women:

“Once a woman gets divorced, her life changes completely. Everybody looks at her from a wrong point of view and [they] call her a bad woman. It becomes difficult to her to provide for her children’s education all by herself. [The] future of those children gets spoiled, and when a father is present at least they get government school education, but without him everything becomes difficult.”

Meher, a more senior field worker at OCWRC, has dealt first-hand with this situation. Her face bears the scars of her own experiences with severe domestic violence, and while I never ask about these explicitly, she shares some details here and there during our conversation. Meher advocates women leaving violent homes and making their own way, but she knows that this is extremely challenging for poor women. She explains that a woman seeking OCWRC support in a situation of abuse needs to decide whether she “wants to lead an independent life, with or without divorce” or if she wants to stay in her marital home. Meher goes on:

“Even if a woman decides to live an independent life; first of all, her own family raises various questions and possible threats - how will you live by yourself? How will you decide for yourself? Second, our society believes that it is absolutely impossible for any woman to live without a man. And when a woman seeks a job to lead an independent life, she is faced with the dark patriarchal society- where the society thinks twice before hiring a single woman and male principals at school decide that a single woman who comes from a broken marriage is not fit to be a teacher at all. If she wants to work at a hospital, she wouldn’t be hired for her worth rather she will be asked about her family history. And if she has her child’s custody, that child grows up to demand a father and question as to how she managed to live by herself. Living independently is a good thing but the society is not willing to accept it.”

The combination of factors that make divorce an ‘impractical’ option for many Muslim women living in *bastis* – related to financial instability, lack of safety, and societal prejudice against single women – also affect women’s unwillingness to ‘seek help’ from the Indian criminal justice system.

One element of this is that lack of education and income limit access the few available legal resources. Both NGO legal advocates and the Protection Officer in Hyderabad who serves under the Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) reported to me that the majority of those women who successfully bring charges against their abusers are wealthier, middle and upper class women. In such cases, women often have familial and legal support in bringing charges at a police station. Farida, a long-time advocate for peace and women’s rights in Hyderabad told me that Muslim women in the *bastis* rarely seek police assistance in cases of violence. She explains that at police stations:

“they do not know about Sharia law, so they keep saying things like, ‘in your religion four marriages exists, beating exists and you folks just give birth to children and leave them’ ...usually whoever goes to the police station, this is the typical behavior one is encountered with even if you are a Muslim or a Hindu, unless if you offer money to them which is when it is a different scenario and (they) listen to you.”

While Islamophobia clearly operate here, Farida emphasizes conditions of deprivation and the treatment of poor people as crucial challenges for Muslim women. Rayna, a field worker at OCWRC, who has worked on several research projects in their Old City neighborhood, puts this in even starker terms:

“Usually people don’t go to the police station. People are scared of the police, so it’s difficult for them to approach the police. In one of the interviews we did, we had the same question, one of the woman said if that were to be the case for her, then she would prefer to die rather than go to the police station.”

In addition to forms of everyday harassment and dismissal found at police stations, for decades Indian women's movements have drawn attention to the widespread problem of custodial rape (R. Kumar 1993; Gangoli 2007). Women fear the police for good reason.

Police violence also often extends to Muslim men and other poor men living in the *bastis*, which can also affect women's hesitancy to call upon criminal justice responses to abuse. While I do not ask about her own experiences of violence, Abeera, one of the older field staff workers at HF, is very open about her own suffering. Shortly after we sit down to talk, her kind, wrinkled face falls and she begins to sob. She tells me how she ended up working at HF: *"I am a widow. I have two daughters, one of them is physically challenged. So they took pity on me and asked me to join here."* We go slowly, and as Abeera talks more about her work as a counselor, she wipes her eyes and her posture straightens somewhat. Abeera is proud of her work at HF and she tells me that she is especially satisfied that she helps people avoid going to the police. When I ask more about this, she says *"some people just approach the police station and get their husbands arrested."* My research assistant asks if the police station can be helpful, and she replies:

"Yes, but they beat up the men. There was this case, where we approached the police station and then we saw that the husband was beaten up by the police...It is better not to let the case go to the police station and instead we solve the problem by counseling."

In her experience as a senior counselor working with and training HF field staff, Aisha also sees firsthand the distrust of police, and how this is both gendered and particular for Muslim communities. She says that women only come forward with their problems at all because HF offers counseling and legal advice, but does not require police involvement:

"...people don't go directly to the police. The police would send them right back. Or they would be further abused emotionally or mentally. Police have a very bad reputation, no one thinks positively about the police at all."

When I ask Aisha if this is particularly so for Muslim women, or a general trend, she replies:

“[It is] more for Muslim women, because of this mindset, because again that the police force is communalized. So that’s why they wouldn’t go. But otherwise, also, the mindset that police won’t really help. Unless you know some big shot...because they’re not at all sensitive. I hear that they’re having a sensitivity drive among (police)...but I don’t know how far it’s helping...no, police is not a good idea.”

Aisha refers to the police force as “communalized”⁴⁷ as a signal back to an earlier point in our conversation, when we were discussing her peace-building work among Hindu and Muslim communities broadly (in addition to her work on familial peace-building). She explained to me that tensions have grown between Hindus and Muslims in the city and that many misconceptions operate on both sides, and stereotypes of Muslims abound.

This fear of a patriarchal, communalized police force – based in documented histories of police violence – also sheds light upon structural violence and spatial dispossession shaping Muslim women’s everyday lives in Hyderabad. As Aisha’s accounts reveal, this precarity also extends to more middle-class or upper-middle class Muslims, as communal violence and Islamophobia force them into impoverished urban settlements. This came up when Aisha was describing the importance of peace-building work starting with young people in schools:

“Because that’s where you start, right? And especially after the Gujarat riots, there’s just been so much divide between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Muslim people, especially in Gujarat, have been reduced to living in ghettos, regular building owners won’t allow them in their buildings, they won’t give them space, whether it’s residential or commercial space...Even in Hyderabad, not so much, but it’s there. Bombay and Gujarat is really bad.”

⁴⁷ Communalized refers to the ways in which tensions, conflict, and violence between Hindu and Muslim communities also infects governmental bureaucracies and institutions. Given the power of the Hindu right, and the current political leadership of the BJP (Hindu-nationalist) party, in many cases this can lead to discrimination against Muslims.

Following communal violence across the country and in Hyderabad, Muslims have sought the security of Muslim majority spaces, but across Indian cities, these have primarily been impoverished settlements like Hyderabad's Old City and other basti neighborhoods. These areas are known as 'Muslim areas', even though some low-caste Hindus also reside there. One Hindu field worker at OCWRC, who speaks the regional language of Telegu and helps with cases among low-caste Hindus and with Muslim families, told of her own experience with stereotypes about the Old City. She says that when she started working at OCWRC, *"My neighbors used to comment on my work that I go to Muslim bastis, and then my mother supported me."* She was not afraid to go to bastis, and her mother supported her, but others found her work troublesome because it is in poor areas dominated by Muslims.

Meher, on the other hand, encountered resistance to her work at OCWRC because she is Muslim and her family and friends worried about her working at a center where different religious communities intermingle:

"Before 2002 there were a lot of communal riots happening here, where a lot of houses were burnt and many people were killed. So my folks at home were absolutely against me coming here [to OCWRC] as people from all communities come here. After coming here I changed these beliefs of my own and of my family."

Communal violence has marked the landscapes of structural violence in Hyderabad – fueling increased spatial segregation of the city by religion (on top of existing class polarizations) and creating fear and a general wariness among both Hindus and Muslims about spaces where the other community dominates or where people from different religious communities interact. Yet, since the massacre that followed the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid, a mosque in northern India, the brunt of communal violence has been born by Muslim communities. And in fact,

referring to the conflicts that have followed in the past two decades as ‘riots’ (as many do) implies a degree of mutual violence that denies the reality of the “pogrom-like killings and cold-blooded massacres” that have actually taken place primarily *against Muslims* (Alam 2010, 205).

These historical relationships of deprivation, communal violence, and discrimination for Muslim communities are also being re-formulated in the contemporary period through a reinvigorated Islamophobia in India – affected by global events like 9/11 in the U.S., as well as local events like the Mumbai attacks of 2008 (Singh 2009; Sayyid and Vakil 2011). In May 2013, Bushra moved to Hyderabad from Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) in northern India and some months later found a position as a program manager at Healthy Families, making the connection through a local interfaith peace-building organization in the Old City. Bushra tells me she is 30 years old and “belong[s] to a very rural background,” but also to a “very liberal family,” with a father who “was very keen to give education to us”. Bushra is both an anti-violence worker, committed to women’s rights and to equality across differences of gender, religion, caste, and class, as well as a member of Muslim communities in rural Uttar Pradesh, the U.P. capital Lucknow, and now in Hyderabad. While she is newer to the Hyderabad Muslim community, she describes family ties in the city and her cousin’s work in promoting “progressive” approaches to the “true Islam” that does not oppress women. Based on her work, life, and social networks across these places, Bushra observes how long-standing structural violence and recent exacerbations of “Muslim phobia” interpolate to create greater precarity for Muslims in India:

There is this “game [in India] to brand Muslims as terrorists. After 9/11 there is a worldwide Muslim phobia [and the] situation changed completely globally...In India also, our police and intelligence agencies took up these ideas – before, Muslims are deprived and poor, but this whole labeling as terrorists has made things a lot worse...Now [Muslims] are facing dual oppression – as minority, and now the suspicion mixes with it...It’s everywhere, whether Hyderabad or U.P., [there’s] no difference.”

While many of my conversations with anti-violence workers in Hyderabad unearthed more indirect and invisible ways that structural violence targets Muslims and thereby subjects Muslim women to increased (vulnerability to) violence, Bushra made direct linkages between state-propagated Islamophobia and Muslim communities' responses to domestic violence. As she talked about Muslim phobia and its effects on Muslims' lives in India, I asked if there was any effect on how response to domestic violence takes shape. She replied that yes,

“Now Muslims are more closed toward their issues. To save their identity, they are now a more closed community. Because outside they are not welcomed. They are hiding their problems, especially their domestic and cultural practices. Initially there were many Muslim women groups demanding changes to Sharia (to codify in order to protect women) and Muslim personal law...But now what happened after communal carnage and terrorism things, they are scared...Because they are targeted – by judiciary, right wing groups, etc. If a Muslim man or women go to police station [they are faced with] remarks about terrorists and other stereotypes...[the] judiciary is also very biased against the Muslim community in India. A lot of youth [are] picked up, no charges [are] proven, but [they are] held for 8-10 years, so their lives are changed forever. [The] situation is very complex, because [Muslims] are not getting any rights, but [the] community itself is not raising its voice. The reforms completely stopped right now in Muslim community. Because the community is closed right now.”

As Bushra's analysis suggests, violence in the lives of Muslim women in Hyderabad stems not simply from their religious or cultural belongings, but rather from complex formations of structural inequality. Domestic violence forms a 'connective tissue,' as Sangari says, between regional patriarchies; uneven development and stark class inequalities; and Islamophobia, anti-Muslim violence, and counter-terrorism – all of which intersect to severely limit women's mobility and agency. Yet, in spite of these limitations, HF and OCWRC actively disrupt culturalist tropes of abused and passive Muslim women. They work to re-educate those who

misuse Islam to justify the abuse of women, they exercise agency and create pathways for others to do so, and in their movements across the city – for meetings, candlelight vigils, protests – they claim public space as visibly Muslim women who are also agents of anti-violence.

Structural Violence in Seattle: Islamophobia, Immigration, and Political Dispossession

“When we consider the narratives...that turn dispossession into a civilizing move, we must do so conscious of empire’s culture of exception, whereby whole populations are abandoned as surplus or unwanted. The eviction of groups of people from political community begins with their difference, coded as an incomplete modernity that poses a threat to the nation. While nationalism has always demanded the stigmatization of the foreigner, increasingly that stigmatization carries with it the probability that the stigmatized group will be literally expelled (deported), marked permanently as undeserving of the full benefits of citizenship, or abandoned” (Razack 2007, 84)

The precarity produced in Hyderabad – by uneven development and geographic exclusion in urban spaces – is significantly shaped by discrimination against Muslims in India. While the use of ‘Islamophobia’ is relatively recent in India (Singh 2009), longer histories of communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, and several examples of extreme communal violence primarily targeting Muslims interweave with institutionalized discrimination in housing and employment to form a longer history of inequality that scholars and policy makers are just beginning to document (for example in the 2007 Sachar Committee Report and in the Gayer and Jaffrelot 2012 collection). In the impoverished urban settlements where OCWRC and HF work, the effects of these structural processes are felt and described as an extreme financial precarity that causes suffering in Muslim women’s lives and heightens stress and anxiety that fuel familial conflict, as well as a kind of boundedness, a sense of being trapped or limited to *basti* spaces and

therefore barred from access to better schools, higher quality health care, higher paying jobs, better housing, etc.

Comparing this landscape of structural violence with the conditions of structural violence shaping the lives of South Asian Muslims in Seattle presents significant contrast as well as some parallel elements. Most significantly, the comparison reveals the extent of contemporary reinvigorations of Islamophobia across the world. While relative class privilege protects many South Asian Muslims in the Seattle area from the kinds of living conditions and spatial exclusion most Hyderabadi Muslims endure, this does not mean that South Asian Muslims do not experience structural violence. Rather, the landscapes of structural violence for Seattle-area South Asian Muslims are formed through representational violence and anti-Muslim racism that sparks both hate speech and physical violence. Such landscapes are marked by a spatial exclusion born of rhetorical and political dispossession – an exclusion of Muslims from full humanity and full citizenship in the modern nation-state. Thus, both the contrasting forms of structural violence shaping Muslim lives in Seattle and Hyderabad, as well as the shared precarity that both sets of communities face, exposes the ways in which longer histories of Muslim exclusion bear out in current forms of unabashed Islamophobia. These realities arise in relation to current geopolitics, but also suggest the durability and dynamic nature of Orientalism and the racialized hierarchies of modernity.

For South Asian Muslims Americans, precarity arises primarily from nationalist discourses, policies, and laws that reduce their rights-bearing capacity and cast suspicion upon them through both official state channels (i.e. detention, surveillance) and what Cindi Katz (2007) calls “banal terrorism,” or everyday reminders of the constant threat of terrorism. Spatial dispossession operates through the legal dispossession of counter-terrorism laws, as well as

rhetorical and political dispossession through anti-Muslim racism and anti-immigrant xenophobia (i.e. hate crimes, political speeches, etc.) (D. Kumar 2010, 2012; Razack 2007). In API Chaya's work, these landscapes of structural violence are primarily felt or revealed through South Asian Muslim women's experiences of precarity as racialized immigrants in the U.S.

The history of South Asian immigration in the Pacific Northwest (PNW), including Seattle, reveals a longer trajectory of discrimination and exclusion, which has intensified through more recent linkages to Islamophobia. Early 20th century migration of South Asians to the PNW came primarily through Vancouver, British Columbia and involved men coming mostly on their own (without wives or families) for work, which often meant laboring in the region's dominant industry at the time – lumber. The most widely reported and large scale incident of discrimination during this period was the “Bellingham riots” of 1907, during which 200 South Asian men (primarily Sikh men wearing traditional head coverings) who had come to the area to work in lumber mills, were attacked by a mob and then held in the local jail for ‘their own protection’. Upon release, the labors quickly departed the area, returning to Vancouver. This exemplified the anti-immigrant sentiment of the time, which was also encoded into law through the Asian Exclusion Acts, which aimed to significantly curtail or prohibit immigration of Asian peoples from a number of countries and regions and which were in effect from about 1882 through World War II. During the early 20th century, however, many South Asian immigrants continued to seek work and education in the PNW and also resisted the anti-immigrant prejudice they faced, forming cross-class alliances through such efforts at the Gadar movement (Bhatt and Iyer 2013, 30–45). In 1965 the Hart-Cellar Act (also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act) removed many of the restrictions on Asian immigration and a larger wave of South Asian migration to the U.S. and PNW began. While this marked the beginning of a more ‘welcoming’

period for South Asian immigration, this primarily applied to educated elites. As Bhatt and Iyer (2013, 16) put it, in addition to regional histories “...American social and political forces have strongly shaped the experience and formation of South Asian communities in the Pacific Northwest. Carefully crafted immigration, education, and labor policies in the United States that have ensured the migration of highly educated and middle-class individuals must also be considered vital factors.”

Prashad (2012) has argued that the generation of South Asians that began migrating to the U.S. in 1965 sought out comfortable middle-class lives and eschewed politics. He and others (Bhatt and Iyer 2013 for example) suggest that this generation and their children were awoken to political consciousness by the racism targeted at their community following 9/11. While I think these assertions overlook the significance of South Asian Women’s Organizations (SAWOs) political work in the decade or two preceding 9/11 (much of which was informal and ‘feminized’ political labor), my own research in Seattle does support this broader trend of an intensification of public, political action emanating from South Asian American communities in the early 2000s.

The precarity of Muslim American and South Asian American communities came into stark view following 9/11. Immediately after that widely known and grieved tragedy followed a series of less visible tragedies in which Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim were targeted with hate violence – in the form of speech and physical violence, including multiple murders. In the week after the event – from September 12th-17th, 2001 – 645 incidents of biased attacks (verbal and physical) against those perceived to be Muslim or ‘Middle Eastern’ were reported by

local news and other media sources in major cities across the U.S., including three murders.⁴⁸ While Muslim leaders and communities came out strongly condemning the attacks, and U.S. political leaders, including President George W. Bush, cautioned equating ‘terrorists’ with the average Muslim (Curtis 2009, 98–99), both hate violence and hate speech continued to be targeted at those perceived to be Muslim.⁴⁹ In this sense, 9/11 marked a significant shift in the forms of discrimination faced by South Asian Americans *and* in Islamophobia in the U.S. The ‘model minority’ status enjoyed by many South Asians, particularly those with the additional benefit of class privilege, suddenly came into question and did not protect members of this community from physical and verbal violence motivated by racism and Islamophobia (Prashad 2012). Many South Asians (as well as people of Arab and Middle Eastern descent) faced violence regardless of whether or not they practiced Islam – based upon their style of clothing, the color of their skin, the spelling of their names, or their accented English (SAALT 2001, 2014). In this way, the highly racialized thinking underlying Orientalism (Said 1979, 1993), which interweaves religious, cultural, and racialized representations of difference and non-Western being to produce the Muslim “other”, came to the fore in a form of Islamophobia perhaps best characterized as “anti-Muslim racism”. I employ this terminology of anti-Muslim racism in order to emphasize the convergence of religion and race in the targeting of both Muslims, and anyone perceived to be Muslim (which has included South Asian Americans to a significant degree). In their reporting on the hate crimes and political rhetoric that I refer to as anti-Muslim racism, SAALT emphasizes that among xenophobic comments directed at South

⁴⁸ South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), September 2001, “American Backlash: Terrorists Bring Home War in More Ways than One,” pg. 3.

⁴⁹ South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), 2014, “Under Suspicion, Under Attack: Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States”.

Asian, Arab and Middle Eastern communities following 9/11, over 90% were motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment. In addition, over 80% of the incidents of violent physical attacks ('hate violence' documented by SAALT in the same report) were intended as attacks on Muslims.⁵⁰ The reality that many such attacks were actually directed at non-Muslims reveals the racism and xenophobia built into these hate crimes and hate speech. Commenting on the eviction of Muslims from political community following 9/11, Razack writes: "we are witnessing the consolidation of a racially ordered world" (2008, 6).

At the same time that South Asian/Muslims faced hate speech and violence from the general public, and xenophobic rhetoric from politicians, further suspicion was cast upon these communities by the actions of the U.S. state (Mathur 2006; D. Kumar 2010). In the two months following September 11, 2001, thousands of people – predominantly men of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent – were questioned by U.S. authorities, often the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at the direct of the Department of Justice (Mathur 2006). This questioning and detention led to the arrest and incarceration of around 1,200 non-citizens, most of whom were held on immigration violations (Mathur 2006). Investigations of these processes of questioning and detention by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and several scholars (Mathur 2006; Hashad 2004; Prashad 2012) has revealed that U.S. government agencies made arbitrary decisions regarding whom to question or detain. Many of these detainees were held without charges, were not told why they were being held, and were denied access to lawyers. Families were not informed of their loved ones' detentions. If struck fear into many South Asian Americans and created a sense of 'disappearances' from their community at the hands of the U.S. state (Mathur 2006). At the same

⁵⁰ Ibid, pg. 2-3.

time, this wave of detentions cast wider public suspicion upon South Asians, Arabs, and Middle Eastern people through a demonstration of the U.S. government's own distrust of these communities (Curtis 2009, 100). Writing on the suspension of rights during response to 9/11 explained as a consequence of the "deadly threat [to] the nation", Razack asserts that such government responses "naturalize the suspension of rights and the rise of anti-Muslim racism in the post-9/11 period, uncoupling them from the past and, significantly, from the *ongoing* management of racial populations of which they are a part" (2008, 6).

