SURVIVING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE MIDWEST UNITED STATES: SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

By

Zain Shamoon

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ABSTRACT

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Research over the last fifteen years has revealed a high prevalence of domestic violence amongst South Asian women in the United States, as well as culture-specific manifestations of abuse (Mahapatra, 2012; Maker & deRoon-Cassini, 2007; Raj, Liu, McCleary-Sills & Silverman, 2005; Raj & Silverman, 2003; Robertson, Nagaraj, & Vyas, 2016). However, mainstream domestic violence interventions in the United States are ridden with cultural barriers, irresponsive to experiences of ethnic-minority women (Abugideiri, 2010; Few, 2005; Krane, Oxman-Martinez, & Ducey, 2000; Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010; Pan et al., 2006).

Little is known about the ways U.S. South Asian women choose to cope with domestic violence, or the role of this abuse within larger systems of disempowerment. This study used grounded theory methods to understand the lived experiences of South Asian women who are domestic violence survivors currently residing in the Midwest United States. This project was framed through a human ecological perspective, in order to capture a systemic understanding about domestic abuse, and its sociocultural influences.

Results yielded two main storylines that are summative of these survivors' experiences. These were the Ecology of Disempowerment and the Ecology of Survival. Themes related to participants' disempowerment included: rigid power dynamics they endured, various typologies of abuse, and the deleterious impact of these experiences upon their wellness. Findings related to their survival had seven elements: their perceptions about whether support was available, having

to cope in secret, trying to locate family for help, trying to locate the community for help, personal processing, the role of social standing, and individualized ways of surviving.

This study suggests the importance of a family and community centered approach in interrupting domestic abuse against U.S. South Asian women. Findings also reflect the need for a critical view of survivor secrecy, and the need for culturally sensitive access to services available in multiple sectors of society.

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So begins the next phase of life as Dr. Zain Shamoon. I hope to see you all in the fight to keep us healing and growing.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This manuscript is written to describe a qualitative research study regarding domestic violence survivorship for South Asian women residing in the Midwest United States. This first chapter will provide rationale regarding the importance of this work, current information about abuse prevalence, and cultural considerations important for research and services. This chapter also includes an introduction of the research design used in this study, its guiding theoretical framework, and research questions. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief review of culturally sensitive domestic violence services that exist in the United States, in order to situate this project as an important contribution to that line of work.

Definitions. For the purposes of this project, the term South Asian is used to refer to those peoples whose culture originates from the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), and their diaspora. Though this U.S. demographic is heterogeneous, shared legal and political climates bind America's South Asian women together in their experience of domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV). Given this, the terms IPV and domestic violence will be discussed together. This is due to the interwoven nature of domestic violence in South Asian families, where husbands and in-laws might perform abuses against South Asian women in combination (Rianon, & Shelton, 2003). Multiple typologies of domestic violence were considered in this project, including psychological, sexual, and physical forms.

Gender and regional considerations. This project addressed the survivorship of South Asian women specifically. While other sub-groups experience domestic violence, such as South Asian men and children, their experiences were beyond the immediate scope of this project. Moreover, this research study utilized a context-sensitive approach to understanding domestic

violence, including focused considerations of race and gender that influence survivorship. In addition, the Midwest United States was focused upon to reflect contextual sensitivity by location. This region was chosen for its concentration of South Asian Americans surrounding major cities, as well its proximity to a number of South Asian women's agencies that serve survivors. One final rational in choosing this particular region for examination was due to my own upbringing in the Midwest United States as a South Asian man, to fit with the constructivist research frame that will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Rationale for Study

It is known that domestic violence has severe and negative consequences upon survivors, including physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health symptoms. Amongst the maladaptive effects are health issues including depression, trauma disorders, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, and unwanted pregnancy (Harvey, Garcia-Moreno & Butchart, 2007). However, there are specific cultural groups within the United States that are at increased risk for exposure to domestic violence, and these groups manifest the abuse in different ways (Maker & deRoon-Cassini, 2007). Research over the fifteen years has revealed a high prevalence and increased risk for domestic violence amongst U.S. South Asian women, as well as culture-specific manifestations (Mahapatra, 2012; Maker & deRoon-Cassini, 2007; Raj, Liu, McCleary-Sills & Silverman, 2005; Raj & Silverman, 2003; Robertson, Nagaraj, & Vyas, 2016).

Prevalence for U.S. South Asian women. Recent studies indicate high prevalence of domestic abuse encountered by U.S. South Asian women, demonstrating that more needs to be done to interrupt these harms. In a large cross-country study with 215 South Asian women in the United States, results yielded a 38 percent prevalence, where respondents had endured some form of domestic abuse within the previous year (Mahapatra, 2012). One decade prior to this,

Raj and Silverman (2002) found 40 percent prevalence amongst South Asian women residing in Greater Boston, MA, where physical, sexual, and injurious forms of abuse were present in the survivors' current relationships.

In one particular study with 208 South Asian women in Boston, MA, approximately 21% reported victimization in their current romantic relationship, and commonly reported co-morbid health symptoms (Hurwitz, Gupta, Liu, Silverman, & Raj, 2006). In another estimate, 10 percent of Bangladeshi immigrant women reported experiencing spousal abuse (Rianon & Shelton, 2003). In that particular estimate, perpetrators included husbands, in-laws, and other family members in the South Asian kinship system, bringing to light a unique collectivist manifestation of violence for these women.

While a collection of studies looking at prevalence have been listed here, qualitative research demonstrating the factors leading to disempowering experiences of family violence, or variables helping South Asian women survive their experiences, are severely lacking in scholarship. Specifically, U.S. research lacks specific disclosures from South Asian women about what has helped or hindered their survivorship with domestic violence.

Cultural considerations. Another rationale for the current study was that current domestic violence interventions in the United States come with a host of cultural barriers, irresponsive to experiences of ethnic-minority women (Abugideiri, 2010; Few, 2005; Krane, Oxman-Martinez, & Ducey, 2000; Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010; Pan et al., 2006). Martin (2007) suggests that this problem persists due to too much reliance on current intervention programs that remain impenetrable to marginalized communities. Martin suggests that anti-domestic violence initiatives have been largely informed by the experiences of middle-class heterosexual white women. While these approaches have ensured attention to oppressive

sexism and patriarchy, other forms of powerlessness by race, economy, and immigrant status, have been left out of the discourse. Moreover, the point of view of ethnic-minority survivors has too often been ignored when producing new intervention strategies.

When survivors are not provided ways to express their own survivorship stories, this may emulsify their experiences of subordination, being considered unimportant actors in their own lives. Given the large amount of Eurocentric domestic violence interventions available to women (Gillum, 2008), their experiences may be prone to observation through an orientalist framework, vulnerable to the pathology of culture rather than a focus on helping women survive within their lived contexts. Visweswaran (2004) clarifies this critique by discussing that western human rights discourse has looked at women's rights abuses in other countries as evidence that the non-western world is observably weak and primitive when compared to the west. This has created a dichotomy that situates the western world as free, and cultures from the east as oppressive. This rigid paradigm has been unhelpful in responding to the needs of ethnic-minority women residing in the United States. If this mindset remains operative, problems in U.S. services may continue to be attributed to minority women and their cultures, rather than calling for important changes within interventions that are ridden with cultural barriers.

Pan et al. (2006) specifically documented barriers in accessing appropriate domestic violence services that include: ethnic minorities' lack of trust with social services, language barriers, transportation struggles, and the lack of a bilingual and bicultural staff that could speak to clients. It becomes an imperative that scholarship demand attention to specific sociocultural factors informing domestic abuse experiences for ethnic-minority women in the United States, and create services to match these needs. This was an important rationale for producing the

current research project extracting lived experiences of domestic violence for South Asian women in the Midwest United States.

Sociopolitical climate. Another consideration for this work was with respect to dynamics that arise from South Asian countries of origin. These may have the power to color women's expectations of help seeking in the United States. For example, previous literature has established the complexity of domestic violence in South Asian communities overseas, and this is well documented as distinct from other women's experiences (Khan, 2003; Khan & Hussain, 2008; Lodhia, 2009). This literature has highlighted unique challenges facing South Asian survivors, where these women are positioned within legal and cultural realities different from that in the U.S. Euro-American experience. Unique challenges include legislative ambivalence in the Indian sub-continent, patriarchal expectations about the role of women in South Asian families, and recurrent societal backlash that has intimidated women from addressing their concerns.

Khan (2003) explains the legislative ambiguity that has endangered women in Pakistan. Discussing the *Hudood Ordinances*, which are legal mandates introduced to Pakistan in 1979 (aimed at creating a "pure and chaste" Pakistani state), Khan points out that these laws have been misused to violate women's fundamental human rights. *Zina Ordinances* are a section of these laws that provide sanctions regarding adultery, fornication, rape, and prostitution. *Zina* is an Arabic word that refers to sexual intercourse that occurs outside the parameters of marriage. Given these laws, sexual behaviors outside of marriage are considered illegal actions against the Pakistani state. Unfortunately, these ordinances do not have clear regulations needed to distinguish an act of adultery from rape. Given this, these laws have been used to falsely justify

the incarceration of rape victims, on the reductive basis of penetration "occurrence" – treated as evidence for the admission of a woman's legal transgression against the state.

Following the implementation of these laws, thousands of women have been jailed, many of which ended up in jail after attempting to speak out about being raped or domestically abused. Given this, the meaning of "speaking out" takes its own tone for South Asian women who are trying to combat their experiences of domestic violence. As has been described by many scholars on the topic, these contextual realities of minority groups, such as historical mistrust with authorities, has not been readily addressed by the current landscape of U.S. domestic violence intervention (Abugideiri, 2010; Few, 2005; Krane et al., 2000; Kulwicki et al., 2010; Martin, 2007; Pan et al., 2006). Without careful respect to these sociopolitical experiences, U.S. South Asian women might falsely be labeled as combatant, inhibited, or resistant to treatment.

Collectivism. There are other realities of the South Asian experience likely to be missed by current U.S. intervention and prevention programs. For instance, Khan (2003) notes that South Asian marriages are positioned in a collectivist framework, implying the unification of two families. Within this, families become beneficiaries of the economic assets between them. Given this, survivors may be intimidated into keeping quiet given the economics of the situation, even when the violence is known. Because of the focus and attention on the social position of a woman as a symbol of state or family purity, women who speak out run the risk of being identified as loose, immoral, or promiscuous. Here, public disclosure of the abuse is not simply viewed by her community as a risk to her, but also a threat to the status of her family and kinship system.

Structural trauma. Khan (2003) points out that when women have been convicted of fornication or adultery, they have also had haunting experiences upon release from jail. That is,

they are often kept by their own families, in solitude away from outside contact in order to uphold a family's sense of honor. In Pakistan, given the challenges of returning to the family unit, many women have run away following their release. Possible sources of refuge in these cases are *Darul Amans* (women's shelters). Although these shelters provide a seemingly safe place to go, they are primarily funded by the state, which is the same state that has imposed rigid laws restricting their legal rights. It is not surprising, then, that the experience within these shelters often mirrors that of a prison. For example, women in these *Darul Amans* are not generally allowed to vacate, or have visitors outside of their immediate family. Matching the legislative ambiguity within these countries, these shelters do not have clarified policies that protect the women who utilize them. Therefore, women in these places are often vulnerable to the mandates placed on them by shelter officials.

In this way, South Asian women who are resistant to U.S. interventions may have their own sociopolitical reasons. Although legal realities discussed here have more to do with the Indian subcontinent, it is important to consider historical stigmas that color South Asian's women's hesitation with services in the west. Attention to these women's international ecologies may point to important sites of intervention and relief. In addition, cultural respect can provide a window into reconstructing services that readily validate the mistrusts these women may hold.

Myth of universality. Krane et al. (2000) notes that there has been much literature regarding violence against women in the west, but that experiences of ethno-racial minority women have been pervasively ignored. This may be influenced by an assumption that the needs of women of different backgrounds are universal, or that all women experience domestic abuse under similar conditions. Where this belief is dominant, specific and unique needs of differential contexts can be deemed unimportant.

These institutional attitudes have privileged certain types of instruments and intervention strategies that do not match the lived realities of many South Asian women residing in the United States. Raj and Silverman (2003) provide an important example, assessing the impact of immigrant-status variables that contribute to the rate and form of domestic violence amongst South Asian women in Greater Boston. Trends in their data suggest that social isolation was a part of their immigration story, and that the severity of domestic violence they experienced was greater for these new U.S. residents. For example, women in this study who had no family in the United States were three times more likely to be injured during IPV. When these women had no family or community to turn to, this seemed to deepen their experiences of powerlessness in intimate relationships. Trends in their research also suggest that non-U.S. born South Asian women are less likely to be aware of services available to them. Where these issues contribute to unique forms of isolation and affliction, the inattention to these variables in U.S. based interventions ensures that many immigrant women will continue to be ignored.

Krane et al. (2000) suggest that part of the problem is that ethno-racial women are often seen as a summation of their parts, one at a time, rather than for her comprehensive self. For example, a women's identity may be seen as solely South Asian, or as a mother, or as a worker, but rarely is she seen for her entire complex identity at the same time. However, these intersections are crucial, as they demonstrate the various states of disadvantage and powerlessness experienced by South Asian women in the United States, such as immigration-variables and family hierarchies that may influence abuse experiences. Krane et al. (2000) suggests that some interventions that do place an emphasis on culture, do so superficially, because they work through dominant frameworks that hold stereotypical assumptions about

ethno-racial women. The current research study was used to respond to these gaps by asking South Asian women directly about their encounters with violence.

Research Design Introduction

This research study was built to examine the lived conditions of South Asian survivors of domestic violence who are residing in the Midwest United States. Very few studies on domestic violence have solely relied on the informant power of South Asian women's disclosures. In order to strongly center the knowledge of South Asian survivors, this study was conducted using constructivist grounded theory methods, where the aim was to produce a map of understanding off of their experiential knowledge alone. Details of grounded theory research and analysis are provided later in this manuscript.

Theoretical Framework

Human ecological perspective. It is important to research domestic violence using a culturally appropriate lens, where environmental contexts that surround experiences are studied. Given this, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model of human development was chosen as a guiding framework for this project, in order to contextualize information about U.S. South Asian women's survival of domestic violence. This conceptual framework is well suited to examine social contexts and external forces that impact violence, because it's central assertion is that studying each layer of society (Macro, Exo, Meso and Micro) captures the context of human development.

Shobe and Dienemann (2008) suggest the fit of this theory to domestic violence prevention, noting that an ecological lens draws attention to the presence or lack of human capital amongst survivors. These authors conceptualized the idea of capital as one's assets that give them protection and maintenance of health, in response to violence. Capital at each

systemic level varies by racial, ethnic, gendered, and economic statuses. Lack of public attention, scholarship, and scarce access to appropriate intervention programs may be indicative of diminished human capital experienced by U.S. South Asian women survivors. Human ecological research is responsive to this, by its fit to address risk and protective factors at various systemic levels.

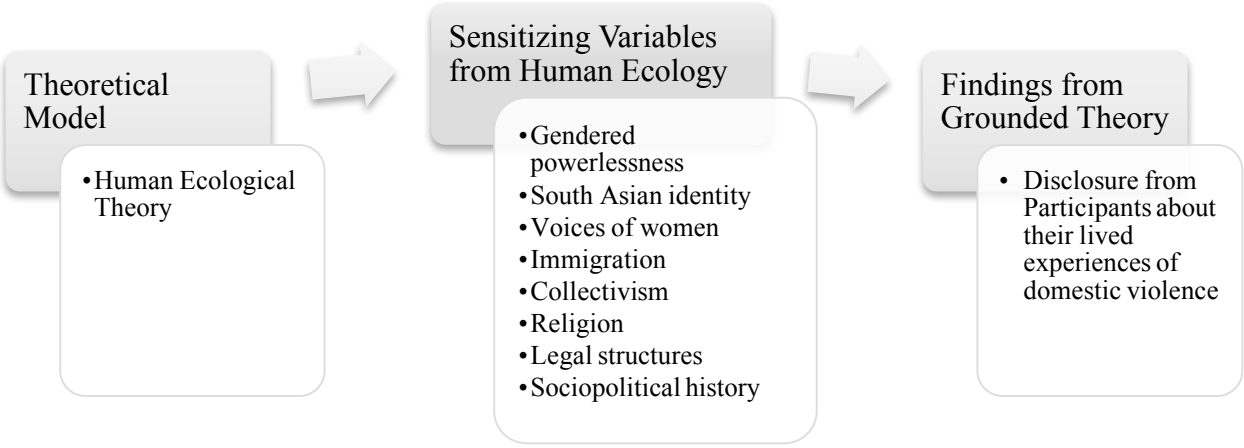
Sensitizing concepts. Since human ecology is a good fit to examine important components at each layer of society, it is important to note its match with considerations of power and identity. For example, this research employed an ecological lens to demonstrate a critical view of race, as well as respect for women of color's personal narratives. These considerations were mechanized through a grounded theory about the lived experiences of South Asian women. Other systemic constructs such as immigrant-status, religion, history, laws, and collectivism were also critical variables to be considered. All of these components were regarded among "sensitizing concepts" which help researchers confront their preexisting theoretical frameworks prior to beginning new research (Charmaz, 2008). In this way, these variables do not drive the study, but accent it as an important part of inquiry.

Figure 1 demonstrates the match between human ecological theory and these sensitizing concepts. The left-most box in this figure shows the conceptual framework that drove the research project; human ecological perspective. The second box in the middle indicates sociocultural variables that flow from an ecological lens, where these may influence specific manifestations of domestic violence. These were used to develop interview questions and additional probes during the study. The final box at the right indicates information about how sensitizing components impacted experiences for participants. Actual findings from their disclosures are listed in Chapter 4.

In the middle box for Figure 1, the layer of ecology these variables operate at depends on how they were discussed in survivors' disclosures, and how participants described their interactions with each. For example, religion may be a direct microsystem resource that a survivor utilizes for personal solace after experiencing harm, or it may be a more abstracted institutional variable (such as religious community attitudes) that impact general trends for women. Other components listed here are more clear in their systemic level. For example, legal structures and sociopolitical histories are macro-level constructs because they fundamentally operate on a societal level.

In Chapter 2, existing literature is organized by specific ecological layers regarding South Asian women's experiences of domestic violence. In Chapter 5, participant disclosures are shown in an ecological map according to these layers of ecology.

Figure 1: Flowchart of Theoretical Concepts



Examples from previous scholarship. Other scholars have demonstrated attention to environmental variables when studying domestic violence in various cultures. Owen, Thompson, Shaffer, Jackson, and Kaslow (2009) conducted research for low-income African American mothers and their children, in order to examine mediating variables that inform IPV and poor

childhood adjustment. This study provided support for interventions that include mothers and their children together, as they are concurrently affected by IPV in the same family.

Hancock and Siu (2009) studied the efficacy of treatments used for domestically violent Latino immigrant men. One of the most important findings in the study was the ineffectiveness of intervention methods that did not take culture and context into account. The previous operating assumption was that these men exhibited behaviors that could be dismantled similarly to non-Latino men, but participants saw this as inapplicable to their understanding of authority within Latino culture. Under their own notions of authority, the concept of machismo had implied positive aspects of leadership, including protecting one's own family from danger.

The previous mode of intervention was abandoned, in order to make way for a more culturally sensitive methodology of treatment. This implied the need for more awareness on the part of intervention leaders about how these men held disadvantaged social locations based on race, class, and social inequality. The new approach was used to incorporate the batterer's language, traditions, customs, values, and overall lived experiences of powerlessness. When these feelings of powerlessness were validated, fears about losing their leadership role within the family were made explicit and this gave way to a deeper conversation. Through this respect for context, interventionists were able to help these immigrant men process feelings of helplessness, oppression, loss, and grief, that had been projected on to their partners in acts of violence. Following this change, participants in these groups became markedly more engaged, where they began taking accountability for their violent actions. At the heart of this work was a call for cultural sensitivity informed by a respect for environmental variables, situating these men in an intervention method that matched their lives.

Maciel, Putten, and Knudson-Martin (2009) mention that identifying variables within a broader context can help produce understandings of conflict at a relational level (such as violent conflict). The current project was conducted to capture this ecological context within the stories of South Asian women in the Midwest United States, looking at all the levels of society that contributed to their experiences of violence.

Research Questions

A central research question was developed to examine the multi-layered experiences of South Asian women in the Midwest United States: What are the lived experiences of Domestic Violence, as endured by South Asian survivors in the Midwest United States?

A sub-research question was developed for the purposes of deepening understanding regarding specific ecological components: How do sociocultural and systemic variables influence this experience?

Both of these were mechanized through appropriate interview questions (and additional probes) which are reviewed in Chapter 3 of this manuscript.

Culturally Sensitive Domestic Violence Agencies

This research was situated to contribute to an existing line of domestic violence works that respond to cultural gaps laden in the United States. It is very important to pay respect to the family of scholars and professionals who do this work, especially as their contributions are rarely discussed in the public sphere, in mainstream service planning, or in academia. A few novel examples will be mentioned here, to make explicit the importance of adopting a culturally sensitive view in serving minority communities.

Ahimsa for safe families. Pan et al. (2006) document *The Ahimsa for Safe Families Project,* which is a community-collaboration project attuned to the experience of family violence

in refugee and immigrant families residing in the San Diego, CA area. The project operates from a foundational principle that culture cannot be divorced from the experience of domestic abuse. The main goal is to develop culturally specific and relevant programs aimed at diverse communities. Amidst their larger services to many racial minority groups, this project included services responsive to the South Asian community. Themes emerging from the Ahimsa project include: the importance of a global approach to prevention programs, the importance of eliminating the distance between social service response and community perceptions of domestic violence, the importance of identifying cultural values in specific communities related to experiences, the importance of hiring and training bicultural and bilingual staff members, and relationships with existing community leaders in each cultural community. Attention to these avenues has helped *The Ahimsa for Safe Families Project* flourish as an appropriate intervention strategy for various minority groups in the San Diego area. Similar considerations might be adopted to serve South Asian women in different regions of the United States.

Peaceful families project. Abugideiri (2010) documents the efforts of *The Peaceful Families Project* (PFP). This project works to produce relevant intervention for Muslim Americans. This is a faith-based initiative dedicated to eradicating various forms of family violence through education, training, and domestic violence services to the community. Given that South Asian's make up one of the largest cultural groups within the Muslim American population, this response is relevant to the current study. The author highlights that some Eastern traditions, such as those that stem from the Indian subcontinent, center on the concept of family honor, or the protection of a family's social reputation. Within this, divorce is often considered a taboo, even when ongoing violence is present, and there is an emphasis on keeping family matters private. Because *The Peaceful Families Project* takes these realities into account,

it provides an important forum to discuss these variables in the process of delivering services for South Asian women. However, due to it being faith-centered, it is difficult to demonstrate its applicability to South Asian women of other religions and traditions.

South Asian domestic violence agencies. Merchant (2000) provides a discourse of twelve identified community agencies in the United States that focus on serving South Asian survivors of domestic abuse. One of these agencies, *Manavi,* was cofounded by Shamita Das Dasgupta, and was the first ethnocentric agency established to serve South Asian women in the United States. This agency is based in the state of New Jersey and those utilizing its services are predominantly Indian. Prior to its creation, Dasgupta was troubled by the lack of attention from mainstream feminist frameworks on the experiences of immigrant women and women of color. *Manavi* was created as a response, in order to create services that responded to cultural context of South Asian women.

Rudrappa (2004) outlines the work of two other South Asian women's organizations serving domestic violence survivors in the United States. These are Apna Ghar in Chicago, IL and Saheli in Austin, TX. She described the concept of "radical caring" embedded in this work, to mean the immersion of personal and organizational convictions to seek justice at both levels for South Asian women. With regard to Apna Ghar, this radical caring implies two things: 1.) a dedication to the safety and agency of individuals they serve, and 2.) a dedication to social change in their cultural community to confront gendered inequalities.

Rudrappa (2004) discusses how Apna Ghar uses three strategies in operationalizing this mission. They are: 1.) empowering women by helping them place boundaries from abusive networks, and gaining resources to promote personal wellness, 2.) questioning community and family institutions that promote disempowerment by gender, and 3.) bringing in the necessary

funds through grants and other sources to continue providing care and services for survivors. Rudrappa suggests that the inspiration for starting these South Asian women's agencies was to respond to gaps in other feminist work that did not focus on the lived experiences for women of color. She describes the importance of having sites that exist within cultural contexts, not riddled with the mishandling or ignorance of South Asian women's needs. For example, she writes how Apna Ghar provided an opportunity for South Asian women to not feel othered when receiving services, because the customs therein matched their lives, such as with language or food. Apna Ghar is also the first South Asian centered women's organization to have its own shelter (Merchant, 2000; Rudrappa, 2004).

Rudrappa indicates that there are more than 30 organizations serving South Asian survivors of domestic abuse in the United States. A comprehensive list of South Asian domestic violence agencies in the Midwest United States are listed in Chapter 5 of this manuscript. It should be noted that agencies discussed in this paper are rarely mentioned in academic literature, and are far too absent in the wider discussion about domestic violence in the United States, either at national conferences or through scholarly publications. Developments can be made when South Asian survivors, themselves, are asked what they need to make their lives better, healthier, and safer. Producing awareness about existing culturally sensitive agencies should be part of this mission.

Summary

The goal of this research project was to center the lived experiences of domestic violence for South Asian women in a particular U.S. region. In doing so, participant disclosures were used to produce a map of understanding that can inspire better quality resources available to them. Grounded theory methods were undertaken to extract this information at various

ecological layers surrounding their experiences. The more South Asian women's voices are respected and made apparent, the greater likelihood services will begin to match their needs. When these types of studies become more abundant, similarities and differences in South Asian women's survivorship by U.S. region can be examined as well. The current project is one such collection of narratives, in the Midwest United States.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter presents a summary of scholarship regarding domestic violence amongst South Asian women, with specific focus on U.S. women. Previous scholars have applied an ecological lens in understanding domestic violence for specific minority groups in the United States (Conwill, 2010; Leal & Brackley, 2004; Perilla, Bakeman & Norris, 1994). This approach has helped researchers organize contextually relevant information into clusters, stratifying aspects of violence by each systemic level to highlight various entry points of prevention and intervention.

South Asian survivors and human ecological perspective. A recent study demonstrated how an ecological lens could be used to examine domestic violence survivorship for South Asian immigrant women in Canada (Ahmad, Rai, Petrovic, Erickson, & Stewart, 2013). This was a qualitative inquiry utilizing in-depth, semi-structured interviews to examine the resilience of eleven IPV survivors. Findings indicated physical, psychological, and emotional forms of violence. Major themes from the data included: resources utilized by these women before and after challenging violence, changes in their self, changes in their social support network, and the role of immigration. Positive self-concept amongst survivors was an important feature of this study, and this included change towards a disposition of personal autonomy. Participants also discussed changes in a collective-self concept aimed at a sense of belonging, and wanting to interrupt transgenerational cycles of violence.

These authors discussed the concept of a *turning point* in their findings, where women chose to confront and challenge the violence they endured towards survivorship. Some of the resources they used to reach a *turning point* were willpower, family, friends, and a determination

for their children to have a healthy life. Family and friends were also important after reaching a *turning point*, as well as spirituality and support from professional resources. One of the main resources used by women in this study were professional services such as social workers, post-natal nursing professionals, use of shelters or long-term housing solutions, legal aid, immigration consultation, and daily supplies such as food and clothes. Description of these services included meeting the needs of their children as well, such as gaining school supplies or access to counselors in their schools. In addition, participants exhibited the ability to assess the impact of their social networks, and move towards comfortable and trusting relationships that suited their survival.

Findings from this work indicate that women were seeking and using multiple resources at different levels of their ecology. More studies using an ecological lens may shed light on different intervention and prevention opportunities at once in this way. Reflecting this, these authors called for the availability of individual, community and structural resources that help women challenge and endure past their experiences of violence. They note that this should include multiple sectors of society working in harmony to help people in their resilience. This fits with the current study in that its aim was to discover sociocultural insights surrounding experiences of domestic violence for South Asian women in the Midwest United States, including helpful resources in survivorship.

Using this very ecological lens, this literature review will be organized by insight at each systemic level surrounding survivorship for South Asian women. This review will include international and U.S. based literature given limited publication on this topic, as well the importance of including sociopolitical histories from different countries that can color expectations for South Asian Americans.

Microsystem

The following section will detail what is known about the microsystem experiences of domestic violence for U.S. South Asian women. Microsystem experiences refer to those aspects of violence that are endured directly and personally by the survivor, such as specific types of violence, attacks from specific abusers, individual coping methods, and deleterious health symptoms.

Violence typologies and survivor coping. Mahapatra (2012) conducted a study of abuse prevalence amongst U.S. South Asian women. Eliciting survey data from 33 states, 215 women were sampled. Results showed that 38 percent of South Asian women had experienced domestic abuse in the past year, where the perpetrator was their male spouse or male romantic partner. Among the 82 women reporting this abuse, various forms of abuse were identified: 77 clarified that that psychological abuse was involved, 27 noted sexual abuse, 22 reported that abuse was physical, and 9 discussed that abuse had resulted in an injury.

Personal experiences of isolation were also identified as influencing violence for these women. When they endured greater isolation and less quality time with their partner, as well as less perceived social support, this increased the likelihood that they had encountered domestic abuse. Interestingly, most of these women currently shared residence with their perpetrator, where co-residence was not indicative of felt support or safety. Rather, it may be that living with someone that one does not feel close to can enhance perceptions of isolation.

Individual coping methods were also identified in this study. Although 55 of the 82 women reporting abuse said they tried personal methods to cope, most reported maintaining silence. A number of the women reported talking back (e.g. telling the perpetrator to stop, questioning their acts, or screaming at them), and a little more than half tried avoiding the

perpetrator altogether. Others tried to calm the perpetrator by wearing clothes they liked or cooking for them. In addition, one in five of the women considered suicide as a way to cope with the abuse, and only two percent reported leaving for good. This study highlights the direct encounter of violence typologies, personal experiences of isolation and silence, various methods of coping, and psychological impact.

Deleterious health outcomes. Hurwitz et al. (2006) conducted research with a sample of 208 women from the Greater Boston, MA area. This research examined experiences of IPV and its relation to women's overall health outcomes. Findings showed that 21 percent of these women had encountered IPV by their current partner at some point, where the nature of this violence included physical and sexual forms. About 15 percent of the entire sample had experienced victimization within the previous year.

Regarding health impact, survivors in this study were more likely than those who did not report IPV to indicate negative physical health, depression, and suicidal thoughts. These authors also conducted separate qualitative interviews with 23 South Asian survivors. Data from these interviews yielded connections between victimization and the following: injury, chronically poor health, depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, poor appetite, and less energy. This study points to severe and poor health outcomes amongst U.S. South Asian women whom have been abused, indicating the need for physical and mental health screening as an assessment tool in responding to the needs of this demographic.

Sexual health risk. Raj et al. (2005) utilized this same data as Hurwitz et al. (2006) to examine the relationship between experiences of IPV and sexual health outcomes. Of the women reporting IPV, more than 90 percent reported being sexually assaulted. Women who experienced IPV in their current relationship were 2.6 times more likely to report discolored

vaginal discharge in the past year, 3.1 times more likely to report burning sensations during urination in the past year, and 3.4 times more likely to report unwanted pregnancy.

Separate qualitative findings in this study indicated survivors' reduced sexual autonomy, pregnancies they didn't want, and a number of abortions. 60.9 percent of the survivors in the qualitative sample reported burning in their urination, 39.1 percent disclosed unwanted pregnancy, and more than a quarter of them reported vaginal discharge discoloration. This study points towards the importance of increasing gynecological health outreach for U.S. South Asian women, especially those who are survivors of domestic violence. Stories from the qualitative sample included instances of rape in response to disclosing to a partner they didn't want children, partner's abuses producing miscarriage, violence from abusers who did not want the baby, and forced abortion against the survivors wishes.

Childhood abuse and witnessing. Robertson et al. (2016) conducted a study with a sample of 368 U.S. South Asian adults in an online survey. This study functioned through collaborations with many South Asian organizations to deliver it through social media and email lists. The average age of the respondents was 32.9 years of age, and a large majority of the sample were female (77.7 percent).

A quarter of respondents reported enduring some type of childhood sexual abuse in their lives. More than one-fifth of the sample reported experiencing suicidal ideation, 24 percent reported encountering relationship violence, and 41.2 percent were witnesses of parental violence. Findings also indicated that those who experienced some type of relationship violence had increased likelihood of being child sexual abuse survivors as well. This study examined interrelated nature of harmful components within domestic abuse experiences, including the centrality of early abuse and witnessing abuse upon future instances of harm. This work also

reinforces the public health imperative of providing services to this U.S. South Asian population through a focus on childhood experiences that can be predictive of subsequent health outcomes.

Maker and deRoon-Cassini (2007) provide another estimate of 70 percent victimization for higher socio-economic status and college educated U.S. South Asian women. This estimate comes from a retrospective-survey study with a diverse sample of 251 women, assessing for prevalence of childhood witnessing of domestic violence, and personal victimization as adults. This high estimate should be taken with caution, because South Asian and Middle Eastern women were collapsed into one group for analysis. These two cultural groups have distinct sociocultural histories, restricting much implicative use of this statistic. Still, more than half of each cultural group represented in this study had witnessed parental violence while growing up. This indicates the power of intergenerational transmission for domestic violence, as well as direct witnessing during childhood, where this may influence encountering violence later in life.

International microsystem. Inconsistent measures of prevalence and a short list of scholarly papers about U.S. South Asian domestic violence are indicative of scarce attention to the subject matter. It may be that these differences are accounted for by different methods of research and different sample sizes. There are also not many large cross-national studies. Another problem is that existing literature is accounted for by some of the same authors, reflecting lack of abundance. Given this, it is important to acknowledge what is known about micro-level experiences of domestic violence in South Asian countries of origin, where the realities of those regions potentially influence the nature of these experiences for South Asian women in the United States.

Malnourishment. Ackerson and Subramanian (2008) provide an important study addressing the impact of domestic violence in India upon maladaptive health outcomes for

women and children. These authors examined data from 69,072 women in a national-level study of Indian families. 19 percent of women in this study reported experiencing domestic violence. For those reporting more than one experience in the past year, there was an increased likelihood of anemia, as well as low body weight.

The authors attribute these findings to the heavy prevalence of malnutrition in developing countries, where food withholding (when a husband cuts off food resources from his wife) may be a pervasive form of domestic abuse experienced by Indian women. The relationship between this violence and malnourishment held true even when controlling for economic status and geographic location in analyses. Given this, culturally specific transgressions, such as food withholding should be assessed for when providing services for South Asian survivors. Given the amount of women born in the Indian-subcontinent that are now residents in the United States, these international ecologies matter but specific studies need to be conducted to examine similarities and differences.

Mesosystem

Variables in the mesosystem refer to instances where two or more components of a survivor's microsystem are in interaction with each other, and this further impacts her experiences of violence. This section will include insight about plausible complicity between different family members informing violence upon survivors that stem from those connections. How these connections inspire assistance, or conversely create barriers to help seeking will be addressed.

Family network. Rianon and Shelton (2003) document perceptions of domestic violence among 23 Bangladeshi immigrant women in the Houston, Texas. 91 percent of them reported that they perceived domestic abuse as a prevalent experience for women in the Bangladeshi

community. Respondents in this study indicated their view that perpetrators included husbands, parents on both sides, and other family members.

In fact, 84 percent of the sample indicated their perception that perpetrators of these abuses were husbands and in-laws. These findings indicate the importance of examining unique collectivist experiences of domestic violence for U.S. South Asian women, as well as the need to construct proper intervention and prevention services for families, instead of just individuals. This study also suggests that relational violence from spouses may be indicative of other forms of family violence experienced by U.S. South Asian women, such as from in-laws.

The extent to collusion between these two parties should be further examined by other studies, but has been mentioned in other literature. Ayyub (2000) indicates the existence of these relational dynamics in the domestic violence experienced by South Asian Muslim immigrants in the United States. Ayyub explains that these South Asian women are often told to preserve family honor by keeping silent, even in extremely violent scenarios. This highlights the overt responsibility imposed on women where they are charged with meeting demands for both husbands and complicit family members, even if it means lack of safety, protection, or ongoing abuse.

Support systems and help seeking. Pulling from the larger sample described in the work of Mahapatra (2012), Mahapatra and Dinitto (2013) examined the experiences of 57 South Asian women domestic abuse survivors in the United States, and the surrounding sociocultural variables that informed their help seeking behaviors. 77 percent of participants were immigrant women originally born in South Asian countries, with the rest being born in the United States. The majority (79 percent) of these women were also married. This research primarily served as

an examination of informal or formal sources of support, as well as the usefulness of specific types of support.

35 of the participants (61 percent) reported seeking some form of assistance in the previous year. With regard to support networks, findings indicated participants' use of their friends more than any other source of help, as well as rating it better than other informal options such as their immediate family or spouse's (or partner's) family members. In fact, their partner's family members were rated the least favorably in terms of perceived helpfulness. Here, the connection between husbands and role of in-laws was again made apparent similar to other scholarship.

Women in this study were more likely to seek help if they experienced greater isolation from their partner and did not reside with children. The extent to which presence of children either motivates or hinders help seeking should be clarified by future studies. Reflecting these considerations, Mahapatra and Dinitto (2013) call for service programs to tap into women's personal support systems in assisting them. This may also bridge the gap between informal and formal domains of service, where South Asian women are encouraged to utilize both when needed.

International mesosystem. Scholarship from outside the United States also reflects the centrality of family networks and family complicity in violence upon South Asian women. Specifically, expectations that are placed by spouses and other family members may influence manifestations of violence against them. This includes a host of punitive measures, including social restrictions that are paired with violent acts to disempower these women. Examples of these themes are provided in the review below.

Reproductive disempowerment. Wilson-Williams, Stephenson, Juvekar, and Andes (2008) document a qualitative study with women from Gangadhar, which is a rural village in India. Looking at the relationship between contraceptive use and domestic abuse, participants' narratives suggested that lack of reproductive rights in one's marriage were indicative of risk for domestic abuse in the same marriages. For example, women shared that soon after marriage they were expected to begin childbearing. If a woman acted outside of this expectation (willingly or unwillingly), this increased her likelihood of being beaten by her husband. Here, high fertility might function as a marker for domestic abuse, where a woman is not allowed to command agency in regards to how her body is used. Instead, she is sociopolitically and intimately cornered into decisions that are not her own.

Ongoing, mutual, and safe communications between spouses would mitigate these occurrences of forced pregnancy and high fertility. By contrast, participants in this rural Indian study shared that there was a risk of being abused if they were disobedient to their husbands, were autonomously mobile (as in going to certain places without their husband's consent), or if they did not meet family demands for childbearing and sexuality.

Women shared that a possible way to cope with these issues was to practice the covert use of contraceptives, or subversive avoidance of sex with their husbands. However, narratives in this study show that when the former option was discovered, a woman might experience physical or verbal abuse from their husband or mother-in-law as punishment. If subversion were practiced, this would likely precipitate fights, because husbands might draw their own conclusions regarding their wives' avoidance, questioning her fidelity and obedience to him.

This study underscores the influence of family expectations upon direct abuse for South Asian women. Participant narratives reflected a constellation of experiences that include lack of

reproductive agency, experiencing in-law abuse, and lack of cohesion in their marriages. These might be considered mesosystem indicators of violence, because they reflect abuses that arise from family networks and expectations therein.

Ali, Israr, Ali, and Janjua (2009) provide similar findings in their study of reproductive rights, depression, and IPV prevalence amongst married women in Karachi, Pakistan. They found that 61 percent of their participants, who were clinically depressed, were also survivors of IPV. Co-morbid with depression amongst these women, was lack of sexual and reproductive agency, including being married off at 18 years old or younger, being abused by in-laws, not having a say in who they married, three or less hours a day spent with one's husband, marital rape, and having intercourse two or less times a week. This study indicates increased risk for psychological distress and IPV amongst South Asian women who have been denied sexual and reproductive rights. These denials are housed alongside experiences of in-law abuse and IPV.

The extent to which collaboration between abusers is implicit, explicit, planned, or a subconscious function of structural disempowerment needs to be studied and written about more. These international studies seem to begin the conversation regarding how a survivor's mesosystem colors their experiences of violence. While scholarship from the United States is not extensive, available information points to the centrality of family dynamics in contextualizing domestic abuse encountered by South Asian women. A rigid focus on the perpetrator-survivor dyad in research or service programs, without a consideration of family network, would ignore a crucial component of the South Asian experience.

Exosystem

Exosystem influences of violence are those that do not directly involve a survivor, but profoundly impact them. These include life stressors experienced by others in one's system of

violence, such as the economic, work life, and educational pressures that perpetrators experience. These stressors can, in turn, be projected through violence upon women. Neighboring community variables that influence the experiences of a survivor will also be included in this section. These include community and religious spaces, community attitudes and perceptions, and economic or educational opportunities that impact lived experiences of violence for survivors. This section is mostly reliant on themes gleaned from overseas studies, as U.S. based scholarship about indirect influences for South Asian domestic violence are limited. One piece of scholarly discourse from the United States will be listed to start.

Community attitudes in America. Dasgupta (2000) notes that despite the existence of long-standing U.S. South Asian anti-violence movements, the outright community position remains that such violence does not exist. This lack of attention can deter responsiveness to battered women's needs in those same communities. Dasgupta (2000) suggests that South Asians in the United States have been concerned with preserving their impeccable image as model minorities, where exposure of sexual assault, homelessness, intergenerational conflict, and delinquency in their communities would work to tarnish their image in front of dominant society. Within this, South Asian women have been asked to maintain their families' reputations.

Community literacy and education. Ackerson, Kawachi, Barbeau, and Subramanian (2008) discovered evidence to link husbands' education level, community literacy levels, and frequency of IPV amongst Indian women. These findings come from analyses upon a national-level study in India. Findings show that women with husbands who lacked formal education were more likely to face domestic abuses than those with college-educated husbands. In addition, high levels of community literacy were negatively correlated with IPV prevalence.

However, women who had acquired more education than their husbands were more likely to experience abuse than those who had educational parity with their spouses. This study shows the potential for raising husband's educational attainment and community literacy levels as exosystem buffers preventing IPV. However, these findings also draw attention to gendered power and control dynamics, in response to when a woman attains more education than her male spouse. He may compensate by asserting control over her through violence. These considerations need to be studied with more clarity in the United States.

Perpetrator stressors. Koenig, Stephenson, Ahmed, Jejeebhoy, and Campbell (2006) produced scholarship regarding domestic violence experiences in North India. Results from 4,520 married men show that economic, personal, and intergenerational stressors informed men's violence against their spouses. For instance, household economic pressures were related to abuse, such as when men had to borrow money from others to pay for medical expenses within the past year. Also, men who had witnessed their own father's abuse their mothers, were more likely to participate in physical abuse and sexual coercion in their own marriage.

In addition, men who had extramarital sex were more likely to be physically and sexually abusive towards their wives. These findings point to individual stressors that are not direct to the survivor of abuse, but instead to perpetrators, underscoring their place in a survivor's exosystem. With respect to this, future intervention and prevention strategies would do well to incorporate coping recourses for men who perpetrate in effort to protect female survivors of abuse. Though these findings are from India, their large sample sizes and acculturative influence on U.S. manifestations of abuse are important to the current conversation, especially when international ecologies and global migrations are considered.

Regional considerations. Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain, and Mozumder (2003) studied individual versus community level determinants of domestic violence in two rural areas of Bangladesh. Findings indicated that higher education, higher socio-economic status, religion other than being Muslim, and extended family living in the area were protective factors against violence, where risk was lower when these variables were present.

Location provided important contextualization for these findings based on ecological level. Individual and community variables acted differently depending on which area of Bangladesh was being examined. Of the two areas study, the more culturally conservative one (Sirajgonj) showed that individual-level variables such as women's autonomy increased risk for violence, but community-level variables did not impact rate of violence. In the less conservative area (Jessore), community-level variables such as status were linked to lower risk, but individual variables were unrelated to violence risk. Findings also indicated no interaction effects between community level and individual level variables. This brought to light that the region being studied mattered in situating implications from findings. Researchers examining determinants of violence in the United States should also heed the importance of regional context. In this light, the current project was used to focus on women's stories in the Midwest United States.

Economic disadvantage. Rao, Horton, and Raguram (2012) examined the disclosures of 32 poor women who were psychiatric outpatients in the Karnataka State of South India. 75 percent of these women were identified as meeting the criteria for current major depressive episodes, and the majority of the participants were also living in poverty. Findings identified a connection between personal and sociocultural variables surrounding the participants' depression, where distress symptoms were related to their accounts of structural violence, experienced lack of personal agency, and limited resources. Participant accounts indicated abuse

on the part of husband or male significant other, and threats to one's children. These accounts also underscored the role of economic disadvantage for domestic violence survivors, where suffering and powerlessness are deepened alongside intersections of gender and poverty. This interwoven relationship of personal and economic variables was a marked feature of their research:

> These women's depressive symptoms appeared to be related to their desperate financial situations, lack of choices to remedy these situations, and sometimes the emotional and physical violence they experienced. At the same time, the children have been a motivating factor in these women's desires to be well, stay alive, and perhaps even seek ways to remedy their situation. (p.1972)

Given their findings, these authors specifically discussed that women can be buffered from these violent experiences and psychological distresses through increased economic and educational opportunities, stricter law enforcement for crimes of gendered violence, the immediate accessibility of coping resources, and through the de-stigmatization of shelter use.

Interwoven community variables. Dutta, Rishi, Roy, and Umashankar (2016) provided another analysis of risk factors for domestic violence in Indian states, including an examination of community-level variables that surround instances of abuse. This study was conducted using a cross-national database (National Family Health Survey – NFHS-3) to assess a sample of 69,704 women between 15 and 49 who had been married at some point in their lives. Results show that a number of socio-economic and demographic variables increased the likelihood of domestic violence encounters. Among findings, partner's use of alcohol a risk factor.

A strength of this study was that it included a multi-faceted explanation of risk factors for violence, including a comparison of urban and rural sub-samples within the data. Contextual variables that influenced the experience of violence were educational achievement by women and their husbands, women and men's employment status, caste, and religious identity. These

included significant findings across both sub-samples where participants who married young had increased likelihoods of domestic abuse occurrence, and older women were less likely than younger women to endure this violence. In addition, primary education was not a predictor of domestic abuse rate, but higher education was negatively correlated with instances of violence.

Macrosystem

The following section will detail macrosystem influences of domestic violence for South Asian women. The macrosystem refers to the sociocultural blueprint of human environments, including societal attitudes, cultural mores, media, laws, and norms that influence human development. This also includes the position of service organizations with regard to their socialized attitudes about survivors of different cultural backgrounds. International discourse will be included in this section, because sociopolitical and historical associations of the Indian subcontinent to U.S. South Asian women are fundamentally situated at the macro-level.

Structural barriers and orientalism. Visweswaran (2004) provides scholarship regarding institutional barriers to women's rights, pervasive in the United States and abroad. Visweswaran asserts that human rights interventions for South Asian women have been orientalist in nature, where discourse has been driven by superficial assumptions of culture. One of these assumptions is that women are oppressed by their culture and need to be freed by western civilization. This assumption would breed an inattention to institutional gaps in the United States, and instead apply pathology upon a culture itself. Khan (2004) clarifies this point by noting that this dichotomy influences an ignorance of America's deeply gendered inequalities, that could leave many South Asian women disillusioned when trying to access services. The expectation that things will be different in the United States will not necessarily be met, emulsifying experiences of powerlessness.

U-visa and immigration. Visweswaran (2004) provides an example of service gaps for South Asian immigrant women, noting that they may withhold reporting domestic abuses, as many of them have contingent-residency status' dependent on their marriage with an immigrant South Asian man. In these cases, filing for divorce in the United States would likely result in a woman's deportation. Instead of the western political system functioning as a salvation from patriarchal abuse, a South Asian woman's right to protection is again dependent on the status of her husband.

Some of the aforementioned literature in this manuscript has considered the role of immigrant status for South Asian women's domestic violence survival (Ahmad et al., 2013; Ayyub, 2000; Mahapatra & Dinitto, 2013; Rianon & Shelton, 2003). However, these differ from each other in research methods and questions, and the extent to what implications can be made about immigrant women specifically. However, in scholarship regarding the experiences of immigrant Mexican women, Fuchsel (2012) noted the role of a U-Visa as a resource for immigrant domestic violence survivors in the United States. This U-Visa is an application for legal status to allow survivors to live and work in the United States if they can provide evidence for their experiences with domestic violence, and that their marriage to a current resident was conducted with good intent. Fuchsel (2012) notes that this type of formal support is difficult to attain when there is lack of education about resources available to immigrant women. The application to U.S. South Asian women is that many of them are immigrants who hold fears of deportation. These need to be considered when assisting women who show up to an agency setting, where service providers should be aware of legal restrictions and potential use of unique legal resources to help immigrant South Asian women.

Indian legal system. Survivors' hesitations in seeking help may also be colored by realities in South Asian countries of origin. For example, Lodhia (2009) provides discourse regarding the central role of the Indian government in promoting or preventing gendered violence against South Asian women. This work highlights how, in 2005, the Protection for Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) was passed by the Indian parliament, but this was the only civil law that clearly addressed domestic abuse in India. While this had increased some legal rights for women, there has historically been a dissonance between legislation and its actual application. For example, prior to the passing of PWDVA, the Indian Penal code section 498A vaguely addressed domestic abuse against women. Although this law did not necessitate dowry allegations in claiming abuse, the vast amount of cases outside of dowry related claims were dismissed.

Pakistani legal system. There are also many service barriers present in the legal system of Pakistan. Visweswaran (2004) discusses that, under the Hudood Ordinances (laws aiming to purify Pakistan's moral state), women who claim they have been raped are charged with sole burden of proof. If she cannot provide four male witnesses of the account, she then becomes the subject of criminal activity, as her charge of rape is now reframed into an admittance of adultery or fornication. Within this, Zina Ordinances (laws aimed at preserving chastity) make these sexual "crimes" punishable by the state. These may be seen as a sort of legalized and public transgression charged against Pakistani women, and not men. Similarly, when women have filed for gender-based asylum in the United States, in response to rape victimization, immigration officers have historically considered her "rape" as a private act conducted by a self-interested individual, not impetus for asylum or increased protection. Given these legal restrictions to

women's rights, Visweswaran suggests that gendered violence should be considered a result of state shortcomings in the United States and abroad, rather than a shortcoming of culture.

Khan (2004) also points out ambiguities in Pakistan's legal system, which have functioned in denying rights to women, despite the country's constitutional claim to gender equality. For example, the functional realities of Zina laws have oft-been used by men to control and use women as commodities, including the prostitution of wives to pay off personal debts, knowing that these women cannot speak to authorities as it is likely that they will be apprehended and charged with criminal activity. Given the intense nature of these legal ambiguities, more U.S. studies need to be conducted to clarify the expectations of South Asian women regarding their knowledge and awareness of laws in America versus the Indian sub-continent.

Portrayals in media. These disempowerments have also been reinforced by depictions of South Asian women in media. Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2003) provide a content analysis of sexual violence portrayals in popular Bollywood films. Findings exposed moderate sexual violence against women often being depicted as fun, normal, and important to maintaining romantic partnerships amongst South Asian couples. The authors argue that large film industries (Bollywood produces the most films in the world, annually) play influential roles in teaching gender norms and messages about sexuality to the South Asian public. These can work to reinforce the continuation and social acceptance of abuses against women.

Religion. The extent to which religion is considered a micro, meso, exo, or macro-level variable in understanding domestic abuse survivorship depends on how it is being operationalized in scholarly papers. For example, survivors' use of religion to cope with abuse may be seen as a microsystem variable since it is a personal behavior. Neighborhood mosques,

temples, gurdwaras, and churches may play a role at the exosystem. Laws in various countries that reflect religious mores, or socializations of religion that disempower large groups of women might be considered items at the macrosystem. However, rigorous research studies are lacking at all ecological levels regarding the intersection of culture and religion for South Asian survivors. The scholarly discourse that does occur will be reviewed here, due to inferences about religion in social institutions within this work.

Sharma, Pandit, Pathak, and Sharma (2013) provide arguments about the intersection of religion, marriage, mental illness, and domestic violence for Indian women. Specifically, these authors discuss the cultural framework that surrounds relationships for people of the Hindu religion, including a focus on uniting families within society, and not just individuals in marriage. Within this, they note the role of gendered power dynamics for women, where social forces and law can interact to reinforce instances of domestic violence, financial (dowry) abuses, and other forms of disempowerment for Hindu women.

They mention how domestic violence is an output within the crossroads of all of these variables. For example, they discuss the centrality of marriage and family in Hindu religion, where it is regarded as a crucial sacrament and ensuing acts of spirituality depend on it. Given this, they compare domestic life to the social contracts that surround it, including the distortion of dowry customs into manifestations of domestic violence, coercion, and death. They also note societal bias against women in Indian society who exhibit mental illness, which may emulsify disempowerment experiences. The authors discuss the concept of a "triple tragedy" where divorced women with mental illness are judged unfavorably thrice over for: 1.) being female, 2.) having psychosis, and 3.) being divorced or separated due to their husbands not tolerating their mental health challenges. In this way, domestic violence can be seen as a multi-faceted issue for

Indian and Hindu women, where differential types of abuse might occur depending on the way religious and mental health notions are pronounced next to societal demands.

Ayyub (2000) provides discourse regarding the role of religion in domestic violence for South Asian survivors in the United States. This discussion is provided as a reflection of the author's professional experiences in combatting domestic violence in the Muslim community, as well as personal experiences of South Asian culture. In this work, the centrality of family and religious institutions for South Asian women is underscored. Specifically, Ayyub discusses how Islam is practiced by a large number of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, but that gendered disempowerment can come forth from certain interpretations of religious concepts. This can be reflected in the discouragement to seek help from religious community members, including family and friends.

Ayyub also suggests that religious communities can exhibit disempowering treatment towards women, where survivors are judged and scrutinized for trying to seek protection from violence. Where this lack of resourcefulness in the religious community is evident, the implication is that women should endure and accept their victimization. The author contends that Islam is meant to be freeing, but that people fall short in ensuring this freedom for domestic abuse survivors in the Muslim community. Ayyub mentions how this is also indicated by the shortage of domestic violence information at religious centers, as well as a lack of information about prevention resources. These institutional barriers seem to undermine any potential access points for survivors' refuge and coping opportunities.

Whether these dynamics continue to be pervasive in the U.S. Muslim community should be reexamined, given that the article from Ayyub precedes September 11, 2001; after which many sociopolitical changes for Muslims in America ensued. In addition, there is a need for

more articles to examine the experience of domestic violence for South Asian Christians, Sikhs, and those of other religions where South Asian women are well represented.

Synthesis of Literature

This chapter has highlighted ecological variables that surround the experience of domestic abuse for South Asian women. This included scholarship from the United States and abroad. Findings and implications within this can work can be examined for potential sites of intervention, prevention, and research, where various sectors of society can play a role in ensuring greater safety for survivors. Notably, this chapter reflects the importance of service providers assessing for comorbid health problems amongst survivors, sexual and reproductive health concerns, and unique family-level constructions of violence. The matters of education, spousal cohesion, reproductive agency, legal agency, immigrant status and religion have also been reviewed.

While research on South Asian domestic violence is growing, there are several limitations within this body of work. Namely, much of the work relies too heavily on the same data sets for analysis, and article growth seems to depend on similar authors instead of new scientists in the field. Another reality is that there are major gaps between research and services, where public knowledge on this issue has not been effectively transformed. Given Dasgupta's (2000) discussion on community silencing, these gaps might be best dismantled through raising women's voices in those very communities, to be better represented in research, public discourse about research findings, and in the production of culturally sensitive services.

In order to create these best practice interventions and prevention programs, research needs to move beyond examination of violence prevalence. Research on this topic needs to embrace the importance of lived narratives from South Asian survivors themselves. The current

project functioned through a grounded theory analysis to extract information from eight South Asian women in the Midwestern region of the United States. With reference to a human ecological lens, qualitative inquiries that examine survivor-centered responses can be used for the sociological aim of increasing services for marginalized members of society. The aim in the current project was to clarify the nature of domestic abuse, asking those who lived through it to inform us about what harms they have experienced, as well as to inform us about how they survived and coped.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

This study utilized constructivist grounded theory methods to to gather information about the lived experiences of eight South Asian women who are domestic violence survivors residing in the Midwest United States. Based on participant disclosures, a central aim of this project was to extract sociocultural variables that influenced their experiences. Findings led to the construction a theoretical map with two distinct storylines, or selective codes. These are described in depth in Chapter 4.

This chapter will provide: justification for qualitative inquiry, discussion of constructivist grounded theory, data collection procedures, and data analysis protocol. Strategies used in establishing trustworthiness for this research project will be detailed at the end of this chapter.