In Seattle, members of the Chaya community quickly rallied their networks to support South Asian Americans, Muslim and Arab Americans, and all those being targeted with this highly racialized violence. Chaya's networks and previous activism contributed significantly to the quick response of early activism, including the formation of an organization called the **Hate Free Zone**, founded by Pramila Jaypal. One activist involved explained that while the initial conversation with the Chaya board included some people expressing reservations about the organization's role, "*at the same time there was a very clear sense that the South Asian community was being deeply targeted*" and this proved to be an impetus to mobilize support. This was important because Chaya staff and volunteers provided "*a lot of expertise in terms of how you deal with a helpline, with people who need assistance, with victims of violence.*" Organizers were able to set up a press conference within 24 hours of the 9/11 attacks, and the calls activists received regarding the subsequent attacks on Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. One person centrally involved described this range of issues and Hate Free Zone's work in relation to four main areas of anti-Muslim racism and anti-immigrant backlash – everyday verbal harassment, physical attacks on individuals, a shift in general attitudes toward Muslims (toward a more openly hostile Islamophobia), and finally, coordinated government actions

targeting Muslims. She explained that there was: “a lot of verbal harassments of kids in schools, of women in the street...[I got] a call from a school teacher...in the Rainier Valley who was just in tears [because] Muslim families [were] pull[ing] their kids out of school because they didn't want them to have to deal with all the harassment getting on the bus and going to school.” The activist goes on to paint a picture of the forms and intensification of Islamophobia in the Seattle area:

“...a lot of our early work at Hate Free Zone was around kids who were being bullied and that continued – the Sikh boys wearing turbans...people were calling them Osama Bin Laden and things like that...so, there was the verbal piece, there was the physical harassment – people were reporting they had stones thrown at them...but then there was this less tangible but equally damaging and actually much longer lasting than the physical, was this change in how people thought about Muslims...it's not that it was a change, in that I think people probably had a lot of questions about Muslims before, but I also think that 9/11 raised it to a different level, and if they already had negative preconceptions, it gave the rational to say something. And that kind of continued then and moved into government action. So the first two were really around individual actions against other individuals, but then a whole new scope of work developed around government actions that targeted Muslims and particularly people from certain countries...A series of government programs like the special registration of Arab and Muslim men, the federal raids on Muslim shops because they were supposedly linked to money transfer and terrorist entities...and then workplace discrimination, we started dealing with that...I think what we saw initially was individual actions against another, which you could kind of say ‘well, 9/11 was such a shock and these things do happen, we don't like it but they do happen sometimes in the moments after an event like this’ but what followed, what ensued was...was a coordinated attempt by the government, it was very systematic...and I think the underlying views of Muslims were cemented in people, so people didn't really think some of those things were that bad – ‘yeah we should deport them, we should finger print them, we should register them’ and the ‘them’ was almost always Muslims...”

While several local activists I interviewed noted this intensification of Islamophobia following September 11, 2001, they also described the continuation of anti-Muslim racism into the present. Many men who were picked up, interrogated, and registered under the Department

of Justice’s “special registration” program are still dealing with the repercussions of that labeling. More than a decade after 9/11, the Washington State chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-WA) continues to handle cases of anti-Muslim discrimination and bias incidents, actually seeing their cases more than double between 2010 and 2011, from 97 reported incidents to 202.⁵¹ These numbers are also reflected in national trends – as CAIR-National, which reported a 14% decrease in anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2008, has since recorded a spike in Islamophobic violence and attacks in 2009 and again in 2010. CAIR attributes these recent intensifications to “anti-Muslim fears promoted during the 2008 presidential campaign, the change in national attitudes following President Obama’s election, and the manufactured Park 51 (‘Ground Zero Mosque’) controversy.”⁵² The CAIR-WA 2011 report lists a number of other national issues that fueled Islamophobia. However, their report primarily works to make visible the everyday violence Islamophobia creates for Muslim Americans:

“CAIR-WA received reports from American Muslims of being told by passersby to ‘go back’ to their country, asked where they are from, told by medical school admissions interviewers that they are ‘exotic’, or questioned about the oppression of women. Employers have reportedly harassed and mocked employees for taking time off for prayer, filed complaints against employees for being “grumpy” during Ramadan, and fired employees for “suspected terrorist activity” without evidence. These blatant acts of discrimination effect the livelihood of targeted individuals – people have lost their jobs, stopped attending school, or stopped traveling to visit family or friends. Many complainants reported the effects of discrimination on their diets, sleeping patterns, productivity and overall well-being. Discrimination against and fear of Islam and Muslims is not

⁵¹ This includes only those cases reported to CAIR-WA. The vast increase in 2011 is partly attributed to the hiring of a full-time civil rights program coordinator at CAIR who could follow up on such cases, but also mirrors up ticks in Islamophobia cases documented by CAIR across the country. Council on American-Islamic Relations — Washington State Chapter (CAIR-WA), August 22, 2012, “2011 Civil Rights Report: The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the Northwestern United States.”

⁵² Ibid, pg. 3.

simply provoking a battle over rhetoric or philosophy; it has a grave impact on the quality of American Muslims' lives."⁵³

The reinvigoration of Islamophobia since 2001, and its particular manifestations as anti-Muslim racism, have had wide-ranging effects on multi-ethnic Muslim American communities, and upon South Asian American communities as a whole (including non-Muslims). For survivors of violence and the field workers at API Chaya supporting them, Islamophobia can be seen to intensify the systemic violence of the immigration process. A majority of the survivors served by API Chaya, including South Asian Muslim women, are recent immigrants or refugees, who have come to the U.S. within the past 10-15 years, or very recently within the past two years.

In her many years working with survivors of abuse in South Asian immigrant communities, Anam sees that isolation is the biggest factor influencing vulnerability to domestic violence. Over many different conversations, Anam explains to me that men often come to the U.S. before their wives (or marry a woman in India or Pakistan after they are already living in the U.S.) and that when a woman comes to the Seattle area, she is then less connected into the local community than her spouse and often does not have family here (at least initially):

"...many, many women that we service, they don't have the family support structure and community structure to support them financially, and they don't qualify for benefits because of their immigration status, so they're really stuck..."

In this sense, then, even the relative economic privilege of South Asian Muslims in the U.S., does not entirely protect South Asian Muslim women from financial precarity. U.S. immigration law significantly circumscribes the options for survivors of abuse in the communities API Chaya

⁵³ Ibid, pg. 3.

serves. While emergency shelters, food banks, and private services are available to immigrants, they do not qualify for any public resources like food stamps, cash benefits, transitional housing, or childcare benefits. Malvika, a former community mobilizer in immigrant communities, including with South Asian Muslims, described additional barriers for immigrant and/or Muslim survivors, with language barriers and isolation being the “most salient” and other including: *“fear of the police and deportation and anything that comes along with that...going to a shelter and then not having halal food. Or just not being able to go to your place of worship because you’re supposed to be in a confidential location...”* In this way, leaving an abuser partner can further isolate South Asian Muslim women who do have some connections in Seattle (from their faith communities for example). Even those resources that are accessible – such as emergency shelters or the police – often have additional barriers for South Asian Muslim women, which can make them feel even more trapped when they do experience abuse.

API Chaya and other organizations serving immigrant women in the Seattle area – such as the Refugee Women’s Alliance (REWA) – also frequently encounter situations where immigration structures and laws, as well as fear of the police, intersect with the power and control dynamic of domestic abuse. Malvika, Anam and another advocate working with South Asian immigrants, Richa, also talk about the particular immigration laws that affect South Asian communities. During my years of training and volunteering with Chaya’s Advocacy Committee, I also learned about these programs - the H-1B VISA program, as well as conditional Greencards. H-1B VISAs are non-immigrant visas that U.S. companies use to employ foreign workers for specialty fields such as engineering, mathematics, and medicine. An H-4 visa is granted to dependents of H-1B visa holders, and is contingent upon the visa status of the H-1B holder (i.e. if an H-1B visa holder loses their visa, and therefore their legal status in the U.S., this

in effect cancels the H-4 visa holders legal status as well). Conditional Greencards work similarly for spouses of the primary person being granted immigration papers. Richa describes how both the rules of immigration, and language barriers that limit women's understanding in particular, often lend themselves to an abusive partner's tactics. Richa says the H1/H4 visa issue is big in the South Asian community in Seattle, and that for survivors she works with "*the abuser has a lot of control over the immigration process...they give their partners false information, suggesting that her kids might be taken away if she calls police*" and manipulating the fact that her immigration status is often dependent upon his papers. This showcases what Bhuyan (2006, 48) refers to as "the combined effect of interpersonal domestic violence with technologies of control, imposed through the state and manipulated by the abuser," which in effect "constitute structural violence". Bhuyan also conducted research with Chaya (prior to the merger creating API Chaya) and her research documents the ways in which federal immigration law, and both local and national enforcement of that law, produce precarity in South Asian women's lives – making immigrant survivors vulnerable to continued intimate abuse and subjecting them to structural violence. (In the next section, I discuss how U.S. anti-domestic violence legislation has attempted to deal with this issue, and how this has sparked anti-immigrant rhetoric from U.S. lawmakers.)

The immigration structures described above, and which figure in Bhuyan's research, affect all South Asian immigrants and have presented a challenge for Chaya's work since before 9/11. However, recent escalations of Islamophobia in Seattle and the U.S. have introduced new forms of structural violence into the equation – affecting all South Asians as a racialized immigrant group targeted with anti-Muslim racism, and intensifying the precarity of South Asian women who are also members of Muslim families and communities. Sita, an activist involved

with the Hate Free Zone and South Asian communities, explained with “the rise of Islamophobia on the one hand, and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, I have always felt that those two are deeply connected,” and she saw this play out with the passage of the Patriot Act and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, as well as a host of laws and policies that reduced the rights of both non-citizens and citizens based on their status as Muslims, or their origins in particular countries (like Pakistan, Somalia, etc.) (Mathur 2006; D. Kumar 2012).⁵⁴ Sita also described how counter-terrorism efforts affected Muslims’ hesitancy to interact with the police. She said “*Yes, I think there’s no question that post-9/11 people [were afraid of police] ...I mean there were federal agents bashing down people’s doors and pointing guns at young kids and taking parents away...and I think a lot of the Muslim community knew about it and was aware of it and so it set up a whole other barrier...*” She goes on to talk about Homeland Security’s “See Something, Say Something” campaign and how this induced fear and propagated Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism.

Richa, a non-Muslim woman who has volunteered and worked in advocacy with South Asian survivors of abuse for more than a decade, told a story of an incident that happened shortly after 9/11, when she was taking a survivor to the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project in Seattle:

“I had picked her up and driven her there and she was wearing the headscarf and everything and I dropped her off and she gave me a hug and after that there was some passerby who saw that, and he just went off on me about Muslims and this and that, and that was one of the most shocking things for me. And I was dressed the way I’m always dressed, in Western clothes, and I was thinking ‘I wonder what kind of response she gets when she goes to places’...so that really shook me.”

⁵⁴ A cataloging of the immediate Justice Department actions is available, along with testimonies of the victims of anti-Muslim discrimination and hate violence, in a report released by the Hate Free Zone following public hearings they organized in 2002 in Seattle, both titled: “Justice for ALL: the Aftermath of September 11.” Video footage of the hearings and a full report are accessible on One America’s website (Hate Free Zone became the immigrant rights organization now called One America) here: <http://weareoneamerica.org/justice-all-report>

As documented in the work of SAALT, CAIR-WA and CAIR-National, Hate Free Zone, and (API) Chaya, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 resulted in a marked increase in the precarity of racialized immigrant communities in the U.S. – of both Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. My findings augment this reporting by focusing in on South Asian/Muslim immigrant women, who experienced a particular gendered precarity. Their vulnerability to intimate abuse was heightened at the intersections of relational forms of structural violence, enacted through immigration law, counter-terrorism, and Islamophobia. Anti-violence workers from API Chaya, REWA and other agencies repeatedly told me that while they cannot *know* if Islamophobia and representations of Muslims keep Muslim women from reporting abuse to outside agencies (because of course they mostly know only of abuse cases that do come to them), based on their experiences, they would not be surprised at all if it did. Several advocates told me they think it is *likely* that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discrimination keep some women from coming to agencies or from calling the police. In several conversations with Muslim women anti-violence workers, I also came to understand the silencing power of Islamophobia for wider Muslim communities – as friends and colleagues expressed to me the difficulty of conceiving or accepting that people, that mainstream America, may fear or hate you simply because of your faith or the way you dress or the color of your skin or your cultural traditions. While this type of silencing may not result from direct encounters with verbal or physical violence, the milieu of Islamophobia – including representational violence – can also shape Muslim American lives in unseen ways.

The landscapes of structural violence that Muslim women negotiate in Hyderabad and Seattle – of uneven development, geographic exclusion, Islamophobia, financial precarity,

immigration controls, xenophobia, and counter-terrorism – cast significant doubt upon formalized state mechanisms of anti-violence. This extends to criminal justice systems and laws against domestic violence, as I explore in the comparative section below. It also make community support and cohesion even more vital for many South Asian Muslim women (which will be taken up in more detail in chapter 5). While these landscapes also feature regional patriarchies intersecting with other forms of structural violence, these complex formations unravel the simplified narratives of culturalism and demonstrate what is at stake when dominant powers deploy “culture” as the explanation of gendered violence. Cultural explanations pave the way for the legitimation of structural and state violence against Muslim communities broadly, and exacerbate insecurity and suffering for Muslim women in particular. While these two pieces frame my argument thus far, a vital center emerges more fully in chapter 5 – revealing the agency of Muslim women who name and resist all these forms of structural and intimate violence. Their peace-building work imagines and enacts pathways for social change that are not entirely bound by the frameworks of Western liberalism, and therefore do not require the justification or normalization of violence against ‘others’ to secure the dignity and thriving of some. While these alternative systems are incomplete, in process, and imperfect, they offer theoretical and actionable insights for non-violent response to intimate abuse.

The Failings of Criminal “Justice” in Hyderabad and Seattle: Addressing Domestic Violence Beyond the Law

“To be protected from violence by the nation-state is to be exposed to the violence wielded by the nation-state, so to rely on the nation-state for protection from violence is precisely to exchange one potential violence for another. There may, indeed, be few other choices.”(Butler 2009, 26)

Some of the failings of criminal justice response to domestic violence in India and the U.S. emerged in the sections above. These ‘failings’ also include scenarios in which actors within the state systems of responses – such as police – themselves perpetrate violence against women or re-traumatize victims of violence (R. Kumar 1993; Gangoli 2007; Rupaleem Bhuyan 2006). In this final section of the chapter, I argue that these ‘inadequacies’ actually amount to a state disposition toward a status quo of “domestic-violence-as-reality” within marginalized communities in India and the U.S. This comparative analysis of state-legal systems of response to domestic violence reveals the chasm between state promises of protection and inclusion, and actual practices of dismissal and exclusion. Ultimately, this raises the question of what alternative means of response (beyond criminal justice systems) might be possible, which is explored in chapter five’s analysis of peace-building and community-based response to domestic violence.

In Hyderabad and India, the 2005 Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) provides a non-criminal avenue for women to seek justice or an end to violence through legal mechanisms, as well as a series of services for survivors. This law augments earlier criminal legislation, most notably 498A of the Indian Penal Code (which was passed in 1983 to protect women from ‘cruelty’ and ‘harassment’ and is often associated with dowry cases), as well as earlier legislation like the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961.⁵⁵ The PWDVA in many ways marks the culmination of decades of women’s movements taking domestic violence as a central point of struggle against institutionally entrenched patriarchies and gendered structures of power

⁵⁵ Dowry refers to property or cash that is given by a bride’s family to the bridegroom and his (sometimes extended) family at the time of marriage. While it is a Hindu practice by origin, many of my research participants in Hyderabad reported that Muslims have taken up this practice as well.

(Gandhi and Shah 1992; R. Kumar 1993; Ray 1999; Sunder Rajan 2003; N. Menon 2004; Gangoli 2007; Kannabiran and Menon 2007). Yet since the law passed, continued feminist monitoring reveals uneven and severely limited implementation of the law,⁵⁶ and a significant degree of misuse (Basu 2014). While the role of the state in anti-violence response has always been a tension within Indian women’s movements, the ineffectiveness of criminal legal systems (which also often re-traumatize or directly victimize women) is increasingly troubling anti-violence activists. As Agnes and Ghosh write, “Since the 1980s, Indian feminists have tended to focus on empowering of laws and greater judicial clarity. But, increasingly, there is a realization within the women’s movement that for the large majority of women, statutory law is formidable, alien, protracted, and expensive. Women often prefer alternative terrains where bargaining for their rights may even be initiated because of familiarity of language, kinship relations, and community allegiances” (2012, xx).

As the narratives of field staff at Old City Women’s Resource Center and Healthy Families have revealed, Muslim women living in impoverished urban settlements in Hyderabad rarely seek police involvement in situations of domestic abuse. Many women see criminal justice systems as a last resort, and find navigating them close to impossible. Meher, a senior field staff at OCWRC, describes this in detail – both in relation to her work and to her own experience of domestic violence:

“First of all, women usually do not want to go to the police station because they fear losing their respect or reputation (societal fear). Then there is also this thought that - if the conflict could be solved through talking it over then what is the point dragging it to the police station. Once

⁵⁶ The Lawyer’s Collective, a group of feminist lawyers and academics instrumental in the passage of the PWDVA have released semi-annual reviews of the legislations implementation (six in total, with the most recent being 2013). The latest report can be found here: <http://www.lawyerscollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Staying-Alive-Evaluating-Court-Orders.pdf>

the case gets to the police station, the fear of divorce is greater therefore the fear of sustaining the children. And when some brave women like me go to the police station; it is another battle altogether such as choosing the lawyer and several visits to the court. For instance, if it is a maintenance case or divorce case; the court generally gives a lot of time and several chances for the couple to work on their relationship despite the fact that the woman clearly doesn't want to stay with the husband. In this way, by giving chances, the woman gets pregnant several times without her wishes and woman is the one who suffers. Finally when she realizes that it is not going to work out like this and asks for immediate divorce then the court asks for legal evidences and that sometimes becomes difficult to provide all kinds of evidences which the court demands. Also generally the police themselves say things like – this is between husband and wife, they should solve it by sitting somewhere and talking it over. Then she comes here [to OCWRC] and with the help of 498 Act, many women have taken divorce. But sometimes the husband doesn't like the woman approaching the court asking for divorce and he doesn't want to give what she wants and as a form of revenge, he disappears from the scene so it becomes a long process for her to get divorce. For example, for me it has been 14 years but I still didn't get divorce. Mainly the woman has to make up her mind whether she wants to lead an independent life without or without divorce. Domestic Violence 2005 Act provides for shelter, maintenance, custody and residential order. This is good.”

Meher also draws out a tension that remains – given the extreme economic and social vulnerability that women face if they do choose to leave an abusive home, state provisions for basic survival resources are essential. And yet, even those promised in the PWDVA (which are incomplete even in print) are not delivered in most cases. The legal advocates I spoke with, as well as an Inspector General of Police in Hyderabad and the PWDVA Protection Officer for Hyderabad (both women), all suggested that law is primarily used by women with higher class status, income, and formal education. The Inspector General of Police, Preeti, expressed frustration and disappointment at what she called the government's “*failing the people we're supposed to help*” and she insisted that while politicians may pay “*lip-service*” to domestic violence issues during elections “*it is not a priority – not for government, not for police, not for courts*”.

The current status of the PWDVA implementation in Hyderabad also reveals this lack of priority in state responses to domestic violence. Funding and implementation of the law has been spotty across India, and in Hyderabad district, an urban center of nearly 4 million people, there is one ‘protection officer,’ who has been allotted the responsibility of assisting women in charging cases under the PWDVA. When I spoke with the Protection Officer, Deepa, who is Hindu, she also pointed to many issues that demonstrate this ‘lack of priority’. Between 2006 and November 2013, her office (including herself and 2-3 assistants) have taken down nearly 3,000 cases under the PWDVA, many of which are open for many years. While such a case load may have been manageable if she and her staff could devote all of their time to domestic violence survivors, Deepa also serves as the Project Director for the District Women & Child Development Agency in Hyderabad. In fact, this is her primary position, with Protection Officer under the PWDVA being added to it (presumably as a means of getting around funding limitations). Deepa complained that her office has a lot of other work to do as well, and that if they focused only on domestic violence cases, none of that work would get done. During our conversation, Deepa repeated several common stereotypes of Muslim women and Muslim communities – telling me that “*they are not following family planning methods*” for example. These narratives of the primary state officials charged with ‘protecting’ women from domestic violence in Hyderabad reinforce field workers’ narratives of criminal justice responses that are at best indifferent to women’s experiences of domestic abuse.