Justification for Qualitative Research

This section will demonstrate the applicability of qualitative research in understanding domestic violence. Qualitative research has already been applied by several authors to track the experiences of domestic violence survivors (Kacen, 2011; Katerndahl, Burge, Ferrer, Becho & Wood, 2012; Kinsworthy & Garza, 2010; Leal & Brackley, 2004). Arguments for qualitative inquiry include: its ability to contextualize domestic abuse, gendered reasons to use this method for South Asian women who are survivors of domestic violence, and previous demonstrations with South Asian research samples.

Contextualizing abuse. Katerndahl et al. (2012) contend that it is crucial to choose methods that will illuminate the unique nature of violence amongst specific groups of women, especially given that violence manifests differently by context and culture. In their own mixed methods scholarship, these authors were able to pair qualitative and quantitative methods to

examine unique experiences of violence for women. They suggest how qualitative research can help increase richness in understanding IPV, as well as clarify quantitative findings. This is relevant to the current project, as quantitative prevalence studies amongst U.S. South Asian women are gaining ground, but much is still unknown about the systemic and sociocultural nature of this violence. At this current juncture in scholarship, qualitative findings that include survivor disclosures directly can help identify important sites of intervention and prevention for U.S. South Asian women.

Another rationale for qualitative inquiry is its responsiveness to research questions about lived experiences and sociocultural variables. For example, Leal and Brackley (2004) have demonstrated how qualitative research can produce many implications at different levels of a survivor's ecology. In their use of qualitative content analysis to observe disclosures of women's abusive relationships, findings yielded themes about the identity of the perpetrator, nature of abuse, women's feelings in response to the abuse, and survivors protecting perpetrators. Considerations of healthcare, family, friendships, the legal system, and religion were also tracked in these descriptions. In this way, these authors were able to use survivors' disclosures to underscore many interlocking themes and call for ecological sensitivity in understanding domestic abuse experiences. The current project also utilized qualitative research to examine interlocking variables in the survivorship of U.S. South Asian women in the Midwest.

Applicability for South Asian women. Visweswaran (2004) clarifies the need to spark new methods of inquiry about the experience of gendered violence for South Asian women, where current interventions have been produced with superficial assumptions about their culture. Within this, culture functions as pathology instead of inquiry and this perspective further silences women's agency about their own welfare. Godrej (2011) clarifies this point, by suggesting that a

lot of what is said about group experiences relies on oppressive and hierarchical public discourse. Godrej suggests that true liberation from these forces, such as gendered violence, means prioritizing the voices of women themselves. The good news is that qualitative research can be crafted to produce data from human subjects' own conversations regarding their lived experiences. Godrej states that this type of dialogue is the essential site of change, and without it institutions will remain stagnant in their services.

Qualitative research for South Asian survivors. Khan and Hussain (2008) used qualitative methods to examine the interrelationship of ecological variables that influence gendered violence amongst middle and lower economic classes of Pakistani women. They conducted interviews with: 11 key informants (women identified as experts about community issues), 3 focus groups totaling 23 women, and 10 individual interviews with survivors.

Their data demonstrated the use of qualitative research methods to shed light on several points of interest at once. In doing so, they found the following themes about gendered violence in Pakistan: women's reluctance to speak out because of pressures to preserve family honor, consensus that domestic violence against wives was increasing in Pakistan, the presence of various physical violence typologies (e.g. being punched, kicked, or attacked with a weapon), age and education effects in perceptions of violence, perpetrators obsessions that their wives were cheating on them, and the presence of overarching gendered inequalities that exist in society. Specific themes from interviews with the 10 survivors included: lack of perceived social support, feeling trapped in one's relationship, threats to their children, and contemplation of suicide. This study was able to produce a comprehensive picture of gendered violence amongst Pakistani women, highlighting crucial nodes of intervention at various ecological levels.

Hussain and Khan (2008) were able to conduct an additional analysis of this qualitative work, finding more themes present in the data. Within this, they found that sexual coercion was common in marriages, for those reporting abuse and not. Additional themes included: increased violence during pregnancy, additional risk of abuse when refusing sex from perpetrators, unwanted pregnancy, and coping with the abuse in silence. The ability for qualitative inquiry to track a multitude of findings at once is underscored by their work. Unfortunately, this type of work regarding multi-layered experiences of violence against South Asian women is scarce in U.S. based literature. However, these methods fit with goals of the current project since its aim was to understand sociocultural variables that inform domestic violence experiences for South Asian women in the Midwest United States.

Grounded Theory Methods

This section will provide rationale for the choice of grounded theory as the appropriate qualitative research method in the current project. Previous applications to the topic of domestic violence across cultural groups will be listed, with specific focus on grounded theory for U.S. South Asian survivors.

Rationale. Grounded theory was chosen for this research project because it's purpose is to produce explanatory paradigms (LaRossa, 2005). In this research, this meant the utilization of South Asian women's disclosures in producing a map for understanding their survival in a particular U.S. region. LaRossa (2005) notes that this creation of theory is the responsibility of researchers in serving people. Due to my belief that domestic violence prevention and intervention is a crucial public service, I appreciate that these methods are geared in that direction. The centrality of survivors' disclosures was used as an essential source of knowledge for this project, especially because mainstream services and scholarship often overlook their

voices.

Another rationale was that grounded theory is aimed at explaining how different concepts are interwoven with each another (Charmaz, 2000). The goal of examining this interrelationship has a match with human ecological perspective, which was the main conceptual framework for this project. Charmaz (2008) also notes how grounded theory can be used to maintain attention to social complexity, which is endemic to the multilevel observations of human life that can be achieved in research.

Grounded theory in different cultures. Previous scholars have already utilized grounded theory methods to understand features of domestic violence in distinct cultural groups. Randell, Bledsoe, Shroff, and Pierce (2012) used grounded theory to understand motivating factors in mothers' help seeking with IPV. Their sample consisted of 62 English and Spanish speaking mothers divided into eight focus groups for interview. External and internal motivators for help seeking were extracted from the data. Findings included the following motivators: survivors' want for a better life, the negative impact of abuse on their children, other people who intervened about the violence, and being able to frame their partner's behavior as abusive.

Their study also highlighted the use of grounded theory to confront cultural and contextual considerations in IPV, where Spanish speaking mothers discussed immigrant status and language barriers that effected their ability to seek help. This included their perceptions that disclosure about abuse might lead to deportation, as well as general mistrust with services where their culture was not well represented.

Fuchsel (2012) used grounded theory to understand experiences of marriage and domestic abuse for nine immigrant Mexican women in the United States. One goal of this was to use participants' disclosures in designing a prevention model. Findings showcased different

ways in which these women sought help. Six of the women reported that their family members were not helpful in this regard. Variance in support from church was also highlighted, where six of the women reached out to either pastors or clergy for assistance. Their experiences ranged from getting practical assistance in navigating violence (such as obtaining an annulment), to misinterpretation or lack of support. Implications included the necessary preparedness of religious spaces frequented by survivors, to assist women in obtaining help for domestic violence. This pertains to the current project because the lives of U.S. South Asian women include intersections of religion and culture, where places of worship and their responses to domestic abuse play a crucial role.

Ripoll-Núñez, Villar-Guhl, and Villar-Concha (2012) used grounded theory to understand expectations about therapeutic change in Bogotá, Columbia. This included perceptions of multiple parties involved in services for clients who have endured family violence. These parties were therapists, eleven families, and two judges. Authors noted that a motivation to conduct the study was to shorten service gaps by promoting co-constructed collaboration between clients and providers. While their work focused directly on the treatment of family violence within a court-ordered service setting, existing gaps between service avenues and those being served were also rationale for the current research project.

Grounded theory for U.S. South Asian survivors. Despite its methodological fit, grounded theory methods have scarcely been used to understand the lived experiences of South Asian domestic violence survivors in the United States. There are some exceptions listed here.

Raj et al. (2005) included grounded theory in their mixed methods examination of the relationship between IPV and sexual health outcomes for U.S. South Asian women in Boston, MA. Their qualitative research functioned through interviews with 23 women who are survivors

of intimate partner abuse, using 12 open-ended questions regarding the nature of their abusive relationships, forms of abuse endured, health outcomes from the violence, and help seeking choices. Grounded theory results indicated the impact of abuse in interrupting sexual autonomy, as well as increased risk for unwanted pregnancy. Disclosures also included violence leading to miscarriage, or forced abortion. This use of grounded theory drew attention to the paired nature of abuse and poor gynecological health in survivors' lived experiences.

Hurwitz et al. (2006) revisited the same data to assess for new findings and implications. These grounded theory findings showed that survivor disclosure included: chronic health problems, injuries, mental health challenges, suicidal thoughts and attempts, threats to quality of life, and problems with sleep and appetite. This also included disclosure of ongoing challenges after an abusive relationship was over, reflecting the lasting impact of those experiences. These findings provide rationale for the linkage of U.S. South Asian survivor intervention to healthcare settings, where providers in the health sector should be equipped to assess for abuse more regularly. Here, the applicability of grounded theory methods in extracting these layers of meaning for U.S. South Asian survivors has been demonstrated.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

This research project followed the prescriptions of constructivist grounded theory detailed in the work of Kathy Charmaz (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2008). A constructivist lens was chosen due to my personal convictions in doing this work as a South Asian man, where this approach allows the role of the researcher to be fully embraced. Charmaz (2000) describes how reality is informed by those who live and observe it, including subjective meaning making by the researcher. Within this, researchers are charged with the task of appropriately representing the

data they have collected. Because this takes review and revisiting, our presentation of data must be considered reconstructions of what has been given to us by participants. She says:

> The grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed. (p. 522)

Fit with an ecological lens is also reflected in the tenets of her constructivist grounded theory approach, in that research context is situated several ways. These tenets include: 1.) reality is constructed phenomena, as well as a process with respect to context, 2.) research occurs by way of interaction, 3.) researcher and participant positionality matter, and 4.) data is presented as the output of interaction between researchers and participants (Charmaz, 2008). These considerations reflect the imperative for social scientists to confront their value positions and preexisting biases as part of the research process.

Researcher introspection. One of the important principals of a constructivist approach to grounded theory is the ownership of previous subjectivity (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2008). This view allows scholars to share with readers the deep personal impact the research had on them. In viewing my own positionality relative to participants, I was able to readily address that I share racial identity markers with them. While this meant that I had to watch closely for my biases and be careful not to project them on the data, it also meant I needed to be sincere about the personal stake I had in learning about the needs of the participants.

I cannot agree with positivist frames that require the researcher to act as though data has no relationship with pervious insights or personal convictions, because that would undermine the entire reason I chose to embark on this study in the first place; I care deeply about the betterment of my South Asian American community. All of these matters can be owned, scrutinized, and situated using constructivism, and these considerations would have been lost with a purely

objectivist vantage point. In adopting this method of introspection, the end of Chapter 5 includes my personal reflections. I urge readers to center the quotes of the participants first and foremost, while noting that my presentation of their words is a subjective retelling that matters. This admission, I believe, allows readers to gain a rich understanding of the data, in all of the raw conditions that come along with human research.

Data Collection Procedures

This section details data collection methods and a description of the research sample. Participant recruitment, interview protocol, and consent will also be discussed here. With regard to human rights protections, this study and its procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Michigan State University.

Sample. A total of eight South Asian identified women were interviewed in this study. Purposive sampling was utilized in building a distinguished theoretical map regarding the experiences of South Asian domestic abuse survivors in the Midwest United States. This meant that women were only eligible to participate under strict inclusion criteria, consisting of: 1.) identifying as South Asian women, 2.) being 18 years of age or older, 3.) currently residing in the Midwest United States (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, or Wisconsin), and 4.) encountering domestic violence at some point in their lifetime. In addition, eligibility required being free from active harm or violence at the time of the study, as to not amplify risks for women whose participation might be found out by abusers.

All eight women included in this study met the list of eligibility criteria. This implied that women had exhibited resilience in removing themselves from harm after having endured domestic violence in the past. In addition, their stories could be used to situate regional

considerations for South Asian adult women in the construction of a grounded theory about domestic violence.

Recruitment. When data collection began for this project, participants were invited through a database of graduated cases at a Midwest South Asian family agency serving domestic abuse survivors. Graduated cases refer to those where survivors used agency services in the past, but their cases were closed after they acquired safety away from domestic violence. The specific name and location of this organization will not be named in order to maintain strict confidentiality. Formal typed invitations were drawn up in collaboration with two agency workers, and sent to potential participants by email.

The intent with this approach was to house data collection alongside regular functions at a South Asian family agency serving women, in order to reinforce cultural respect and bridge research goals to services. However, after repeated attempts to recruit participants, only one person responded. This person was the only individual within the study who I sat with for a live semi-structured interview.

Following guidance from agency workers and with the approval of my doctoral committee, the study was moved to an online Qualtrics format in order to increase the sample size. Qualtrics is an online research tool that allows investigators to produce projects remotely. At the time of this change, the use of formal recruitment letters through the agency was discontinued. The online form provided screening questions that reflect aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria. If they were eligible, participants could use this website to respond to interview questions in an essay box. Their responses were encrypted in order to ensure confidentiality. This second method of recruitment opened up participation to survivors

from other Midwestern states, in addition to the state where the aforementioned service agency is located.

New participants were recruited through the posting of an online blurb introducing the study, where this was pasted on Facebook alongside a link to the Qualtrics form. I also wrote emails including this blurb to personal and professional contacts who could let others know about the study in their networks. I expected re-sharing of the link to occur as these postings got circulated. Seven more participants were gained from this process, totaling eight South Asian women who disclosed their experiences of domestic abuse and survival for this project. Although this number is small, responses from participants were reviewed with an expert coder during research meetings, in order to establish saturation of concepts in data.

Demographics. Six of the eight women were U.S. born, while two had immigrated to the United States during their lifetime. As for the two immigrant women, one of these was born in India, and the other was born in Pakistan. Across the entire sample, two of the women indicated that they are Indian, five are Pakistani, and one is Bangladeshi. One of the Pakistani women indicated that her family was from India but that her father eventually obtained Pakistani nationality before she was born.

Not all of the women disclosed their age aside from indicating they were 18 years old or older during screening protocol. However, their interview descriptions (including the decade they grew up in, the amount of years they have been in the United States, when their parents arrived to the United States before their birth, etc.) indicated that they ranged from being in their twenties to being in their fifties. One woman did not mention any of these indicators, making it difficult to place her age.

Seven of the eight participants referenced Islam as part of their life at some point or in their family's background, but the extent to their religiosity and religious experience varied. Only one woman indicated being of the Sikh religion.

Interviews. Four grand-tour questions were utilized in interviews with these eight participants. These questions were aimed at extracting their lived encounters with domestic abuse, as well as sociocultural factors that informed those experiences. Table 1 shows the connection between theoretical framework, research questions, and interview questions. The order of interview questions as they were presented to participants are provided in parenthesis on the right side of the Table 1. A difference in question 2 depended on whether women were immigrants or U.S. born.

It was important to begin with general questions about family history, upbringing, and community in order to warm up to inquiry about personal encounters of violence in Question 4. In addition, these earlier questions helped situate lived context surrounding violent experiences. Following grand-tour questions, a final inquiry asked about any other information participants would like to share.

Table 1: Research and Interview Questions

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Human Ecological Theory	What are the lived experiences of Domestic Violence, as endured by South Asian survivors in the Midwest US?	- What was your own experience like with domestic violence? (Question 4)
Human Ecological Theory; Sensitizing Concepts	How do sociocultural and systemic variables influence this experience?	- Please tell me a little about your family history in the United States? (Question 1) - What was it like growing up in America? OR What was your personal immigration experience like*?* (Question 2) - How is domestic violence addressed in the South Asian community? (Question 3)

One in-person interview was conducted at a mutually agreed upon and private location. This interview was captured in a terminable audio-device, which I later used to transcribe this participant's responses. In switching to an online platform, the other seven participants were able to contribute responses remotely at their own pace, without interacting with an interviewer. These seven disclosures were automatically captured and transcribed since they were written in an online essay box.

The in-person interview was conducted using a semi-structured format, utilizing the interview questions that were open-ended in nature, as well as additional probes for heightened insight. When placing this interview online, grand-tour interview questions remained the same, with the exception that participants had to check an additional box distinguishing if they were born in the United States, or if they migrated during their lifetime.

One distinction between the two interview types was that additional probes were part of natural dialogue during the in-person interview, but were listed as discussion suggestions underneath each grand-tour question in the online platform. These probes were used to solicit information about participants' time spent in the U.S., their family's country of origin, their childhood experiences, how many children they have, as well as the roles of marriage, separation, education and religion in their lives. A full list of probes is listed in the interview guides provided in appendices.

The in-person interview guide is shown in appendix A, and the online version is provided in appendix B. All interview questions were delivered in English to participants. This was due to my only being able to type in English, which was necessary for the online format. Prior to this change, my intent was to include an agency worker for in-person interviews, to deliver them in distinct South Asian languages if needed.

Consent. In determining how consent would be obtained, risks involved in participant disclosures about domestic abuse were considered. This meant requesting from Michigan State University's IRB that written consent be waived, in order to avoid paper trails of each survivor's participation. This request was granted and participants were not required to sign any documents.

For the in-person interview, protocol began by reading the consent form out loud in front of the participant. This consent form provided an overview of the study and participant rights. Following this, verbal consent was captured by an audio-recording device prior to beginning interview questions. Consent was obtained from the other seven women by way of their agreement to participate in the online Qualtrics platform. Potential participants could not access the interview questions, or even screening questions, without first encountering and agreeing to a consent form on this website. The consent form provided on Qualtrics differed only in that it was

formatted to fit with online procedures.

It was acknowledged to all participants that they may discontinue the interview at any time during the process, without any consequences or forfeiting of benefits. Participants were free to make this choice at any point during the process. They were also given the right to skip any questions without penalty. These considerations were made to ensure that survivors' responses were completely confidential and voluntary throughout the process. The first consent form is shown in appendix C, and the online version is provided in appendix D. All appendices have been de-identified where necessary to protect confidential parties and private information.

Benefits for participation. All eight respondents were informed about benefits to their participation during recruitment, as well as in their consent forms. Each of them was offered a 20-dollar gift card for their participation. For the in-person interview, this was provided at the time of verbal consent. For the seven online participants, a 20-dollar Amazon gift card was offered. All participants who demonstrated eligibility and affirmed consent were entitled to this incentive, and did not have to return it if they chose to end the interview early, or in the case that they chose to skip any questions. They were also able to waive this incentive if they didn't want it.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using procedures summarized by LaRossa (2005). LaRossa describes three major phases of analysis which are referred to as the triadic coding scheme. These are open, axial, and selective coding in that sequence. All three phases were conducted using the qualitative analysis software NVivo (NVivo for Mac, Version 11.3.2).

Open coding. Open coding is the initial search for categories within raw textual data. This phase of analysis began after data collection completed. This was practiced by going

through each sentence of a participant's transcript, and looking for new conceptual meanings about their experiences. I attempted to develop and name codes directly from the language of the participants where possible. Sentences and phrases were included under single codes based on their similarity in concept. Many of these were theoretically saturated due to dynamic and rich disclosure from different participants. This determination was based upon codes where no new information could alter insight, and where participants either talked about a concept a lot or it was discussed by several of them. I also coded what I considered significant nuances of meaning. This meant a new code for every emerging concept that was distinct from what I had already found in preexisting ones. Statements in each transcript were reviewed several times before moving to the next phases of analysis. I reviewed this first phase with an expert coder to ensure fidelity to grounded theory procedures.

Axial coding. The second phase of analysis was axial coding, where open codes were inductively connected based on a binding paradigm. Constant comparison was used to apply scrutiny in looking back at the raw data, and comparing it to higher order themes that were beginning to form. In this way, I attempted to code and analyze simultaneously, weighing concepts next to each other where they are similar and dissimilar, and in frequency of occurrence. During axial coding, I achieved this by listing open codes on a Microsoft word document (Microsoft Word for Mac, Version 15.19.1) and considering how they might be connected to each other. Less saturated open codes were absolved by more saturated ones, and were not included in order to avoid repeated concepts. This phase of analysis yielded ten total axial codes, with several open codes included within each. In naming each axial code, I examined dimensionality by the open codes within them, and for terms present in-vivo from participant disclosure. Where it was difficult to ascertain the best words or phrases to choose,

summative concepts were used as titles. These steps were checked alongside the guidance of an expert coder during research meetings.

Selective coding. After arriving at ten axial codes, I began visually mapping them next to each other using directional arrows. This was done in order to theorize their relationship with each other. I paid attention to the most direct and apparent relationships between axial codes, and not ones that were only vaguely connected. Using this process, I arrived at two selective codes, or major concentrations of meaning in the data. One of the two selective findings contained three axial codes, and the other housed seven axial codes. These two findings were considered as the main storylines that framed data (LaRossa, 2005). In my analysis, I found these to be the most summative frames of participants' disclosures regarding domestic violence. These two main findings are named and described in the subsequent chapter.

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were undertaken to establish trustworthiness in this research project. One of these was to center rich descriptions from South Asian survivors themselves, in order to respond to service and research gaps that do not include their voices. In this way, findings in the study fundamentally matched a public health rationale.

At the start of data collection, trustworthiness was established by working with a South Asian service agency. This helped to maintain a culturally centered approach to research, where I was mentored by South Asian advocates who validated the importance of the work and gave it guidance. Their role in the study was to be a consistent source of reflection and conversation, as well as to recruit participants in an ethical and culturally appropriate way. Discussions in meetings at this agency were tracked in an audit trail from December 2014 to April 2016 when the format changed to an online survey.

Throughout all phases of research, trustworthiness was reinforced by the inclusion of cultural advisors. Cultural advisors were professionals whose work and background matched the goals of this project. In addition to the South Asian agency advocates who fit this definition, all four members of my dissertation committee are women of color. This committee represented expertize in areas of immigration, critical race dialogue, and feminist narrative; all of which were sensitizing concepts in this study. One of these committee members is a Pakistani woman who has worked in the field of mental health for disenfranchised communities in the United States.

During data analysis, trustworthiness was established by frequent meetings with my doctoral committee chair, who is an expert coder and qualitative researcher. These meetings were used to review and validate my coding decisions, and to reach consensus before moving to subsequent steps. These meetings were conducted before and after each phase of analysis, and following the write-up of findings. I also practiced multiple re-reads of participant transcripts as an additional measure.

Finally, in order to fit with a constructivist approach to grounded theory methods, I wrote personal memos to track my biases and personal reflections throughout the project. This began in December 2015 prior to data collection, and it continued until data analysis was complete in May 2017.

Ethical Note

All procedures in this research were conducted using guidelines set by the IRB at Michigan State University, and with regard to human rights and ethical considerations. In order to reinforce confidentiality and anonymity, written consent was waived for participants in this research project. Confidentiality was established to the greatest extent allowable by law. Research data is password protected on an external drive locked safely in a file cabinet at the

primary investigator's office, only available to this investigator and to the author of this manuscript.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter will present the findings of a grounded theory analysis. Open codes were grouped into ten axial codes codes using NVivo (NVivo for Mac, Version 11.3.2) analysis software. These ten axial codes were then grouped into two selective codes, which were named/themed the Ecology of Disempowerment and the Ecology of Survival. These selective codes are the major findings for understanding participant responses about their experiences with domestic violence and its surrounding ecological context. Domestic violence is operationalized in this study to include any form of IPV or family violence reported by the participants.

The Ecology of Disempowerment consists of three axial codes: Power Dynamics, Types of Abuse, and Impact of Abuse and Control. The Ecology of Survival is a larger selective code, and consists of the seven axial codes: Availability of Support, Coping in Secret, Locating Family, Locating Community, Personal Processing, Social Standing, and Specific Ways of Surviving. Each of the two major findings will be discussed in detail by their respective axial codes.

Confidentiality and protection. It was essential to keep identities of the participants completely concealed, given that they are an at risk population of domestic violence survivors. Moreover, seven of the eight participants did not share their names because they filled out the survey using an encrypted online system. Because of the potential of matching the actual name of a given participant, pseudonyms were not used. While non-South Asian names could have been applied to avoid this, this would not have kept with the cultural fidelity of the research, where names used should honor the community being studied. Participants will be numbered when they are mentioned to distinguish them from each other.

The Ecology of Disempowerment

This selective code is one of the two major findings for this grounded theory research. The Ecology of Disempowerment refers to the ways in which either structural or direct events worked to disempower, alienate, or dehumanize survivors, as well as block their agency and development. Axial codes that make up this major finding are described below.

Power dynamics. Power Dynamics refer to the ways in which structures were imposed upon survivors in this study, including being controlled by others, or when they were made to feel small (in importance), less mobile, or less powerful than others. This had an impact on their ability to navigate their lives before, during, and after their encounters with direct forms violence.

Participant 1 is a married Indian woman in her fifties, who immigrated to the United States two decades ago. She described her experiences of abuse in terms of in-law power dynamics that she felt controlled by. Her description included how her husband has a lack of control over his own actions due to the domineering presence of his mother. She stated: "Like my mother-in-law, she is - was the principal of the college and like, you know like how Indian families are, they just own their sons." She went on to describe that her husband does not act on his own accord, but is pervasively led by his mother. She said: "…my husband, even at this age - he's like fifty-six, fifty-four - even at this age, he needs directions from his mom to move around." Not being able to confront his mother's domineering presence created a framework where he projected control over his wife. This was clarified when she stated: "Yeah, because he cannot say anything to his family. All he needs to do is snub me down, so that is his problem."

This experience of powerlessness due to the role of her mother-in-law fostered an emotional projection from her husband, who in turn would take power over her to compensate, and at times to appease his own mother. She described how he does this:

> …my husband has to make all the phone calls away from home. He never calls them from – He makes one phone call to his parents from home, that is all BS talking about weather and stuff. But they make all stupid plans and - it's kind of so bad that you talk about your wife to your mom. So that's what they do all the time.

She discussed how she doesn't feel that her husband is present with her, and is instead focused on his mother at her expense. In-law control dynamics have caused her to anticipate being gossiped about. In addition to this emotional projection from her husband, she also discussed how the domineering presence of her mother-in-law could occur in a direct way: "So she had such a rivalry from me from the day one that I could not even eat there or do anything because we lived there, and she would just harass me so much."

On a different note, Participant 1 talked about how power dynamics existed between her and her husband due to educational standing. She stated:

> See if my husband was like a higher – highly educated guy, and I was just like a high school person, I would say, oh my husband is such a smart guy, so whatever he says I would listen, so he feels better. But now he feels like we are kind of equal and so he has to put me down somehow, so how would you do that?

At another point in the interview, she clarified: "I think in our case, if you are both equally educated or smart, then you know, then there are more chances of violence. Why? Because you need to put down the other person somehow, whatever it takes (laughs)." Participant 1 expressed how her husband's own experience of powerlessness has an impact on her, where he felt threatened by his mother, and by his wife being just as educated as him. To cope with this, he took power over her through violence. Specific forms of his violence will be detailed in the subsequent section detailing Types of Abuse.

Participant 2 is a U.S. born Pakistani woman in her twenties. She described the violence she encountered in a previous romantic relationship, discussing it in terms of pervasive control patterns. She discussed how her agency was constantly threatened or taken away in an outright manner. She said:

> I wasn't allowed to go to the gym because he should be able to reach me at all times. He has a tracking device on my phone so even if I left it unattended for 20 minutes, he knew I intentionally left it behind. He forced me to break off friendships with people who were my best friends, he had complete access to my Facebook, email and other social accounts just to see if I was using them because of the timestamps, and if he saw that I was using them, he would force me to do humiliating acts like take 1 min cold showers.

This quote demonstrates the role of manipulation and threat that occurs when a person does not have right to their own agency. She was blocked from being able to decide which friends to spend time with, or how she could use her own personal resources. If she violated one of his rules, he would punish her in some way such as the cold showers she mentioned. She discussed how intense the control pattern could get, saying: "If I was hanging out with people he didn't like, he'd force me to get out of the car, even if I was on the highway and take a cab back from there."

Participant 2 also also discussed how power dynamics are gendered, discussing how she grew up:

> Growing up, it was difficult in the sense that being a female, if someone saw you talking to boys or hanging out at later times, your parents would end up finding out. You really couldn't hide much. And any information could potentially tarnish your reputation in the community.

For her, navigating on someone else's terms was a gendered experience, and she was familiar with this powerlessness throughout her life even before she endured it in her relationship. Further illustrating this, she noted what she believes women are made to endure in their powerlessness:

> I think the older generation, both sexes, really do believe it's okay. It's also okay because sometimes the woman HAS to put up with it since the male is the breadwinner and the

> female has nowhere to go. Her entire family would have a tarnished reputation if she got divorced. And the male would get married again in a heart beat but for the female, others would look at her as 'feisty' or hot headed and not worthy to marry because she got hit, so she of course deserved it.