These inadequate systems also intertwine with the structural violence of poverty shaping the lives of many Muslim women in the city, restricting survivors’ access to ‘justice’ through the state. Zahra and Muneera, both field workers at Healthy Families, explain how class status shapes access to state anti-violence mechanisms:

Zahra: “I used to hear about domestic violence happening around me; sometimes in the families of my relatives but I wasn’t aware of the availability of this kind of help [at HF] which is free of cost. Basically earlier I was very much aware of domestic violence happening in several families and not every woman wants to approach police station...For some people who are financially not well off, approaching the police station and going around the court for years together becomes a costly affair so when they get to know about our NGO as it is free of cost, they tend to come forward to approach us for their problems.”

Muneera: “If the case goes...to the court, it is a waste of money and time. During this process of bearing the violence, some women die. I have seen this before coming here, where in the process of putting the wife through domestic violence and while case is in the court – the husband burns her to death. The counseling process here is done free of cost.”

The structural failures of domestic violence law in India provide insight into a state disposition toward gendered violence as an everyday reality (particularly in marginalized communities) that rarely rises to the level of government priority. While the history of anti-violence legislation varies significantly in the U.S., a similar disposition emerges through analysis of state anti-violence response for immigrant women and in relation to the recent renewal (2013) of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

In Seattle and the U.S., anti-immigrant policy-making further erodes state-promised protections for victims of domestic violence by limiting their accessibility for immigrant women. The effectiveness of criminal justice responses for survivors of domestic violence in the U.S. has been the subject of debate for several decades, both before and after the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994 (Hoyle 1998; Buzawa 2003; Garcia 2011; Nichols 2013). In addition to debating the ability of police and courts to serve victims and to avoid re-traumatizing them, recent engagements have also taken up domestic violence policing in relation to patriarchal discourses of protection and security. Cuomo (2013) argues that the policing interventions developed over the past 25 years remain ensconced in “narrow conceptions of masculinist

security”. She draws on I.M. Young’s (2003) idea of ‘masculinist protection’ and employs a feminist geopolitics lens to show how “intimate partner violence policing practices...reinforce state-based security interventions” (Cuomo 2013, 857). While Cuomo’s analysis draws important attention to the patriarchal discourses operating through U.S. criminal justice institutions, it focuses largely on mainstream communities (with empirical data from rural Pennsylvania) and does not address race or immigration in depth.

Women of color activists and scholars, on the other hand, critique criminal justice interventions not only based upon their patriarchal logics of protection and security, but also in relation to institutionalized racism and state violence against racialized and/or immigrant communities (Sokoloff and Pratt 2005; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006; Ochoa and Ige 2007; Victoria Law 2014). Based on research in the Seattle-area, including with Chaya, Bhuyan extends these critiques by highlighting the “structural violence of neoliberal governmentality and immigration control” that construct “the battered immigrant woman” (2006, 47-8). She points to the ways in which “the socio-political context of South Asian immigration in the U.S. interfaces with multiple systems of regulation and control made available to an abuser to assert control over his spouse” and also links “forms of everyday violence experienced by South Asian women with structural inequality that marginalizes the gendered and racialized experience of domestic violence in immigrant communities” (Rupaleem Bhuyan 2006, 48)

Several factors point toward a parallel state disposition of domestic-violence-as-usual in the U.S. as well, including insufficient funding for VAWA initiatives, inadequate training for police officers, and limited accessibility of legal systems for marginalized groups. While the Department of Justice, through the Violence Against Women Office and VAWA legislation, does provide funding for state and local criminal justice initiatives (including training with police

and court officials and victim advocates working with the system), as well as grants for community-based support services (such as those offered by API Chaya, as well as for domestic violence shelters and temporary housing), there is far greater demand for all of these resources than there is funding to support them. While a shortage of funding may be the norm for many public programs, domestic violence response is markedly de-prioritized within criminal justice systems. Officer training is a prime example of this insufficient attention to the issue. An attorney in the King County Prosecutor's Office's Domestic Violence Unit explained that while progress has been made in recent decades, the state still have a ways to go to better address domestic violence:

“What can we do at the state level? There are things like the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission, so they fund constant PSAs, not having a bake sale to support [them] because they get actual fines and things directed to them to do prevention efforts; prevention efforts as far as treatment, public messaging, ad campaigns. Campaigns, not things that run at three o'clock in the morning, funding law enforcement efforts around the state and in smaller jurisdictions who can't afford to have specialized response, all to prevent acts of traffic fatalities. We don't do that in DV because we don't have a system whereby those things are funded. And it should be. And you need to have many, many years of doing this to make it happen...

Police response today is much better than it was in the past. In part because of the training the police receive is much better. They only get that training once. There is not mandatory recurrent domestic violence training by the state. Which again speaks to the priority this issue has within the criminal justice system.”

Recent Congressional debates around the renewal of the VAWA further demonstrate state ambiguity around who qualifies as a legitimate victim of gendered violence. While VAWA, which passed in 1994, underwent two renewal processes with bipartisan support and relative ease, including expansions in the bill's scope at each renewal (in 2000 and 2005), in 2011 the law was allowed to lapse as political debates ensued around newly proposed provisions. The

three hotly debated provisions were: 1) the extension of services to LGBTQ people; 2) the granting of special jurisdiction for courts on Native American reservations to try non-tribal perpetrators in tribal courts; and 3) a slight increase in U visas, which are granted to undocumented crime victims to facilitate their temporary stay in the U.S. if they assist in the trails of perpetrators. During these politicized arguments around these extensions of VAWA coverage, primarily Republican lawmakers objected to the “dilution” of the legislation and in so doing, positioned immigrant, indigenous and LGBTQ individuals and their ‘special needs’ as a hindrance to ‘protecting actual victims’. When the VAWA Renewal bill came before the Senate Judiciary Committee in February 2012, Senator Charles E. Grassley, a senior Republican from Iowa, said that the legislation “creates so many new programs for underserved populations that it risks losing the focus on helping victims, period.”⁵⁷

After a year and half of protracted debate, and a poor showing among women voters in November 2012 elections, Republicans largely reversed their position and helped to pass the Reauthorization of VAWA in February 2013. While both the provisions supporting LGBTQ and indigenous survivors of abuse were retained from the original 2011 proposed renewal, the additional U visas for immigrant survivors were dropped from the bill prior to renewal. At the time, Democratic lawmakers promised to pick up these issues during large scale immigration reform efforts.⁵⁸ However, within heated, and racialized, debates around immigration, and in light of what Pramila Jayapal has called “sexculsionary” immigration policy (Jayapal 2013),

⁵⁷ Jonathan Weisman, March 14, 2012, “Women Figure Anew in Senate’s Latest Battle,” *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/us/politics/violence-against-women-act-divides-senate.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, February 28, 2013, “Violence Against Women Act Renewed: Lessons From Renewal Process Should Spur Further Reforms,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/28/us-violence-against-women-act-renewed>

additional supports for immigrant survivors are slow in coming. As one commentary keenly notes: the debacle of the renewal debate “highlights the reality that, in the United States, violence against women and violence based on sexual and gender expression or immigration status are still considered the natural course of life” (Ortega and Busch-Armendariz 2013, 227).

While I do not mean to conflate or homogenize the complex apparatuses of state agencies and actors, which operate from quite distinctive histories and presents in India and the U.S., I bring these two analyses of criminal justice systems together in this section to shed light upon the parallel character of legal responses to domestic violence that prove inadequate on the whole, and are especially incomplete (and often sites of further violence) for marginalized women. By unevenly funding and enforcing crimes that fall within the gambit of violence against women, both the U.S. and Indian criminal justice and legislative systems demonstrate the continued operation of regional patriarchies through institutional structures of the state. These varied forms of state response to intimate violence also reveal biases toward particular communities – the poor, non-white or racialized groups, immigrants, LGBTQ folks, and people practicing minority religions. In Hyderabad, the significant barriers for low-income women in accessing legal avenues of anti-violence maps onto low-caste and minority religious status. In this way, insecurity vis-à-vis the state becomes another form of structural violence that interfaces with uneven development, geographic exclusion, and anti-Muslim discrimination to place Muslim women in a position of heightened precarity. In Seattle, the precarity of South Asian Muslim women increases at the intersections of a parallel insecurity in relation to the state, which correlates to immigration status, political dispossession, racialization, and Islamophobia. These webs of structural violence not only make Muslim women more vulnerable to continued abuse (by severely inhibiting their options for addressing violence when it does happen), they also

create heightened risk and increased visibility of violence in marginalized communities. Drawing in political-economic analysis through the lens of structural violence further disrupts culturalist narratives, and reconnects struggles against interpersonal trauma and violence to critiques that integrate political-economy and cultural analysis (True 2012; Anglin 1998; Adelman 2004; Fraser 2013).

Conclusion: Securing Muslim Women's Safety?

“The priorities of women seem to be rather different, that is, to obtain immediate relief from their situation or to better the terms of a marriage rather than punishing the erring husband, which is the priority of the law... Within the current discourse on domestic violence, it has led to the prioritising of formal/public institutions as the legitimate domain of women's actions and the consequent neglect of what women do before, after, along with and more often outside the realm of public institutions to deal with the violence that they face... such activities of women... complicate the women's rights framework in which domestic violence discourse is ensconced.” (Suneetha and Nagaraj 2010, 453, 456–7)

A key question then arises in both Hyderabad and Seattle (and which has been asked for decades in each place) is this: given the ineffective, ambiguous, or even violent actions of the state with regard to domestic violence, what other mechanisms of response are possible? Can marginalized communities be mobilized to address and end violence through social channels that (mostly) avoid the state? Suneetha and Nagaraj, above, refer to the “activities of women” in Hyderabad that address domestic abuse “before, after, along with and more often outside the realm of public institutions,” yet their analysis proves insightful in the case of immigrant women in the U.S. as well, including South Asian Muslim women. My own findings amplify Suneetha and Nagaraj's conclusions and draw critical attention to articulations of agency and alternative

formations of violence response that Muslim women in Hyderabad and Seattle build through their daily peace-making work.

Structural violence provides an important counter-narrative to culturalism: showcasing in interwoven processes of regional patriarchies, uneven development and geographic exclusion, Islamophobia and political dispossession, and insecurity vis-à-vis the state. Landscapes of structural violence also heighten the visibility of interpersonal violence, even as they increase Muslim women's vulnerability to intimate abuse. This structural analysis thereby also disrupts stereotypes that label poor men as more prone to violence, instead focusing attention on the systemic processes that fuel violence and hide their own enactment of violence underneath the more readily visible forms of interpersonal, physical violence.

These webs of structural and intimate violence become more discernable from the vantage point of marginalized Muslim communities in Seattle and Hyderabad. Structural forces do not entirely contain or control the lives of Muslim women, however. In fact, the plural resistance waged as peace-building by women's collectives each city recognizes and responds to structural violence and domestic abuse, whilst maintaining hopeful visions of women's empowerment and multi-scalar peace. In this way, my last chapter weaves together my full argument and establishes more fully the agency and theoretical vision of Muslim women peacemakers.

Chapter 5: Making Meaning, Making Peace: Plural Resistance and the Politics and Possibilities of “Community”

“Peace, meanwhile, can be experienced as both intimate and global. Peace can be created at an individual, family, neighborhood, community, and other scales, and using the term can foster seeing these scales as intertwined and mutually constitutive. One of the best ways we can work for peace is to recognize that much of what critical geographers are already looking at is about peacemaking, broadly understood. Using the term peace, even with various definitions of the term, allows us to connect these peacemaking projects around the world. As geographers we are well placed not only to take peace to pieces, but also to connect the peace(s)” (Koopman 2011, 194).

“On the one hand, while feminists have rightly been wary of religious institutions that have sought to control women’s bodies and sexualities, this wariness has inadvertently allowed conservative religious and political organizations and movements to colonize spirituality. On the other hand, the dissociation between spirituality and social justice has further alienated secular, urban, middle-class feminists from the majority of women whose understandings of their lives do not conform to easy distinctions between the secular and sacred” (Fernandes 2003, 9)

Building from decades of critiques by U.S. women of color, post-colonial and transnational feminisms, and from the creativity and resilience of social justice movements, the following chapter takes a *hopeful* approach to anti-violence. In fact, this last thread of my argument moves away from a solely ‘reactionary’ stance that positions itself in relation to violence as the norm or standard. Rather, the strategies of resistance used by API Chaya, Old City Women’s Resource Center, and Healthy Families combine *response* to violence with the *active production* of peace. Even as Muslim women’s diverse lives across these cities and continents are shaped by multiple, intersecting forms of violence, elements of peace (love, compassion, communication, mutual respect) also figure in their everyday lives. And in many instances Muslim women themselves become agents of peace building. Much like Fernandes

suggests in relation to spirituality, I argue (along with my co-authors Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi in the section on Seattle) that we should not cede the grounds of “peace” or “community” to conservative elements and dominant structures (whether those be Islamophobic politicians, patriarchal community (or national) leaders, racist state institutions, or neoliberal development regimes). These concepts of peace and community have each been twisted toward violent ends – peace as a violent pacification of resistance to injustice and inequality, and community as a unit of honor and justification for violent attacks on ‘other’ communities. Yet there are substantive ways these concepts, together, offer a path forward for viewing gendered violence not as the norm that we can only hope to decrease, but rather as a symptom of deeper inequalities that we can and must address in order to ‘end’ violence against women.

My analysis takes up peace and peace-building as a form of plural resistance. As such, plural resistance is characterized by (1) the contestation of multiple forms of violence at once; (2) the intertwining of these responses in recognition of how assemblages of violence operate; and (3) an embeddedness in community and place. Plural resistance arises out of the struggles of marginalized communities and anti-violence workers who theorize complex inequalities and structural violence and work within communities to address these webs. In both Hyderabad and Seattle, plural resistance emerges through women’s organizations mobilizing against domestic violence through familial and community networks. These efforts often deploy ‘peace’ as a mode of violence response and prevention, and develop specific methods of peace making fit to the contexts of each place. Practices of peace-building refuse culturalist assumptions about Muslims and instead insist that Muslim women can resist intimate abuse *and* the very forms of violence that culturalism legitimates.

In this chapter, I foreground my field work in Seattle with API Chaya. My longer-term work with API Chaya and the Peaceful Families Taskforce provided an opportunity for deeper ethnographic analysis of the questions this chapter explores – particularly around long-term social change and community-based peace-building. My residence in Seattle and on-going volunteering with API Chaya also made it possible for me to co-author portions of this chapter together with two API Chaya colleagues – Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi. Foregrounding the Seattle case allows me to centralize our collective dialogue and analysis, recognizing our co-production of knowledge as part of feminist collaborative praxis. As we composed the co-authored section, however, my field work experiences in Hyderabad often surfaced and presented a number of examples around peace building and plural resistance, some of which Farah, Sarah and I also discussed. We found, in fact, that many of the peace-building practices of OCWRC and HF in Hyderabad¹ posed important questions for community-based organizing in the U.S. and API Chaya’s own approach to community mobilization, including PFT’s peace-building practices. My analysis draws upon my Hyderabad findings to showcase these questions. The unique features of peace-building work in Hyderabad demonstrate both the importance of *placing* ‘peace’, and alternative pathways of social modernization that may in fact prove useful in ‘the West’.

The comparison of Hyderabad and Seattle in this chapter complicates feminist accounts of the private/public divide in relation to intimate partner violence (R. Kumar 1993; Meth 2003; Bhattacharya 2004; Brickell 2012; Brickell 2015). All three of the organizations I worked with incorporate some element of peace and peace-building in their efforts to reduce violence in Muslim women’s lives. The practices employed by each organization are shaped by the systemic forms of violence outlined in chapter four, and this results in complex negotiations of ‘public’

and ‘private’ in relation to domestic abuse, family life, and ‘community’ spaces. Formations of peace-building have distinctive contours in Seattle and Hyderabad. Comparing the two sites raises several significant questions, beginning with: *Why* do peace-building practices follow distinctive trajectories in each place? And ultimately, the more collective approach of Hyderabadi organizations poses several vital questions for Seattle (and U.S.) anti-violence organizations, including: what is lost by *separating* individualized services for survivors (which are meant to empower those individuals) from efforts to mobilize a collective, or “community” response to intimate abuse? What does it mean to proclaim domestic violence as a “public” issue (what “public(s)” are being invoked)? Why don’t organizations like API Chaya go door-to-door to talk about family issues and abuse? What characteristics of everyday life in Seattle or U.S. settings actually work to “re-privatize” domestic violence?

Considering these different contexts for, and practices of, making peace in Hyderabad and Seattle reveals dividing lines along axes of economic status or class, as well as in relation to Western constructions of the “modern family” and of domestic space. For example, peace-building practices in Hyderabad (such as door-to-door canvassing, women’s meetings in bastis, and whole-family counseling) are made possible by the conditions of poverty and structural violence in the urban settlements where OCRWRC and HF work. In these spaces, people live in close quarters and neighbors tend to know what’s happening in one another’s families and home spaces. Directly approaching families to offer mediation and facilitation of open dialogue (as OCRWRC and HF do) therefore makes sense within these spaces – where community members may already be talking about the violence, just not openly or with the purpose of ending it. These methods are not extended to wealthier enclaves in the city – where the direct approach of knocking on doors would be met with more skepticism and offense by privileged people who’s

familial relationships are not open for ‘public’ discussion (Suneeta Krishnan 2005). In Hyderabad, the more isolated spaces of middle- and upper-class homes (in high rise apartment buildings and enclaved houses), however, are often still mediated by the widened social circle of the joint family. While this does not always mean intervention in abuse, it does mean that marriages take shape in relation to many other familial relationships. In Seattle and the U.S., by contrast, most often South Asian Muslim migrants are either separated from extended kinship and social networks through migration (i.e. leaving behind their joint family homes in India or Pakistan), or they adopt the American cultural standard of a ‘nuclear family’ and the separate living spaces commiserate with this form. These isolated spaces of daily life therefore limit the possibility for intervention into intimate partner violence – by parents, siblings, neighbors, friends, or extended kin.⁵⁹ In this way, the Western, liberal imagination of modernization – both as increased economic status and as social reform toward more ‘modern’ social forms (i.e. of marriage, family, home) – actually works to isolate women and potentially to exacerbate their vulnerability to intimate violence. While the conditions of structural violence, which produce increased visibility of familial relations and thereby an opportunity for community discussions of domestic violence, should not be valorized nor romanticized, they do present compelling questions for the so-called order and ‘security’ of wealthier, more ‘modern’ society.

This final chapter builds upon my disruption of culturalist narratives in chapter three, as well as my analysis of the particularities of structural violence for Muslims in Hyderabad and

⁵⁹ There are also situations of abuse where joint-family members participate in the violence. In these cases, isolation remains a huge factor, but more so in relation to a woman’s separation from her natal family and those kinship networks. While this enters less into the comparative analysis above, it is an important situation to consider in terms of further complicating the promise of “breaking the silence,” as more people knowing about a woman’s situation of abuse does not translate directly into intervention in informal or formal networks.

Seattle in chapter four. Here I unpack the significance of the visions and strategies of women's anti-violence organizations working in communities marginalized through Islamophobia, poverty, immigration processes, and/or criminal justice systems. First, I define plural resistance in greater detail and discuss how this phenomenon plays out differently in Hyderabad and Seattle. Next, I move into a discussion of peace-building as a mode of plural resistance by discussing first the contours of peace making in Hyderabad. The bulk of the chapter (co-authored with Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi) delves into API Chaya's community mobilization and peace-building work in Seattle, with immigrant South Asian Muslim communities. I then shift back to my comparative analysis with Hyderabad and the ways in which this analysis advances feminist discussions of the 'public' in relation to domestic violence. Finally, I conclude by asking 'what is "structural" peace?' and can intimate peace-building become systemic? Can intimate peace be "scaled-up"?

Peace-building as Plural Resistance in Hyderabad

Too often responses to violence against women reduce the problem to cultural practices and ignore structural violence. Similarly, much academic analysis and social movement activism deals *separately* with gender violence, social inequalities, and structural violence, thereby erasing the linkages between them. This practice of siloing creates the kinds of invisibility that erodes Muslim women's rights and silences their voices (Hasan and Menon 2005). The disconnection of material deprivation and discrimination from "cultural" concerns not only impoverishes our understandings of inequality and intimate violence, but actually bolsters culturalist explanations of the same.

In their work in bastis across Hyderabad, HF and OCWRC recognize and respond to intersectional forms of violence. They navigate ‘power geometries’ and webs of violence through complex formations of plural resistance. These organizations’ plural resistance involves working against multiple forms of violence, *and* recognizing that resistance to one form of violence (i.e. domestic abuse) cannot succeed without concerted effort to transform other violent social relations (i.e. poverty or unequal citizenship). Plural resistance is also the difficult work of long-term social change. HF and OCWRC envision and enact *peace* as a comprehensive strategy for addressing the abuse of women within the home, community, public sphere, and market. Peace-building proceeds through communication and cooperation, and sometimes draws on Qur’anic teachings to emphasize mutual rights and respect. This work not only treads through “the messy middle grounds of dominance and resistance” (Sparke 2008) it also extends what we think of as resistance beyond direct conflict to include everyday peace-building practices (Williams 2015).

Old City Women’s Resource Center

A banner hanging in the computer lab of OCWRC’s offices (featuring artists’ renderings of Muslim and Hindu women) proclaims, “We Want Peace. At Home. In the Market. In Society.” After months of time spent in these offices, this sign struck me by how succinctly it captured the multi-faceted work of OCWRC, which centers on women’s empowerment and anti-violence initiatives, but accomplishes these goals by addressing the range of inequalities and violences women experience in Hyderabad’s Old City. This message covers many layers of OCWRC’s peace-building efforts, such as their door-to-door canvassing in *basti* neighborhoods and the dialogues they host on family relations and women’s rights. The banner might also refer

to the groups of *basti* women they organize to meet regularly and support one another in times of crisis, or their efforts to defuse communal conflict and potential violence between Muslims and Hindus by working with both communities on ‘slum improvement’ projects. It could encompass their skills training courses, which provide opportunities for poor women and men in the *basti* with options for quality education and few job skills, as well as the demands they make on local and state governments both to improve conditions in the impoverished Old City and to better implement anti-domestic violence legislation. The peace described in the banner might also be accomplished through their gender sensitization workshops, which OCWRC offers to young boys and girls to help shape their socialization toward greater gender equity in homes and communities. All of these daily tasks and program initiatives take on small pieces of the broader issues of gender inequality and violence, structural violence, Islamophobia, and the state’s practical disregard, impotence or complicity with all these issues. In this way, OCWRC’s peace-building practices simultaneously resist many forms of violence shaping the lives of the Muslim women who do this work and the Muslim women they serve.

During my time volunteering and interviewing at OCWRC, and several long conversations with Rubia, I learned that OCWRC faced some early opposition to their work – mostly from men in their neighborhood, who feared they would break up families or get men arrested. Rubia told me that in response, she began to adapt her approach to empowering women. OCWRC started offering skills training courses for girls and boys in such areas as sewing, literacy, and computers. Anyone who takes a course must participate in gender sensitization workshops, which focus on gender equality and respectful attitudes toward women. OCWRC thereby integrates their work on long-term prevention of gender violence with programs that build the income-generating capacity of women and men in their impoverished neighborhood. In

recent years, OCWRC has extended the scope of their work further – focusing on the needs of their immediate neighborhood, working with both Muslims and low-caste Hindus living there. One example is a project aimed at documenting the conditions of the slum in order to facilitate the uplift of minorities. This community-based work builds peace through shared interests, whilst seeking to hold the state accountable for conditions of structural violence.

Rabia explains that these efforts to work also with Hindus living in the area, and not to fuel communal tensions, means that they do not label themselves a “Muslim organization”. Yet, she says that OCWRC’s reputation and location give it a Muslim association and so “*Muslims feel more comfortable coming here*” and now, many years after their initial skepticism about this women’s collective, “*men come [wanting to] collaborate on projects*” with OCWRC. Field staff also tell me that when they do their canvassing or hold *basti* meetings, if they meet with questions or skepticism, often times simply explaining “*We are with OCWRC*” helps to open a dialogue because the organization is known and respected in the area.

While they employ practices of plural resistance that tackle the wider webs of violence in Muslim women’s lives, staff at OCWRC recognize the great scope of these inequalities and they are not naïve about the social change work they engage in. Yet, they are also hopeful. A number of field staff explain that their goal is to equip 10 women with the knowledge and confidence to spread the word about women’s rights in the home and society, and that these women will then share their knowledge with 10 more women. Suddenly, the everyday work invested in small groups of women seems to open up change on a much wider scale. Meher describes how this works:

“We go by the model of ‘each-one-teach-ten’, where we make one woman completely equipped with all the knowledge related to domestic violence so that this one woman can teach other ten women. They are given this paralegal training so that if there is a domestic violence case in the basti,

they would know which hospital to go to first, which NGO to approach, which police station and lawyer to go to.”

Taaliala is one of the more skeptical among OCWRC field staff and she repeatedly describes the weight of the status quo – the ways in which the ubiquity and normality of violence against women makes it difficult to disrupt. She explains,

“Obviously it is difficult to bring about change in everybody immediately and it is going to take time. We have been working for so long and only now people are opening up; we are aiming at changing 100 people but even if 10 people change, that is how it is.”

While she sees the potential and positive effects of the kinds of peace-making that OCWRC instigates, Taalia describes how acknowledgement of violence and dialogue about it often requires prodding. While domestic violence is visible in the *bastis*, men still use ‘privacy’ as an excuse to try and hide their violence or to avoid change. Taalia describes both the general scenario of how community members react to violence around them, as well as how people react to OCWRC’s door-to-door canvassing:

“Usually people avoid any kind of intervention thinking it is a family matter and it is between the husband and wife and one should not get in between- is the general idea of people around. But when the violence is out there and too much then people approach to help taking the woman to either bringing her to OCWRC or to the police station or court or any leader. Generally though, the usual perception is that, it is a woman’s fault, which is why she is facing violence. Also the general idea behind this is; however the man is, women are expected to be good.

Usually people respond well to us and we mostly talk to women and girls but sometimes when a man opens the door or a woman who is not interested in listening to us then we leave but we make a note to visit them again. Upon consistent visiting, they listen to us then we start explaining them about our work at OCWRC and other vocational skills offered here. We also let them know that they can seek our help in case of domestic violence which is when they becomes defensive and say that it doesn’t happen at our place then we explain to them again that it is not necessary that the violence should be happening at their place but anybody known to

them who might be going through domestic violence can be informed about the existence of OCWRC and they can get help for free of cost.”

In this way, OCWRC staff defuse those men (and women) who present defensive reactions – which may or may not invoke privacyⁱⁱ – and use their embeddedness in the community to slowly open conversations about addressing domestic abuse and recognizing women’s rights in those spaces. Their counseling model responds to women’s reluctance to seek divorce and attempts to cultivate respectful marital and familial relationships based in communication and a recognition of women’s social and legal rights. Peace might not easily be won in the home, market or society, but OCWRC staff invest in the inter-personal interactions and relationships fostered by their daily work in *basti* communities. They witness incremental changes that keep them committed, and even hopeful.

Healthy Families

In explaining why she got involved with Healthy Families and what she appreciates about their work, Bushra tells me:

“Their basic idea to empower community women as peacemakers is a very fantastic idea...we can’t be there all the time, if someone is there based locally with access to women [that is ideal]...[it’s] very important that community women are doing this...[because] they are trusted” and they are “known” in those places.

As a more senior manager in at HF, and someone of a higher class status who is not living in the *basti* neighborhoods where most field workers reside, Bushra recognizes the limited reach of NGO workers who are not part of the communities they serve. She links peace-making with the everyday presence of “community women” who are educated about violence and women’s rights, and equipped to counsel and support women experiencing abuse. Many of the field staff

at HF also described how their peace-building work begins from their own families and social networks, such as Saba and Ifrah:

Saba explains how she goes about her daily work as field staff at HF: *“We are peacemakers for Healthy Families and we create awareness among our friends and relatives about domestic violence and a women’s right to live a happy life... Whoever we meet on a daily basis in our local community, we spread the word about us being peacemakers and about our social work. So if anybody knows of any kind of domestic violence, they get in touch with us.”*

Ifrah echoes Saba’s references to community spaces: *“So we just go around our communities, and sometimes we go to schools and [places] like that, to spread our work and service...we started from our community, like neighbors, door-to-door.”*

In many ways, HF field staff work to bring their expertise on counseling and violence response into scenarios where women, who do not want to go to the police, will seek assistance from their family or community members, especially if/when the violence escalates. As Bahar puts it:

“People don’t want to go to the police station, so “they look for help from other community members or family elders, etc. for compromise between the couple.”

Neelam’s daughter, Zenia, who works with her mother at the vocational NGO they started in a more rural area near the city, as well as with Healthy Families in Hyderabad *bastis*, adds to Saba, Ifrah and Bahar’s narratives. She explains that when their work extends beyond their own social networks in Muslim communities, they work to make themselves identifiable as a resource to the community. Zenia tells me:

“Mostly we are trying to make friend[s] with the community members and in the neighborhood. And then slowly introduce them to the concept of women’s rights by talking about domestic violence. We also ask them to approach us if they face any problem regarding domestic violence so that when the problem arises they know whom to contact.”

What Zenia is describing mirrors the process of trust building that senior counselors and other managing staff at Healthy Families described. Healthy Families leadership choose field staff based on their existing memberships and investments in local *basti* communities, but field staff do not know every person in their own neighborhood or the next neighborhood over and so forth. And as they are mostly young women, they sometimes need to ‘prove themselves’ to older women and to men. This process often involves multiple visits to a residence during door-to-door canvassing, as well as referral to the more senior counselors when cases emerge that require deeper counseling. Farida, a senior counselor and manager, explains that this process is not simple, and often takes some time. But their approach is particularly important for engaging men in peace-building processes:

“Our aim here is to counsel...so that they lead a peaceful life. This doesn’t work in one sitting – sometimes the counseling goes on for four months and even after that we follow up with them... We also make the abuser understand that if at all he has a problem with the victim, he should approach us for counseling rather than exhibiting violent behavior. In this way, we build their trust (with men also) which is important, only then they approach us in times of crisis.”

During this interview with Farida, a younger male co-worker of hers, Sahil, the office manager, chimed in to say:

“We follow up with them. We also make them sign an agreement regarding this with mutual understanding by making the family members as a witness to this agreement. This letter is of no use to us, but this helps as the man would be scared of this agreement. And if still the violence gets repeated, the victim can approach us and we will talk to the abuser again. This process which goes on aids the relationship as it sort of instills a kind of fear in the man that there is somebody who is out there who can help the woman at any point.”

The presence of Healthy Families in Muslim communities in Hyderabad’s *bastis* - including the field staff who canvas neighborhoods and present at schools and community

centers, and the offices where the senior counselors work – serves as a key node in the *social awareness* of domestic violence. Their counseling processes are specifically designed to include men and to force men to talk about and confront their use of violence against their wives (or in some cases, their complicity in a mother-in-law’s use of violence). Police and legal response do not serve poor women well, and do not necessarily lead to men questioning their violence (as they might instead just divorce the wife or throw her out of their home). The Healthy Families counseling model not only helps families to avoid engaging with state systems, but actually incorporates mechanisms that help to ‘protect’ women by emphasizing to men that their behavior violates religious codes and women’s rights, and that there are people around who make women’s suffering ‘their business’ and who are spreading this awareness. In this approach, allowing men to describe their “side” and to feel *heard* helps to facilitate their investment in the peace-making process. But in many cases, this means first convincing men that the HF field workers and senior counselors will listen to them, just as they listen to women. As Farida explains, this includes convincing both men who are (accused of being) abusers and men in positions of power:

“Basti leaders call to pressurize us by saying that it is the fault of the woman, they are on the side of the man. They say, this is a court for women and you all are working for women so they support the man by saying that the woman is at fault, and they probe us to look at both the sides. Then we respond to them by saying that this is not one sided nor are we taking the woman’s side. If that were to be the case, we would have gone directly to the police station instead we call both the victim and the abuser to our office for counseling.”

As men’s involvement in these familial peace-building processes is crucial to their success, OCWRC and HF take care in engaging men, and they do so by employing the same kind of communication skills they teach to families. This peace-building work takes up conflicts

along a spectrum – some of which escalate to physical violence or emotional abuse, and some of which involve other everyday forms of gendered oppression. As Muneera explains:

“Depending on the issue, we do individual counseling first and then make them sit together and talk to them again. For instance, if the wife wants to work and the husband is against it; wife doesn’t want her education and degree to go waste instead she wants to work to earn money and repay the parents through it but the husband wishes for her to stay home to look after the children and his mother. In this case, it is also one kind of violence. Then we make the husband understand and we have been successful with many cases of this sort.”

The long arc of these organizational peace-building efforts includes reaching out into the everyday spaces of communities with ideas about healthy families and women’s rights (i.e. through door-to-door canvassing), as well as expanding peace with the next generation of young people. OCWRC does this with their skills training courses, and Healthy Families runs a school program where they send young women to primary schools in the basti neighborhoods to talk about gender, sexuality, violence, and children’s rights. They see these presentations as a way of educating young people about women’s and girl’s rights, about child marriage, as well as about sexual and physical abuse that both girls and boys may experience. Even as peace-building involves conflict resolution or de-escalation, it also means prevention of abuse and discrimination against women through changing gender norms. Farida extends this beyond the school program, to discussing parents’ roles, and articulates a narrative of peace-building that is attentive to women’s rights and gender equity:

“For instance, I have to two children – a girl and a boy, while bringing them up if I make the girl do the household chores and leave the boy and when they grow up, while sending the girl out, if I assign the job of sending the boy as an escort for the girl although the boy is way younger to her. Then we are creating the mindset of the boy –like although he is younger he perceives himself to be stronger and powerful hence he thinks that- I should and I am expected to oppress the womankind is instilled in his mind and all this is just because he is a man therefore when a child is

brought up in such an environment and later when he gets married he misuses this control which is bestowed on him. The power he has been using to oppress his sister while growing up hence in similar fashion violence gets translated into his married life as well leading to oppression of his wife. So it is crucial to shape the mindset of a boy during the period of his childhood- so we also do meetings in bastis and make them understand the importance of equality among both girl child and a boy child. We talk about this at Women and Child Welfare meetings and school programs. It will take a long to change this mindset- this violence is going on like a ritual - we all know that we can't and shouldn't beat up someone for dowry but we see it happening. It is helpful and crucial for us to change the mindset of the young people."

Both HF and OCWRC describe their work as counseling families – beginning with victims of abuse and then also talking with husbands, in-laws, and other relevant family members. This peace-building approach works around ineffective and discriminatory legal systems, but does also employ criminal justice mechanisms when needed. Many survivors of violence see police or courts as a last resort, and so these women's organizations do their best to help solve family conflicts or confront abusive partners, calling on legal resources at a survivor's request, often only if counseling fails or if the physical violence is severe. Saba describes it thusly:

"We do fight for the woman against domestic violence but we do it in a very civil way. We solve the problem by talking it out. In case of emergency we also consult the lawyer."

While OCWRC follows a similar pattern (of counseling before legal recourse), their field staff show a greater degree of comfort with the legal system as an option for women. But they also know that the police and courts rarely help poor women (as described in chapter four) and they also see it as the last option after counseling. As Aalia puts it:

"Although women do not go to the police station, they do come here [to OCWRC] for help so when that happens we counsel both the victim and the abuser. We also involve an advocate for further legal action. If the case doesn't get solved here, we take it forward to the court."

At HF, field staff rarely spoke of taking cases to the courts or police. Instead, they primarily discussed their work as peace-making that “fixes families” and prevents divorces. However, this reality arises from the desires of the women they work with who are facing abuse – most of those women do not want leave their marriages or homes. Healthy Families remains committed to following the agency of the women they serve. Managers and senior counselors described this as part of their training with field staff, who are in effect front-line counselors. Several field staff explained this:

***Amani:** “We are not supposed to be judgmental about the situation, rather we should ask what sort of step the victim wants to take further and help her through it.”*

***Zahra:** “When we talk to the victim; neither are we supposed to judge the victim or advise her into doing something which we think is right. Our job is to build their courage and self-esteem by empathizing with them.”*

***Muneera:** “While counseling we do not dictate anybody to do something. We make them understand about different paths they might take and lay it open for them so that they are free to make their own choice. I am happy and proud to have helped [with] uniting many families.”*

This emphasis on women’s self-determination highlights the gendered starting point for HF and OCWRC in their response to the plurality of violence in Hyderabad’s urban slums. Each organization retains a gender analytic and remains committed to women – individually and as a group – as the center of their social justice endeavors. They work in coalitions and with larger communities, but do not locate themselves strictly *within* certain communities (i.e. Muslims). The realities they encounter bring poverty into view as a primary axis of inequality for Muslim women in Hyderabad. Their practices of resistance – from door-to-door canvassing to family counseling to slum improvement – centralize gender and regional patriarchies, yet respond to systemic inequality based upon their theorizations of its complex, everyday life as a plural and

dynamic mix of intersecting oppressions. They view peace as a process realized within homes, communities, and at the scale of ‘society’ and ‘the market’.

Both Old City Women’s Resource Center and Healthy Families shape their work with survivors of violence around their daily presence in *basti* neighborhoods. OCWRC field staff do some door-to-door canvassing and organize community women’s meetings. HF field staff canvas neighborhoods daily, and as their friends, neighbors and extended families learn about their work, they also field questions and provide support as they go about their lives outside of work. They provide education on women’s legal rights, as well as mediation or counseling referrals to mitigate family conflicts and prevent (further) abuse. Door-to-door canvassing becomes a tool of plural resistance because it embeds the organizations within the realities of people’s everyday lives and needs. OCWRC and HF canvas to raise awareness about their services, to show their interest in supporting women and building peace in families, and to connect with their communities. In this way they identify which households might need their support *and* learn about the host of issues faced by different women and families.

Community-Based Peace-Building in Seattle

The ideas and analysis in the following section were co-authored by Farah Abdul, Amy Piedalue, and Sarah Rizvi. Before digging into the substance of our analysis of community formation and peace-making, we will explain more about our collaborations, our separate identities in this joint work, and the process we employed to compose the pages that follow. This co-authorship emerges from relationships spanning the past four to five years. Sarah joined Chaya in 2001 as the Community Mobilization and Awareness Building Coordinator. She built this program with support from the Executive Director at the time, Aaliyah Gupta. Amy began

volunteering with Chaya in 2003, serving on the Advocacy Committee and supporting Chaya's direct services work with survivors of violence. As a result, Amy and Sarah did not work directly together until 2010, shortly after Sarah returned to Chaya following a five-year absence, and became an advocate, providing direct service support to survivors of domestic violence. By this time, Amy had returned from a 2 year hiatus in volunteering (when she briefly moved away from Seattle). Farah began volunteering with Chaya in 2009 and then came on board as the Coordinator of the Peaceful Families Taskforce in late 2010, reporting to Sarah, who had co-founded the PFT during her earlier years as Chaya's Community Mobilization Coordinator.

Our collaborative work all together began in June 2011, when Farah and Sarah invited Amy to shift some of her volunteer work over to the PFT, to co-lead a community-based research project called 'The Role of Masjids in Building Peaceful Communities'. From early 2011 onwards, we have worked together closely – at times spending 20 hours a week together, at times communicating from different continents. During these past four years, we have spent countless hours discussing the ideas animating this chapter, and many others. Our conversations and work together has been serious and earnest, but also often full of laughter. We are colleagues, collaborators, coauthors, and friends. These relationships we have formed with one another also shape our writing together – we analyze community and social relationships from our own individual experiences and positionings, but also through our collective understandings of these issues, which have been forged in dialogue and through shared organizing experiences.

Farah has volunteered and worked with API Chaya for 7 years and her feminism has been fundamentally shaped by her experiences and the wisdom of many voices within the organization. Growing up, Farah spent significant time in her Northwest masjid community. She has personally experienced and continues to strongly appreciate the complexity, tensions, and

deep nourishment that can arise in faith communities. She is currently in medical school and is also interested in the intersections between spirituality, personal and collective story-telling, and social justice. Amy comes to our shared thinking and writing as an anti-racist, feminist, scholar-activist invested personally, politically, and intellectually to anti-violence and peace-building. As someone always striving for allyship in this work, Amy remains committed to self-reflexivity and to questioning the assumptions and blind-spots that accompany her privilege. Sarah comes into this work from a personal history of participation and activism in her own South Asian Muslim family and community, and of working on social justice issues with a focus on immigrant and marginalized communities. She has done development and organizing work in the US, as well as abroad with slum populations in Pakistan and India. She has been a part of API Chaya, and formerly Chaya, for over 10 years in several different roles and capacities and has seen the anti-violence movement grow and take shape through this lens.

We composed this chapter through a dialogue-driven process, over the course of about a dozen conversations that were each about two-three hours long. We began our process with a brainstorming dialogue in August 2014, and finished our collective editing of this text in late October 2015. During this period, Farah was in the midst of medical school and Sarah was serving as Executive Director of API Chaya. Given these additional burdens on their time and commitments, as well as the destination of this piece of writing (that is, Amy's dissertation), we decided that Amy would take on more of the administrative work of organizing our writing together, including audio recording, transcribing, and composing agendas. In addition, she also did the foundational labor for transforming our audio-recorded conversations into text, including writing up the initial outlines and drafts. While Amy took the lead in writing much of the full text, she did so drawing directly from all of our recorded voices. The writing style reflects Amy's

synthesis of our conversations, but the ideas were co-authored. Our process involved several rounds of discussing and revising the written text.ⁱⁱⁱ We do distinguish our voices at times and draw upon personal experiences in explaining our arguments. However, the chapter as a whole was “communally wrought” (Mohanty 2003) and we share in the credit and responsibility for the ideas presented here.