She highlighted the power of gendered attitudes, and social contracts that drive whether or not women can make their own choices, including the choice to combat abuse or leave a relationship when abuse occurs. The power dynamic is made apparent given her commentary about divorced men being able to navigate freely, where women are seen as blemished in character when this happens.

Participant 3 is a U.S. born Indian woman who grew up in the 1990s. She also described power dynamics in terms of gender. She explained:

> There's the element of it being a Taboo topic but there's also the notion that men can do whatever they want & women are property. Although it's 2016 there are plenty of modern men that still act this way, even if they don't admit they think this way.

She described abuse as a gendered expression of power for men. She clarified that it is not just an age old problem, but one that men in the current day also practice, in their mindset and their behavior. She went on to describe the ways in which she was treated like this in a previous relationship, saying:

> When it came down to it he wanted me to be someone I wasn't. He wanted the Indian wife who would finish her education but then not work & would sit with her eyes closed & hands folded until he got home from work.

She discussed the influence that men's attitudes have on the extent to which women experience agency, especially men's attitudes towards women they are in relationships with. Interestingly, she described this man as someone who wanted her to complete her education but not use it in the way she herself decides. Either way he was the one setting the limits for her, and her personal choices on the matter were not prioritized.

Participant 4 is a U.S. born Pakistani woman who shared that her experiences of domestic violence had to do with her mother's abuse towards her. She reinforced attention to the concept of appeasing others as a key feature in control dynamics. She said:

> I was not the ideal daughter for her and she made sure I knew it. The moments where she was pleased with me were when I pretended to the community that all was well, and I was achieving an education and seemed like a good daughter to others -- even if I was miserable.

There are imposed consequences for not looking and being a certain way, due to the social contract her mother pushed upon her. She is similar to Participant 1 in that her experience of powerlessness was a projection of the abuser's own need for control. In Participant 1's case, it was her husband's triangulation with his mother, and for Participant 4 it meant having to meet social demands so that her mother could be thought well of in the community.

For these South Asian women, power dynamics are not simply one to one encounters of violence, but must be understood as larger social, sociopolitical, and transgenerational patterns of control. Participant 4 directly spoke to this when she said:

> …I left that community the first chance I could. And I stayed out of it. I have individual connections to it now, but the overall communities in (Midwestern State mentioned) and (Midwestern State mentioned) are too abusive for my liking so I stay out. My family members love the community and think their opinions matter more than mine. So I don't have those family members in my life either.

Participant 4 feels that her own family does not value her voice relative to the community's expectations. She went on to explain her perception that survivors are blamed for trying to cope with abuse; always made guilty for the personal choices they make in navigating it. She wrote:

> The problem is she is then victim blamed, told she should have spoken up sooner! Well, that's the issue: you speak up right away and you're told to tolerate the bullshit. You speak up later you're told you should have spoken up sooner. You cannot win.

She said again:

> The worst thing about being abused is knowing when you speak up you're told to shut up about it. People then blame you for not speaking up sooner. It's a vicious cycle that I wish Desis would own up to.

Here the concept of appeasing and looking good for others returns, interrupting what the survivor might want for her own wellness. No matter which way they go, they are trivialized and blamed.

Participant 5 is a U.S. born woman whose parents immigrated from Bangladesh three decades ago. She also talked about how social dynamics in the community can work to silence women, giving them messages about the extent of their agency. She said: "Marital rape is considered normal - a duty that a wife has to bear. Discussions about sexual violence in a marriage/relationship is considered something 'unmarried girls shouldn't overhear when aunties talk about it.'" This brings to light the lack of autonomy that is involved with power constructs, where the pretense is that women should not expect to see themselves as mobile agents if and when they endure violence, nor should they hear about what abuse exists, as not to spook them from getting married.

She also said: "…there seems to be a conflict with certain aspects of culture and sometimes aunties say I'm lying when I bring up certain hadith or verses about marriage or gender roles." Hadith refers to traditions and stories that come from the religion of Islam and its prophethood. What is important here is how her own personal relationship with religion is being denied as part of the restriction she faces in the community. Trivializing women's perspectives seems to be an undercurrent here.

Participant 8 is an immigrant Pakistani woman who came to the United States when she was a child. She has now been in the United States for over thirty years. She spoke to multiple aspects of power and control she experienced. Among these, she discussed the hierarchy within her household growing up:

> My mother never had a voice or a say in anything. She was brought to this country against her wishes to stay in Pakistan, closer to her relatives in India. My father obeyed the wishes of his mother who was to come to the US and so all of us moved.

Her explanation notes her mother's lack of agency in the household, and how power dynamics can be transgenerational. She also shared about her experience with extended family, as well as the surrounding sociocultural climate that disempowers women. She noted how she experienced this firsthand:

> Culture played a misogynistic, sexist, patronizing, patriarchal role in my upbringing. Only girl in my age group, all my cousins were male and I had one older brother. Although we only had a difference of 1.5 years, throughout my upbringing there were stricter, different rules for me and basically no rules for the boys in the family.

This reinforces the notion brought up by other participants, that there can be more restrictions on women relative to men in their personal experience of South Asian culture. She continued to describe this differential treatment, where men can retain their mobility no matter what, saying about boys in her family that:

> They openly or secretly rebelled…such as drinking, dating, stealing, pre-marital sexual relations, drugs, etc. All was tolerated or simply ignored or parents were in denial. Overall community also subscribed to this mentality, boys will be boys and as long as they eventually marry a good South Asian girl, all is good. But girls had stricter rules, curfews, demands, etc. unfairly and all through the guise of culture that you're not "American" so don't act like that...

She described how women are quickly labeled and judged as part of their disempowerment, even for something that is not in their control, such as someone else's expectations, or how the community views divorced women. At the same time, men are free to err without expecting the same consequences. Note in her description that even men's reputations are upheld by the "good" South Asian girls they marry, where women's actions are under scrutiny and men are not responsible for their own character. Participant 8 also noted this about power: "The role of power dynamics and systematic domination/control usually or universally by male members is

disturbing and devastating." This reflects the other participants' commentaries in this section, where external forces of control influence women's disempowerment in a deeply impactful way.

Participant 7 is another U.S. born Pakistani woman, who responded to the interview questions with very short answers. Like Participant 8, she also made a general comment with regard to restricted autonomy for women who endure domestic violence. She said: "It happens but in our society you can't just get up and leave."

Types of abuse. Where the previous axial code described overarching control dynamics that disempowered the participants, this section will detail their direct encounters with violence. The participants shared about multiple types of abuse, as well as about the other people who were abused alongside them, such as some of the survivors who were abused by their fathers but also witnessed their mothers being abused by the same man.

For example, Participant 6 is a U.S. born Pakistani woman who is a survivor of her father's violence upon her and her mother. She was not introduced in the last section because her descriptions centered on direct experiences of violence, rather than reflections about surrounding power dynamics. She said: "…grew up with a father who was periodically extremely physically abusive to my mother and me but not to my younger siblings, emotionally abusive to everyone…" Different forms of abuse are described here, with the physical forms being reserved for her and her mother, while emotional forms of abuse were also extended to other family members.

Participant 1 described her experience of abuse in terms of how her husband reacted when she would exhibit personal agency, which he would immediately reject through his violence upon her. She told about a time where he was violent after she asked a question regarding their family finances:

> So when we we're doing accounts, he - my husband was so mad when I asked him because like, it was like five-hundred dollars or something off that amount, so I said what happened to these? So he just didn't want me asking and he pushed and threw me – I was sitting on the chair, and hit there on the wall. So that's what he did, so, and he just tried to twist my arm.

When she asked about a discrepancy in an amount of money within their accounts, her questioning was met with violence.

She described more generally about how her husband responded to her strong will, saying: "…anytime I say something he's like, he doesn't know how to stop me, so sometimes he gets angry, he'll yell, or throw me, or do things like that." She also described what used to happen when she challenged him about something she didn't agree with: "If I say no that's wrong, he doesn't want me saying anything so he'll start yelling or something so - then, what do you do?"

For other participants, their encounters with abuse came in multiple non-physical forms as well as physical. Participant 2 said about the relationship she was in:

> My experience with domestic violence was mental and verbal abuse. I was 21 at the time. I was absolutely taken with a guy I met in medical school. I wanted to be around him all the time, just like puppy love.

She also talked about her initial experiences of abuse with this man, where it was verbal in the beginning: "There was always yelling and demeaning comments throughout the first 8 months. But it got worse after that." It got worse by way of sexual manipulation. She talked about a graphic and recurrent experience she had when her partner got upset, saying:

> Any time I made him upset, he would make me dance naked on skype, make me hook up with other guys on video for his sexual pleasure, force me to vomit on screen to humiliate me because I was suffering with bulimia at the time, I would have to wear a clown outfit he made me buy at party city any time I said something wrong, and apologize to him in that 'because I was a clown'. I would have to insert objects inside me for his sexual pleasure.

This description brings to light how humiliation, sexual abuse, and emotional shaming can be experienced together in the same instance of violence. It also highlights the use of technology to abuse others.

She also talked about the direct acts of shame and humiliation she experienced: “There was one time I had to take 20 ice cold showers in one day because any time I would speak over him or make him upset it would make him so angry.” Like Participant 1, Participant 2 was abused in response to signs of her own agency, such as when there would be crosstalk between her and her partner. Forcing someone into an unwanted act of humiliation can be understood as a direct form of violence that is both physical and mental. The latter is in the sense that it was used as an attempt to muffle the survivor from speaking or acting on her own accord.

This participant also discussed how her vulnerability was used against her, as part of the abuse cycle:

> He knew my every weakness and used them to exploit me. He knew I was bulimic but used to make me strip down and poke my fat and laugh. That's what an abuser does. I thought of him as one of my best friends and told him everything about myself, but he used it all against me.

This description shows how disempowerment can be mechanized through direct acts of physical shaming and manipulation.

Participant 3 also described the different forms abuse that were weaved together in a previous relationship she was in: “I was with a man for 2 years. It got mentally abusive 6 months in & physically abusive about 6-10 months after that.” Like Participant 2, Participant 3 also experienced worsened abuse as time went on in the relationship. She described visceral experiences of how she was abused: “One friend had to come pick me up after I crawled out of a bedroom window with my dog, after he drunkenly tried trapping us inside.” She also said:

"I was living two lives. The one was my reality, full of name calling, threats & him grabbing me at the throat when I fell silent." This highlights how threats, trapping, physical acts of violence, and shaming could be a part of the same abuse cycle.

Participant 4 was unique among the participants in that she was abused by her mother. She commented on how pervasive her experience was, writing the following: "I was beaten, regularly…" and "She would take out all her anger on me, all of her frustrations in life." The ways in which her mother projected her desire to look good to the community was highlighted earlier. The ways in which this occurred through specific acts will be discussed here. Participant 4 said:

> I had no privacy from her where she could help it. She had people stalking me when I was in college so she could keep tabs on me. She forced me to speak to strangers for potential marriage prospects because I had to look good for others so she would look good in the community. When I was finally living away from home, and I found love that was not approved by her, she stalked me outside my home, called the FBI to tell them I was kidnapped and forced me to quit my job and find a new one.

The forms of abuse being discussed here include manipulation, intrusions on privacy, and use of force. If she did not comply with her mother's rigid structure, she was abused in these ways. According to her, these forms of abuse were being used as an attempt to control her and steer her away from independent life choices, similar to the descriptions of other participants in this study.

Participant 8 is a survivor of her father's abuse, as well as a witness to his abuse upon her mother. In this way, she can be compared to Participant 6 who endured similar family dynamics. Participant 8 clarified the types of abuse she endured versus the types she witnessed, saying: "I have been a witness to the emotional/psychological abuse my mother suffered by my dad. And I have also been a victim to that abuse through daughter-dad relationship." She also said: "I suffered physical, emotional, psychological abuse." This highlights the ways in which a family member can commit abuse upon different individuals in distinct ways. While her mom was never

hit in a physical way, she spoke to how her mom was treated emotionally. When it came to her own survival, her father exhibited the same forms she saw used upon her mother, but would physically hurt her as well. In addition, she said: "Although my mom was never hit, I was physically hit by my dad, grandma and sister."

The involvement of multiple family members is addressed here. Some of the women in this study were witness to another person being abused alongside them. In other words, there can be multiple survivors in the same abuse cycle. There might also be multiple abusers, or multiple parties that influence one's abuse. The role of transgenerational emotional projection, or community emotional projection was discussed earlier in this chapter (i.e. Participant 1), but for Participant 8 this collusion happened in a direct way where more than one family member used physical violence to hurt her.

Participant 5 did not speak directly about her own experiences of violence, but made a general comment about the different forms of abuse survivors encounter: "Other forms of abuse are also just normal or, at worst, unfortunate - financial, emotional, etc. abuse aren't types that I learned about until I was in college."

Impact of abuse and control. A third phase of disempowerment described by the participants is the extent to which the abuse impacted them personally. This impact of abuse and control includes the ways in which they experienced deleterious effects on their health, family relationships, sense of support, social life, psychology, and overall wellness.

Participant 1 reflected on the strain she experienced on her family relationships that followed her distant and abusive experience with her husband:

> And then just to be a nice guy, he will just do things for them which are not in bounds, but still hide and do it. So now we are to the point that my in-laws don't talk to me or my kids. So, and they want him, and he hides and helps the sister-in-law, helps their kids, and all the garbage they do. And like when they go to India, I'm not allowed in their house,

> and so that kind of stuff. So now I just learn - they is - guys are not changing. It's high time for me, I need to take care of my sanity - let them do what they have to do.

This quote demonstrates how power dynamics have worked to create fixed boundaries where Participant 1 is not able to navigate her in-law relationships effectively. It also demonstrates the extent to which she has become used to it, not expecting it to change because of the fixed collusion between her husband and his side of the family. She spoke to the direct lack of trust with her husband that came from this experience: "Basically, I cannot trust my husband in this aspect." She stated this shortly after mentioning the dynamic where her husband gossips about her to his mom. She had lost trust with him due to this.

Two other major effects she spoke to were that she felt left behind, and that she became upset. She stated:

> So they don't get me involved, they don't tell me anything, and so it's like a secret. So then I was kind of, last year, so upset he went to India by himself and got him married and do all kinds of things.

The abuse cycle has created a type of abandonment and frustration experienced by the participant. She continued to describe how these extended family dynamics impacted her and her children emotionally, where they felt an injustice: "So then I just like feel, even my kids feel so hurt, like what is wrong with this. It's kind of – it's not fair."

For Participant 2, her experiences of enduring sexual manipulation and shaming impacted her in several damaging ways. She said:

> Despite me being in 3rd year medical school, I couldn't get out of it. I contemplated suicide twice and overdosed on caffeine pills once. I really didn't have a support system at all. I had to get out of it on my own.

The impact on her mental well being is illustrated here, as the thoughts of ending her life are juxtaposed next to the feeling of being stuck, with no sense of support from others. She reflected on the extent of this psychological impact: "Those were the worst two years of my life. I'm on

antidepressants now, but I still get horrible, HORRIBLE flashbacks thinking he's watching me, or he's going to come after me." While she notes using medicine to combat the trauma she experienced, she is still haunted by what was done to her. This highlights what abuse can do to a persons psyche well after it has ended. She spoke to this when she said:

> I was in (East Coast city mentioned) three months after I completely broke it off, (I deleted everything, and it took so much out of me to do that, but I knew it was for my own good.) and I suffered a huge panic attack. I was on the floor, hyperventilating, sobbing, becoming paranoid that he was in my neighborhood, he knew where I was and he was going to kill me. There are still so many things, songs, places, times of day where I visibly cringe and have a physical reaction...like if someone plays a song that I had to dance to, it's an automatic response to say 'no stop stop the song please' otherwise I get a flood of all these memories, these horrible times where I was at my worst.

At another point in this chapter, the survival mechanisms and resilience of these participants will be reviewed. However, it is important to note here that for Participant 2, wellness does not exist in a binary where relief is achieved at once or not at all. Instead, she still has to grapple with the triggering nature of songs she used to dance to, and the abusive meaning that has been ascribed to them now. Given the sexual and punitive nature of the abuse she experienced, she also said: "And even a year later, I get intense flashbacks about a lot of things. I couldn't touch the clown outfit I had, I had to make my sister throw it out for me." Like the triggering songs, the outfit she was made to wear also carries with it a reminder of how she was treated. She also spoke to the concept of this violence being a collection of selfish acts by the abuser, where the detrimental impact of those acts created lasting fear. She provided a summary of this experience:

> But the extent of it, the mental scars from being put down, from performing horrible sexual acts, just...everything for his pleasure, to make HIM feel better about HIMSELF, they're still there. I don't think I'll ever get over it. And it scares me.

For Participant 3, abuse created deterrence from reaching out to her support system for help. This was especially the case because the previous notion her family held was that she was

in a good relationship. She said: “I didn't have the courage to tell my mom that this guy that thought was perfect had left me in such shambles. I knew once I did there wasn't any going back to him.” In addition to hesitancy in sharing about the abuse with family, she also mentioned that she was left in “shambles”, as well as worried about what disclosure would do to the status of her relationship. This underscores attention to the affection some survivors might feel for their partners, which does not detract from their want and right for safety. Survivors may be left to reconcile both realities in such cases.

She also discussed the impact of abuse on her sense of support and personal confidence: “By the end of the relationship I was 25 years old & my lowest; heart broken, friendless (as I had been isolated from all of them), alone & without any self confidence.” She also made mention of her romantic vulnerability, and the lasting emotional tenor of her connection to this ex-partner: “…been almost a year now & I’m still getting monthly emails, messages & friend requests from him. Although I'm away, I'm still weak enough where I will reply. I fight him off again & again…sometimes cave.” The use of technology to reinforce abuse, or control dynamics is made apparent when an ex-partner is pervasive in their contact through email and social media. This highlights the potential for that contact to create vulnerability once over for a survivor, even after the relationship has ended. For her, this experience carried a mixture of affection, fear, vulnerability, heartbreak and terror. She reflected upon this when she said:

> When someone has taken over you in that way you can't see, you can't think. The extreme high & extreme lows. The passion. You mistake it all for love. This is something I am still struggling with. I don't know if I'll ever love anyone they way I loved him. So stupidly, blindly & unconditionally. It's comforting & terrifying.

Participant 4 discussed how she was affected by expectations that she should not disclose about the abuse her mother enacted on her. She said: “My mother and her sisters, including my grandpa, all told me to sacrifice my happiness and well-being for my mother's well-being. I was

suicidal and depressed because of the way I was treated." The relationship between being told to hide one's pain, and a negative influence on one's mental health is observed here.

There were also external consequences for the abuse that Participant 4 endured: "My old job was not comfortable keeping me because of the risk my mother showed in stalking and abusing me. It was terrifying." Not only did the abuse create a situation where she was frightened by her mother's actions, but it caused her to be relieved of her job. This might be understood as an act of violence in itself (i.e. forced removal from one's job on the part of the abuser), as well as a consequence/impact of abusive control dynamics (i.e. abuse creates a loss of personal resources). Like the other participants, she also experienced effects in the aftermath: "It was a traumatic experience and I'm still in therapy over it. I dealt with PTSD from the abuse for many years."

Participant 6 spoke to the effects of constantly having to defend herself and her mother, and what this type of pattern can do to a survivor in their subsequent relationships. She said:

> I stopped being afraid of my father's violent temper at a very young age and often would provoke him as a way to protect my mother from being hit. This had a very bad effect on me because it made me very confrontational (emotionally) in all my relationships.

In her case, the coping method of confronting others was a tool she used to challenge her father's abuse. However, the staying power of this coping mechanism had an unintended influence over her future relationships. She continued by saying:

> I have a healthy marriage (no dv) and have been married for 15 years but it took me a long time to work through trust and to work through how to manage conflict due to the extremely maladaptive style I had of handling conflict with my abusive father.

The dysfunction produced in having to cope this way is described here, as well as the ability for this effect to linger for a long time before it is healed.

Participant 8's experience of abuse had created strain on her relationship with her South Asian culture. She noted: "…I grew to hate my culture (represented by him)." She had associated her father's actions as a manifestation of culture instead of being grounded in religious values. Recall that for other participants this included severing ties with family or extended family networks, but for Participant 8 it meant severing ties with what she perceived was cultural. Similar to Participant 6, she also made mention about the power of abuse over future relationships. She said:

> I also question and wonder sometimes if I suffered sexual abuse because I have an abnormal notions of intimacy and do not have any healthy male relationships. It is possible that I've suppressed it in my memory because it is too traumatic. I never got married and never had sexual relations and am fearful of the thought of it.

While she was not sure about whether or not this abuse occurred, she examined the possibility of repressing sexual violence. It could be that these effects are plausible outcomes for the abuse that she is aware of, or it may be that she has forgotten some forms of abuse she endured. Either way, her reflection indicates the possibility for cycles of violence to create confusion for survivors, as well as obstacles for future relationships.

She provided further reflection, commenting on how enduring abuse can creating longstanding barriers to wellness and relief:

> The wounds of abuse, no matter what form they take, whether they are directed to you or you are witness to an immediate family member's abuse are very slow to heal if every heal completely. In my case, both directed at me and directed at my mom. It's been a double blow to experience it first hand, but also to witness it towards her.

The direct impact of witnessing abuse combined with the direct impact of experiencing abuse, and this created even more adversity for her.

Summary of ecology of disempowerment. One of the two major findings in this study exposed ways in which participants experienced disempowerment. Their descriptions included a

global experience of disempowerment that includes power and control dynamics that slighted them at different points in their life. In addition, direct encounters of abuse were discussed, with some cases of witnessing violence upon another person. Finally, the detrimental impact of power dynamics and direct violence were underscored, including strain upon social, familial, and intimate relationships, as well as negative implications for mental and emotional well-being.

The Ecology of Survival

The Ecology of Survival is the second major finding for this grounded theory study. It refers to ways in which participants made sense of the support systems available to them, as well as how they chose to utilize these. It also includes the ways they dealt with adverse conditions present in their lives, personally sought out safety, and produced effective methods of coping that worked towards greater relief and wellness. Where the previous selective code referred to controlling arrangements and direct instances of abuse that were imposed on the survivors without their choosing, this Ecology of Survival refers to their own choices, sensibilities, and actions, even when resources available were limited or unfavorable. Participants also included commentary on how things should be handled to help other survivors like themselves. The axial codes that this ecology consists of will be detailed below.

Availability of support. Availability of Support refers to discussion by the participants regarding whether or not they felt helped when combatting abusive experiences, as well as if support was available to them throughout their lives. This can include expectations of supportive environments that preexisted their encounters with abuse, or assistance they were aware of while going through it or in its aftermath. Descriptions about the extent to which friends, family members, social services and counselors, cultural institutions, law enforcement, and community members were available will be detailed here.

Participant 1 spoke to the value of having understanding friends when she said:

> …in 2014, I was really getting too stressed, and then I did go and talk to a couple of people, like my neighbors or some people I counted. Some of my friends, like a couple of them, are religious and very nice people, so they understand.

She also commented about how this type of support is difficult to access, especially when friends take sides:

> …like some friends are good, but you know sometimes, like in - my husband, basically is a good guy. So what he does is- because he has to hide everything, sometimes he will go out of the way and do things for them. Say for example, our neighbors. He will go out of the way, drive them to the airport, midnight – they can call, do all kinds of undue favors just to win them.

She continued by saying: "So if you talk to them – everybody in this world is selfish. So, they want him to take care of them, so then they just think, oh maybe I'm not good, or I'm not right." Depending on the nature of the friendships, and whether or not they had a good view of her husband, she had limits to which friends were a resource to her.

She had similar reflections about how social services can be good or bad, noting an experience with a local agency:

> Like (service agency mentioned) services in 2014, when I was really stressed, I did call and they were very good. Because there was a counselor, she used to come and talk to me, she met with me a few times, she also helped me if I needed advice, and set up, like, my - appointments with a couple of people, just to help me figure out what I wanted to do.

While she felt that these services helped her get organized about what she could do, she also said: "We thought of going for counseling and someone at (service agency mentioned) service suggested us to go for counseling. We went for marriage counseling, and that counselor was hopeless." She clarified that the problem with counselor was that they did not address the extended family dynamics that were putting a strain on her marriage; a central part of the abuse

cycle she experienced. She referred to these as the "big bomb" the counselor was unwilling to help her through:

> As a counselor, I think it is very very difficult to be a counselor, and be fair and still not interfere. She didn't know how to. And our problem is so complex, when we talked about it, she would talk about little little things, and not touch the big bomb.

She also said: "I just think, like, they need to do a better job of assigning, or, the counselors, referring."

Participant 2 was also unsure about which people would be supportive, and which would not. She said: "After 6 months when I broke it off, that's when I came clean to my sisters. And they were shocked. They wished that I told them sooner. But I doubt they would have provided me with social services." It seems she had a hard time coming to her sisters right away, not sure about how they would have helped, and expecting that they wouldn't have handled it appropriately. She clarified her hesitation to seek help:

> But I know for a fact that my sisters would not have referred me to a domestic violence kind of service. I don't think they saw it that way. I really think they just saw it as a bad relationship.

Her expectation was that her sisters would see it different from relationship violence, and that they would not help her in an adequate way.

Participant 3 wrote about the support she got from her own family, and its sharp contrast to the lack of it she experienced from her ex-partner's parents after the abuse was disclosed:

> 2 years later I had finally broken, I cut him loose & told my mom everything. Our families are no longer friends. There was a huge fight between them. When my mom confronted them about him being physically abusive his mother responded with "I'm sure it was for a good reason."

She also touched on the mixed experience she had with friend support. This was mixed due to friends' avoidance of her boyfriend, but also her own avoidances. She said: "A few people knew what was happening. I would call them crying after a night of nasty fighting." While she could

use some friends as a resource in this way, she also said: “They stopped acknowledging him & asking about him. At first I stopped bringing him around, then I stopped seeing my friends.”

Participant 4 spoke about abusive environments she had encountered throughout her life. This had deterred her from reaching for support from them. For example, she said:

> I grew up having to attend that mosque and hearing hatred taught in the classrooms. I was forced to attend. I was not a willing participant in religious activity. I taught myself Islam at home because what I was taught in the classroom was hate-filled. I wanted to know what the sources say, not what some hack-teacher-volunteer from Pakistan has to say about Jews, non-Muslims, and "apostates" of Islam.

While this is not a reflection specifically addressing support for the violence she encountered, she saw these “hate-filled” experiences as part of larger power dynamics in her community, where one’s agency is restricted and where she should not expect support and openness. She experienced this again when it did come to her abuse, while trying to utilize therapy. She felt the process was interrupted by her mother: “When I sought help from therapists, I was asked what was spoken about in therapy by my mother. I had no privacy from her where she could help it.” In this way, the usage of therapy as a supportive tool was undermined by her mother’s controlling behavior.

She also clarified that she didn’t expect much access to support for anyone else who had similar experiences: “I know many more women who are in my shoes and were abused by their families and haven't received support -- this IS domestic violence and it doesn't have to be done by "husbands".” In the larger sense, she described that support is hard to come by in any case, and in a more specific sense she discussed how family (i.e. parental) violence is a topic that goes unaddressed, leaving survivors of it to cope on their own.

Participant 6 discussed her trouble in utilizing law enforcement for support against violence: “The very few times police were called it only made matters worse and no charges

were made." She also had mixed experiences about the availability of support in the social circle that surrounded her family. She said:

> Many times uncles (friends of my father) would admonish my father when they thought he had taken things too far (even if they had hit their wives or kids in the past but not to the extent he had). This had little effect. They also provided shelter and mediated conflicts. This was extremely helpful.

On the one hand, there is a certain hypocrisy described here where it was possible for abusive "uncles" to attempt interrupting another man's violence upon his family, and this did not have much weight over the situation. On the other hand, when they went beyond mere verbal dissenting of her father's actions, and observable resources were given (i.e. shelter and conflict mediation), this participant felt it was useful.

Participant 8 suffered from her father's dual violence upon her and her mother. She spoke to the lack of surrounding support that kept her mother from obtaining a resolution:

> I wished and asked repeatedly for my mother to divorce my dad, but so many factors played into keeping the status quo. Lack of support from her other children, no financial independence, the stigma of the local community and the shame and embarrassment she did not want to bring to her family in India.

Many of these quotes resemble the dynamics of disempowerment discussed earlier in this chapter. However, these quotes mainly signify how survivors made sense of what was available to them in navigating abuse. The search for proper support across these participants is apparent, where these survivors were left to utilize the little help they could get. Participant descriptions indicate that there are some clear resources that stand out amongst these.