Our Analysis

Our contribution to theorizing ‘plural resistance’ and peace-building centers on the role of communities and community-based organizing in creating long term change in social relations. ‘Community’ enters into API Chaya’s work as a concept that we mobilize around in addressing domestic violence and supporting survivors; as a material reality embodied in the social networks and spaces that we work within; and as an organizational structure we continually work to build and strengthen – linking staff, board members, volunteers, program participants, and supporters together through shared commitment to anti-violence. Community carries a significant degree of complexity, and its many meanings change over time. Nor are communities bounded categories – people move between and regularly occupy many different kinds of communities. Our analysis digs into the complexities of communities, resisting both overly romantic and demonizing or dismissive views of community, in order to argue for the importance of community relationships and networks in addressing domestic violence and in creating conditions for broader realizations of peace.

We argue that anti-violence organizing cannot simply fabricate the communities it wishes to change. While mobilization may bring people together for short-term campaigns and ‘create community’ in this way, we suggest that community relationships that evolve organically through mundane experiences and shared spaces actually offer a more sustainable model for

‘community’ as a site of social change. Our experience with API Chaya’s Peaceful Families Taskforce (PFT) also demonstrates the potential of **peace** as a rallying point for changing the power dynamics that produce domestic violence. Peace-building in intimate relationships and families can also extend to wider networks in society and promote more just and equitable social relations. We view ‘peace’ as both a radical concept in some regards (i.e. as a challenge to unending war for example or mass incarceration, or anti-immigrant laws and detentions), as well as a rather benign proposal on the other hand – it is difficult to attack ‘peace’ if those promoting it refuse to ‘battle’ within the confines of divisive, fearful, and hateful struggles for dominance. This is a notion of ‘peace’ as loving, compassionate, tolerant, and radically open; interested in forging bonds between people, rather than creating divisions or acting based on assumed fundamental differences (of religion, politics, culture, etc.). We also complicate the meanings assigned to ‘peace’, and argue for the need to maintain the critical edge to peace that does not shy away from conflict, but seeks change through ‘peace-ful’ processes of conflict resolution that centralize mutual respect and social justice.

In the following discussion of community-based efforts to address domestic violence, including PFT’s peace-building initiatives, we continually return to the idea of balancing radical political beliefs with an approach to activism and social change that simultaneously engages with existing systems, working to reform them and while also envisioning and working to build alternative systems. We see this as an important tension in API Chaya’s work, and also as central to how we approach working with communities. Community-based anti-violence or peace-building work balances engaging with existing systems, creating reform, and imagining new formations. **Working within** community structures is both about the value and strength that can be found there, and about the necessity of that engagement for long-term social change. **Reform**

is about drawing out the positive elements of cultural practices and community belonging, and using these to change more negative practices or ideas – so, for example, drawing out ideas of mutual respect and equity in marriage and family and using Qura’nic teachings and faith-based ideas to challenge those within communities that deny that domestic violence is happening or who use Islam to try to justify dv. Reform also requires being compassionate toward those with whom you disagree, and not making assumptions about their intentions or perspectives. This allows for greater care in discerning positive elements from negative ones. **Imagining new formations** includes seeking alternatives to criminal justice systems in domestic violence response, and also captures the ways in which these processes of reform, coupled with migration and shifting gender roles for example, might actually mean new formations of faith-based community that retain the strengths of past formations, but reflect wider systematic change over time and thus are not merely the result of minor accommodations within unchanged systems. As Sarah suggests, communities must make space for difference and for change and evolution, or else they will die out.

“Complicating” Community

In this chapter, we take up ‘community’ as a concept, a question, and a phenomenon we have all, in different ways, been entangled with and have witnessed “in action”. After her years of direct work in communities through both advocacy and mobilization, Sarah sees the unique possibilities for long-term change that community-based strategies offer. We all recognize the value of community-based anti-violence work and the history of its evolution in the work of women of color and immigrant women (within the U.S. anti-domestic violence movement). There is a degree of necessity in this approach, as the organizations pioneering this work have

often been engaged with smaller communities, which are isolated from mainstream society or public resources and that cannot or do not want to rely on the U.S. criminal justice system. But embedding anti-violence work in community also arises from meaningful connections within the cultural, religious, and linguistic communities API Chaya serves. As Sarah put it, you engage because you see existing structures that are already supporting survivors, as well as the real potential for positive change, even when you also see the problematic elements of community structures.

We regularly reference community in the pages that follow - as we grapple with the politics of belonging for South Asian Muslim Americans, with the complexities of social relationships and networks for individuals and groups, and with significance of different people's worldviews in shaping the possibilities for community-based solutions to domestic abuse. The term 'community' holds multiple meanings and these are shifting all the time. For many people, their daily lives bring them in and out of several overlapping or distinctive 'communities'. As such, our usage of community is intentionally not fixed – as “the South Asian Muslim” community for example. Rather, we employ the concept to refer to different kinds of social groupings, and more importantly to explore how bonds of care and trust form and link networks of people together.

We begin, in order to give substance to the term, with the basic starting definition provided in the 5th Edition of the Dictionary of Human Geography, and written by Deborah Martin. The entry for community begins: “A group of people who share common culture, values and/or interests, and who have some means of recognizing, and (inter)acting upon, these commonalities.” Communities come together based on a lot of different aspects of people's lives and their experiences. For Chaya, historically, and today for API Chaya, we recognize the

significance of immigration in people's lives and identities.^{iv} Country of origin and ethnicity also shape the constitution of specific immigrant communities.^v

As we will elaborate, our critical engagements with “community” in anti-violence work require a vigilant consideration of the heterogeneity of communities, as well as an appreciation of their capacity for flexibility and change. Our experiences with ‘communities’ include both groupings that form around religion, language and/or country of origin, as well as those that arise in particular spaces, such as masjids, which often include people speaking many languages, who may practice different forms of Islam, and trace their heritage to many different countries and cultures. Other forms of difference – such as class and caste – may well create separate groupings of people who feel comfortable with one another based on a degree of shared experience. However, with in the U.S. diaspora, those are rarely *named* as communities. Our discussions of community and the possibilities and tensions it offers for peace-building work complicate these simple identifications of “community” and dig more deeply into *why*, for example, those who share a particular faith or a particular country of origin might choose to forge strong social networks and invest in long-term social bonds across both similarities and differences.

Complicating community as a basis for violence response or peace-building begins by acknowledging this diversity and permeability of ‘community’. We all learned through the course of getting the PFT research project up and running in 2011-13 that it is vital to maintain these complexities in how we talk about Muslim communities. When we started the research project, our initial language on posters and in emails, which used the phrase “the Muslim community,” caused discomfort for some. Volunteers shared their own and their friends’ feedback that this might come off as homogenizing Muslim Americans,^{vi} which may make some

people reluctant to participate. As a result, we changed the language we were using – to pluralize communities and to refer specifically to masjid-based communities. We also decided to adapt our interview recruitment strategies to approach community members on a masjid by masjid basis, in order to make clear our intention to capture the diversity of ideas and practices of Muslim and masjid communities and not to make any blanket generalizations about ‘the Muslim community’ and response to domestic violence. In this way, PFT volunteers who are also linked into diverse Muslim communities, helped to guide the organization’s work and to keep us accountable to different pockets of community.

This example demonstrates the ways in which a distinctive organizational “community” has also formed around (API) Chaya, as staff, volunteers, donors, clients, and supports have formed networks of comradery and friendship over the years. This organizational community is evident at such events as our annual fundraising auction, as well as in our own individual experiences of both finding shared values and interests through API Chaya, as well as observing how people continually return to or remain connected with this particular organization, even as the core staff and board members change over time. API Chaya itself, as well as individuals who are part of this organizational community, might also be said to be part of a broader, cross-border transformative justice or anti-oppression community. This scale of a community as a social formation or network really describes a social movement, but one based in a wide range of localized and community-embedded projects and services. API Chaya engages in coalitional work with organizations like the NW Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse and the NW Immigrant Rights Project, as well as with labor unions like Unite Here! and more loosely defined collectives working on prison abolition, disability justice, and sex workers rights.

The diversity within South Asian and Muslim communities – of ethnicity, class, sexuality, political viewpoints, age, etc. – becomes apparent as members of those communities become engaged with ‘the API Chaya community’. The strong base of volunteers that Chaya, and now API Chaya, has had over the years brings together people with a broad range of views and experiences. As Farah points out, in an important sense, this is a strength of the organization, that it draws this diverse swath of people and that there are different ways that people can become involved, such as through volunteering or regularly attending the annual auction and fundraising dinner, or attending the annual candle light vigil and related events, or by helping with a particular program, or supporting survivors in big and small ways (i.e. donating household items, providing rides or resume help). Farah also points how API Chaya’s ability to work with a range of people allows the organization to reach many types of communities, and to invoke loyalty from many kinds of people with varying levels of affiliation or wariness towards radical politics. Sarah notes that the tension this creates in terms of growing separate programs and events through these different volunteer pools but not wanting to then becoming too compartmentalized. Yet (API) Chaya has managed to maintain a cohesive organizational community over the years. Similar to the cultural and religious communities we work with, the API Chaya community is large enough that not every member (especially with volunteers) knows every other member/volunteer. And yet, consistencies like volunteer training and the annual auction allow for a recognizable community to continue growing around the organization’s work and for new people to continue to join that group and bring their own diversities into the mix. Current supporters and volunteers also often bring their friends and family members to events or trainings, and as a result, social networks and affiliations to ethnic or religious community end up bringing people into conversations about domestic violence and

about how they can be part of change in their own communities. This is huge – as it means that API Chaya is not always ‘preaching to the choir’, but rather taking their visions of anti-violence and peace-building, and commitments to anti-oppression broadly writ, to an audience that hasn’t necessarily been primed to listen or may not even have thought much about these issues in the past.

While we see the benefits of that diversity in the API Chaya community, the messiness of community-based work also means that we navigate internal tensions – different perspectives and experiences, as well as different visions for the organization’s growth or trajectory. Farah and Sarah recall a couple of examples from 2013. First, when API Chaya’s Director at the time left Seattle, as the organization’s board and staff discussed who would serve as an interim director, some differences emerged in what priorities the board had versus what the staff saw as most important. While this was not a polarized conversation, it did demonstrate the kinds of tensions that can arise between those who focus more on the fiscal and administrative stability of the organization and those who are doing the daily work of supporting survivors and mobilizing communities. Board members are of course interested in community support and direct services, or they would not be involved at all, and staff of course understand and value the importance of financial and leadership sustainability for the organization. Yet each group also comes to the table speaking and thinking from their particular roles. This emerged also in the planning for the annual auction and dinner that year. The API Chaya board and a team of volunteers largely run this event on behalf of the organization, which allows staff to stay focused on their work with survivors and community mobilization. The auction is a vital source of funding for API Chaya, and the organization had decided that financial stability needed to be a primary focus for 2013-14. Yet, this event also knits together various branches of API Chaya’s organizational

community, and as such becomes an important forum for presenting organizational values. The complexities of API Chaya's analysis of gendered violence and anti-oppression can be difficult to explain in this forum, but the organization must also be careful that presenting the basic ideas does not over-simplify in a way that plays into myths of domestic violence in API and South Asian communities.

Finally, while we do sometimes refer to communities named for geographic associations (i.e. the Pakistani community), we do not employ the common definition of "community" used in the mainstream domestic violence movement. Traditionally when mainstream organizations talk about community they mean *institutional* community in a city or county— including coordinated coalitions of police, schools, social service providers, and nonprofits providing advocacy and other services to survivors. This usage of community arises primarily from the popularity of the 'Coordinated Community Response' model of anti-domestic violence organizing. While API Chaya does engage with law enforcement and other state agencies, we do not include these units within "community" when we discuss community-based response. The racialized, immigrant families and individuals that API Chaya serves have distinctive experiences with domestic abuse that should not be subsumed into mainstream anti-violence organizing, nor should their experiences of 'community' be equated with the homogenized urban population or governance of 'Seattle'. Our emphasis on the organic processes that forge bonds of trust and care also focuses our analysis on smaller communities that form through everyday interactions. We use care to describe not only affection or concern or the labor of caring for others, nor simply to refer to an abstract interest in others' well-being. Rather, we note that care includes relationships of obligation (in both positive and negative ways), and that this is tied to reputation and caring what one's community members think about their actions. Caring

relationships may also extend through kinship ties, such that persons who are ‘friends of the family’ or a particular family member will be treated with additional care (as will their other members of their family). These smaller communities are groups of people who become intertwined to the point that what effects one member also effects the others. In a community, a person’s own reputation/identity/character is now defined by this group of people (versus other people) and so what s/he does with them/to them/for them matters because those one has community relationships with now have some authority to define one’s reputation and identity out in the world. In this way, obligation and expectation become important elements within relationships of care and trust. Also, due to the sharing of social spaces and community affiliations, people’s ways of relating do affect those outside their family as well. For closer relationships, these linkages may also mean that an investment in one another’s comfort, happiness, and thriving develops.

Communities as Sites of Immigrant Belonging: Culture, Spirituality, and Assimilation

Over the years, and most recently in preparing to write this chapter, we’ve had numerous conversations about how culture plays into domestic violence and how working with culturally specific communities influences the priorities and practices of organizing against dv. Amy has captured some aspects of our analysis in earlier chapters – particularly the significance of ‘cultural competency’ in anti-dv work, and how we hold that in tension with complex characterizations of culture and community that work to disrupt or pre-empt the “culture blaming” tendencies of mainstream U.S. society. While culture can enter into abuse and cultural differences are relevant to dv response, culture blaming reproduces colonial and Orientalist discourses of racialized immigrant communities as prone to violence, and can contribute to

Islamophobic political rhetoric and anti-Muslim hate crimes (Raja 2013). In relation to API Chaya's community organizing, 'culture' also enters into immigrants' negotiations of (in)direct pressures to assimilate into mainstream U.S. society.

As Farah points out, assimilation is experienced differently by different people. Given our work together with the PFT, and our own individual experiences, we are particularly interested in how *spirituality* enters into processes of assimilation. One key question that emerges in this is - how does spirituality shape immigration processes for communities defined by a shared faith (be it Islam, Christianity, Hinduism), a shared faith-center (i.e. masjid, church, temple), or by faith-based social networks (i.e. of fellow Muslims, Christians, Hindus) – or by all of these? In her own experiences in masjid communities, and working with PFT, Farah has observed multiple ways that assimilation plays out – both consciously and more subconsciously. Feeling a need to assimilate (whether or not one identifies it as such) can shape what people view as being definitive of Islam, or what it means to be spiritually Muslim. For example, an Islamic value of tolerating difference extends to the white mainstream communities that Muslims are also part of (in a neighborhood/town/city) and this might become embedded in what your religion represents to you. In this way, building peaceful inter-faith community relationships allows a faithful person to draw upon Islam as part of their assimilation process. Highlighting tolerance and peace also makes Islam acceptable to the surrounding non-Muslim society. Farah understands this process as distinct from seeing oneself as marginalized within assimilation processes – rather, there is a strength in being able to say that one's practices of 'fitting in' are authentically part of who they are and their faith. This does not mean such a perspective is necessarily positive, but rather that it is durable as a cohesive worldview that may be both useful and meaningful for individuals.

This way of understanding adaptation as a spectrum or grey area (rather than a black and white of assimilation or resistance to assimilation) also helps us to understand how “peace” enters into Muslim American identity and community. For example, in India, what defines being Muslim might not be tolerance or peace, it might be related to other starkly distinguishable practices like eating meat. So in each place and situation, there are different imperatives for what differentiates a Muslim person and what allows them to maintain their life in that place. We might think of this process as being framed by some key questions, such as: how does this religion continue to be useful in a really wide variety of situations? And how does Islam (or religion and faith) get shaped to meet your needs? For Muslim Americans, faith might be useful because it allows for adaptation, but not a form of assimilation that emphasizes being different or being oppressed. This structures religion in a way that allows you to maintain a sense of benefitting and unique value, as well as not putting friction in any relationship, such as those in work, school, or neighborhood spaces. Farah observes that this demonstrates the interesting way that faith can morph; that religions stay alive because they meet people’s needs throughout time and space. So when there is a need or desire to be assimilated into society, people might draw on a particular form or understanding of spirituality that allows a ‘safe’ route because it is palatable to the society around you, sort of like the path of least resistance. This doesn’t mean that a desire to assimilate causes one to draw on spirituality, but rather that those who both have spirituality in their lives and want to assimilate, may find it helpful when spirituality supports that process and doesn’t get in the way. This requires, however, a particular presentation of Islam for non-Muslim people, a particular idea of what Islam is – for example, this might mean emphasizing certain aspects that project peace and tolerance. For immigrant communities, then, there is a process of seeing which aspects of your culture or religion are valued by the mainstream society and

projecting out that part of a worldview that works well in the U.S. and allows for peaceful interaction. For example, while this might include ideas of peace and tolerance for Muslims, for Hindus it might relate to yoga or meditation. In these everyday processes of immigrant adaptation, people may directly feel a pressure to assimilate, or they may follow this ‘path of least resistance’ and assimilation may play out through this negotiation of what one’s faith or culture have to *offer* as contributions to the new society within which you are beginning to embed yourself and your family.

These negotiations of culture and assimilation also put anti-violence organizers and survivors of abuse in the position of juggling different cultural expectations of how best to address domestic violence. On the one hand, mainstream U.S. anti-domestic violence discourses and movements emphasize freedom (in being able to make your own decisions and live your own life) as a really important right that’s being hindered by abuse. On the other hand, many South Asian survivors express a sentiment that they don’t want this kind of ‘freedom’, but rather want to be embedded in family and community. They often do not mind if people are helping them make big life decisions, and they do not necessarily experience those more collective processes of decision making as related to abuse. They also quite often express that they want to make the violence end, but also to remain part of their families and communities.

Yet, when survivors do not agree with this notion that they should be ‘free’ from their families or communities in order to end abuse, the assumption in mainstream anti-violence movements is that they must be experiencing internalized oppression. There is a failure to see that culture may provide different frameworks for addressing violence, without excusing or ignoring it. In this way, South Asian and Muslim survivors navigate two distinct cultural ideas of how to end abuse – a model emphasizing individual freedom and liberation from a family or

relationship, which is embedded in Euro-American culture, and a framework that emphasizes trying to keep families together and end the violence within them if you can,^{vii} which emerges in both South Asian culture broadly, as well as from many different ethnically diverse Muslim communities.

For anti-violence activists and workers, this creates repeated tensions. From a survivor empowerment standpoint, API Chaya advocates strive to support survivors in defining their own paths forward. So, if women do want to stay in their marriages, API Chaya works to help them find empowerment within their situation, in terms of safety planning, of making sure their needs are met, and by maintaining a supportive point of contact and resource referral. Yet Sarah and others who (have) work(ed) as advocates sometimes experience an internalized reaction that calls forth the individual freedom philosophy – they might feel a survivor is making too big of a compromise by choosing to stay. Yet, as Sarah points out, this reaction does not give due consideration to how that survivor’s life would be compromised if she did leave. Among the survivors API Chaya staff support, some do choose to leave, and staff have seen that in most of those cases, survivors face many struggles. For example, they experience difficult economic situations and they often struggle to find housing, legal help, employment and to meet basic needs. Or, as a result of visitation or shared custody agreements with their ex-husbands, survivors experience a continuation of abuse, which is reconfigured within those situations, but still very traumatizing.

‘Community’ & Criminal Justice Systems

For API Chaya and PFT, community engagement practices have emerged and continue to take shape based upon organizational experiences working with *immigrant and refugee*

communities. The particular needs of immigrant and refugee communities complicate violence response because immigrants often cannot, or do not want to, rely upon criminal justice systems. API Chaya and other community-based organizations serving immigrants and people of color in the Seattle area have worked for years to educate law enforcement and court officials about the particular realities of domestic violence in those communities, including the persistent fear and distrust of police. And in fact, Seattle and King County criminal justice officials are often more thoughtful about immigration concerns and domestic violence in general. Sarah notes that as an advocate, this latter point was brought home for her when she worked with a survivor living in Snohomish County and encountered a judge who demonstrated a disturbing lack of understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

Yet, despite the greater sensitivity and knowledge of King County officials, the concerns and realities of immigrants' situations are not always fully understood. A recent example comes from API Chaya's 2012 candle light vigil,^{viii} where King County Sheriff John Urquhart spoke. Sheriff Urquhart spoke of training his officers to be sensitive to immigrant communities' concerns, for example instructing them not check immigration papers on domestic violence calls, all in an effort to reduce fear of police within these communities. While his office's efforts in this regard are commendable, Amy and Sarah both noted that Sheriff Urquhart characterized immigrants' fear of police as based primarily in their experiences with corrupt and violent police in their countries of origin. He failed to sufficiently acknowledge how immigration laws and enforcement produce this fear, and he gave no account to the fact that fear of police for racialized immigrant communities is also based in experiences of violence and discrimination at the hands of police *in this country*.