Coping in secret. This axial code refers to the ways in which participants kept their experiences with violence concealed, or when they had to cope with it in their own private way. Participants provided reflections on what happens that leads to this secrecy, including their thoughts on how people end up coping in silence given a lack of support that is pervasive. While

this might be tagged as a type of isolation that can stem from abuse and power, in this section it is listed in terms of participants' resilience and endurance to survive when other resources were hard to come by. Their stories suggest that there are community pretenses that make it difficult for survivors to reach out to potential support in an open way, especially if they are met with shaming and blame when they try. Their reliance on themselves is provided here as part of their survival story.

Earlier in this chapter, Participant 1's ambivalent sense of support from friends was highlighted, where receiving help depended on whether she thought they were triangulated with her husband. In experiencing certain friends as untrustworthy, she decided that she ultimately had to rely on herself. She said: "…it's like some people take advantage. So I just decided, I suffer, I know what is right or wrong, I'm not even going to get them involved."

Participant 2 wanted adequate support for the violence she endured, but wanted to make sure to refrain from seeking help from sources that would trivialize her want to stay in the relationship. She said:

> My parents weren't involved at all. It was too humiliating for me to discuss it. I didn't even tell my sisters 90 percent of the things because I thought they'd just want me to break up with him and I couldn't do it at the time.

She did not trust this source at the time, and didn't want that type of reaching out to undermine her want to stay with her partner. She clarified another reason why her parents were not a resource she wanted: "…I wouldn't tell my parents because it would seem like it's my fault to them." To keep from experiencing more shame, she decided to conceal her experiences from them.

Participant 6 discussed how her family protected its image by keeping the violence within it a secret: "…appears normal to everyone outside of our family so we kept it a secret." She also

said: “The community never knew what my family suffered as it was a secret, dv usually is, and no one would suspect it.” Here, she spoke to the likelihood of survivors keeping their experiences with abuse a private matter away from others in their community. Participant 7 also spoke to this reality when she said: “It's something that happens within the walls of your home and never talk about.”

Participant 8 similarly offered reflection about the ways in which survivors are left to cope on their own, away from the knowledge of others: “Domestic violence is a silent killer/destroyer in our communities.” She also said: “There are invisible victims, survivors who are suffering in silence and continue to suffer in silence.” Of course, survivors should not have to suffer in silence. However, given participant reflections, in the unfortunate circumstance that they cope in private, it may be viewed as a testament to their personal endurance and resilience.

Locating family. This section will highlight participants’ sense of family throughout their entire lives, to the extent that they felt safe or unsafe around them in navigating challenges that came up, including domestic violence. Of course, in cases of family abuse, or when the abuser was an immediate family member, the lack of safety to reach out to these parties is apparent. In other cases, some participants had support from family members who did stand up to help them in opposing an abuser’s actions.

In some instances, the experience of relationship violence stood in sharp contrast to the survivor’s own upbringing. Participant 1 described her own nuclear family as always supportive in her life decisions, including marital prospects and educational opportunities. She said: “So they used to have arranged marriages, but my parents, they said okay this is one guy, this proposal, you can see, you talk to him - if you agree, you do it, if you don’t, you don’t have to.”

She also said: “And then my parents, like we never had such tight schedules or what to wear, what to do. We were like, go, you are educated, you can go and make your own choices.”

In continuing her reflections about her family of origin, and how her parents’ openness led her to educational autonomy and opportunity, she said:

> For me it wasn’t hard because we were always raised in a very open society, and my dad was - I lived in a place which was more like (local city mentioned), really because, if you know, I don’t know, there are like Universities in India which are more like this (inaudible), so I was raised there. So, and, a lot of people like Americans would visit there too. So I was raised in a University campus, very open-educated.

However, the rigid dynamics of her marriage, and the perception of her in-laws stood in contrast to this. She said about her mother-in-law: “So mom kind of raised the two sons. So she had such a emotional connection to the sons that when he got married, the typical problem…like the moms, they cannot see their son gone.” She also said: “Like my husband was not supposed to spend time with me, talk to me - she would keep him so busy and away from me, and like, she wanted me to just be like a slave serving her.”

Where Participant 1 experienced openness and support from her own parents, she now felt a lack of freedom in the presence of her mother-in-law. One of the key features of this is that she could not access her own husband as she pleased, because her mother-in-law would keep him away. The triangulation of closeness for their mother-son relationship relative to the participants’ marital distance is highlighted here. She said about how bad it could get: “So, then I had my daughter, I was carrying her, and so he was not even allowed to talk to me.” She also discussed how this was projected in the larger experience of her extended family: “So they all – the mom and the younger brother would gang up, like - just like Indian movies. (laughs).”

This reinforces themes in the previous section about coping in secret, where this participant felt she had to navigate her experience on her own, due to the distance she felt from

her husband, and the punitive treatment she got from her in-laws. It seems in her reflections that the one family member that could have mended this dynamic would be her husband himself, by way of his stopping abusive actions, and by way of his spending more time with her. She spoke to the difference between her ability to access his support, and the time he spent being available to others, such as his brother's wife:

> His mom treats like he has two wives, and he has like, instead of the two kids, he had four. Two of his, and then you have to take care of his wife. So, it's like maybe he's – it's not in a dirty sense, but that's not how it should be. Like your – that's your sister-in-law, she should be talking to me, not you.

For Participant 2, there was a big difference between her upbringing and her abuse experience. She said:

> Things growing up were amazing, I had a wonderful childhood, with my sisters being my best friends and my parents being incredibly loving individuals. My parents provided us with everything Alhumdulillah. I never really had any horrible, traumatic experiences up until my 20's.

Even as she spoke to this immense support, she also mentioned feeling that there were sociocultural differences between her and her parents that mattered: "My parents, of course growing up in Pakistan had a very different environment than I did. I feel like they were more sheltered than I was." She also said:

> I had to break various molds my parents were used to, like hanging out with boys, talking to them on the phone etc., even when it was just platonic. It took some time but eventually my parents understood that this is how western society is and they knew they could trust me.

While she had a general sense of support and trust from her family members, she felt that some of their views made it difficult for her to discuss domestic violence with them. She clarified this challenge when she said:

> I recently spoke to my mother about my cousin's wife who tends to be a little hot headed sometimes. I asked her: what if your nephew ends up slapping her? My mom said well she probably deserved it. Then I asked her what if your daughter (my older sister is

> married) was yelling at her husband and he slapped her? Both my parents became quiet and pondered the thought. Then they said, well we would bring her home. But within a few minutes, it was justified to them that her husband slapping her would be okay. This created a huge problem in my mind.

She was not able to locate them as an adequate support system on the topic of domestic violence and this may have reinforced her choice to cope in secret throughout her abusive relationship.

Participant 3 also described coming from an open, supportive, and loving home. She noted that she felt support at many levels:

> My mom comes from a creative, open & love filled home. My dad had more strict parents but a lot of freedom in making his own decisions. As a result, my family is a very open minded unit & they have always been supportive of my need to explore my own lifestyle. When I wanted to learn music they allowed it, when I wanted to pursue a creative career they encouraged it & went I felt the need to drop out of college they supported it. I have the most incredible parents.

She also spoke to challenges they endured, and how this shifted dynamics in the family:

> But, growing up my brother got sick with Cancer. The focus then shifted from everything else to his recovery. I was moved around a few years during his treatment & my schooling took a back seat. My brother eventually went into remission & is now a healthy 23-year old (his birthday is today!). He has always been the baby of the family & my parents tend to fret over him a little more because of those things. This also gave me freedom to pretty much do whatever I wanted. My brother eventually graduated with two degrees from a great university. I eventually dropped out of a great university. They have like the idea of me finishing my education but have understood what's best for me & stood by it.

Even through the shifting focus, she was able to acquire freedom and support for her choices. As described earlier, Participant 3 was able to use this sense of support later on to open up to her mother about the abuse she had experienced. Her mother advocated for her, even when this severed ties with the abuser's parents, and even when those people attempted to justify the abuse.

This dynamic was quite different for Participant 4, who was abused by her own mother. She expressed an overall negative view of her family of origin. She said: "They are racist and speak openly about how they think Hindus, Christians, Jews and Atheists etc. are all morally

inferior to them." She saw her family members as judgmental, presenting with a superiority complex. This colored her relationship with them, and she did not feel they were supportive when she was suffering from her mother's abuse upon her. Reflecting this, she said about them: "In my family, Narcissistic Personality Disorder runs rampant. I tried to address this directly with them but as is well known about Narcissists, they denied and claimed I was the crazy one."

Contrastingly, Participant 5 was able to access her mother's guidance for support, which may have influenced some of the tools she would herself use to prevent entering abusive relationships. She said: "There was a saying my mom said when I growing up: 'You can divorce a man for 3 things: drinking, cheating, and hitting (and everything else is fair game).'" While there is a sense of general support here, there also an implication that men could do anything outside of that. However, she noted how she would utilize her mother's validation as a direct resource in placing boundaries with specific men who made her feel uneasy: "However, when I started talked to guys when I was 21, I would keep talking to them until my mom said I could stop even if they made me uncomfortable."

A sense of support was also echoed in what she was taught about "family" and how it was defined for her growing up. She noted how her mother helped her gain an open and connected sense of family:

> My mom often mentioned that because we don't have any extended family here, the aunties and uncles who aren't related to us became our family. Still, my mom taught us about all of our family members back in Bangladesh and we visited every 4 years while growing up.

She learned about other community members as "family", and connecting to her biological family tree was also emphasized.

Participant 6 also spoke to her mother's attitude being an important resource in combatting abuse. She discussed how this helped her challenge her father's abuse:

> Unlike most abuse victims, my mother never internalized the abuse, always told us the problem was with him and that he was crazy unlike the men in her family who would never hit a woman. She grew up in a very functional family and so she was a source of emotional stability for us kids and that's probably why the family was so functional despite my father's abuse.

Her mother's reflections about an abusers own accountability prevented internalization. In addition, her mother's presence preserved some wellness amidst the chaos of abuse exhibited by her father.

Participant 8 experienced a lack of support in her family because her father was abusive and because she saw other family members as domineering. She also spoke to the differences she experienced between her two parents. She said:

> I saw my mother as a devout, spiritual, practicing person who lived her religion peacefully. But since my father was not practicing and not even aware of basic religious tenets, his abuse to both me and my mother was a clear indication to me that he was not grounded in religion.

She had framed her father's lack of grounded morality as distinct from her sense of religion, where she saw it as a resource of solace within her mother's practices.

She also saw differences in their power and permission to guide children in the household: "My mom worked full time throughout my childhood/teens/adult life so she never parented much at home and was not allowed to either. Both father and paternal grandmother dominated that role." Rigid patterns were present in her interactions with siblings as well. She noted how they were not adequate in supporting her when she was suffering: "My siblings were in denial or turned a blind eye or lost in their own world while growing up. As the youngest child, I suffered the same way my mom did."

For her, family was not a good sense of support; either indifferent or ignorant to her and her mother's suffering, or they were part of the domination (i.e. her father's violence, her

grandmother and sister hitting her). She carries a negative view of her father still, even though he has made some changes. She said about him:

> Later in life he became more "practicing", actually praying during the day and making dua, extra supplication, but that's about it. His behavior continued to be abusive and not reflective of any growth or change as a positive aspect of being more religious, thus I don't view him as a true Muslim, just in name. Because if he actually feared God and followed his faith and Sunnah, he would be a much better person.

Although she recognizes his increased connection to religious rituals, she cannot conceptualize her father in a positive way, especially when his abusive behaviors have persisted. Sunnah refers to the practices and teaching of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam, with emphasis on high morale character; the type she thought was missing in her father's behaviors.

Locating community. Participants shared thoughts about how they perceived the local communities they grew up in, as well as their larger sense of the South Asian community. These reflections also included experiences of living in their respective religious communities. The extent to which participants felt these communal contexts were supportive in their lives is provided in this section. Specific quotes here reflect community attitudes, perspectives and expectations placed on these women, and what participants thought about their community's view of survivors.

Participants in this study largely saw the South Asian community as unsupportive for survivors like themselves. Many of them reflected on how they saw their communities as avoidant on the subject. Participant 3 said: "Domestic violence isn't really addressed in our community." Similarly, Participant 2 said: "Domestic violence is something that doesn't exist in the South Asian community." Participant 2 provided further reflection, discussing the judgmental attitudes she encountered about survivors. Specifically, she spoke about how violence against women is justified by community members:

> The South Asian community thinks it's okay for a man to hit a woman because she is out of bounds. They constantly refer to the hadith that the Prophet said you can 'hit your wife' but they take it out of context. When I asked them if it was okay for the girls to hit their husbands, they got upset and said, no no you should never do that. That causes divorce.

She also clarified:

> But if a woman is getting hit, that is NOT grounds for a divorce. She should understand why she got hit. This doesn't make any sense to a functioning human being. So it's very troublesome that a LOT of South Asian males refer to religion to justify hitting their wives.

This reflects power dynamics addressed earlier in this chapter, but it is provided here in terms of the participant's personal awareness of the community not being a validating source for survivors. The implication in this quote is that if a woman is not acting in accordance to what is expected of her in the community, then its members perceive hitting her as justified. This quote also reflected the misuse of religious notions to justify abuse against women, as well as the different social contracts set up for women relative to men. In this, people might justify the misbehaviors of men but castigate women regularly.

Participant 4 felt that the community she grew up in was judgmental and rigid. She discussed about her experience: "If you didn't agree with everything being said or keep quiet, you were chastised. That is my experience with Islam, the Muslim community in (various states, including two Midwestern states mentioned here)." She discussed here how religious institutions could be used as a device in the community to deny the voices of others. She reflected further on this perception, saying: "Religious leaders and community members alike (including family) tell you to keep trying to work things out with abusers because there is too much shame attached to a "failed" marriage or relationship." The connection between power dynamics and participants' sense of community is underscored here. It is difficult to see cultural or religious spaces as useful during challenging times if survivors experience shaming and guilt from that same source.

She also spoke about how she perceives domestic violence is handled in her cultural community:

> It is addressed by a group of "elders" who deliberate on whether the woman has properly forgiven her family or husband, gone to religious authorities first, and only after she has put up with this garbage for years is she ever listened to or taken seriously.

She perceived that instances of survivor responsibility were prioritized over survivor support. Her overall sense of the community was similar to the other participants, in that she viewed them as avoidant of major issues: “I think the problem is that the Desi community does not want to face its own demons.”

Participant 5 shared a different experience of community compared to the others. In the last section it was listed that her sense of family included family-friend networks that were available and supportive. Emphasizing this, she wrote: “We attended community dawats every weekend, and spent time during weekdays with other kids our age too from the families that were closest to us here in the US.” Not only was there a closeness, but a frequency in interaction with others from the community at “dawats”, or social gatherings. For her, locating family and community were supportive experiences that were interwoven with each other in this way.

However, even as Participant 5 stands apart, she still did not trust the larger community to handle domestic violence appropriately. Almost echoing the sentiments of other participants, she said:

> The worst of DV is seen as bad, but even then, men and women justify it. For example, there was a couple who was considering divorce and it came out that he had beat her multiple times. It also came out that she had a drinking problem. And the story became that "he shouldn't beat her... but really, she shouldn't be drinking."

She shared her expectation that survivors are often denied support when the narrative about their abuse is transformed into an interrogation of women’s problem behaviors instead of an abuser’s violence.

Participant 6's sense of community support was described very similarly to the others, where she expected people to justify it: "Domestic violence is treated as an accepted but unfortunate reality." Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that her experience with violence was kept in secret from the community. However, she had this to say about family friends who did know about it, and ended up helping: "I don't think a state service or other service could have provided the help that family friends did provide in those emergency scenarios." She has an overall view of the community that reflects avoidance and justification of violence against women. However, she had personal experiences of support from some community members that were beneficial. She was similar to Participant 5 in this way.

Participant 8's view of her community is that they are mostly concerned about how they look to the outside world, and this creates an excuse to go on ignoring domestic violence. She said: "I think this problem is beyond ignored, it is hidden, it is defaced, it is denied and it is guarded to protect the image our communities was to preserve." In her own encounters with violence, this meant that she could not rely on community resources such as the mosque or others: "There was no help from the community, nor the mosque. I confided in my American friends for support and that was helpful growing up to have any support." Her help seeking from outside the community is noted next to the lack of resourcefulness she felt in her personal experience with the South Asian community and local religious spaces.

Personal processing. This section will list personal reflections about the participants' sense of self throughout their lives, including their self-identification relative to the influences of religion, culture, and education. They also provided personal reflections about the ways in which they found reward in their own resilience when facing violence, which flowed naturally from their descriptions of personal awareness. In this, they discussed ways in which they were able to

make sense of their experiences with disempowerment and violence, in order to manage and move forward.

For Participant 1, this meant finding a resource in her own righteous living. She stated about her focus: "…I just think I have to do the right things, then I believe in Karma, I believe – I'm religious, so I just think okay, they will have their turn." Here, she provided insight into her belief in spiritual justice about people who do wrong by others. In addition, she provided reflection that her priority is on doing "the right things". She also discussed a framework about how she sees her overall experience:

> My idea is nobody gets everything in life, so I just think okay, this life is almost - like I've been married to him thirty years - so that's what I got. It's over. Next birth we'll see what happens. If we have a rebirth or not, who knows? (laughs).

The extent to which this reflection is a positive reframe versus negative resignation is difficult to suggest. What can be said is that her personal processing included a sense that change required her husband to take accountability for his actions. She said:

> So, yeah, my husband just says, okay, so, oh I don't want to change anything, I said okay so you don't believe in God? you don't want to change anything? you still want things to be better? so maybe some miracle has to happen (laughs).

Participant 2 talked about her relationship with religion and living in the west, and how she was able to use this to develop positive self-concept. She said:

> I believe that being a moderate Muslim along with the education I received in the states really helped me form my own identity and the personality I currently have. It showed me a side of religion, that it's not meant to be scary, it's not that you have to fear God. God loves you and wants the best for you.

She discussed how religion and education worked to help her form a personal identity that includes a disposition towards love and personal wellness. She also said:

> …growing up in a western society it also helped me come to terms with things like homosexuality, premarital sex, and even simply talking to the opposite sex. I think it helped create a balance in my mind for all these things.

She explained that the sociocultural climate of western society helped her find a sense of mental balance to manage her life.

Participant 3 also discussed the ways in which she had to reconcile her identity. She reflected upon her cultural identity that was in sharp contrast to the kids she went to school with while growing up:

> I grew up in a predominately white town. There were a few Hispanic kids in the mix however, my brother & I were the only Indian kids in our district in the 90's. When I was in High School my family relocated to the east side of (Midwest State mentioned) & I we were placed in a richer area with bratty kids &, by comparison, far more people of color. Oddly, none of the Indian kids in my school talked to one another. I was so removed from that identity they may as well have been German, I didn't connect.

She underscored the search for self that can occur in different cultural contexts, especially when one has a hard time connecting to other children while growing up. She also provided reflections about her spiritual upbringing:

> Although my family is of a Muslim background we don't practice. My mother was always trying to learn & teach us about other religions. For less than a year she put my brother & I into Sunday School at a mosque. It was about a 30 min drive. In that half an hour my brother & I were usually able to coerce my dad of ditching class & taking us to look at the puppies at the pet store down the street. My mother made us pray at night & tried her best to explain Islam to us kids. She eventually moved on to the Bible & became a regular at church. She has always encouraged us figure out what our own faith & spirituality looked like. Whether that was meditation, prayer, devotion to a certain religion or nothing at all.

In addition to her reflections about culture and religion, she discussed how a sense of self was an important feature in her domestic violence survival:

> There was nothing that anyone could have said to me that would have changed my mind about him. I had to get to that point myself. I consider myself a strong person. I never thought I would allow something like this to happen to me. I definitely would not have expected to let it continue for as long as it did. If it were a friend of mine going through the same thing it would have been so easy to identify. I would have shook her & yelled "WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO YOURSELF." But, in the way that girl would respond & I did the same..."You don't know him like I do." The whole thing was painfully cliché.

In comparing an outside person's view of domestic violence to living with it herself, she highlighted the role of finding personal reasons to leave an abusive relationship. In this way, her reflections note the role of self-awareness in survival.

Participant 4 provided personal views about how violence and abusive environments form: "Not everything has to do with religion, but some of it does. Not everything is culture either, and some of it is purely personality disorders that run rampant and unchecked for generations and are accepted as the "norm."" Here, she provided reflections about the role of family mental health in domestic violence. She also discussed what she would want other survivors to know:

> I try to do my best to help them but I'm not a therapist and I'm just a friend. I want them to know I hear them and I want them to feel understood and cared about -- BELIEVED even.

For her, the belief and validation of stories is important in extending care for other survivors.

Participant 5 had reflections similar to Participant 3, in that they centered on her sense of cultural minority-status while growing up. She stated:

> I did feel othered since I was young for being culturally different from the other kids. However, I didn't feel discriminated against. I was shy and made (non-Desi) friends in school when I was young that are still friends today.

She spoke to the dual experience of being "othered", and contrastingly feeling included by non-South Asian friends in school. She also reflected on her personal relationship with school and religion:

> My parents emphasized doing well in school and I did well, focusing on my studies. In many ways, I fit the model minority stereotype - smart, good at school, didn't get into trouble, "conscientious." I started attending Sunday School when I was in elementary school and made friends there as well. Religious memorization was emphasized, and I was neutral about religion/didn't think about it much.

Growing up, she had a strong relationship to her educational performance, but a somewhat distant relationship to her religion despite a focus on memorization. Like the other participants, her critical reflections eventually landed on how to she would personally handle the issue of violence. She said: "I am hyper-aware now of red flags in any potential relationships and men who are pushy, don't listen, are dismissive, or guilt me for having an opinion are ones I avoid." For her, there are distinct warning signs that reflect domineering and controlling behavior, where men who present with these need to be avoided.

Like other participants, Participant 6 reflected on her personal experiences of religion, culture, and education. She said about education:

> Grew up in this area my whole life, education was not stressed as very important (we were working class) but I was naturally good at school and college was optional. I had a scholarship so at the last minute I did end up going to college, a commuter college, not the best college I got into.

She also reflected about religion and culture, saying: "Religion was important and I consider myself religious but I would never describe my family as conservative. We always attended many different kinds of mosques as a kid, Sunni, Shii, and every ethnic group."

Her descriptions provided earlier in this chapter mentioned how forms of conflict with her father created maladaptive relationships with others afterward. However, she also reflected about how she learned to cope differently later in her life due to new experiences:

> Although I have never seen a therapist I think it took me about 7 or 8 years of marriage to develop healthy coping skills and conflict resolution skills. I have three children and they have never experienced any dv (I occasionally spanked them as toddlers). To be honest seeing my father treat my children kindly as a grandfather has helped me forgive him for his poor role as a father.

These reflections bring attention to the role of ongoing life experience. She discussed her positive experiences with her marriage and children, as well as newfound view of her father that helped her heal about what she endured.

She also spoke to the concept of sublimation, or using her own struggles to make positive change for others: “I imagine so much of my passion for unseen suffering around the world (hunger, war etc.) is related to my own unseen suffering as a child. This is how I sublimate it as an adult.” For her, it was important to reframe her survival into a source of understanding and advocacy for others.

Participant 7 provided only brief reflections about the nature of religion and culture in her life, saying: “My Pakistani culture gets mixed a lot with my Muslims religion.” She also discussed the relationship between priorities earlier in life and now: “Growing up and even now education is the most important thing to me and my family.”

Participant 8’s personal reflections centered on the role of religion in her life, and how it impacted her sense of self, and her sense of personal strength in challenging the violence she endured. She stated: “Religion played only a minor role in my upbringing, mandatory daily prayers were enforced upon me by my paternal grandmother.” She also said: “There was no role of religion or spirituality or education growing up.” Given that the role of religion was only minor, she saw it as a gap in her life. She reflected that it would have been a helpful resource early on:

> Had religion played a better role in my upbringing I would have appreciated the "rules" that were originated by deen, not culture. I thus purged any/all cultural ties to my ethnic/cultural origins except for the fact that I speak a native language.

Because she perceived her father’s abuse as a cultural manifestation, she would have preferred experiences of religious and moral behavior from him, where she should have been treated with more fairness. She described her positive relationship with religion later on in life:

> As I grew older and had my own personal and independent spiritual growth, I realized how much solace and salvation and solutions I felt in my practice of faith and how that was lacking in our household by my father who was the opposite of any positive tenet of

> faith since I thought being abusive was the opposite of being spiritual and religious and that is exactly what I witnessed.

Reflections about personal identity markers were made apparent in this section, where participants drew connections between their sense of culture, religion, and education. These variables were compared to the ways in which they made sense of the abuse they encountered, and how to combat it personally for themselves or in advocating for others.

Social standing. This section will detail the class politics that some of the participants' experienced throughout their lives, and when this was an important variable in their experience with violence. At times this was discussed as a general part of their family history, but they also shared it in terms of social leverage they were able to use towards relief from abuse. Class politics might be viewed as macro-level forms of dominance that can create powerlessness through social hierarchies. However, the extent to which social accolades (such as obtaining a degree in higher education) were used as a resource to challenge violence will also be discussed here, including the ways in which women made sense of their own social standing and abusers social standing.

Participant 1 made comments about the social standing of her mother-in-law who was a direct player in her abuse cycle. She said: "His mom, she was a principal of the college, so very strong. And, so he couldn't say anything to her." However, she was able to compare this to her own educational achievement as a resource to combat being treated poorly:

> And slowly slowly what happened is like, I was simple earlier, but then for survival you need to stand for yourself. And I had to take care of my kids, and I said I'm not taking this shit anymore. So I have to stand for myself and I had a different career in India. I was – have a Masters in textile. And I was a teacher back home. Then I came here and became an engineer, and I work for (Workplace Named) now. So it's like, went through all this and raised my kids and - I was strong, and I said okay I'm going to be by myself. I have to stand for myself.

Her listing of personal achievements surrounded her reflections of personal strength, which allowed her to know that she could stand for herself against the controlling patterns she encountered.

Participant 4 also encountered class hierarchies that impacted her abuse cycle. She said about her family members: “They are all highly educated -- Physicians, teachers, members of society at higher levels in their communities.” Note that this is the same participant who was told by family members to keep from disclosing the abuse her mother enacted upon her. She also experienced her community as abusive and unsupportive. However, this participant’s own education was a way out of this abuse cycle. She stated: “I was also pushed to be very educated -- I have a Masters and I left that community the first chance I could. And I stayed out of it.”

Earlier in this chapter, Participant 6’s description of being in a healthy marriage for fifteen years was noted as part of her personal healing. She described other features of this marriage as she talked about her educational achievement. She said: “In the end I became much more highly educated than anyone expected due to mentorship outside of my family and I married "up."” The mentorship outside the family is important given the fact that the abuse came from within the family, and she went elsewhere to seek personal growth. In addition, she mentions marrying “up” which may mean many things, including entering into a family (through marriage) of higher social standing. In any case, Participants 1, 4, and 6 were all able to use their own educational achievement as a personal resource.

Participant 2 also made comments about her family’s educational background and occupation. She said: “My father is an engineer and mother was initially a homemaker before starting work at a restaurant.” At another point in the survey, she compared her father’s educational background to his views on violence, as well as community views on violence: “My

dad is an engineer but he feels the same way. I've spoken to male doctors in the community as well and they think it's justified to hit their wives as well." An important feature here is the mentioning of doctors, a highly coveted role in South Asian communities in terms of class politics and one's family reputation. The opinions held by these men seem to be of particular importance for this participant.

This section included direct reflection by some of the participants about the role of social standing, both in the power they assumed of the abuser, and the power they assumed of themselves to challenge and abate experiences of violence and control. For some of the participants, when they acquired personal achievements (i.e. education, support from mentors) they saw themselves as more empowered and in healthier states of living.

Specific ways of surviving. The participants also described context specific ways of surviving beyond what has already been noted in other themes. While the Ecology of Survival includes themes across all of the participants, there are also some unique methods that were individualized.

For Participant 1, this meant searching for a better situation for her family through relocation: "And then my husband tried, and we tried to move out, and so we went to (foreign country named) and lived there for three years." She also said:

> …somehow things didn't work out there, so we had to go back to India, so when we went, they were so bad to us. So I - then somehow my husband had his friends in America and they said okay, why don't you come here? They didn't know all the family history, but they knew we were trying to move. So then we came here...

Trying to physically relocate her nuclear family was an attempt to leave the controlling dynamics in her extended family.

At another point she mentioned busying herself with her occupation and personal self-care as a way of coping with her husband and in-laws:

> If they're not doing it right, and if they are happy to do this, let them do what they do, it will come back to them. So, I'm just kind of like, I'm busy with my work. I have a job, I'm so busy, I'm getting old, I do yoga – mediation stuff, I have all my own life.

She mentioned that her relationship with spirituality and religion also made her feel stronger as a person: "…that holds me up…that made me strong." She discussed how her and her husband eventually started utilizing marital therapy that helped them communicate better:

> Everybody suggested that you guys are Indians, and maybe that's might not be the same, but we started going to a American counselor, a man, and he's really good. So that mean, it doesn't make any difference like we said. Unless you accept your problem and you're willing to change. But what happened is when we went there, he's a nice strong man and he talks good, so we had an opportunity to talk about our problems, so all our problems are on the table. So now it is up to us what we want to do.

In finding a therapy that worked, the couple was able to put their issues on the table. For Participant 1, it didn't matter what ethnicity the therapist was long as it provided ample opportunity to address major issues impacting her marriage. This even meant that her husband stopped using controlling patterns of behavior, and instead would communicate more directly and kindly. She stated: "At least we have all our issues talked there. And whenever I talked to my husband, he would never respond or yell or throw something or get angry."

Participant 2 had attempted to distance herself from the context of disempowerment by trying to redirect her partner to other suitors, so that she would not have to endure his sexual manipulation upon her, or the hurt of not achieving a closer relationship:

> I slowly started to pull away from him because I felt worthless as a sexual object to him. It got to the point I was even showing him potential proposals for marriage because I thought I was so far out of his mind, maybe he wanted something else. Because that hurt so bad, I ended up not talking to him for a few days. After that is when the abuse started.

When she was trying to protect herself from being used, and from the discomfort of a distant-feeling relationship, the abuser began exacting greater harm upon her. Fortunately, this relationship and its abuse patterns are in the past. Still, she noted wanting to utilize mental health

services going forward to manage the trauma she experienced from this pattern of violence: "I plan on seeing counseling for PTSD because I feel like I still have symptoms of that."

For Participant 3, she discussed how she tried to leave an abusive relationship several times without lasting success: "I tried breaking up with him over & over again but kept going back." She also highlighted the challenges endured when she finally ended it for good, but discussed that she was satisfied with this final decision: "When I left him, I torn apart our families, my parents perfect picture of my life & my world. It was the best decision I made but incredibly difficult." Here, repeated attempts to end a bad relationship are mentioned, counteracting the assumption that survivors who are with abusive partners simply don't try to leave.

Participant 4 described a more direct form of fighting back against her mother's physical abuse:

> …I fought back when I could finally raise an arm to defend myself from the blows. When I was old enough to scream back, I was left alone. Until I could do that, I was told to suck it up and not ruin things for my mother.

Trying to defend herself against her mother was a recurrent theme in her coping. For example, at another point in her life she was stalked by her mother and attempted to defend herself through threat of law enforcement: "I told her to leave me alone and she would not. I had to threaten police involvement to get her to stop, but she still sent me abusive emails. She had other relatives sending me abusive emails too." It is illustrated here, like some of the other participants, that her attempts to gain safety were met with additional forms of control on the part of the abuser.

Similarly, in this chapter it was noted how Participant 6 felt she had to provoke her father to get him to stop abusing her mother, but this was listed under Impact of Abuse and Control because this is how she decided to speak to it. As such, it is not included for this section.

However, it might also be recognized as an early, albeit traumatizing, attempt to protect her mother and herself. Participant 6 also used forgiveness and sublimation to heal from the impact of her abuse, but this was listed earlier under Personal Processing. The choice of which axial code to include these descriptions was made by observing how participants mainly chose to speak to those experiences, even though they could be listed under several themes.

For Participant 5, one method of self-protection was to seek education that would give her a healthy understanding of a good relationship. She said: "I found learning about religion on my own later in life gave me a better understanding of what's healthy in a relationship…" Earlier in this chapter, personal reconciliation was discussed as a key aspect of Personal Processing. For example, Participant 8's use of religion as an intrinsic resource was described in this way. However, this particular quote from Participant 5 is listed here to signify the search for knowledge about healthy relationships, as an additional way to cope.

Summary of ecology of survival. The second major finding in this study sheds light on the ways participants' made sense of their support contexts. One reflection was the extent to which they could find available support, and another was how they found ways to cope alone when they didn't find it elsewhere. In addition, they discussed their overall perceptions of family and community, and related their expectations about whether either of these would be available to them or other survivors in a time of need. Their sense of self and personal reconciliation was also included as part of their survival story, as well as their personal navigation of social hierarchies. Finally, individualized and specific modes of survival were listed, to demonstrate the unique situations of each participant, and to show that survival might include an ongoing series of attempts to gain safety.

Summary of Findings

This chapter detailed two major findings amongst participants, who are South Asian women survivors of domestic violence currently residing in the Midwest United States. Analysis of their interviews yielded maps of their disempowerment (Ecology of Disempowerment), as well as a framework for coping with the abuse they endured (Ecology of Survival).

Table 2 shows the relationship between major findings (selective codes), and the distinct features and themes within each of these (axial codes). The latter may be understood as descriptive of the former.

Table 3 indicates research questions with correspondent participant answers. These are paraphrased to summarize themes from axial codes yielded in analysis. Note that answers to the first research question match respondents' reflections on disempowerment, while sociocultural variables are included more directly in their reflections about coping, or searching for support in the second research question. Even though participants spoke to each ecology under different interview questions (i.e. some speaking to their personal experience of violence before being directly asked about it), the findings were listed based on which research question they helped to answer more directly.

Table 2: Major Findings using Grounded Theory Analysis

Selective Codes (Major Findings)	Axial Codes (Descriptors)
The Ecology of Disempowerment	- Power Dynamics - Types of Abuse - Impact of Abuse and Control
The Ecology of Survival	- Availability of Support - Coping in Secret - Locating Family - Locating Community - Personal Processing - Social Standing - Specific Ways of Surviving

Table 3: Research Questions and Participant Responses

Research Questions	Answers from Participants (Using Axial codes)
1. What are the lived experiences of Domestic Violence, as endured by South Asian survivors in the Midwest United States?	- Disempowerment by family, extended family, and members of the community. (Power Dynamics) - Direct types of violence endured. These were committed by family of origin, in-laws, current and ex-romantic partners. (Types of Abuse) - Deleterious impact on social life, mental health, and sense of safety (Impact of Abuse and Control)
2. How did sociocultural and systemic variables influence this experience?	- Support was difficult to find (Availability of Support) - Sense of family and community support shaped coping strategies (Locating Family, Locating Community) - Had to cope alone when other sources weren't available or reliable (Coping in Secret) - Reflection about religion, culture, and education led to personal understandings (Personal Processing) - Awareness of social hierarchies provided information about features of disempowerment, and how to challenge them (Social Standing) - Individualized contexts gave way to individual methods of coping (Specific Ways of Surviving)

These findings respond to the sociocultural context and lived conditions of South Asian women survivors in a particular part of the United States. Implications for services, academia, and the future of domestic violence prevention and intervention are detailed in the next chapter, with emphasis on matching resources to the support needs of participants in this study and other women who have similar stories. In gathering personal responses from those who have lived with violence, this research used their voices as mandatory information to inform best practice and education on the subject in the context of a particular U.S. cultural community.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter will provide discussion regarding the experiences of eight South Asian women who are domestic violence survivors residing in the Midwest United States. Two major findings came forth from participant reflections. They are: 1.) The Ecology of Disempowerment, and 2.) The Ecology of Survival. Each of these shed light on the vulnerable human experience of enduring domestic abuse in a particular cultural community. The former is about how women in the study ended up experiencing disempowerment, including structural and personal domination, direct violence upon them, and the lasting effects of each. The latter is with regard to how they found resources and personal resolve to survive this violence.

Implications about their experiences use findings extracted from grounded theory research and analysis. At the start of this chapter, a broad view of these findings will be provided using two visual maps. One of these maps will organize findings based on human ecological theory, which is the guiding conceptual framework for this project. A second visual map will be shown to summarize the output of grounded theory research analysis, with its final selective codes displayed. Each visual map will be described below, followed by a more in-depth review of implications for research, intervention, prevention, and best practice services.

Human Ecological Theory Revisited

This research began with the assumption that different layers of society work to inform the experiences of individuals and communities. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model in understanding human development was used throughout this manuscript because of its ability to dissect the multiple variables that surround a human being's life and development. In this study, variables that surround domestic violence for a particular cultural community of U.S. South

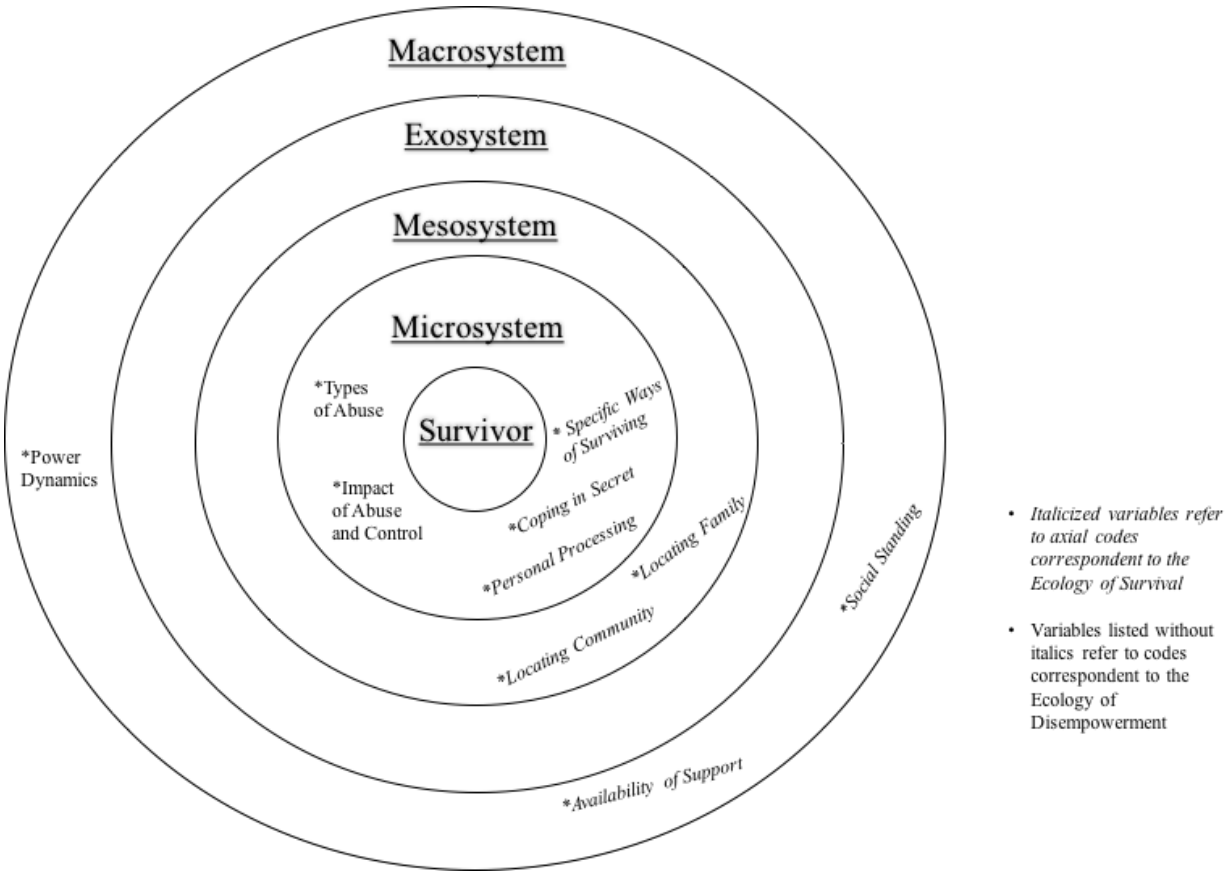
Asian women in the Midwest were directly inquired about through research questions regarding participants' lived experiences.

In using an ecological framework to understand these women's experiences, readers should imagine a blank map of five concentric circles, with the survivor at the center. In this map, there are multiple layers of society represented by each of the circles, with the macrosystem being the most abstract and outermost force informing a person's life. The microsystem is innermost circle, and the most direct one to one experience a person could have. Imagine that these blank layers are waiting to be filled in by participant responses regarding their experience of domestic violence. This research employed grounded theory analysis to fill in those blanks.

Figure 2 accomplishes this and demonstrates findings that correspond to each layer of society impacting the experience of domestic violence for participants. While many of these variables may be discussed at more than one level of the ecological map, they were listed in terms of their highest level of abstraction. For example, searching for the Availability of Support might be conceptualized as a microsystem encounter for a survivor, if that search was a direct experience they had in a given day. In a larger sense, however, Availability of Support is set in terms of what institutions are apparent and available to survivors, and the extent to which domestic violence is discussed and confronted on a sociocultural level. As such, it was listed in the macrosystem.

In Figure 2, note that the findings which have to do with participant survival are italicized and listed on the right side of the ecological map, whereas variables of disempowerment are placed on the left side of the map and not italicized. This is to make each variable distinguishable to the reader, keeping with the differential groupings between the two selective codes.

Figure 2: Human Ecological Variables for Disempowerment and Survival



This map demonstrates multiple features of abuse and survival at once. Some variables within the Ecology of Survival are fundamentally personal or direct. As such, they are listed as microsystem variables. These include: Specific Ways of Surviving, Coping in Secret when other support was not available, and Personal Processing. Even as these survival tools are personal to the participants, they are impacted by the other layers of the map. For example, when locating family or community is difficult to come by in one's mesosystem, then one might opt for more personal and private coping methods in the microsystem. This might be viewed as a sort of retreat to the layer of ecology that is the safest at a given time.

Locating Family and Locating Community were both listed as mesosystem variables. Even though community level influences are typically less direct in the ecology surrounding people's lives, community and family support systems were discussed by the participants in a paired way, suggesting the South Asian collectivist framework they come from. Their reflections spoke to this connection often, such as Participant 4's perception about the abusive mindset of her community, and how she experienced her family in collusion with that mindset. This relationship between community and family variables may also be positive, such as for Participant 5 who noted that friends in her community became like family members, because her own family did not have extended biological members who lived near them.

Social Standing and Availability of Support are listed in Figure 2 as macro-level influences because they are higher order social constructs. Two of the three variables within the Ecology of Disempowerment were listed as microsystem variables. This is because the various types of abuse endured by survivors are fundamentally direct, with the deleterious impact of those abuses also being direct. Conversely, I considered Power Dynamics to be higher order experiences in the macrosystem. However, they may manifest at other levels. Consider that Power Dynamics can be determined by law, history, or sociopolitical constructs which lends them to a higher abstraction, but these dynamics can also manifest through direct and specific forms of abuse upon survivors.

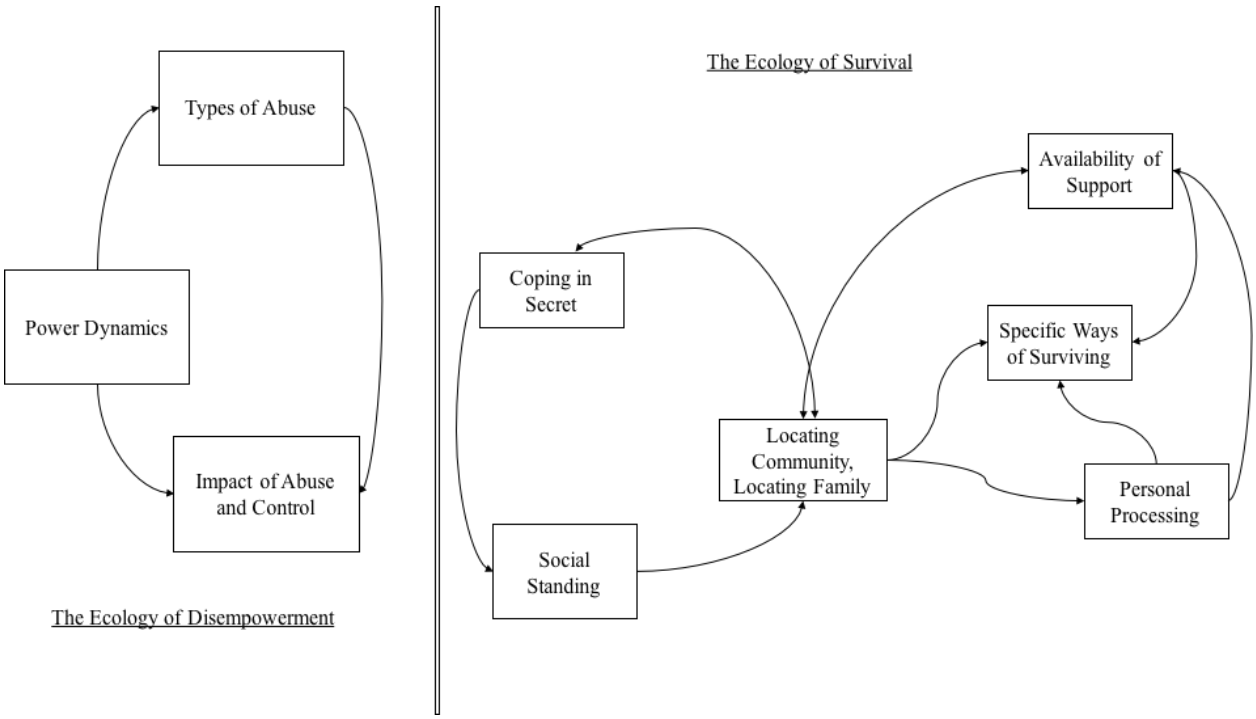
These considerations indicate that ecological levels are in constant interplay with each other, which reflects the way participants chose to discuss their stories with a deep sense of context. They simultaneously discussed their personal experiences alongside more global implications. For example, several of them described how things were for them personally while growing up (microsystem), and how this was related to community level pretenses (mesosystem)

or power dynamics based on gender (macrosystem). The interplay of these levels in their descriptions led to salient implications for support that will be described later in this chapter. Just like the findings in this study, so too should its implications operate at the axis' of different systemic levels at once, imploring service providers and research scholars to work toward increasing empowerment opportunities at multiple sectors of society.

Grounded Theory Findings Revisited

Where human ecological theory can be understood as a map towards a destination (a conceptual framework to ask the right questions about domestic violence for a particular community at risk), grounded theory research should be understood as the way in which the researcher takes notes about what they are observing at that destination. The participants should be viewed as the people who live at that destination who know the ins and outs of where they reside. As such, the ecology surrounding lived experiences of violence were solicited by grounded theory coding methods, using participant reflections. In this way grounded theory was the methodological tool used to inform a critical view of domestic violence in the Midwest U.S. South Asian community, where survival and disempowerment were themes most central to women's descriptions. Figure 3 demonstrates these two major grounded theory findings, or selective codes. Each ecology includes its respective features (axial codes).

Figure 3: Grounded Theory Map of Findings



Recall that the axial codes within The Ecology of Disempowerment were bound together because they are conceptualized as structural and direct forces of harm, and these were imposed on the survivors without their choosing. Conversely, the seven axial codes under the Ecology of Survival were grouped together because they were a part of each participant's own autonomous search for support, and how to best use it.

Figure 3 also uses directional arrows to show the sequential direction of experiences for survivors. For example, types of abuse precede the impact of those abuses, so an arrow in the diagram is pointed from Types of Abuse towards Impact of Abuse and Control. Power Dynamics have this same directional relationship with Impact of Abuse and Control. In a practical sense, this means that control patterns do not require direct violence in order to have a lasting impact on a human being. For example, many of the participants discussed gendered power dynamics that existed in their communities overall, or they discussed how domestic violence is treated as a

taboo topic, where these pretenses might negatively impact them personally or other survivors like them. However, with Power Dynamics in Figure 3, there is also one arrow that first runs through Types of Abuse before getting to Impact of Abuse and Control. This signifies how domination and the controlling nature of abusers was mechanized through specific forms of abuse, such as the acts of sexual shaming experienced by Participant 2, or the pervasive violations of privacy experienced by Participant 4.

The direction of relationships between variables is also made apparent within the Ecology of Survival. Most notably, Locating Family and Locating Community are situated in the same box because they were often discussed in the same breath by participants. This is similar to Figure 2 where both of these axial codes were listed under the same ecological level; the mesosystem.

The interplay using arrows between axial codes for the Ecology of Survival in Figure 3 is more complex than for the Ecology of Disempowerment. This is certainly due to the greater number of codes within this selective code, as well as the fact that survival is an ongoing pathway of healing and reconciliation. Consider that participants spoke to the Impact of Abuse and Control being a lasting experience even after their abuse subsided. Similarly, the search for survival and healing is not achieved at once. Instead, Figure 3's arrows are interwoven to signify that it is an ongoing experience. Some of the survivors spoke to this by noting that they were still figuring things out in the present day, in some cases taking years to find coping patterns that worked for them.

Major Implications: Helping South Asian Women Survivors in the Midwest United States

The findings summarized in Figure 2 and 3 reflect data presented in the previous chapter. These findings have led to several major implications about how to best support women afflicted

by violence in the Midwest U.S. South Asian community. These include: the importance of a focus on family systems, the importance of assessing community and family realities together, a critical and non-judgmental view of secrecy, and looking for a variety of access points in helping survivors. All of these will be discussed in terms of best practice strategies for research, intervention, prevention, policy, advocacy, and health.

Focus on family. Seven of the participants provided reflection about their families' involvement with their experiences of abuse. For some of these participants, these reflections included trying to seek out family members for support when confronting violence from people outside the family. This was the case for Participant 3, who was able to use her mother's support when she wanted to end an abusive relationship, and for Participant 5 who was able to use boundaries instilled by her mother to keep away from controlling men in the future. Participant 2 also searched for this support, but was worried that she would be shamed by family members instead of supported. She finally did disclose about it to her sisters when she left an abusive relationship.

The type of family involvement that was happening for other participants was direct abuse from members and collusion from in-laws or other relatives. Participant 1 was abused by her husband whom she felt distant from, and this was reinforced by power dynamics in her extended family. Namely, this meant the domination of her mother in-law over the whole family system. This was similar for Participant 4 who was abused by her mother, and was told to put up with it by other family members. Participants 6 and 8 carried the dual weight of being witness to abuse upon their mothers, as well as being abused directly by their fathers. Participant 6 mentioned that it was helpful when her mom didn't internalize it, making explicit that he was accountable for what happened, and not them.

The role of family members being either a part of abuse, or a helpful resource on the contrary, is highlighted here. This provides rationale for doctors to ask about family dynamics when South Asian women patients present with injuries and physical symptoms, especially when there is an air of secrecy that might surround the abuse cycle. It might be that no one has asked yet, and asking about family is an important gateway forward. The same goes for family therapists, social workers, psychologists, and advocates who may be meeting South Asian women for other psychosocial and behavioral matters. This includes dialoging about family during intake assessments and at other points during counseling or advocacy services. Participant 1 was frustrated when a counselor avoided talking about family dynamics, since it was so central to her experiences of abuse. In this way, avoiding discussion about family, and overlooking its importance in services for U.S. South Asian survivors is an egregious error.

A focus on the family unit also means shifting away from a one abuser to one survivor dichotomy in intervention and prevention models of service. For instance, it may not be enough to help a woman gain an individual restraining order from a single abusive partner if other nuclear family members and in-laws are complicit in the abuse. Instead, family services are needed to help survivors cope with the interrelated nature of multiple member involvement in the abuse cycle. Assessing the extent to which any people in the family system are supportive is crucial, because helping the survivor should include counseling and supporting other family members to advocate on their behalf. Given this, more production and access to family therapies is needed, and well as family-centered approaches in domestic violence advocacy services. Finding out which family members have been disclosed to by the survivor, and what their reaction was, is also part of this.

Multiple-party view. Researchers and service providers should switch to a multiple party view of abuse and survival. Within participant descriptions, there were constellations of family violence that included multiple survivors in one family, such as in the stories of Participant 6 and Participant 8. In other cases, the collusion of multiple abusers, or those who cosign on the abuse within the family were mentioned. Of course, there could also be multiple abusers and multiple survivors at once in other situations. Such is the simultaneous challenge and strength of working with South Asian families. Their collectivism can provide quick insight for service providers about the different people who can be resources for a survivor. Looked at this way, family resources have the potential to be abundant. Conversely, the extent to which so many different people can act as abusers at once is haunting. In such cases, finding safety for survivors would mean confronting and creating boundaries with multiple parties, and not just one abuser.

Collectivist family dynamics. In reference to multiple-person survivorship, such as wives and daughters who are physically abused by the same male in the family, we might consider "collectivist" survival, which would mean the inclusion of multiple family members who have suffered together in intervention models, and in agency services. Family therapy can be situated to include mother-daughter sessions, or sessions with multiple siblings, instead of relying on traditional marital therapy constructions that focus on a couple.

More domestic violence scholars should employ research questions that inquire about family dynamics, especially when studying the experiences of women of color who come from collectivist backgrounds. Without this, context is missed. Marriage and family scholars should also increase family research about U.S. South Asians in general, in order to keep with cultural sensitivities to support them, including how to support survivors given their contextual situations. In the current study, simple probes about family experience were included in

interviews, and this provided an arena for participants to talk about how multiple family members could be abusive at once, or where they were part of maintaining an abuse cycle indirectly. It also provided an arena for them to discuss when multiple family members were being abused, as well as how they searched for help within the family system.

Transgenerational approach. A focus on family should also include a transgenerational lens upon family dynamics. One of the reasons for this is that families' ways of relating may precede their entry into the United States. For example, two of the participants in this study were immigrants, and five of the six U.S. born women spoke to being children of immigrants. Asking about immigrant family experiences has the power to shed light on relational patterns that have long-existed, some of which inform abusive patterns. Family history may also shed light on the supportive nature of some families that might be long standing. Examples of transgenerational dynamics in the current study include Participant 1's dealing with power dynamics from her in-laws, Participant 2's lack of trust in her parent's views on domestic violence, and Participant 3's mother coming from an open and creative home which may have influenced her eventual disclosure to her. All of these considerations impacted the participants search for survival. A direct reflection of this came from Participant 4, who spoke to her perception that domestic violence had also to do with uninterrupted personality disorders that go on for generations without being challenged. This was her view of her own family.

Connection to literature. These reflections about family involvement match previous research regarding South Asian survivors of domestic violence. Rianon and Shelton (2003) studied the perceptions of married and immigrant Bangladeshi women in Houston, Texas. In their study, the identity of abusers included husbands, in-laws, and other family members in the kinship system. One way to understand this is that violence from one family member might be

indicative of other forms of family violence going on. For example, Participant 1 in the current study was abused by her husband, and also by the way her mother-in-law treated her. Asking about any one experience of abuse in medical, counseling, and advocacy settings can lead to disclosure about other forms and other abusers, helping service providers respond in a culturally appropriate way that includes the entire family. This might also provide insight on which family members can help or be included as part of doctors visits or therapy sessions. At the very least, helping survivors list the appropriate emergency contacts is a step in the right direction.

A focus on family constellations that surround abuse is also examined by the international work of Rao et al. (2012). Their study of structural violence experienced by depressed women in South India indicated that forms of abuse were reinforced by expectations from in-laws, abuse on the part of a husband or male significant other, and threats to one's children that deepen psychological suffering for women. While this study is from South India, trends that carry over the diaspora need to be considered, especially as they match responses in the current study for Midwest U.S. survivors. However, caution should be taken to not simply equate experiences from international studies, since ecological differences are apparent.

Scholarship from Khan (2003) reinforced attention to these family dynamics by shedding light on how families might use pejorative legal mandates (Zina Ordinances) in Pakistan to morally regulate women's lives. According to Khan, some of these women are jailed for not obeying their family's wishes, and many of them also fear returning to their families after jail. The extent to which these moral expectations impact the South Asian diaspora, including women in the United States, needs more clarification and attention in future research. However, Ayyub (2000), in discussing U.S. South Asian survivors, suggests that women here can also be required to hold up their family's sense of honor to the outside world, where their personal choices are

scrutinized in terms of this. This scholarship seems to mirror the reflections of Participant 4 in the current study, who felt her autonomy and privacy were constantly threatened by her mother if she didn't obey her wishes.

Dutta et al. (2016) found that intergenerational exposure to violence was a significant risk factor for women in Indian states. They suggest use of policy in encouraging medical settings to intervene about violence exposure for child patients. I agree with their sentiments, in that U.S. policymakers should standardize domestic violence assessment for families at medical checkup, and especially for children who may be witnessing violence at home as they grow up. This has special implications for South Asian families in the United States who may be experiencing different forms of domination at once within a single family. One challenge with this would be the extent to which South Asian survivors trust authority figures, especially if they are concerned about unintended consequences. For example, if patients do not have a U-Visa, disclosure might mean an immigrant survivor's deportation upon separating from a violent relationship, where custody of an American child might be given to the abuser, or where there could be forced separation of mother and child. As an act of cultural sensitivity, policymakers need to include respect to confidentiality when structuring parameters for service providers and hospitals regarding the assessment of violence.