This experience demonstrates both the ongoing work of reform and education within criminal justice systems, as well as the limitations of such engagements. This presents a constant tension in API Chaya’s work – the organization engages transformative justice work (discussed further below) and operates from a radical analysis of inequality and oppression, but in order to support survivors, API Chaya must also engage with the criminal justice systems that these analyses critique. This sometimes creates disagreement within the organization – as some staff members with more radical politics express a desire to disengage entirely from criminal justice systems, while others either find it helpful or necessary to engage with those systems at times. Ultimately, centralizing survivor empowerment requires that API Chaya staff work with law enforcement and courts when survivors wish to utilize those systems.

In our analysis of community-based organizing, however, we also find this tension productive of alternative imaginings of response to and prevention of domestic violence. In many ways, API Chaya’s two main areas of operation balance working with current systems and building alternative ones. The organization combines direct services for survivors (which often engage with criminal justice mechanisms), with community mobilization work (which often helps to envision and promote community change and accountability as an alternative to police, courts, and jails). In anti-violence movements, this is sometimes talked about as “dual power,” which enters social movements through Marxist strategizing. Lenin first used the term to describe Russian worker and peasant movements. “The strategy of dual power means that oppressed people can simultaneously organize themselves to fight against the state, and create democratic institutions that prefigure the new forms of social organization of a socialist society” (Crass 2013, 28). In relation to criminal justice systems and gendered violence, dual power articulates the parallel work of envisioning and building alternative systems for addressing abuse

and holding abusers accountable, while at the same time advocating for survivors within current criminal justice and social service systems, trying to improve these through education, political agitation, and legal reform. We see dual power as a necessary approach in part because community-based response systems remain inconsistent and under-developed in many communities. While the state may not be the ideal arbiter of justice in cases of intimate violence, alternative systems are still not strong enough to fill that role entirely and survivors should not bear the burden (of further suffering or even fatal violence) while social systems evolve to better meet their needs.

While API Chaya works to educate police, courts, and social service providers about the dynamics of domestic violence in the diverse communities we serve, we are also part of coalitional efforts to build transformative justice systems that are separate from state criminal justice structures. Dual power and transformative justice also open spaces for conversations about how best to help survivors end the abuse in their intimate relationships, while remaining embedded within their families and social networks. Survivors commonly articulate this desire to advocates at API Chaya, and other organizations, but current systems are ill equipped to respond and instead offer primarily resources that help women to leave abusive situations, or in cases where a survivor does not want to leave, strategies for staying as safe as possible within the abusive home. These approaches very rarely engage men as part of the solution, and instead rely on incarceration and tend to demonize abusers as ‘monsters’. This not only exacerbates the mass incarceration of men of color and the growth of the ‘prison-industrial complex’ (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2006), but also denies the humanity of abusers and the impact on families and communities when men are ‘thrown away’ and subjected to state violence in prisons (and detention centers in the case of immigrant men). There are clear cases where an abuser’s

use of manipulation, control, and extreme violence make it impossible for him be accountable for his abuse without criminal justice intervention. However, there are also many cases where incidents of violence or abusive behavior might be addressed without incarceration and where men might be held accountable through their social networks, if appropriate systems existed to facilitate such ‘community accountability’. The reality is that *most* men are not abusive – even statistics that suggest about 25% of women will experience domestic or sexual abuse in their live times do not actually point to 25% of men being violent. Most men who commit violence against women will abuse or assault a number of women in their lifetimes, and are therefore a smaller percentage of men are responsible for the statistic reflecting women’s vulnerability.

Transformative justice and community accountability models are pushing the anti-domestic violence movement toward a more nuanced engagement with men. This includes demanding that that 80+ % of non-violent men take some responsibility for their role in enabling cultures of American masculinity that degrade women and perpetuate heteropatriarchal violence (J. Katz 2006).

In addition to envisioning alternative systems of accountability through transformative justice, there is also evidence to suggest that community-driven anti-violence initiatives are more oriented toward prevention and longer term change (as compared with current criminal justice based responses). We discuss this further in the upcoming sections, and particularly based on our experience with peace-building projects in American Muslim communities. While API Chaya invests in this organizing work, we must also emphasize the ‘messiness’ of community-based response to violence. One effect of API Chaya’s close relationships with the communities they serve is that the organization does not have any overly romantic notions about these communities being perfect or even easy to engage with in anti-violence work. We explore the contradictions

and difficulties of community-based work in relation to our argument for ‘community empowerment’ in the next section. However, it is important to keep in mind that while criminal justice systems may offer a seemingly straight-forward and ‘clean’ approach to domestic violence: to ‘end the violence’ by incarcerating the perpetrator and to protect the victim through restraining orders when a perpetrator is not incarcerated. But, this system is only clean and ordered on paper. In everyday life, criminal justice systems are also quite messy – they are time-intensive bureaucracies made up of people, which vary considerably across place and according to race and class (with uneven outcomes, for example, depending on what kind of lawyer a person can afford). As a result, these systems can rarely deliver the ‘justice’ they promise. Survivors often feel coerced by law enforcement and court officials (Cuomo 2013), and long, drawn-out court processes often cannot be wholly sensitive to survivors experiences and needs, which ends up re-traumatizes many. All of this is not to say that if our current systems are broken, it is okay to have imperfect alternative systems that may also do harm to survivors. Rather, it is to argue for the validity of a dual power approach. Decades of reforms have not sufficiently improved criminal justice response, and have met with very little success in reducing rates of domestic violence. Communities are, in many ways, the most obvious and perhaps only significant alternative to state systems. Thus, while building community response and accountability mechanisms may be difficult, messy, and require a long-term time investment, it offers the realizable means of simultaneously supporting survivors, preventing violence from happening in the first place, and resisting state violence against immigrant communities and communities of color (Victoria Law 2014; Bierria 2010; Bierria, Kim, and Rojas 2010).

Community Empowerment

API Chaya employs “community-based” strategies for addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. As we’ve discussed, this does not mean necessarily abandoning involvement criminal justice systems and the tools they offer, which in some cases are helpful to survivors. Rather, our individual and collective interest in community-based work derives from the potential we see in working with/in communities to create long-term social change around issues of gender, sexuality, and violence. From their inception, many organizations led by women of color and immigrant women worked within their communities for many reasons, including to better get at the root causes of abuse. Currently, community-based practice has become a trend even in mainstream anti-domestic violence work and is seen as ‘evidence-based practice’. Farah and Sarah also recognize this potential for change from within communities as members of several masjid communities, as well as in their social relationships that extend through masjid spaces and ties of family and friendship. All three of us have remained engaged with (API) Chaya’s work partly because the organization’s community-embedded approach frames domestic violence not only as an individualized issue between intimate partners, but as a concern of larger social networks.

While the U.S. anti-violence movement has emphasized that domestic violence is *not* a “private” matter and should be a concern of the larger society, in many ways this has been a signal toward criminal justice interventions. For example, there is the much celebrated “coordinated community response” model coming out of Duluth, Minnesota, which creates networks of communication and resources for addressing domestic abuse, typically at the city or county level, and involving police, courts, social services, and anti-violence NGOs (Shepard and Pence 1999). These efforts to define intimate abuse as a social issue not only rely upon criminal justice interventions, but also cast a wide net in defining ‘community’. API Chaya’s work, on

the other hand, grows out of and works in direct relationships to interconnected groups of people who define themselves as ‘communities’. This gives substance to the claim that violence is social issue – by working through actual networks of people that know and are invested in one another. This is a different view of ‘community’ than one invoking the entire city, general ‘society’, or a large, faceless ‘public’ – as the latter are disembodied and attempt to *produce* community rather than drawing upon existing social networks. In intertwined community networks, abuse becomes a social issue because people feel that it also affects them when someone they know and care about is suffering, and thus it is in their interest to help solve the problem. That suffering may also materially affect others and thereby become in the self-interest of other community members to get involved. In this sense, community is the material space of the social – a web of embodied, inter-personal relationships. For API Chaya, working with community means understanding the ways in which people draw upon their social networks in times of crisis, and exploring how violence might be prevented through reshaping social relationships of all kinds (i.e. parental, intimate partner, friendship, neighbor, etc.).^{ix}

A number of questions extend from this concern with the substantive relationships of social networks and ‘community’: How do people frame what kind of ‘community/ies’ they are part of? What does it mean to ‘represent’ a community or many communities? What does this look like? What are the (im)possibilities of it? Why and *how* can/do we “meet the community where they are at” in order to work on anti-violence issues? How might we think about a vision and practice of “community empowerment” in this work, and how is that related to the survivor empowerment model at the heart of API Chaya’s services?

A key insight that guides our analysis, and which Sarah brought to our conversations, is the idea that the strongest potential for social change beginning within communities (and extends

beyond them) lies in “organic community relationships”. Our interest is in relationships that form and are sustained through everyday activities, connections, and inter-relations, which are often mundane and yet involve a lot of energy and commitment. An organic community relationship may form from people spending a lot of time in the same spaces – for example, attending masjid for prayer and for other events. Over time, when people are together this much – for rituals, eating and talking together, celebrating together, organizing masjid programs and events together, cleaning together at the masjid, etc. – this forges bonds of care between people. This means they notice one another’s absences; they bring soup when someone is sick; check-in when they know someone is going through a hard time; and attend one another’s birthdays, weddings, dinner parties, and holiday celebrations. They may also attend events and meetings for causes or issues that their fellow community members invite them to – things they may otherwise not have known about or sought out.

The organic way that these relationships form within community is significant. First of all, given the diversities *within* religious and cultural communities, the formation of community bonds through shared time and space also involves an everyday encounter with difference. On the one hand, for the types of smaller religious and cultural communities that API Chaya works with, within community spaces (such as a masjid) people interact across class differences, with people from a range of cultures and countries of origin who speak many languages, and who have various experiences of migration and adaptation – as refugees; recent immigrants; international students; guest workers^x; or as first, second and third generation members of migrant families. Community spaces bring together wide-ranging experiences of life in the U.S., as well as diverse perspectives on politics, economics, citizenship and social life. By virtue of the sharing of space and forming of bonds in those spaces, people encounter one another’s

differences. On the other hand, as communities grow, this kind of shared space might change. Both Sarah and Farah have experienced this in masjid communities within which they grew up. For example, Sarah describes how South Asian Muslims in the Los Angeles area originally rented space for worship, and then built a single mosque in the 1980s. Growing up attending this masjid, Sarah remembers considerable diversity, especially across class lines. As there was just the one masjid, people would drive 45 minutes or an hour and a half from various neighborhoods and surrounding suburbs. But as the population grew, additional masjids were built and this led to some degree of division by class, as people attend the center closest to where they live. Now that there is mosque in Orange County, for example, there is no need for South Asian Muslims living there to commute to other mosques where they might encounter more working class people. Farah shares a parallel example from growing up in the Tri Cities in Washington State. When she was younger, there was only one masjid, which included a lot of ethnic and class diversity. Following two major waves of refugee settlement in the area – from Bosnia and Somalia - there are now two masjids, which tend to divide along ethnic lines and class lines, with Bosnian refugees attending one mosque. Yet even as masjid spaces may become less diverse in this way, there are also often familial and community bonds that maintain some degree of loose cohesion across masjid spaces. Sarah describes how holidays, such as Eid, will often bring families and even extended friendship networks together to attend masjid, even when individuals and their immediate family may typically attend a different masjid. Important holidays such as Eid may also be celebrated in larger spaces – for example in Seattle, Eid has been celebrated at the city’s convention center with Muslims from across the area coming together to celebrate.

Organic community relationships become significant in such heterogeneous spaces because they cultivate a wider sense of care in relation to these encounters with difference. They

may, for example, happen through formalized Islamic practices like zakat, where masjid members share their income and support those who are struggling financially in their community. Caring relationships also affect reactions to difference around controversial issues, such as sexuality. Sarah describes the experiences of a good friend, Laila, who is embedded in both the spiritual and social elements of her Muslim community and decided to remain in the community after coming out. While lesbian or queer identity remains silent in many masjid communities (and faith-based communities more broadly), Laila did not want to lose all of the benefits gained from relationships to her faith community. As a practicing Muslim, she also wanted to hold onto her faith and spiritual practices. And while it is not her responsibility to educate others about heteronormativity or non-normative sexuality, by choosing to remain interconnected with her community, Laila created a situation within which family and friends could recognize the humanity and value of person who they might otherwise simply categorize as ‘different’/aberrant and perhaps as ‘sinful’. Existing bonds of care and trust mean that community members must confront their own assumptions or prejudices and hopefully learn to think differently about the stereotypes and discriminatory practices that their loved one is subjected to based upon this ‘difference’. We are not suggesting that Laila’s experience stands for all queer people who attempt to remain part of their communities while being open about who they are – there are plenty of examples to counter such a generalization. However, we are suggesting that it is easier to dismiss a person that you do not have a relationship with and do not care about in an everyday, intimate sense. If Laila chose to leave her community, there would be less opportunity for other community members to shift their ideas around normative sexuality. While our experiences suggest that many masjid communities have a long way to come toward accepting openly gay, lesbian, transgender and queer members, examples like that of Laila do

suggest relationships of care and trust may provide a means of confronting prejudice and opening minds to ‘alternative’ forms of sexuality and love.

This potential avenue of social change brings us to a second strength of organically formed community relationships. For social change work – such as API Chaya and PFT’s mobilization against gendered violence – drawing upon existing bonds of trust and relationships of care creates a much stronger base for community organizing. An organization or activist(s) may approach a loosely affiliated group of people and urge them to come together for a cause, and perhaps they do for a particular moment or event, such as political campaigns. But this may not have the long-term effect of mobilizing that community toward deeper social change. Our approach to community-based work, on the other hand, seeks to mobilize the existing relationships and strengths of the community itself. API Chaya’s work also highlights the importance of intersectionality and anti-oppression as frameworks for addressing how gendered violence is embedded within broader social worlds. However, intersectionality and anti-oppression, as concepts or approaches to anti-violence, do not capture the significance of relationships of care and bonds of community, which form the substance of ‘community’ more than an identifying label (of ‘Muslim’ or ‘South Asian’).

In our work with the Peaceful Families Taskforce, we value these organic relationships that forge community bonds amongst heterogeneous groups of people. We recognize that working through such community relationships helps PFT and API Chaya to achieve our organizational goals of supporting survivors of violence and raising awareness about the dynamics of abuse within the communities we serve. However, our approach to community mobilization is not merely about the organization’s priorities, but rather seeks to support processes that lead to more effective social change in the long term. In this case, that means an

investment in community change from within. Our experiences suggest that the best role for an organization or activist(s) in community-based work against domestic violence is one that facilitates change by empowering communities to build effective violence response and prevention from a base of their existing resources.

Community empowerment means meeting communities where they are at and working with them toward sustainable social change. The underlying assumption, which parallels that of the ‘survivor empowerment model’ of anti-domestic violence work, is that communities know themselves best – they understand the dynamics within their social networks and have the wisdom to figure out their own solutions. More formal institutions like API Chaya, and our PFT program, enter as organizers who possess resources and information, and can provide guidance to help focus community efforts and resources. Rather than intervening to tell communities how to make change, then, PFT offers knowledge and skills to support masjid communities, in utilizing the ingredients they already possess. These combined efforts work toward addressing domestic violence in ways that will best support survivors of abuse and will be most effective for longer term prevention within those particular communities.

In working with communities, PFT contributes specialized knowledge about the dynamics of domestic violence generally, as well as the particularities that often arise within Muslim families. This knowledge draws from API Chaya’s decades of experience providing support to survivors and navigating criminal justice systems, and PFT’s decade of experience hosting community conversations on these issues. PFT also brings resources compiled through collaborations with organizations such as the Peaceful Families Project, a national organization working within Muslim communities to respond to domestic violence.^{xi} Several examples illustrate how community empowerment shapes PFT’s work. First of all, our organizing

approach values the knowledge and values communities already possess. PFT offers our experience and singular focus on domestic violence to help to draw out the ingredients communities possess and to pull these together into a strategy for supporting survivors and responding to violence. While communities have many agendas, we have only one and are positioned (through experience and study in this area) to organize communities around this particular agenda (of anti-violence). One way that PFT does this is through our trainings for communities, which draw upon Qura'nic models of family and teaching around non-violence and mutual respect, as well as provide community members with language to articulate things they also recognize in relationship dynamics (i.e. cycle of abuse, etc.). Another example of how community empowerment plays out in PFT's work is our community-based research project. After nearly a decade of providing community education and organizing support, PFT staff and volunteers recognized that while they were working with some community derived tools (that they recognized as useful to anti-violence), that there may be many other possibilities for drawing on community knowledge. The research project became a way to empower the voices of people in the community to help determine what kinds of strengths and assets their faith communities might have for addressing domestic abuse and supporting survivors and for informing the direction(s) of PFT's future work.

In a number of ways, an approach based in organic community relationships and community empowerment is considerably more complex than a top-down model of anti-violence organizing based in professional expertise and authority. One challenge is that the same hierarchies of power and domination that operate in the wider society of course also exist in Muslim communities. Patriarchy, heteronormativity, and class inequalities, for example, also create hierarchies of privilege and disadvantage *within* Muslim communities. In our work

contesting domestic violence, and our wider resistance of oppressive structures, API Chaya and PFT cannot ignore such internal community hierarchies and must contend with how inequalities crop up during work with survivors or within community mobilization efforts. However, this does not mean abandoning community empowerment or refusing to work with anyone who does not share all of our political commitments and theories of violence and oppression. Rather, the difficulty of addressing such internal hierarchies actually makes an approach based in trusted, organic relationships more appealing.

To this point, Sarah recalls participating on a panel at Seattle University with Reverend Marie Fortune from Faith Trust Institute. Reverend Fortune shared an insightful analysis of this question of navigating inequalities within faith-based communities. She told a story of her own path to anti-violence work, and how she witnessed patriarchy and other inequalities in her own faith community, but also could see them in every space she was part of in her life and work. Seeing this ubiquity of inequality and violence, Reverend Fortune chose to work with/in her own faith community, where she shared many values with her fellow community members and had built relationships of trust and care. Sarah feels similarly about her work with and membership in Muslim faith communities. Community empowerment does not mean supporting the status quo of community dynamics or adopting a naïve assumption of perfect communities with only positive qualities and relationships. Rather, community empowerment means drawing upon the strengths of communities – in terms of organic relationships of care and trust, as well as traditions and teachings that support mutual respect and equity – and rallying these positive resources as ingredients for social change within and beyond that community.

Another complexity of community empowerment revolves around questions of agency that arise within collective processes of decision making. We think of community empowerment,

to some degree, as modeled after survivor empowerment. When working with survivors of violence, API Chaya provides information, resources, and support, but assumes a survivor knows her own life best and should be in charge of making decisions and choosing her path forward. This can be a difficult road to walk with survivors, especially if a survivor is choosing options that might not seem ideal to an anti-violence advocate. But survivor empowerment emerges from many decades of evolution in the anti-domestic violence movement in the U.S., and particularly from analysis of power and control in abusive relationships, which shows that attempting to ‘save’ survivors or to make decisions for them only perpetuates their disempowerment and limits their ability to take control over their own lives (a power and self-confidence often taken from them by abusive partners). So while it is can be challenging, survivor empowerment follows a relatively straightforward idea of agency that centralizes the self-determination of individual survivors of violence.

Agency becomes a lot more complex when you’re dealing with a *collective* that includes different individual perspectives, as well as multiple subgroups that might wish to adopt different approaches or may hold divergent ideas of what the community’s trajectory should be. From an organizational standpoint, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether or not certain people’s ideas are dominating the conversation and thus how best to be responsive to different articulations of community values, particularly when some of them conflict. The organizational role is one of providing tools and helping to facilitate conversations, and should include working with a range of community members and leaders. But ultimately, community mobilization is not about *controlling* the process. Rather, much like survivor empowerment, API Chaya approaches community empowerment by supporting change that addresses domestic violence in the short and long term, and helps to meet the self-identified needs of survivors.

Instances of direct conflict between survivors and their communities also occur, and present another kind of challenge for organizational efforts to support both survivor and community empowerment processes. There are instances where community members may actively support an abuser, not believing a survivor's accounts of violence and even attempting to convince her to stop making the accusations and/or not to press legal charges. In this way, some community members may actually become part of the abuse. In specific cases, API Chaya supports the survivor and follows her lead, and does not engage with community members regarding the specific cases of individual survivors. Confidentiality forbids even revealing whether or not a particular woman is in contact with API Chaya and using our services. This means the organization can deflect any community members requesting their mediation in favor of a man accused of abuse, but also that advocates cannot step in to 'defend' a survivor, as this would violate confidentiality by revealing her relationship to the organization. When survivors are in conflict with their communities, API Chaya supports them in finding alternative avenues of support and resources, and does not engage with the other community members in question. This often means respectfully, but firmly, explaining to community members that 'We cannot talk to you about any specific case or situation of abuse' or 'We cannot discuss any case or confirm or deny whether or not someone is working with our organization.'

While on a case-by-case basis such instances present a challenge to community empowerment, they do not negate the wider possibilities for and benefits of working with communities. Mobilization is still possible with a masjid community, even if some members have 'sided with' an abuser in a particular case. There is a significant distinction here between not engaging with community members who try to intervene in scenarios where survivors either do not want them to or where their behavior is harmful to the survivor, as opposed to seeking a

wider shift within communities toward taking responsibility for preventing domestic abuse and supporting survivors (away from assuming intimate relationship violence is a ‘private’ problem that is ‘not their business’). Survivor empowerment (in the former case) does not preclude organizational support of community empowerment as described in the latter.

Intimate Peace-Building

“To unsettle ‘peace’ by exposing how it is both portrayed and visualized, as well as practiced and materialized, is not just an intellectual exercise but an integral part of creating peace itself” (Koopman 2011, 193).

PFT’s work – with local masjid communities, as a program of API Chaya, and in collaboration with other organizations like the Faith Trust Institute and the national Peaceful Families Project – showcases the ways in which processes of community formation can intertwine with peace-building practices. The organic relationships that emerge and help to forge networks of familiarity, care and trust within communities also provide a foundation for peace-building initiatives and in some ways actively do the invisible work of constructing everyday peace (Williams 2015). As Sarah points out, the idea of *peace-building* is great for organizing because it’s a more palatable way to approach communities, rather than starting with the negative, the problems, and therefore proposing to fix something that’s ‘wrong’ with the community. Peace-building suggests that people can contribute to positive processes in their own social networks, including drawing on Qura’nic models of peace to address domestic abuse (which in many cases involves changing the minds of those who think that intimate violence is not happening in their community and providing them positive actions to take to support survivors and to bring everyday realities of violence closer to the ideal of peace and mutual respect in Islamic marriages and Muslim families).

This view of peace also envisions an *active process*, which results in a healthy community in the short term and lays a foundation for the prevention of violence within families or between communities in times of crisis. For example, several qualitative studies in South Asia have found that inter-community bonds between Hindus and Muslims – forged through shared labor (I. Chatterjee 2009), trade associations, and women’s cooperatives (K. Sharma 2002) – proved to be protective factors during outbreaks of communal violence during the Partition of India and Pakistan, or during more recent communal riots and pogroms against Muslims. Inter-faith relationships and community linkages that emerge through everyday practices related to livelihood, neighborhood improvement, and shared class interests create bonds that prevent people from turning on one another during crises and even motivate them to shelter and defend friends, neighbors, and co-workers who face the threat of violence. Yet, despite several examples of this outcome, very little research digs into the mundane production of peace and the building blocks of peaceful relationships within more intimate spaces like families/homes, communities/neighborhoods, and amongst coworkers.

When it comes to domestic violence, the idea of peace as a form of primary prevention is compelling. *Primary* prevention refers to actions that work to reduce the incidence or likelihood of a problem before it arises, in contrast to secondary prevention that responds to warning signs of a problem already emerging, or tertiary prevention, which works to prevent additional harm once a problem has already arisen. Primary prevention means preventing domestic abuse before it occurs (rather than responding to ‘red flags’ in an existing relationship or working to support survivors in leaving a violent partner and not entering into future relationships that are abusive). As Wolfe describes, “Examples of primary prevention include school-based programs that teach students about domestic violence and alternative conflict-resolution skills, and public education

campaigns to increase awareness of the harms of domestic violence and of services available to victims” (Wolfe 1999, 133). While primary prevention emphasizes preemptive action to avoid harm entirely, in many ways it is conceived as a *responsive* mechanism. These examples that Wolfe offers suggest that the specter of domestic violence hangs over primary prevention as well – it is a reaction against a negative social reality. In this way, peace-building may in fact offer a more *constructive* avenue: as an active, productive process that centralizes building healthy, caring, and mutually respectful relationships in familial and community networks. This also means that a community’s stated and shared values become helpful for peace-building as specific positive values to draw upon, for example with faith-based teaching, which become tangible reference points for adapting relationships of care and obligation.

In this way, we distinguish between peace and anti-violence. Addressing the reality of domestic violence in a(II) community(ies) from a reactive, even preventive stance suggests starting from the negative and saying ‘let’s not allow this bad thing to happen’. The logical extension of anti-violence or violence prevention in this vein is that ‘peace’ means the absence of violence. On the other hand, an active and processual idea of peace defines peacefulness as a presence (not an absence) and calls forth respect, tolerance, love, and care as realizable *actions*. As Sara Koopman suggests, we must ‘take peace to pieces’ and look at the plurality and different contexts of its production, as well as the varied ingredients that ‘make peace’ in the plural (Koopman 2011). In this vein, Williams and McConnell (2011, 930) “propose a more expansive and critical focus around ‘peace-ful’ concepts such as tolerance, friendship, hope, reconciliation, justice, cosmopolitanism, resistance, solidarity, hospitality and empathy.” In our work in South Asian and/or Muslim communities, and in Sarah and Farah’s own experiences as members of South Asian Muslim communities, we recognize some significant ideas that can be ‘peace-ful’.

In addition to the Qura'nic teachings around peace described earlier, a cultural-religious value shared between many diverse South Asian/Muslim communities is interconnectivity.

Staying connected to one another and showing up for each another's happy occasions (i.e. weddings) and sad occasions (i.e. illnesses) is both appreciated and expected in many of these community spaces. For the relatively small migrant communities that API Chaya and PFT work with, staying connected and taking care of one another is a cultural/religious value that becomes accentuated in struggles faced by immigrant communities. For example, when there are few immigrants of a particular culture and/or faith, families may choose to live in the same neighborhoods, or at least share masjid or cultural spaces, even if they have diverse class backgrounds. Or poverty may unite a diverse group of immigrants who support one another through difficult times. In these kinds of situations, immigrants may not have any other choice – they need each other and end up interacting and helping each other so much that they organically develop trusting relationships and become close.

One type of dynamic that we have observed in our experiences is that as populations grow or incomes rise for some, once people have the means and the choice, those neighborhoods or shared spaces may splinter and people may start separating. At this point, people may become motivated to identify positive elements as a means of arguing for maintaining some degree of community cohesion, because they no longer have the proximity/closeness/structure that previously enabled both positive and negative elements of close-knit community relationships. This might emerge as an argument for taking that positive sense of community bonds and caring relationships and carrying it forward past struggles that originally created spaces for people to connect and forge community. Shared religious or cultural traditions and rituals become a means of making that argument for valuing and maintaining interconnectivity. In a sense, this argument

for close-knit community also resists assimilation to ‘modern’ capitalist social formulations for family and civic life. Capitalism functions by and strengthens as people become more and more isolated and individualized, wherein their relationships become transactional rather than based in mutual need or mutual care. The benefits of relationships of care were less openly recognized and discussed when necessity and proximity worked to maintain those connections. But those positive elements must now be more clearly articulated as part of an argument in favor of creating and maintaining community networks, which we see as a form of peace-building.

The argument for interconnectivity and mutual responsibility emphasizes the maintenance of community bonds through everyday acts of care and support. In this way, *obligation* becomes more nuanced - not only a negative, nor only a positive – way of relating to family and community. In API Chaya’s work, we also see some really awful situations that arise from overly rigid social norms or notions of cultural obligation. These need to be addressed by communities, but addressing the coercive use of obligation in inter-personal relationships (for example, an abusive partner maintaining control over his wife by invoking her obligations as a mother) does not mean rejecting all forms of obligation that operate in social relationships. In some ways, Western notions of individualism and choice lead to a sort of ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’, wherein rejection of coercion or control in social relationships has included a dismissal of forms of mutual obligation that can also be positive. So the idea of only doing things that you want to do or feel like doing trumps an obligation to support community members and put time and energy into demonstrating your care for them. While we are not suggesting that obligation ought to be enforced through punitive measures (even more subtle forms like shame), we are asserting that collectivity and interconnectivity will atrophy if members of a community feel no obligation to one another. Those obligations are most effective

when formed through organic relationships and the recognition of mutual benefit, which also suggests mutual suffering (i.e. mutual investments in relationships of care that create a sense of sharing in one another's lives – if you thrive, I thrive; if you suffer, I suffer).

Religious and cultural norms that celebrate commitment to family members and community can also serve as positive reinforcements for bonds of trust and care that promote peace-building. In the case of domestic violence, considerable research demonstrates that survivors are far more likely to find support from their existing social networks than to call upon law enforcement or professionalized services like those offered by API Chaya's advocates (Goodman and Smyth 2011). Strong social networks, which are also educated about the dynamics of domestic abuse, provide greater support to survivors, and while research is unfortunately slim in this arena, many working in the anti-violence movement believe that strong social network support also increases the likelihood of intervention or mediation in unhealthy relationships before violence occurs. Obligations to community relationships may therefore be 'peace-ful,' if such concepts come along with ideas of mutuality and equality. The latter point is key - an important part of building peace from existing concepts and practices is the flexibility of those traditions, the ability to add in some new ingredients as well or to tell the same story from a different perspective.

Considering the particular building blocks for peace that are present in a specific space or place, allows for a hopeful approach, but one that can and must be critically engaged with power dynamics and hierarchies. Just as we are not suggesting a universal concept of peace that fits all families, communities, or inter-community relationships, we do not have romantic notions of peace building processes. (We like to say that peace is not all about "unicorns and rainbows".) Peace building requires hard work, especially when peace encompasses ideas of social justice

and equity as well as non-violence. Part of specifying peace is avoiding constructing an empty idea, or one that is "...sentimentally idealized as either simply not-war, or all that is good" (Koopman 2011, 193). When ideas of peace do not include historical analysis of contemporary inequalities and systems of violence, then the concept can too easily become a disguise for coercion or even for its so-called opposite, violence. For example, peace within a family is not a woman 'keeping the peace' by compromising her own needs and desires to (try to) avoid conflict, to always accommodate others, or to maintain a status quo that prioritizes some people's happiness and well-being over others'. From PFT's perspective, familial peace-building acknowledges the reality of conflict in healthy marriages and families, and promotes active communication (i.e. *mutual* listening and speaking) and negotiations or compromise based in mutual love and compassion, and which presume the equality of women and men. Cultivating peacefulness in families cannot be achieved through control. Ideas of 'peace' that suggest *pacifying* individuals or groups of people without just and equal negotiations and mutually beneficial outcomes may create a sense of calm or tranquility. But this is not a fully developed *process* of peace-building, as under the surface, one party continues to suffer.

We have also observed strains of thought and online dialogue threads that deploy South Asian spiritual conceptions of peace (coming out of both Islam and Hinduism) in a judgmental manner. For example, in the past year, we've observed such judgments in some narrative assessments of the protests in Ferguson, MI.^{xiii} In social media and in-person conversations, some spiritual critiques have emerged that object to the use of violence by protestors in Ferguson – suggesting that this puts negative energy out into the universe by acting from a place of fear and hatred rather than one of love. The tensions raised by this example evoke some questions for us about peace and how spiritual ideas of peace, love and compassion can be potentially used as

tools of judgment that deny the (often structural, often obscured) effects of violence and trauma, including historical trauma. Such narratives also obscure who decides or defines which actions constitute love/peace/creativity/compassion, and who's disruptions or reasons for disruption are valid. When peace is used in this way, those promoting peaceful relations erase the significance of histories of systemic oppression and deny the necessity of working through inequalities and injustices as a prerequisite to building and maintaining peace within and between communities. While this recent example stood out to us, the issue might/does arise in a variety of contexts. For example, in U.S. discourses around immigration, and particularly those presented by conservative Christians, 'peace' is deployed in terms of protecting 'us' (white, U.S. citizens) from the violence of 'others' (Latino immigrants) and narrative of peace become justifications for legitimated state violence in the form of detentions, deportations, and racialized policing.

Avoiding these problematic deployments of peace requires vigilant attention to the details and mundanity of peace-building. As Koopman (2011, 194) suggests:

“...peace means different things at different scales, as well as to different groups, and at different times and places. Peace is not the same everywhere anymore than war is. When peace is portrayed as a mythical singular it becomes so abstract as to be unobtainable, an issue best left to philosophers. Or perhaps it becomes so unspecified that it is open to manipulation by politicians and attached to violent pacification.”

This also requires evolving notions and practices of peace-making that consider the nuances and structures of inequalities shaping our individual and collective lives. These dynamic processes can still utilize a familiar toolkit – such as tolerance of difference, social justice, mutual respect, dialogue, and obligation to care – but must adapt in order to continually address power differentials.

The Intimate-Geopolitics of Making Domestic Violence (or Peace?) a ‘Public’ Matter

To conclude this chapter, I synthesize my argument across these two cases – of peace-building work in Hyderabad and my co-authored analysis of peace-building in South Asian Muslim communities in Seattle. While ‘community’ and ‘peace’ each remain complex and contested concepts, ones which have been employed in patriarchal forms of control (citations), my research in Seattle and Hyderabad suggests that these remain salient ideas within the resistance movements of marginalized subjects. The work of OCWRC, HF and API Chaya also suggests that critical analyses can be incorporated into the usage and operationalization of these concepts. In fact, relational analysis across peace-building practices in Hyderabad and Seattle reveals the unique features of these strategies of plural resistance that refuse to accept ‘legitimate’ violence as the cost of addressing intimate abuse.

The idea of moving domestic violence out of the “private” sphere (imagined as the material space of the home and/or the social space of intimate family relationships) and into the “public” (imagined as civil society, shared urban space, and the democratic state) has played a significant role in movements against gendered violence in both the U.S. and India (citations). This move from private to public calls forth an ideological shift – making an argument for the political nature of intimate gendered violence (citation) as well as insisting that “women’s rights as human rights,” demands wider societal concern for women’s (often invisible) suffering in their homes and relationships. The rejection of domestic violence as “private problem” invokes not only a general ‘public’ – as in “the society” that should care about this issue – but also a specific understanding of the public as materialized in state institutions and embodied by state officials (including police, lawyers, judges, and legislators). This therefore becomes a call for

state action against domestic violence, and legitimizes the intervention of state institutions into private homes/families.

In their attempts to work around criminal justice systems, through community-based peace-building strategies, OCWRC, HF, and API Chaya challenge this understanding of “public” anti-violence work as the purview of the state. They also give substance to the idea of domestic violence as a “social issue” through their efforts to build upon existing community relationships and social networks to create alternative systems of violence response. This peace-building work not only avoids ineffective systems, but actually rejects the violence that Muslim women and men are subjected through state systems – based upon their positioning as poor people, immigrants, and/or Muslims. While the approaches of all three organizations run parallel in this sense, there are some important distinctions between peace-building strategies in Hyderabad and in Seattle. Comparing these divergent approaches (working toward similar ends), uncovers some interesting questions about the presumptions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ that shape peace-building work at each site.

When I shared some of OCWRC and HF’s peace-building strategies with Farah and Sarah, they found both the door-to-door canvassing and family counseling model particularly interesting. Sarah described how many recent conversations that she’s been part of the Seattle anti-domestic violence movement reflect an interest in moving more toward the kind of strategies that Hyderabad organizations are using. These conversations include thinking through how organizations can help to build community through the cultivation of positive investments in the relationships and well-being of our friends/neighbors/extended social networks such that it’s normal to “be in each other’s business” in some ways. While the work of OCWRC, HF, and API Chaya do not suggest that it is possible or desirable to *fabricate* “community,” they do make

an argument for creating *spaces* for organic relationships to develop. But in several ways, modern ideas of individual privacy, intimate relationships, and the home spaces that accompany a “modern family” lifestyle (i.e. a nuclear, middle-class families living in their own dwelling spaces – apartments or houses – with walls, fences, etc. that demarcate their private space) – all of these become hurdles to cultivating the kinds of interconnectivity and mutual relationships of care that can help to support survivors of violence, and which hold enormous potential for the longer term prevention of intimate violence.

In India, modern forms of family structure and living space vary across class lines, but remain distinct from Western normative standards. As several of my interview participants in Hyderabad shared, the conditions of living in poor urban settlements tend to bring domestic violence out into the open, to make it “big and exposed” as Anees said. With homes that are not sealed off from one another, *basti* residents often know exactly what is happening in their neighbors home spaces, and therefore quite a lot about their inter-personal relationships. These realities tend to make violence more of a ‘public issue’, and therefore while *basti* residents may try to claim privacy when confronted about domestic violence, OCWRC and HF experiences demonstrate that with certain strategies (that include men, for example), this barrier can be softened and public conversations about abuse become possible.

The living arrangements of extended families also open up the space of ‘private’ to a wider group of people and relationships. According to the narratives of OCWRC and HF staff, joint families⁶⁰ remain common in poorer neighborhoods, but have begun to decrease in middle-

⁶⁰ “Joint family” structure typically refers to families in which the son(s) remain in the household of their parents as adults, with their wives and children. Joint families also often include elderly grandparents, as well as cousins or other extended relatives that stay for periods of time or live permanently together.

class and wealthy communities. For those middle and upper class households that still retain a joint family arrangement, they may still be more separated off from extended kin networks in terms of daily life by virtue of more separated housing structures. Larger homes with yards, gardens, and walls or gates, as well as high-rise apartment complexes are more common and offer greater opportunity to cloister familial relationships. In this way, class and the ‘modernization’ of housing infrastructure produces more separate and ‘secured’ households within which domestic violence might more easily be concealed or kept ‘private’. While joint families may offer some redress in this regard – because marriage couples have some intimate private space (often a room or two of their own), this is located *within* a wider space that is not private just to that relationship – there is also the possibility that mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, or brothers-in-law will not intervene in abuse or will even participate in it. Wider networks of nearby kin, as well as social networks beyond familial and kin relations, often become another avenue of response or support for survivors. In this sense, processes that modernize (ala Western modernity) family arrangements and household structures may actually work to “re”-privatize intimate abuse.

In this way, the peace-building work of Hyderabad women’s collectives poses important questions of similar work in Seattle. Western modernity *produces* the idea of a dichotomous divide between the private (female space) and the public (male space), which Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001) argue projects a Western notion of this gendered separation as a universal form, when in fact there is considerable variation in how private and public are gendered and related in non-Western societies. Their research on Muslim communities in Iran and India suggests far more complex interactions between gendered community spaces and ‘publics’, including the role of religion in creating opportunities for women to convene in “female public

space” (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001). Not only is the gendered “separation of spheres” a construct of Western modernity, the separation extends from the history of capitalist production in the West (Bondi and Davidson 2005). For the families that API Chaya serves in the Seattle area there are far fewer joint families, rarely extended kinship networks, and often not a lot of neighborhood community cohesion. Yet the ways in which peace-building work in Hyderabad presumes a ‘public’ conversation about intimate relationships, violence, and peace, suggests that efforts to resist the (re)privatization of domestic violence may draw insights from alternative configurations and imaginings of the modern family and modern marital relationships (such as those built through HF and OCWRC’s counseling models).

The peace-building work explored in this chapter poses a critical question: might making peace a ‘public issue’ through embodied social networks and communities offer a path of plural resistance through the mine field of culturalism, Islamophobia, and counter-terrorism? The work of OCWRC, HF, and API Chaya suggest hopeful, if incomplete, answers in the affirmative. Their approaches do not invoke the ‘public’ as state intervention through criminal justice (and thereby try to reduce state violence in marginalized communities), nor do they call forth the public scrutiny of “others” (i.e. immigrants, Muslims, poor people) through mainstream media or even global or national development campaigns. Rather, these peace-building practices confront intimate violence as an issue of concern to neighbors, friends, extended family, and community networks of caring relationships. This resists state repression/violence, Islamophobia and regional patriarchies *simultaneously* without sacrificing the well-being of individual survivors of abuse: it is *collectivity (and collective responsibility) through intimate relationships*.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

“I am not proposing that sexual violence and domestic violence will no longer exist. I am proposing that we create a world where so many people are walking around with the skills and knowledge to support one another that there is no longer the need for anonymous hotlines.

I am proposing that we break through the shame of survivors (a result of rape culture) and the victim-blaming ideology shared by all of us (also a result of rape culture) so that survivors can gain support from the people already in their lives. I am proposing that we create a society where community members care enough to hold an abuser accountable so that a survivor does not have to flee their home. I am proposing that all of the folks that have been disappointed by systems work together to create alternative systems.

I am proposing that we organize.”