Ahmad et al. (2013) found that South Asian women immigrant survivors discussed a sense of positive collectivism, including the importance of belonging, as well as the importance of interrupting transgenerational violence. This reinforces attention to family services in providing opportunities for children to reconcile traumatic experiences at a young age, as a necessary measure of prevention. Two of the participants in the current study witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers, and were directly abused by the same perpetrator. Their

disclosures indicate the need for early and available prevention strategies, be they at medical or other service settings. In the case of mothers who seek help while their children are young, the inclusion of their children in services may mean stopping the cycle of abuse before it hits the next generation, or at least diffusing its impact. This is because unattended emotional injuries from witnessing abuse can create greater susceptibility to victimhood.

Cultural respect for families. The difficulty of navigating multiple party forms of violence should not to be understood as a vote for western individualism to resolve South Asian domestic violence, or any false pretense that it would be better if South Asian were not so involved with their families. White American families may have violence cycles that are just as intertwined, but with different cultural manifestations. Moreover, other forms of violence that are less intertwined are not necessarily less harmful. Instead, what should be highlighted is the importance of finding spaces of support within the collectivist family framework that fit with the lives of U.S. South Asian women.

Based on participant reflections in the current study, self and other are not distant or opposing realities for these South Asian women. Noting this, prevention and intervention strategies that are bereft of inquiry about South Asian families do an injustice to survivors. What is needed is frequent inquiry about family dynamics, supporting available family services, creating new family services within the U.S. South Asian community and drawing attention to existing ones. Agencies should begin or continue hiring South Asian mental health providers and researchers who have a deepened understanding of South Asian family experiences. The main reason is that the makeup of domestic violence is distinct for U.S. South Asian women, with a central feature being the extent of family involvement in either catalyzing abuse or preventing it.

Pairing family focus with community orientation. The participants in this study talked about the role of their communities in their experiences of violence, as well as how attitudes within those communities impacted other survivors. By in large, the participants did not experience the communities they grew up in as helpful in tackling domestic violence, or in helping survivors seek appropriate refuge. Participant 2 suggested that South Asian communities treat domestic violence like it doesn't exist, Participant 3 noted that they don't address it, Participant 4 perceived that the community does not want to face its problems, Participant 5 said that men and women both justify domestic violence, Participant 6 said it is accepted by people, and Participant 8 noted that it is denied and hidden to maintain the community's image.

These community pretenses seem to reflect the experience of families and vice-versa. This is shown by Figure 2 where Locating Family and Locating Community are included at the same level of a survivor's ecosystem. Figure 3 also shows this connection where both of these axial codes are within the same box, noting their similar relationship to the rest of the codes within the Ecology of Survival. The participants certainly spoke to it this way, where community and family attitudes were juxtaposed in their reflections. Participant 8 compared the gendered differences she experienced in her family, where girls were under stricter rules, to her perception that the community subscribes to a "boys will be boys" attitude. She also cited the stigma of the local community as a variable in her mom never divorcing her father, even though they both experienced his abuse. For Participant 6, her family kept violence in their home a secret so that they could continue to look "normal" to the outside world.

These disclosures stress the constant interplay between what is confronted in a community and what is addressed in the family. It seems that one hand goes as the other does. This interplay was also true for Participant 4 who noted that her mother was happy with her

when she appeared as a "good" daughter to others in the community, because this would make her mother look good. On the contrary, coming out about abuse would hold the potential of ruining her mother's reputation. It is not surprising that this participant compared her need for boundaries from family members next to her want for distance from the whole community. Would it have been easier for these survivors to seek help, if the image of their families was not as much on the line? What could happen if seeking help about domestic violence was narrated firstly about helping vulnerable women, instead of worries about which families would be looked down upon? What can be said is that prevailing community attitudes, and the extent to which resources are available within them, foster a powerful experience where survivors are left to assess where in their communities they can go for help.

Community dialogue. There needs to be greater awareness about community-based agencies that exist for U.S. South Asian women, where community and family realities can be dually addressed. Family therapists, social workers, psychologists, case workers, and advocates need to ask about community experiences when family comes up during meetings with South Asian clients. So too should family be inquired about when larger community dialogue occurs. Expanding on this latter point, more community center programs that focus on domestic violence need to be held, be they at Mosques, Gurdwaras, Temples, Churches, or at other cultural and religious centers where South Asian families typically gather. Educational programs, and brainstorming sessions create a platform for community-level attitudes to change. Within them, domestic violence can be addressed where it is typically ignored. This would play to the prevention of future violence by creating a more familiarized knowledge base that allows families to feel empowered and educated. Family violence can hardly be prevented if the topic is rarely discussed at a community level. In addition, for those who are currently experiencing

problems, it can begin the process of disclosure and seeking help, just by opening the conversation somewhere. Beyond this, it is possible that discussions at community centers do not hold the same stigma that counseling sessions do, because the concept of violence can be discussed at a distance instead of using only personal disclosure. Participants in the current study often jumped between reflections of their own lives and reflections on the community in general, regarding how violence is handled. If this is a natural connection in conversation, the logical extension is that broad discussion at community events can lead to specific disclosure, and vice-versa.

Two-way street. The other parallel between family and community is that respondents saw both variables having power over how survivors are treated. Participants 5 and 6 underscored this two-way street. Participant 5 noted that community members became like family to her. Still, she expected that the larger community would justify violence regularly. Participant 6 was similar in this way because she disclosed specific circumstances where family friends from her community where able to mediate conflict that was occurring in her home, but her main view was that violence was accepted by others in the community.

A logical extension from this connection for scholarship is that more general research about South Asian communities in the United States has the potential to increase knowledge about domestic violence survivorship, including how community and family variables intersect outside of the concept of violence. With regard to violence, this two-way relationship between community and family can also be addressed when agencies refer clients to family or individual therapies, including culturally sensitive referrals. This relationship can also be emboldened on the other end where more mental health and family therapy clinics have available resource sheets

that include a list of nearby community centers, as well as information about upcoming community events that speak to the needs of survivors.

Midwest agencies. It is important to draw attention to the existing centers that have been working to support South Asian women in the Midwest United States for many years. I was able to gather a list of community-based agencies that serve South Asian women in this region. It should be noted that these are the ones I am aware of as a researcher on the topic, and that more may exist. Even the ones listed here are not valued as they should be, nor are they always made apparent to the South Asian community. This is a problem, especially given the participants reflections that they don't think community members care. Here is the list I would like to share: 1.) Apna Ghar in Illinois, 2.) Hamdard Center in Illinois, 3.) Khuli Zaban which functions in multiple locations of Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, 4.) ASHA Ray of Hope in Ohio, 5.) Mai Family Services in Michigan, 6.) Self-Employed Women's Association Asian Indian Family Wellness in Minnesota, and 7.) Asian Women United in Minnesota. Given the match between community and family attitudes about violence that participants spoke to, the importance of drawing attention to these resources cannot be understated, including available lists of them at religious institutions, community centers, and counseling services in the Midwest near these agencies.

Places of gathering. Outside of community-centered service agencies, community centers in general, such as cultural centers and places of worship, should be seen as potential first response sites to violence because people may gather there for social functions, especially more often than they see direct services. The extent to which these spaces hold programs addressing domestic violence has profound influence. The reflections from participants in this study highlight the need to change the conversation, creating more frequent dialogue about violence in

the places people attend for communal and social gatherings. Participant 4 noted that she perceived community members and religious leaders asking survivors to keep going forward in their abusive relationships to avoid the shame involved in failed marriages. Given this, religious leaders can play a crucial role in de-stigmatizing separation from a violent relationship, especially as community members may look to them in reinforcing their moral frameworks. This is especially important given that several participants discussed the value of religion in reconciling their abuse experiences. This means that religious sermons need to be delivered with quality and specific focus on harmful family patterns. In addition, educational programs at religious spaces need to include lectures about domestic violence, including invitation to relevant speakers and scholars who are educated on the topic. The inclusion of these programs is an important service that can be given to families at risk, as well as those who are experiencing abusive patterns currently.

Connection to literature. The concept of serving families by tending to community level variables has been scarcely addressed in scholarship about South Asian domestic violence. However, Shamita Das Dasgupta called for community based organizations to become more prepared going forward, in response to false community notions that violence does not exist for South Asians in the United States (Dasgupta, 2000). This call was made almost two decades ago in her paper that noted the efforts of various service organizations for South Asians. Given that these service efforts often go unseen, and the lack of speech from community members about domestic violence, it comes as no surprise that participants in the current study chose to cope in silence at different points in their struggle. Their disclosures reflected a lack of other options. To challenge this trend, opening up community-level opportunities by supporting these agencies can

be isomorphic in helping families and individuals come out about their experiences. In this way, the visibility of services can inspire a visibility of survivors who seek help.

Some community level effects have been highlighted in previous scholarship from South Asian countries of origin. In a study from India, Ackerson et al. (2008) examined the impact of community literacy levels upon violence against women. Data in their paper revealed that having college educated husbands, in general, lessened risk compared to women with husbands who lacked formal education. However, women who held more education than their husbands were more likely to encounter violence compared to relationships where there was parity. This reflects the power dynamics mentioned by Participant 1 in the current study who noted that her husband might have felt the need to put her down because they were both educated. While the current study did not specifically focus on the likelihoods of abuse based on educational standing, or interactional effects between educational attainment for batterers versus survivors, participants did mention the role of social standing. The double-edged sword here is that educational access and achievement for women can be misguided inspiration in the controlling behavior of a batterer, or conversely it may increase the necessary personal resources of a survivor to leave an abusive relationship.

What is important to this discussion about the interplay between community and family is that increasing educational resources in communities can have a profound effect on South Asian domestic violence survival in the United States. Agencies and counseling services need to view family and community needs for education together, not separately, because the direction of impact is under question, and timing might be a factor. For example, in advocating for a woman's increased educational attainment and pointing to pathways that may increase her social standing, it may be that she first needs physical boundaries from an abuser. In general,

educational resources are good, but advocacy for this needs to be tempered by other resources women might need to combat their predicaments. One way to accomplish this is to reproduce the type of work presented by Ackerson et al. (2008) here in the United States, assessing South Asian community needs and attitudes across different regions of America.

Koenig et al. (2003) also focused on community-level variables that impact domestic violence. In studying instances of domestic abuse in two rural areas of Bangladesh, they found that individual and community variables acted differently depending on location. A more culturally conservative location exhibited a link between individual-level variables to increased risk for violence, but community-level variables did not impact risk. In the less conservative area of the two, individual variables were unrelated to violence, but community-level variables were linked to lessened risk. This underscores the importance of a context sensitive view of communities when understanding the happenings within South Asian families, where experiences may vary by region, economy, or sociopolitical climate. This was another international study, and scholarship on community attitudes impacting violence for South Asian women in the United States remain scarce.

One promising piece of scholarship from the United States documents the Ahimsa for Safe Families Project in San Diego, CA (Pan et al., 2006) which functions through a foundational principle that domestic abuse is always influenced by the more abstracted context that surrounds it. This project includes, but is not limited to, services for South Asians. The themes that emerged from this work include the importance of shortening the gap between the way communities see violence and how services respond. Applied to the current study, supportive South Asian community members, who are dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic abuse, need to be part of constructing services for U.S. South Asian women. One way

to do this is by hiring South Asian people at existing community agencies and counseling centers. In the other direction, South Asian women service providers, mental health professionals, researchers and advocates need to be at the center of community conversations at their local centers (i.e. Mosques, Temples, Gurdwara, Churches), and not working distantly from these spaces. If every service provider was only working with families from their agency setting, no one would be responsive in challenging the surrounding community pretenses that contribute to violence in the first place. Helping survivors like the participants in this study means honoring their connected view of family and community, by connecting community and family services in the real world.

Having a critical view of survivor secrecy. Participants spoke about the reality of coping by themselves when they felt community and family were not available to them. Their reflections provide important context in understanding how secrecy and isolation arise, not simply as a personal choice or preference, but in response to the lack of safety to reach out to others. Some participants did not feel the South Asian community was very helpful, and found them to be more interested in keeping the topic under wraps to preserve favorable community or individual reputations.

Two axial codes in the current study that may inspire a critical view of secrecy are Coping in Secret and Specific Ways of Surviving. Both were part of the Ecology of Survival. As for Coping in Secret, participant reflections included not feeling safe to go to others in their inner circle due to the potential of push back, expectations to keep violence a secret to protect a family's image in the community, and a general notion about the existence of other survivors who continue to suffer in silence. In none of these is there an implication that participants didn't want to seek help, or didn't try. On the contrary, several of them provided Specific Ways of

Surviving that might have been used when not feeling supported elsewhere. These included trying to relocate, redirecting the abuser to other matters, repeated attempts to break up with an abusive partner, defending other survivors (such as their mothers), use of spirituality, and personal education about healthy relationships. Based on these reflections, it cannot be said that undisclosed abuse is the same as unchallenged abuse.

Respect for survivorship. It is important that service providers and researchers take on a non-judgmental view of survivorship, that includes the perspective that many women have made repeated attempts to find relief. A far too often used stereotype of non-western women, including South Asian women, is that they have simply not been given liberating opportunities, or that they are oppressed by their cultures. These narrations are short-sighted, especially if they lack curiosity about how women have been surviving thus far. Not every survival attempt is the breakthrough moment that gives a person lasting relief, but when survivors are treated as strong agents who are capable of resilience, their internal resources can be helpful to service providers who support them.

Family therapists, social workers, and psychologists from the dominant culture need to be careful about any preconceived notions they have for South Asian people. With regard to the cross-generational violence discussed, trying to find relief from abuse is something these survivors are quite familiar with. As such, services and support from the outside community should be paired with the resilience that survivors already have, in order to amplify opportunities for relief and increased safety in their lives. Intervention programs need to view U.S. South Asian women as agents of change whom they are meeting in the midst of their journeys, and not assume that they are starting with them at ground zero. With the stigma and shroud of secrecy so high to begin with, avoiding a patronizing attitude of South Asian women is best.

Those who serve survivors from this demographic should include a level of respect for their ability to process what has occurred to them, instead of an assumption that they have been resigned to passive coping methods. Women in the current study did not equate the idea of coping in secret with any lack of processing or individual coping skills. On the contrary, they had the ability to reflect on the meaning of their experience, their attempts at challenging violence, and their compassion for other South Asian survivors whom they believe deserve the utmost help.

Connection to literature. Previous scholars on the topic have also discussed South Asian women who are left to cope with abuse on their own. In their study about South Asian immigrant women in Greater Boston, Raj and Silverman (2003) found social isolation to be related to increased severity in IPV. The severity of violence could be amplified when these women had no family connections in the United States. When this was the case, there was a three times greater likelihood of physical injury from their current partner. Trends from their work also show that non-U.S. born women were more likely to report physical abuse, injuries from IPV, and lack of knowledge about services. This highlights the importance of finding even one supportive family member for women who are currently experiencing isolation. The importance of one supportive family member can be reinforced by the experiences of Participants' 3 and 6 in the current study who discussed the role of their mothers in combatting abuse. In addition, there needs to be attention to the importance of service visibility. The hiring of South Asian providers, and raising awareness about culturally sensitive services in both academic and public spaces could serve as an access point for survivors away from their isolation.

In Mahapatra's (2012) large study of domestic violence prevalence for U.S. South Asian women, isolation was associated with increased victimization. If women endured isolation, less quality time with their partners, and less perceived social support, they were at increased risk for violence. This can be compared to the reflections of Participant 1 in the current study who felt her husband was busying himself with the needs of other family members or friends, but not with her. It may be that cohabitation or marriage can amplify feelings of loneliness given that opportunities for greater connection are available but not experienced. Participant 1 reported that it was helpful when her and her husband finally used counseling to discuss their marriage together.

The centrality of silence and secrecy are important considerations for South Asian survivors in the United States and abroad, especially when coping alone is paired with increased abuse instance or severity. The participants in the current study had positive things to say when they could find effective support from family and community, but this was not an easy thing to access. Researchers and service providers alike can go a long way in making it easier by publishing more regarding the topic, and by increasing pathways for U.S. South Asian women in their own communities.

Multiple pathways in survival. Participants discussed the many spaces they navigated in their lives alongside their growth and development. Some of these were useful to them, and some were lacking in resourcefulness. This section will detail the potential for many service sectors to respond to the needs of survivors. Participant 1 spoke to the importance of proper referrals and counseling services. She noted having a bad experience where family dynamics were not appropriately addressed by a counselor, but also a helpful experience with a different counselor. Other support places mentioned by the participants included family services, religious

classrooms, shelter provided by family friends, and friends from outside the cultural community. The extent to which these were useful in helping participants challenge and heal from violence depended on their unique experiences.

An important implication is that all of these sectors have a role in helping survivors. They can all be used as initial gateways for intervention, as well as prevention spaces if domestic violence education is included early and often. Recall that Participants 1, 2, 5, and 8 discussed the positive role that religion played in their lives. However, they mainly spoke to their relationship with religion as a personal experience, and did not cite the community as a reason for their spiritual development. This means that religious centers and places of worship can do better to reinforce the solace that survivors seek in reconciling their experiences with violence. This can be accomplished through educational programming that occurs at those spaces, and the careful hiring of religious educators who lead with compassion on the topic.

Similar considerations are needed for family service agencies, community gathering spaces that are cultural or religious, therapy rooms, medical settings, and classrooms. A lot is at stake when the quality of any of these domains is in question. Recall that Participant 4 discussed hate-filled experiences from religious classrooms growing up. These experiences seem to be missed opportunities for support and education, as well as reinforcement of harmful power dynamics. These spaces have a profound ability to reinforce disempowerment, or if they are utilized appropriately they can have a profound ability in empowering South Asian women. Where lack of perceived support begets coping in secret, the crucial role for any of these spaces to change the tide is apparent. However, the extent to which they are supportive in this way may depend on the standards set by public policy and public health advocates. Government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGO) can play a critical role in advocating for an

increase of domestic violence assessment at any of these spaces. Specific attention to cultural sensitivity should be considered, given the context-specific forms of dominance and abuse discussed by participants. Resources in the U.S. community should heed the cultural gaps that exist for current services, where staff may not always be trained in helping women from different cultures.

Many spaces of support. Participant reflections in this study refer to the positive role of multiple avenues in assisting abuse survivors. One-shot responses that focus on cursory needs of survivors are fundamentally flawed in that they are missing entire sectors of society that may be used in helping them. Taking participant stories in full would mean respect to their reflections on the role of those sectors (i.e. religious spaces, agencies, classrooms, therapy rooms, etc.). In addition, it is not enough to simply make a space. Rather, these spaces need to be produced with high quality, informed by quality scholars on the topic, and by rigorous research on the nature of domestic violence for South Asian women in the United States. Otherwise, in some cases available resources may be more harmful than helpful.

Consider college counseling centers that post multiple flyers for services on their waiting room walls, including information about relationship violence or about safe houses that can be utilized by students. This is the type of resourcefulness that can be echoed at any Mosque, Gurdwara, Temple, Church, and even at medical and classroom settings where U.S. South Asian women frequent. Domestic abuse screenings can certainly increase at the hospital, as well as be provided at religious institutions by religious authorities and educated community members who are service providers by trade (i.e. doctors, clinicians, nurses, etc.). In addition, when domestic violence education is provided in a college setting, this may be responsive to the needs of younger South Asian women. In the current study, some of the women were young and recently

graduated from universities. Finally, the visibility of these resources can equip others within the survivor's inner-circle to respond, changing the expectation that they must handle violence on their own. This could include family members and friends who are not experiencing abuse, but know someone who is.

Something to look for. A sense of abundant resources was absent across participants in the current study, where looking for supportive spaces was difficult in and of itself, adding insult to the already damaging experiences of abuse they encountered. However, it is not as if they were not looking tirelessly. For example, participants in this study spoke to seeking safety at multiple points, including Participant 8's repeated encouragement for her mother to divorce an abusive husband, and Participant 3's repeated attempts to leave an abusive partner. However, when these attempts are not met with ample support mechanisms in the external world, and places of service do not have a pulse on these women's attempts to find relief, survivors may continue to suffer in silence. If it is true that domestic abuse and power dynamics operate at multiple levels of society (see Figure 2), then it is imperative that violence be challenged from multiple levels of society as well. A number of service agencies do exist for South Asian women, and women in general, but these are not always known about in U.S. South Asian communities, nor are they always apparent in literature. That needs to change. Producing new pathways and calling attention to existing ones is crucial in this regard.

Connection to literature. The importance of differential pathways in helping South Asian survivors has been shown by the work of other scholars as well. The work of Rao et al. (2012) examined experiences of distress for 32 poor women who were psychiatric outpatients in the Karnataka State of South India, where depressive symptoms were connected to experiences of structural violence against them. The authors discussed a deep stigma that interrupted the

women's help seeking behavior. It seemed that women in their study presented at services to cope with the psychological symptoms of domestic violence through medication, instead of removing themselves from the source of that distress (i.e. abuse itself). Here, it becomes a focal point to use medical opportunities to assess for abuse, especially when patients present with troubling physical and mental health symptoms, but may not be discussing the cause of these in a forthright way. Women represented in the work of Rao et al. (2012) presented with stomach pains, worries for their children's future, headaches, and hopelessness. Any of these can be followed up upon during health services as a way to increase opportunities for disclosure and intervention.

Hurwitz et al. (2006) provided similar insight about South Asian women in Greater Boston who were more likely to present with poor physical health, depressive symptoms, anxiety, and suicidal ideation if they were survivors of IPV. Raj et al. (2005) provided another assessment of the same data where women whom had experienced IPV in a current relationship had an increased likelihood to also report discolored vaginal discharge, burning during urination, and unwanted pregnancy. Taken together, these studies underscore pairing medical assessment, including gynecological checkups and education, with domestic abuse assessment. So too should family therapy or individual counseling be paired with regular violence assessment for U.S. South Asian women. This includes repeated checks when mental health challenges are disclosed after the first counseling session, not solely relying on intake information. Respect for women's safety and sensitivity to their cultural contexts needs to be a cornerstone feature of protocol when assessing for women's needs and producing appropriate services. Women's disclosures can be met with push back from family or society, especially if discovered by someone abusive. As such, mechanisms at medical and mental health settings that amplify support need to

simultaneously guard against repercussions for disclosure. Strict standards of confidentiality would accomplish this.

If it is true that various structural variables come together to inform an experience for South Asian women in the United States, then it is crucial for providers to address violence in a similarly paired way. Ahmad et al. (2013) demonstrated in their analysis of immigrant South Asian women survivors of IPV that participants' resilience was heavily influenced by their use of professional services such as social workers, post-natal nursing professionals, use of shelters or long-term housing solutions, legal aid, immigration consultation, and access to daily supplies including food and clothes. Structural support opportunities like these helped those women, and existed at different sectors of society. Participants in the current study also discussed the multiple layers of society that helped or hindered their own survival. These services need to be in better collaboration with each other such that they are apparent to those who are suffering from encounters with abuse. Ahmad et al. (2013) echo these implications in their call for the availability of individual and structural resources that help women thrive following their experiences of violence.

Additional Reflections on Findings

Survivors in this study mentioned other subjects that deserve attention. My personal reflections about these other areas of interest will be provided here, to fit with a constructivist approach to grounded theory research. These are issues that were not completely fleshed out in the data, but command attention in my opinion. Reflections will include an examination of co-existing forms of abuse, a focus on women's empowerment that includes combatting gendered constructs, and a lifespan view of recovery that includes healing even after abuse has subsided.

Multiple forms of abuse existed together. In Chapter 4, the connection between power dynamics, specific instances of abuse, and the impact of abuse and control were discussed together under the Ecology of Disempowerment. Taking a closer look within that ecology, participants also implied an interrelationship between different forms of violence, as well as the different forms of domination that surround that violence.

Participant 1 discussed her mother-in-law's domination, as well as her husband's yelling and physical violence as part of her experience. Participant 2 experienced mental and verbal abuse, including shaming and sexual manipulation in a previous relationship. Participant 3 reported that she experienced mental abuse after the first six months of a romantic relationship, and physical abuse later on. Participant 4 experienced physical violence, as well as intrusions of personal privacy from her mother. Participant 6 reported being emotionally and physically abused by her father. Participant 8 reported physical and emotional abuse from her father, as well as being hit by her grandmother and sister. Recall that Participant 6 and Participant 8 are also witnesses of abuse upon their mothers.

With respect to these disclosures, acts of domination over U.S. South Asian women need to be assessed in concert with various forms of violence, instead of looking at singular forms of violence (i.e. physical violence) in a separate vacuum. Comprehensive support should include inquiry from physicians, social workers, therapists, advocates and other service providers about all the ways women report experiencing abuse and violence. In addition, women may present with disclosure about one form of violence, but this needs to be followed up with, in order to get a larger picture of what they are enduring. This is crucial because the treatment they receive should be responsive to the many violent events that could be occurring, and not just to pieces of their experience.

Non-physical forms. Assessments should be thorough in each domain that women receive support. For example, community members who are interested in supporting education on the topic should avoid trivializing non-physical forms of violence, especially due to the fact that participants in this study spoke to profound trauma from those forms (i.e. post-traumatic episodes from sexual manipulation). Also, non-physical forms can lead to physical violence at a later date (i.e. Participant 3). Safe houses and shelters should also be available to women who experience different forms of violence, not turning away women who lack observable injury on their person. Lack of inclusion in this way might lead to further disenfranchisement of South Asian women experiencing deleterious effects in their lives. Here, mental health initiatives within available services can play a crucial role in capturing the non-physical forms of violence, because mental health resources are well suited to help clients confront the impact of abuse, even in its aftermath.

Differing manifestations. Participant 6 noted that her father was only physically abusive to her and her mother, but was also emotionally abusive to other members of her family. Participant 8 similarly reflected that she was physically abused, where her mother was not. Still, they were both psychologically abused. Both of these disclosures expose the possibility that forms of violence manifest differentially dependent on specific intra-family relationships, such as a mother-father dyad or father-daughter dyad. Just as there should be a multiple-party view of violence, there should be a multiple-form view that is worked into the mission of services for domestic violence.

Within each of the types of violence, there can be distinctions in how they transpire. Recall the different types of emotional abuse discussed in the current study, where privacy invasion was noted by Participant 4, and sexual manipulation was encountered by Participant 2.

Both might be categorized as emotional violence, but they differ in content. This underscores the importance of assessing for and validating unique survivor stories, in order to assess for individual needs and cultural context at the same time. Figure 2 demonstrated variables in disempowerment and survival that are shared by participants, such as rigid power dynamics and importance of locating family and community. However, Figure 2 also shows variables which vary depending on the individual context in the microsystem. Within that system, there should be respect given to how each survivor experienced a different combination of violence types, the different identities of abusers (i.e. husbands, fathers, mothers, romantic partners, etc.), as well as a variance in personal processing narratives and differential access to support.

Survivors as the center of knowledge. It is my contention that an important way to capture specific needs and nuances, while paying respect to trends between survivors, is to include opportunities for disclosure where they can tell their own stories. Their experiences should be seen as the center of knowledge that researchers and advocates operate from. It is my hope that this study demonstrated one way to inquire about those stories, getting a sense of all the ways women suffered and survived. The various forms of violence that were juxtaposed next to each other in participant reflections might inspire more research about the relationship between different abuses, as well as research on the prevention and treatment of singular forms. Agencies in the Midwest United States that work to increase the welfare of South Asian women should utilize grants that fund a multitude of resources that would respond to each of the violence types mentioned by participants.

Multi-sector collaboration. Another way to respond to the interrelated nature of violence is to increase the interrelationship between service sectors themselves. This means that social workers, doctors, religious chaplains, psychologists, family therapists, law enforcement officers,

legal officers, and others can refer to each other quickly to respond to the various needs that emit from interrelated violence types. Different forms can be responded to by the different sectors better than others, such as doctors who respond well to injuries, therapists who respond well to emotional trauma, or advocates who respond well to safety concerns by assisting with temporary shelter.

Challenging gendered power structures. Participants in this study discussed the gendered nature of power dynamics, which scrutinized women's actions in their communities differentially than men. Their reflections included encountering gendered judgments about divorced women but not men, how marital rape is normalized, freedom of misbehavior for men, stricter rules for women, systematic control by men, and men's freedom to err without scrutiny. Surrounding gendered control laid the groundwork for violence against women in their reflections, as well as lack of support for themselves or others, and the potential for survivor-blame.