~ Rebecca Farr, Communities Against Rape and Abuse, (Chen, Dulani, and Piepzna-Samarasinha 2011, xxxviii)

“The myth of independence over interdependence is a capitalism-induced illusion. We all rely on each other and we all have different needs (which also change across our lifespan). How do we build the world we want to see if we refuse to recognize and support each other’s access to meet basic needs?” (Vikki Law and Martens 2012, 7)

The activist-scholars quoted above draw from theoretical insights gained from anti-violence work in marginalized communities, in order to articulate what I identify as a *care ethical* approach to organizing against intimate violence. The demands and vision they articulate – of alternative systems (of response to violence) rooted in interdependency and mutual respect and care – grow from critiques of racist criminal justice and immigration systems that rarely offer “justice” for women and men of color, including immigrants and refugees. In short, their evolution of such a care ethical approach derives from the desire to enact plural resistance – to contest patriarchal logics and abuse of women *at the same time* that they refuse to legitimize violence against men of color or in marginalized communities as the inevitable ‘cost’ of gender justice. One of the voices above – Rebecca Farr’s – captures the work of a Seattle-based

organization CARA, which also served as source of mentorship and collaboration for the early founders of Chaya. In their own work, (API) Chaya incorporates similar critiques of the criminal justice system and the intersectional oppressions shaping the lives of immigrant women of color, incorporating their own analyses of immigration regimes and “culture blaming”. Their peace-building work in Seattle area Muslim communities offers a case study of plural resistance, within which relationships of mutual obligation and care become tools for supporting survivors and cultivating mutual respect and healthy communication within families and communities. In this way, API Chaya’s Peaceful Families Taskforce addresses domestic abuse while resisting the structural violences of Islamophobia and ineffective, racist criminal justice systems. As they evolve these programs and engage with transformative justice work to build alternative systems, API Chaya follows a ‘dual power’ strategy that includes engagement with existing criminal justice system and social service systems, including through efforts to educate and promote reform within various city, county and state institutions.

In Hyderabad, Old City Women’s Resource Center (OCWRC) and Healthy Families (HF) forge their own pathways of plural resistance through community-based peace-building work. Recognizing the structural violences that Muslim women face – including poverty produced through uneven development and Islamophobia, and insecurity produced through state ambivalence toward intimate abuse – OCWRC and HF employ family counseling and neighborhood-based awareness raising practices that work to build mutual respect and communication within familial relationships in order ‘secure’ women’s safety within their households, particularly given their extreme vulnerability outside them. They also resist structural violence through neighborhood and organizational coalition work across boundaries of religion, gender, and caste, as well as through the promotion of women’s rights drawing on

multiple frameworks (i.e. religious and cultural rights, state civil rights, and human rights). Their experiences with ineffective and discriminatory criminal justice responses to domestic violence (including through police, courts, and new bureaucracies established through PWDVA 2005), fuel a similarly dual systems approach, where criminal justice becomes a last resort for survivors who experience severe physical abuse or cannot curb abuse through counseling based interventions.

My analysis of this peace-building work began as an interest in alternative approaches to addressing domestic violence for marginalized communities either under-served by criminal justice systems, or who experienced heightened risk of state (sanctioned) violence. This initial research interest grew from over a decade of work with (API) Chaya, combined with parallel questions raised by post-colonial and women of color feminist scholars around relational, intersecting forms of oppression and violence. Recognizing a significant gap in this literature around the experiences of Muslim women and families, I set out to interrogate the complex everyday realities facing community-based organizations that mobilize in response to Muslim women's diverse experiences of violence and precarity. I brought my work with PFT in Seattle into a comparative analysis of anti-violence organizing in Hyderabad also based in marginalized Muslim communities and drawing on the language of 'peace' making. Employing a collaborative, relational comparison of these two places, and the three women's organizations, I posed the following research questions: 1) What are the conditions of modernity that are expected to mitigate or end violence? And, to what extent are these dependent upon polarized understandings of Western v. non-Western "culture"? How do people living and struggling against violence narrate "culture" in their work? (2) How does response to domestic abuse take shape within Muslim communities facing various kinds of exclusions (i.e. based on religion,

racialization, class status, immigration status, gender, & age)? and (3) How and why is ‘peace’ deployed as a response to domestic violence, or as a mode of violence prevention? My analysis considered the narratives of various actors involved in violence response efforts, most significantly featuring the narratives and perspectives of front-line nonprofit workers in Hyderabad and Seattle who draw both from their anti-violence work and training, as well as from their experiences as members of the communities within which they organize.

In answering these questions, my analysis unfolded across three chapters, each of which traced a key thread of the intertwined argument: culturalism, structural violence, and peace-building as plural resistance. In chapter 3, I defined culturalism as an ethnocentric logic and set of discourses that homogenize and pathologize the social worlds of non-Western places and peoples by conflating patriarchies with religion and culture, and explaining gendered violence as the end result of archaic traditions and premodern mentalities. Pinpointing the culturalist narratives that create an imperative to intervene in the lives of Muslim women and communities, I argued that culturalism dominates global and local (in Seattle and Hyderabad) representations of Islam and Muslim women and deploys Orientalist views of ‘culture’ in service of ‘development’ and counter-terrorism. Such discourses operate through mainstream media, and through global feminist organizing around the presumed conflict of ‘culture vs. rights’, which link up with global health and development initiatives for ‘women’s empowerment’. I established the basis of culturalism in notions of a singular (white, Western) modernity, and argued that these discourses have material effects in the world, including the justification of state violence. In contrast to “culture blaming” explanations of intimate gender violence, my empirics from Seattle and Hyderabad demonstrate how organizations working with Muslim women incorporate both cultural resources (such as faith-based social networks and Qura’nic teachings)

and cultural critiques (of the “misuse” of religion and practices such as child marriage) in their efforts to address domestic abuse without reproducing Orientalist and imperialist accounts of their “othered” cultures. OCWRC, HF, and API Chaya’s more complex theorizations of violence and enactments of anti-violence also create a forum within which Muslim women’s voices and agency lead the way.

Moving into chapter four, I extended my critique of culturalism by unpacking several forms of structural violence that culturalist narratives obscure. I pointed to the paradox of visibility that attention to structural violence reveals – as systemic inequalities producing such violence fade into landscapes of suffering, and the inter-personal forms of violence (including domestic abuse) within those same landscapes become starkly visible. I argued that uneven development, geographic exclusion and Islamophobia articulate with regional patriarchies in Hyderabad to produce heightened precarity for Muslims and increased vulnerability to intimate violence for Muslim women. In Seattle, I argued that while relatively greater economic resources protect many South Asian Muslims from the structural violence of poverty, this does not apply for many survivors of violence. Moreover, anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia in the U.S. create increased precarity for South Asian Muslims subject to political dispossession, rhetorical violence, and hate crimes. This exacerbates Muslim women’s vulnerability to domestic abuse. And in both the U.S. and India, Muslim women experience heightened insecurity in relation to state apparatuses that not only fail to “protect” them, but actually become complicit in violence against women, especially those marginalized by poverty, immigration status, race, and/or religion. In this way, I offered structural violence both as a counter-narrative to culturalism, as well as a means of theorizing the material effects of re-invigorated forms of Islamophobia. For Muslim women, the suffering and brutality of structural violence manifest in hunger, fear,

indignity, illness, humiliation, labor exploitation, or police abuse. The relational production of such deprivation alongside thriving not only disrupts assumptions of cultural causes of violence, but also upends simplistic associations between poverty and violence. Just as culture alone cannot explain domestic abuse, nor can poverty.

Following on these accounts of the complex webs of violence in Hyderabad and Seattle, I focused in upon Muslim women's agency and resistance. My collaborative research with OCWRC, HF and API Chaya revealed the operation of both culturalism and structural violence. In chapter five, I showcase how their organizing work makes visible alternative pathways of plural resistance – to domestic abuse and the forms of structural violence explored in chapter four. All three organizations engage in peace-building work that aims to meet the practical and expressed desire of Muslim women to remain within their homes but to stop the abuse they experience. In Hyderabad, I discussed how such peace-building plays out through family counseling and door-to-door canvassing, as well as coalitional work in *bastis* and awareness raising in elementary and high schools. While several efforts of OCWRC and HF seek to hold the state accountable for conditions of structural violence, they also work outside of criminal justice and social service bureaucracies to directly address current instances of domestic abuse and to build toward longer term social change and prevention of violence. For Seattle, I co-authored a section with Farah Abdul and Sarah Rizvi from API Chaya, within which we discussed the importance of “organic community relationships,” forged through mundane everyday interactions and shared spaces, and which form the embodied and material substance of social response to and prevention of intimate violence. Our analysis pointed to the vital tension around deploying “peace” as both a radical concept for social change (not a means of pacification or de-politicization) and as a relatively benign proposal that acknowledges conflict

but seeks to promote concepts like love, tolerance of difference, compassion, and mutual respect. Bringing the analysis together, I drew upon the peace-building work in Hyderabad to question the claims to the “public” that occupy mainstream anti-domestic violence movements, and which tend to rely upon the state and state interventions as the imagined “public” that removes the veil of “privacy” from domestic violence. I argued that the peace-building strategies of OCWRC, HF and API Chaya offer a theoretical and practical ‘outside’ to anti-violence that relies upon Western liberalism’s claims to “legitimate” violence and to “freedom”. By contesting both domestic abuse and the violences of modernity (i.e. structural violence resulting from capitalism, developmentalism, and Islamophobia), multi-scalar peace-building seeks and forges new ethical grounds for more equitable social relations.

Moving Forward with Peace

My findings and analysis fill several gaps in existing literatures, as well as offer some provocations for feminist scholarship on violence and peace. To begin with, my research extends critiques of both Indian and U.S. criminal justice system response to domestic violence through analysis of Islamophobia as a form of structural violence impacting gendered justice. While Indian feminist and U.S. women of color feminists have analyzed the failures of state systems and subjection of women to increased violence at the hands of police, such research has not focused in any depth on the question of domestic violence response for Muslim communities. My analysis of culturalism, structural violence, and plural resistance points to the critical importance of this intersection of Islamophobia and state response to gendered violence. Additional research might explore this area further by collecting Muslim survivors’ accounts, as well as community members’ narratives about criminal justice systems and their likelihood of

accessing them in times of crisis.

This links to another significant contribution of my work. In looking at these two cases together – of Hyderabad and Seattle – a critical question emerges: given the very different circumstances of everyday life for Muslims in Hyderabad and South Asian Muslims in Seattle, why this degree of precarity for both communities? In this way, my comparative analysis calls attention to the need for deeper engagement with everyday violence and Islamophobia in both political and cultural geographies. My research demonstrates that the intimate expressions of Islamophobia exist relationally with its geopolitical manifestations. I also showcase the ways in which the cultural and political become bound together in the everyday, such that Orientalist and white supremacist logics drive not only a geopolitical war on terror, but also underlie Western notions of liberal modernity that produce violence where they promise peace.

My theorization of plural resistance also extends feminist geographers' critical engagements with power, difference, and inequality to highlight everyday negotiations of interlocking oppressions that refuse categorization within siloed notions of gendered resistance, anti-violence, or communal politics. In Hyderabad and Seattle, I found that women's organizations working at these interstices evolve their own complex understandings of power and social transformation and develop pluralistic practices and solidarities in their ongoing efforts to counter multiple forms of oppression and violence simultaneously. My analysis of peace-building as a case study of plural resistance advances the critical geographic literature on peace by exploring intimate and multi-scalar formations of peace making that address both interpersonal and structural violence. The current, quite limited, literature on intimate geographies of peace does not consider this multi-scalar resistance and largely sidelines the theoretical insights of women of color and post-colonial feminists on gender violence, culture

and race. As such, this literature also remains embedded within Western paradigms of gender violence. My work not only upsets such assumptions, but also insists upon taking seriously the ways in which Muslim women's peace-building work offers a politics of hope and possibility that is not entirely conditioned by Western liberalism or by a binary of violence/anti-violence. In this regard, further research is required on the short and long term effects of this peace-building for both survivors of violence, and Muslim communities more broadly.

The models of peace-building work in Hyderabad and Seattle – based in networks of community-embedded relationships – also suggest the significance of work that is attentive to the intersectional lives of survivors, and more importantly, to their articulations of agency. In this way, what API Chaya calls 'survivor empowerment' plays a significant role in the peace-building strategies of not only the PFT, but also for OCWRC and HF in Hyderabad. These organizations work to raise awareness and competency for dealing with domestic violence within communities, and to help women address abuse within their families if they so desire. This demonstrates the critical need to re-evaluate mainstream feminist/activist/state responses to intimate abuse that continue to ignore the often repeated desire of survivors of violence *to stay in their homes and marriages*. Taking these requests seriously presents considerable challenges that must also be researched further. Yet presumptions of internalized oppression or false consciousness do not stand up in the face of decades of documentation showing women's hopes for and efforts to create safety and peace in their homes and marriages (rather than abandoning them for 'independent' lives). For marginalized communities, such desires have been exacerbated by the state violence that often accompanies criminal justice interventions. However, this confrontation of state and structural violence along with intimate abuse has led to numerous innovative strategies of resistance, including the peace-building work my research

highlights.

Theorizing peace, then, is a critical yet complicated venture. Peace in name and practice has been used to pacify women and people of color, to control marginalized people through an instance that *their violence* was/is a deterrent to shared thriving and/or ‘freedom’. Care also can be coercive and compelled, which may be part of systematic pacification. Yet my work demonstrates that ideas of peace and care that emerge from grassroots organizations operating at the margins present some more radical notions of peace, which may not be new, but offer insights for the wider society. Moments or practices of peace glimpsed in efforts to resist oppression require new and deeper theorizations. In addition, my empirics point to how embodied and materialized social networks of ‘organic’ community relationships provide a means of peace-making that is anticipatory, rather than reactionary. All of this suggests that peace may be a critical means of violence prevention that produces a collective responsibility for disrupting or preventing intimate abuse. Such collectively, however, also requires a greater engagement of men as this peace-building work moves forward.

My comparative analysis also contributes to literature on development geographies and transnational feminism. The experiences of women working in anti-violence movements in Hyderabad and Seattle expose not only the failure of liberal modernity to empower all women and end violence against them, but in fact the realities of structural violence that modernization produces. By examining gender violence transnationally – in a so-called ‘developed’ place and so-called ‘developing’ one – my research refutes the notion of Western liberal modernity as the vanguard of peace, and instead draws out complex and contradictory processes of peace-building that quite often include resistance to the violences of modernity itself. In addition to examples of dams, steel plants, and nuclear power as forms of modernization producing violence and

displacements, my work shows how immigration, racialization, Islamophobia are also effects of modern systems of power. Further analysis of structural violence at each of my sites – interviewing Muslim community members about their experiences of uneven development or Islamophobia for example – would deepen this critique of modernization. Such analysis might also be extended to other places to evolve a global-intimate analysis of Islamophobia as manifestation of the violence of modernity.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, my work also contributes to critical work in feminist epistemologies and feminist research praxis. First of all, my use of institutional ethnography extends this methodology in critical development studies. Adding to the kinds of insights gained by Akhil Gupta's ethnography of state bureaucracy in India and Ananya Roy's ethnography of the large scale microfinance institutions, my work highlights the relationships of subordination that become visible when we investigate the everyday operation of social institutions. My research, however, pushes institutional ethnography of development institutions toward a deeper examination of grassroots and community-based organizations and thereby reveals a powerful lens on power, oppression and violence.

Secondly, building on the work of Swarr and Nagar (2010) and many others, my own embeddedness with these organizations, through collaborative feminist praxis and a long-term commitment to anti-violence activism, made possible this richer theorization of power, violence, and peace. My approach deepens our understanding in feminist geography of the vital relationship between research practice and theory and of the intellectual and political value of collaborative knowledge production. At the same time, the *comparative* element of my collaborative praxis also works to 'provincialize' transnational comparative work, by decentering the West as the source of 'solutions' to violence, as well as dispelling culturalist narratives that

locate the ‘problem’ of violence in the global south.

Finally, this epistemological shift made possible by collaborative comparison points to the continued need for deeper engagement with the myriad power structures and inequalities that articulate with gender and patriarchies. My findings suggest that feminists (re)invest in constructing scholarship and activism that takes an ethical and *care*-ful approach to transformative social justice. This requires questioning whiteness and the presumptions of Western liberal modernity, which also operate within feminist scholarship and activism. It means not allowing the desire to respond swiftly and harshly to gender violence to drive feminist movements toward alliances with systems of power that produce, exacerbate, and legitimate other forms of violence against marginalized peoples. This work demands explicit engagement with post-colonial, U.S. women of color, and transnational feminist critiques around race/ethnicity/culture/nation to more robustly theorize gender violence across scale, and through and beyond boundaries of difference and oppression. These questions and critiques, raised decades ago, remain salient. This is about more than citational politics (though this is part of the issue). It is about valuing the theoretical contributions of scholars and activists ‘theorizing from the margins’, and the epistemological shifts their work push toward. My research highlights the theoretical contributions of social movement actors and the ways in which their positioning and struggles provide insights on intersectional inequalities that too easily fall away in generalized, ‘global’ theories of development, human rights, culture, and violence against women. Such analysis would be productively extended through further research that takes up the relationships between social movement actors and the ‘publics’ or ‘communities’ they mobilize within – teasing out how their work is received, understood, and/or reformulated by non-organizational actors.

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End Notes

ⁱ While I shared information from my Hyderabad research with Farah and Sarah, I maintained the confidentiality of my interview participants from OCWRC and HF and did not reveal the real names of either the organizations or any participants.

ⁱⁱ The questions emerging around privacy and domestic violence as a ‘public’ or social issue, are taken up in the comparative section at the end of this chapter.

ⁱⁱⁱ Following our initial brainstorm, we created a list of primary topics we wanted to discuss in relation to community-based organizing in response to domestic violence within South Asian and Muslim communities in the Seattle area. We discussed those topics over the course of three dialogues, at which point we decided to start organizing our analysis into an outline to shape the structure and flow of the chapter text. Amy reviewed our earlier conversations and ideas to create four different outline options. After settling on one, we had two additional dialogues to fill in some gaps of those outlines, particularly discussing some topics we had not yet covered in depth during this process. Based upon our now quite detailed outline, as well as our dialogues in the earlier recordings, Amy compiled a text document working those pieces into a prose chapter. We then gathered to read, edit, recompose, and add to this document. At this stage, we tried to create a more collective voice and to set a tone for our writing that did not necessarily mirror Amy’s original writing style. Over the course of five editing meetings and our individual revisions in the document, we completed the following chapter.

^{iv} This includes recent immigrants and refugees, as well as their children and grandchildren, born in U.S. but shaped by the immigrant identities of their parents and families.

^v Sharing an “ethnic identity” can also be complicated of course. For example, we serve ‘the’ South Asian community, but understand that this ‘catch all’ regional label includes huge diversities of national origin, sub-region, language, caste, religion, class, etc. In many ways, it is the small number of immigrants from South Asian countries living in the U.S that works to coalesce a sense of community around this shared heritage in the subcontinent. Of course, despite the great diversity among those who identify as South Asian, there are also ways in which these same people can recognize one another’s differences more readily (than non-South Asians) and are *familiar* with that diversity due to their own life experiences and family histories. Finally, after Chaya merged with the API Safety Center to become API Chaya, the organization as a whole now serves a wide number of ethnic communities that fall under the banner of Asian and Pacific Islander.

^{vi} We were also concerned that homogenization might leave out minorities within Muslim communities, such as those from minority sects or with less common spiritual practices.

^{vii} API Chaya follows a survivor empowerment model, so all decisions about staying or leaving a relationship are made by the survivor and supported by the organization. This means a survivor may choose to stay and try to end the violence, and then if this is not possible, may seek additional support in leaving the relationship.

^{viii} The candlelight vigil is an annual API Chaya event co-hosted at the King County Courthouse to remember the victims of a shooting at the court house in 1995, when Susanna Remerata Blackwell, Phoebe Dizon, and Veronica Laureta were murdered by Susanna’s estranged and abusive husband. This event galvanized the local Asian Pacific Islander communities and led to the founding of the API Women and Family Safety Center, which merged with Chaya to become API Chaya.

^{ix} Emphasizing the importance of social networks of caring relationships as a live, material form of the ‘public’ or ‘society’ that ought to care about and address intimate violence *does not* negate any role for ‘public’ response that includes state action. We’re not proposing a state withdrawal from domestic violence response efforts. But it does seem that a redistribution of state resources is in order – such that more money and infrastructure goes toward supporting community-based initiatives and prevention programs (i.e. in schools, workplaces, etc.), while less resources are put toward criminal justice responses (like prisons).

^x The guest worker program provides VISAs for the employee, and a companion VISA for a spouse. This is a particular experience of migration, which is privileged for many men, who enter professional fields, but is not necessarily so for their wives. For women, this means that their legal status in the U.S. is dependent upon their husband’s work and VISA.

^{xi} Our local Seattle PFT was founded by Sarah and a group of community members following on the momentum of a conference hosting Sharifa Al Khateeb, who founded the national organization. The Peaceful Families Project, as well as the APIDV Institute, have also compiled resources on the dynamics of abuse in Muslim families, and the PFP recently conducted a nationwide survey on domestic violence in Muslim communities.

^{xii} We refer here to protests sparked by the fatal shooting of Michael Brown, during which residents of Ferguson (and people across the state and country) took to the streets to protest police shootings of African American men and broader systems of racist policing and mass incarceration. Some who participated in these protests destroyed property and threw objects at police.