Accountability for men who abuse. Given this, support for survivors in this demographic should include direct confrontation of men's domination. This can function through batterers groups at service agencies, where the onus is placed on men's behavioral patterns, instead of only on women's survival attempts and coping strategies. The importance of including rehabilitative programs for those who practice violence and domination, is that they can help abusers confront their own emotional projections that may stem from their own need to heal from control patterns, especially where intergenerational violence exists and where status politics in the community have hurt them as well. Future research about former assailants in the South Asian community has potential in providing insight about change, where the value of confronting abuser's personal history with unattended feelings is spotlighted.

Separating masculinity from violence. Community settings can be utilized to teach about unhealthy forms of masculinity, and this can be provided at religious and community institutions with invited speakers who are equipped to discuss the topic with a focus on women's safety and batterer accountability. Not all of the participants discussed men as main perpetrators of violence upon them. Even so, rigid and violent control patterns in U.S. South Asian communities cannot be confronted without respect to gendered pretenses that color women's disempowerment. In fact, some of the women in the study experienced gendered socializing while they grew up where women's agency and curiosity were pervasively denied, and this could precede their own direct encounters with abuse and control.

Human development and family studies scholars can start to build a body of research literature that focuses on the role of U.S. South Asian men in their communities. This can include studies that directly focus on perceptions of violence, as well as broader ethnographic studies. A follow up study to the current one might even include men's reflections on violence, especially focusing on inclusion of South Asian men who work in solidarity with women's movements to oppose violence. Another avenue to confront gendered power dynamics would be through social work and psychotherapy. Individual, marital, couple, and family therapy sessions can be used to tend to differences in gendered expectations between men and women, especially as they pertain to presenting problems and negative interactional cycles for couples. Of course, this should only be utilized where there is no active harm, or no threat to violence upon any member in the therapy room. Because of this, potential for harm should be assessed for thoroughly at intake, across different sessions where appropriate, and where red flags are apparent.

Survivors' personal empowerment. There should be a multi-sector confrontation of gendered power. This could include assessment of control dynamics in all of the aforementioned service sectors, as well as reformation in narratives that are taught in community spaces with respect to women's rights. This ecological view should also embody cultural sensitivity that defines empowerment based on women's cultural context and by their own reflections, rather than on western or colonial pretenses that blame women's cultures or religions inherently. This is underscored here because there exist conflating ideas in society that imply oppression by women's cultural dress, their religions, their home-making, or pejorative ideas about their attachment to husbands and families. But these ideas only work to scrutinize women further, especially if survivors say that they find resourcefulness from those very contexts and are judged for it.

Participants had a lot to say about how they achieved their own empowerment from those types of sources. Their reflections included tribute to guidance from mothers, including the importance of one participant's mother who refused internalization. In addition, while they made it clear that religion could be misused to inform abuses, they did not point blame at it. On the contrary, several participants included religion and spirituality as part of their empowerment in the aftermath of abuse. In this way, religion is akin to other variables in their ecology that can be either used for harm or help depending on how it is operationalized. Other forms of personal empowerment they mentioned included educational achievement, their personal boundaries, and pride in their careers. Empowerment is something that should elevate intrinsic resourcefulness, instead of imposed ideas that treat women of color as lacking in knowledge about what empowerment is.

Public responsibility. Public policy initiatives, as well as public health directives, can be used to support the creation of safe houses and shelters that women can utilize on route to their empowerment. It may be that a safe place to go catalyzes other forms of their self-actualization away from violence in their lives, including healing from previous encounters. In addition, policymakers and public health officials have a responsibility to confront gendered patterns that create harm for Americans. This is true for all women, with specific considerations to be made within sub-demographics in different regions of the United States. The extent to which women's resource centers and women's rights agencies are funded has profound impact on the ability for women to thrive. By extension, whether these are placed in proximity or distantly from various cultural pockets in the United States (including South Asian population densities) matters because transportation and access are key variables for women's awareness and use of those resources. Where these agencies already exist, such as the many South Asian centered ones previously listed in this chapter, they should be made more well known. This should be a public health directive that is championed by all service sectors in the Midwest United States.

Healing is an ongoing process. Many of the participants spoke about healing as an ongoing process. While removal from real-time harm provided a step in the right direction, participant reflections included the psychological impact that followed them in the aftermath.

Participant 2 spoke about having flashbacks, as well as being triggered when certain songs came on that reminded her about her experiences with abuse. Participant 3 spoke to the emotional intensity of her experience with an abusive partner that included both passion and terror in the same breath, and how these emotions continue to manifest for her. Participant 4 noted the post-abuse trauma she experienced. Participant 6 discussed the detrimental impact her experience with abuse had on subsequent relationships, where she spent many years afterwards

reorienting her coping skills. Participant 8 discussed her confusion about the extent of abuse she endured, citing her continued questions of intimacy, lack of healthy male relationships, and fear of sexual relations. She also provided reflection that abuse is slow to heal from.

Resources for ongoing healing. Gradual healing should not be mistaken for lack of survivorship, nor should it be taken as a lack of empowerment. As has been previously discussed in this chapter, there are a multitude of opportunities in society that can be utilized for U.S. South Asian survivors, especially if those resources are made with quality and made apparent at a public level. As such, participant reflections about the ongoing nature of healing should be taken as insight about the ongoing need for support, even when active harm has ceased in their lives.

Some of the participants mentioned their current use of therapy or their plan to use mental health services. Individual, couple, and family counseling are especially fitting in helping survivors develop in their recovery from abuse. Consider that Participant 1 spoke to the value of effective counseling she went to with her husband, and how Participant 6 alluded to her fifteen-year healthy marriage. Taking these two reflections together, the value of heightening healthy communication skills for couples during counseling sessions is apparent. Emboldening safe and healthy interactions with loved ones in these spaces can be useful in counteracting the effects of violence. Moreover, therapy services can provide a platform for survivors to make sense of the side-effects of their trauma, where they can confront those occurrences and seek support that could lessen their symptoms over time. Whether these sessions are individual, couple, or family arrangements depends on the needs of the survivor, as well as the differential value of introducing supportive others into the therapy room. All of these variables can be assessed for by trained, culturally sensitive, and collaborative mental health professionals.

Ongoing use of support systems. Social workers and advocates have a special role in encouraging survivors to continue making use of the support systems that work for them. They can help their clientele take note of which resources correspond to a lessening of symptoms, as well as increases in relief, safety, and wellness. It would be an error to discourage contact with their cultural communities, because this would imply an indictment of those spaces. If women find that those spaces are beneficial in lessening the impact of their abuse, or if they find that reengagement can occur on their own terms, these opportunities should not be missed by service providers.

While some women choose outright boundaries from the communities they grew up in, others may be interested in reconciliation with those environments. This can also include the family unit where newfound experiences of connection can help to heal old wounds. Recall that Participant 1 discovered a positive space in counseling to talk things out with her husband, or Participant 6 who spoke of forgiveness towards her father. While these choices should not be imposed on survivors, it is telling that some of them used reengagement as part of their path forward. For others, trust in this reconciliation is much more difficult. This was the case for Participant 8 who did not trust the changes made by her father, because she still sees him as an abusive person.

Medical checkup. Given the profound emotional experiences in the aftermath of abuse discussed by some participants, emergency rooms and doctor visits should continue as first response sites that survivors can use when they experience overwhelming fear, deleterious impact on their physical health, or when they experience troubling panic states. In all of these health sectors is an opportunity for survivors to get support from another person, where they

don't have to manage the detrimental aftermath of abuse on their own. In addition, use of these services can encourage ongoing experiences of safety and self-care.

Accessibility issues. Of course, frequent access and use of services depend on financial constraints, as well as on federal or state decisions about healthcare. This means that policymakers and public health officials also have a crucial role in ensuring services are available, affordable, and accessible to people, even when real-time safety concerns have subsided. Consider instances where community mental health settings turn away non-critical patients, or where service agencies have grant funding stipulations to only serve those in active danger. While these services are important, they do not respond to the ongoing nature of healing that women in the current study spoke to. As such, policy reform that prioritizes easy and affordable access to services for people who are experiencing ongoing symptoms of abuse is crucial. Matching this, public health officials who meet with city representatives and local governing bodies in the Midwest can advocate on behalf of survivors, bringing attention to the ongoing impact of abuse at those meetings. In this way, the public health benefit of ongoing resources would be discussed where it should be, at the macro-structures in society that color experiences for those who are suffering.

Healing at multiple stages. For existing South Asian family service organizations, and similar organizations that claim to serve all women, providing services to survivors in all stages of their journeys is crucial. While some resources offered therein might be reserved to those in active harm situations, other projects can be tailored in their services to respond to the lasting impact of abuse. This may include quality referral lists, on-site advocates for all survivors, mentorship programs, temporary shelter for those dealing with symptoms of a previous abuse,

and service providers who speak multiple languages that are available to talk with survivors at any point in their healing journey.

Just as the psychological impact of abuse varies, so too does survivorship carry its ups and downs. In this, the anticipation of difficult years, days, or weeks is essential because it allows survivors and the providers who support them to prepare for challenges (i.e. triggering moments) that can occur as life moves forward. A dedication to ongoing care can respond to this human reality, where disempowerment and survivorship are not seen as opposites of a dichotomy.

Scholars who focus on domestic violence in communities of color should lead with a dedication to lifespan development, where being resilient is not seen as a static state of being. Although they are distinct in our ground theory findings (Figure 3), the Ecology of Disempowerment and the Ecology of Survivorship should be seen as connected worlds that need lasting attention. Without this, women would be seen as needing to fit static molds of either ecology, either seen as disempowered women or conversely as survivors. This is too rigid of a notion. Instead, I argue that all survivors should be seen with a capacity for resilience and strength, no matter where they are in their battle for safety and healing. When given the opportunities in their surrounding ecology, South Asian women in the current study found pathways to safety and personal reconciliation. They exhibited a disposition toward continued strength, and this was encapsulated in their reflections about ongoing healing and development.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations in this study on Midwest South Asian women who are domestic violence survivors. Most apparently, access to more participants would have clarified themes in the study. While participant reflections that were included had much depth,

they varied from each other in a number of ways. This included differential discussions relevant to both selective codes. However, the differences between survivors could have been a longer discussion if there were enough participants to categorize them between each other. For example, two of the eight women were immigrants to the United States, and the differences between them and the rest of the participants could not be effectively tracked or discussed given such a small sample. Having at least twenty participants could have clarified the centrality of those discussion points, more than a sample of eight.

A small sample like this also has greater likelihood of creating bias towards the participants who wrote the longest reflections, where each transcript has a lot of weight over the whole study. This shortcoming is most observable in that only one participant was interviewed in-person before data collection was moved to an online format. The idiosyncrasies of in-person conversation give way to nuances and depth not necessarily captured in written form. I worked to ensure that this did not give bias to the codes in any phase of analysis. However, it needs to be said that there was a greater abundance of quotable material (for codes) from this participant who was interviewed in-person, as well as from some participants who stood out with longer reflections online. One of the seven online participants submitted very short responses, and this was in sharp contrast to the in-person interview. These differences made analysis more difficult, but every effort was taken to work alongside an expert coder to remove bias from the study. It helped that I bracketed my subjective reflections throughout, and it helped that I read each transcript a number of times during the coding process in order to give each participant equal attention during analysis.

In a larger study, it could have been beneficial to interview U.S. South Asian advocates who work with women like the participants in the study. This is especially because a goal was to

bring insight into best practices for this demographic. The advantage of talking to those advocates would include their longer tenure in engaging with survivors than I, their own personal stake in working with South Asian women (which may include their own survivorship), and their reflections about what hurts or helps these women given past professional experience. In addition, reflections from survivors could be methodologically validated by echoes from advocates who might suggest similar themes. Differences in their reflections would also be important to highlight. However, the focus of the current study was to ensure attention to survivor voices first, foremost, and centrally.

This study has potential transferability in that its methods can be undertaken in different U.S. regions. However, due to the small number of interviews, it is difficult to gauge what bias could have occurred from any one state in the Midwest. As such, more studies in the Midwest and within state studies are needed to continue enriching scholarly knowledge on the topic of U.S. South Asian survivorship. A similar gap was that only adult women were included. While this reflects the gendered nature of domestic violence, some participants in this study made mention of women who were either abusers or persons who could be colluding with abuse. Moreover, men can experience different manifestations of powerlessness, as can children who witness violence in their households or communities while growing up. This study focused on women's reflections alone, centering the role of gender in abuse, but other research should examine different types of survivorship.

If centering women is taken as a strength of this study, it is possible that inclusion criteria could have been tightened to examine only IPV, or only violence where the main perpetrator was male. Participants in the current study mostly focused on the role of men in abuse cycles, but there were some exceptions. This gave depth to the data, but it may have also worked to create

less focus in implications for readers. Overall, inclusion criteria in the current study were set in order to search for rich discussions within a particular group with unique regional and cultural characteristics. I believe this was accomplished. However, the extent to which there can be strong implications about perpetrators who are men versus those who are women, or survivors who are immigrants versus those who are not, cannot be clarified by this study. What can be said is that the inclusion of multiple survivorship types seemed to fit the ecological insight I sought after, but this did not come without the problem of incomplete discussion regarding differences between participants.

Interviews were conducted in English, because this is how they were presented in the online questionnaire. No other options were given, indirectly limiting the study to English speaking women. This means the study was not fully inclusive of immigrant women who do not speak English, or women who would have preferred the interview be conducted in another language. At the start of data collection, I was working with a South Asian service agency, where the hope was to conduct interviews in English, Hindi, Bangla, or Urdu in order to include the aforementioned women. Because this format for data collection was abandoned due to low enrollment, the limitation in language came with it. Nor can many strong implications be made about age, especially given that online interviews were likely biased toward second generation South Asian women who grew up in the internet age. It may be that this is a reason that more women did not participate in the study, as well as why there were not more immigrants or older women.

With respect to survivors discussing the role of silence and secrecy, it is plausible that the extent of their encounters with abuse were not captured in their entirety by the interviews. Even

so, what the participants chose to share is important because data reflected what they may have found most important and were comfortable sharing.

Strengths

This study also had many positive features that I hope other scholars can build off of in future work with U.S. South Asian survivors of domestic violence. First, the results were yielded after rigorous attempts to find participants with stories to share. In the next section, I detail my difficult experience in finding participants first by reaching out to service agencies in the United States to plan data collection, working with advocates at a specific Midwest agency serving South Asian survivors, and finally looking for participants using an encrypted online interview instrument. Although this yielded a small number of participants, the strength of this is that these can be seen as rare gems that provided courage, depth, and context. Those who step forward to discuss their painful experiences are a world of knowledge, especially where these stories are difficult to find.

Another strength is that this study reinforced the value of personal narratives that can be tracked by grounded theory analysis. This can help situate context, and the informant power of many variables at once. Participants were essential gatekeepers of their own experience, where findings came from their specific statements and not from the false pretenses of outsiders. This is one way to reinforce cultural sensitivity, by honoring and elevating the voices of women of color, whose personal experiences cannot be told the same way by anyone else. Their insights are not cursory, nor can they be impersonal. In this way, grounded theory can be used as a needs assessment tool for other regions in the United States where South Asian women reside, as well as for more studies in the Midwest. This type of research might also be conducted by service agencies who want to understand the experiences of the South Asian women they serve,

including informing grant language by it and seeking resources responsive to their clients' lived realities.

There were also other ways that the study was culturally sensitive. At the start, I was mentored by South Asian women who are advocates at an agency serving that very community. They provided profound mentorship prior to my initiating data collection. Moreover, all of the committee members who guided this dissertation are women. All four are well versed in culturally sensitive research, and all of them are women of color. Taking the constructivist view in research, I embraced myself as a South Asian man, who cannot claim to experience what it is like to be a South Asian woman. However, I had personal stake in this study given that I have witnessed violence upon women in my extended network growing up, and in serving as a South Asian mental health practitioner in the Midwest United States. All of these represent contours of cultural insight that led me to conducting this study, but deference was always given to the participant stories first and foremost. I believe that grounded theory analysis, a human ecological approach, and proper mentorship from South Asian women allowed me to do this.

This study also responds to gaps in U.S. scholarship that focus more on prevalence, with limited research on interview based disclosures from U.S. South Asian women. There was also value in studying disempowerment and survival aspects of violence within the same study, where other works may focus on one variable at a time. This dual observance can be attributed to grounded theory analysis, which led to two selective codes for discussion. Each had their own implications, and these were interwoven with each other.

This study also draws attention to the interrelated nature of different ecological variables, and instances of abuse they are connected to. This matches findings in other papers about the correlated nature of deleterious health outcomes that are comorbid with abuse upon South Asian

survivors (Hurwitz et al., 2006; Raj et al., 2005; Rao et al., 2012). Given the shroud of secrecy also discussed by the participants in the current study, the use of symptoms (e.g. post-traumatic impact on mental health, aversion of male relationships) as conversation starters for domestic violence assessment was an important find that matched the work of other scholars.

This study can be included in the growing number of research studies that utilize a multi-faceted examination of domestic abuse. Using a human ecological perspective, participant reflections about violence and its surrounding context were layered, including descriptions about the role of multiple systems in their ecology and the interrelated nature of different forms of violence. This included reflections about different kinds of abusers, the power dynamics that strung together the role of more than one domineering person in an abuse cycle, a relationship between community and family views, the role of emotional projection, and the connection between witnessing and surviving violence.

Personal Reflections

Completing this dissertation project has been a deeply personal process for me. In accomplishing it, there have been a host of unanticipated challenges, as well as moments of personal reward. It should be noted that this section is written from a subjective lens, with the intention of providing the reader insight into my own experience. It should also be noted that the main descriptions of this research project are those of the participants, and reflections here are only written to humanize the process of collecting data about a vulnerable community that matches my racial identity. I have been taught by my mentors to embrace myself as the main research instrument and to reflect upon that role, and that is the goal of this section.

After years of concerning myself with existing scholarship on the topic of South Asian domestic violence survivorship, I began seeking out appropriate data sources for this project at

the end of 2014. By that time, I had readily inspected literature from the United States and abroad, and had realized that I had personal stake in studying this topic further. I have spent many years in life curious about my own privileges or disadvantages as a South Asian man in America. In terms of community engagement, I realized what some participants in the study ended up reflecting about. That is, as a man I hold a voice less scrutinized than women in my community. I felt it an imperative that I should do something with my voice to assist those who are suffering. In terms of my being American, I have long been attuned to the high level of prejudice that is placed on minority groups, including pervasive stereotypes and quick judgment not afforded to the dominant culture, and barriers in accessing social spaces/resources to foster development. It was not until I concerned myself with South Asian domestic violence scholarship that I realized how this could occur by way of access differences, between services available for White Americans and communities of color. This realization helped to refine my professional goals by reinforcing attention to the topic of service disparities for survivors of domestic abuse. I wanted to learn about the cultural context that deeply impacts how we serve South Asian women, and how to remove barriers that interrupt best practices.

However, this work is even more personal than that. I have people close to me who have experienced similar harms to those described in the study. Due to this, I have long been curious about my own cultural community's handling of mental health topics, and I paid attention to the ways in which matters of marriage, divorce, death, birth, trauma, and violence were discussed in my personal surroundings while growing up. I have always found myself unsatisfied and troubled by the lack of attention to the pain that can surround these issues in my community at one level, and larger society's inattention to cultural sensitivity about minority suffering at another level. This latter point includes the academic world where I repeatedly encountered

patronizing or ignorant attitudes about communities of color, even from some colleagues who claimed critical thinking skills. In addition, I have been working in mental health spaces that respond to communities of color in Michigan over the past decade, which has made me privy to discussions that may not happen as frequently for others. Across it all, there has been nothing more motivating than the fact I felt it a duty to complete this work. People who look like me are underrepresented in the field of human development and family studies. I often thought to myself about how I didn't want to miss a crucial opportunity to serve. I could use my doctoral education, and professional career, as an opportunity to help my own community, instead of passively watching research and service gaps persist.

In 2014, I had the opportunity to meet with a service advocate from an organization in the Midwest United States serving South Asian families, including survivors of domestic violence. This became a mentor-mentee relationship in the months that followed. The name and location of that service agency shall not be disclosed in order to maintain confidentiality for all parties. This advocate was a South Asian woman, who had worked tirelessly to serve South Asian families for decades. We had decided to work together to find data for my dissertation project, and she had taken me under her wing in this regard. This was one of the experiences that was most rewarding for me, and I was able to meet a second member of the service agency who had a lot to impart on me as well. At this juncture, I would like to note that this clarified my role as a pseudo-insider to the South Asian survivorship experience. On the one hand, my own South Asian identity had led me to this type of work as an act of reclamation for my community. On the other hand, I was being mentored by South Asian women who held a gendered experience that I could never access, nor could I lay claim to their tireless efforts of working on the ground with South Asian survivors. Even so, I was embraced fully by these advocates in our

collaboration, because we shared personal concerns about U.S. South Asian wellness that reflected our own family and community experiences.

From December 2014 to April 2016, I was in frequent contact with this service agency, including in-person meetings. These meetings were established to construct proper IRB protocol fitting with the standards of Michigan State University, as well as to ensure that respect was maintained for the service agency in all official documents related to the project. In addition, considerations of human rights, collectivist respect, inclusion/exclusion criteria, benefit to participants, ensuring utmost confidentiality of participants, and personal convictions in doing this work were reflected upon in conversation. Several attempts were made to draft participant recruitment letters by email, that would go out to women who were part of the agency's database of closed cases.

Although working with this agency was deeply rewarding and educational, we found only one participant in the span of almost one and a half years. This led me to consider the shroud of secrecy that surrounded disclosure in general, and especially for communities of color within the United States. In reflecting with the service providers at the agency, I wondered if we lacked in recruitment due to any stigma attached to clients returning to services already utilized. It takes deep courage to disclose about violence in the first place, and women may not have wanted to maintain contact afterward, especially with a South Asian man who was a newcomer they had not previously met. Of course, these are only my guesses at what happened. What was apparent is that accessing survivor stories is difficult. At the start, I thought my dissertation would provide what U.S. literature on the topic had not. That is, disclosure oriented data that centers survivor voices to inform culturally sensitive best practice. Instead, I was harshly reminded that this is not an easy thing to achieve.

Utilizing the guidance of my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Marsha Carolan, I began to make changes to my data collection format in June 2016, in response to the aforementioned barriers. This was discussed with the service agency, and direct collaboration was discontinued. I am very thankful about all I have learned in my time communicating with them, and do not believe I would have had as much quality in this manuscript without their mentorship. They agreed about the need to change direction for the sake of finding more participants. I decided to include the one interview we found together at the agency in my data set, because I felt that any survivor stories that came forth needed to be seen as rare gems of knowledge, not easily accessed by any researcher.

By then it was the middle of 2016, more than a year after beginning my efforts for this dissertation. I needed to recruit more, and utilized an online encrypted format to gain participants. Data collection using the online format yielded seven powerful stories from South Asian women survivors in the Midwest, bringing the total of participants to eight. However, another unanticipated setback was that I received fraudulent emails from people trying to gain compensation from the study. These were not legitimate participants. I worked tirelessly with Michigan State University's IRB and my dissertation chair to troubleshoot the matter before beginning analysis. What I learned from this was that people could go out of their way to trivialize domestic violence research, even if their end game was only to get paid. I learned that people could be undisturbed that they were interrupting a process for survivors who courageously told their stories in this study. This seemed to mimic what a lot of the participants said about how people could respond to survivors, only regarding them in contempt for selfish reasons, and being unable to help them. These emails from non-participants worked to undermine those who used the survey to provide deep reflection about their survival. It was a

profound distraction. In all of this, there were still eight stories that made it through the aforementioned barriers, reinforcing my duty in making these stories known to others, and using them as essential knowledge in mapping understandings for Midwest South Asian women. Each hurdle reinforced my obligation to complete this work.

I began taking memos of my subjective experiences in doing this work in December 2015. I continued this after reading each transcript, and again when completing analysis. This gave me a way to track my own development as a researcher at different junctures, including confrontation of my own biases and insights as a U.S. South Asian man. Prior to data collection, I wrote of my expectation that I would likely hear about the role of secrecy in the disempowerment of these women. I also wrote of my deep respect for collectivist love that exists in South Asian cultures, as well as the potential to distort ideas of togetherness into a denial of rights upon one's body in instances of violence. I wrote about how this is akin to not knowing the difference between personal independence and selfishness. I also noted my belief in a culturally sensitive lens for understanding domestic violence survival, which was reinforced by reading culturally centered articles on the topic beforehand.

As I began collecting data in January 2016, I started taking memos about my eagerness to help survivors as a therapist might, and how this could bias my conduction of a research interview. Noting this about myself allowed me to track it, and ensure a prioritization of collecting data instead of acting as a mental health provider. Of course, the internal dialogue to serve continued since it was such an important element of why I took on this study in the first place. On another note, the first interview I conducted made the issue of domestic violence upon South Asian women real, not in the sense that I had never encountered a survivor from the community, but in the sense that I wasn't reading articles from journals anymore. Instead, I was

sitting in real-time with a survivor whose lived reality exists beyond the pages we write. This was this person's real life story.

When I had completed data collection in 2016, I began reading the transcripts from each participant and taking memos of my personal reflections in response. I kept encountering secondary emotional pain in reading their stories, even though this was minimal compared to the survivors' experiences. Still, I couldn't help but feel a visceral response, in part because the data felt familiar to what I had observed in my community growing up. These participants were confirming things I had witnessed in the lives of close others who had suffered from violence or domination. Most familiar to me were their commentaries about the judgmental pretenses in the community that shamed women for wanting to disclose about their abuse.

Their stories also reminded me about the many times I have been told to be less serious, if I ever ended up talking about domestic abuse with peers. I reflected on January 10, 2017 about this:

> I think the tertiary thing here too, is that men who are supportive of women's agency also become emasculated by those same men in the process of their own socialization – as if to mean, that unless we all agree that it is okay to be punitive and shame women who want to breathe freely, then we are not men who deserve any power either. I think I am doing this project because I refuse to live by such identity markers, so poisonous for my being.

I also thought a lot about the possibility that my dissertation could, to dominant culture Americans, read as an indictment of South Asian culture. On January 11, 2017, I wrote:

> What does it mean to be a South Asian person in the U.S., who has to simultaneously appease racial power structures in the social world, and then not be able to find a truer solace at home because those at home and in your cultural community are trying to resolve and survive the same social expectations of not looking like a primitive minority – the pressure to appear as though everything is fine…

I wrote on the same day:

> One of my biases, even though I appreciate services better than no services, is that they operate with the same xenophobia that the rest of the western sociopolitical climate does, where the first world is seen as more humanitarian than elsewhere, and by extension white women's pathways as more empowering than those who embrace the traditions of other cultures….What program is there that understands and effectively responds to lived conditions of a collectivist network….Of course there are those that work in the back seams of society, but they are not always funded, and not often brought into the fold of academic discussion of abuse prevention...

After completing data analysis in May 2017, I was delighted that the use of grounded theory methods had extracted two main plot points (selective codes) in the participants' stories. The challenge had been that each barrier along the way caused me to question whether anything would come from my dissertation work. Yet, here it was. The stories of the survivors were in front of me, represented in an analytic map to share with others in the academic world. Although limitations in my study included barriers in recruitment, I do believe that the stories in this manuscript should be viewed as rare treasures that can have profound impact on the way professionals look at South Asian women's survivorship in the Midwest United States.

It also means that we need to keep searching for these stories, because they are out there, although hard to come by. Moreover, many stories are told to advocates and service providers in private, and are not intended to be examined in an open literary space like this one. However, the hope is to bridge the gap between service and research in order to increase knowledge about the needs of this U.S. community. I wrote my last memo in May 2017 after finishing data analysis:

> All I can say is how rewarding it is to see a vulnerable community, one experiencing traumatic disempowerment, share with us that resilience matters quite a lot, and that they were going to find wellness in some way no matter what they had gone through. We need to make it easier for them to do so, and we need to pay attention to how we can assist them aptly and respectfully in their survival. We need to accomplish this with a keen eye on their ecological context.

Appreciation. I have deep appreciation for the eight South Asian women who told their stories in this study. I have learned so much from engaging with their reflections. I hope my use of grounded theory analysis did justice by their disclosures. I am so thankful for the courage of these women, who provided important information about their own experiences, especially as it pertains to the needs of other survivors like them. I want to express my deep gratitude to them for allowing my work to be a vessel in sharing their bravery and resilience. I hope that more studies attempt to capture the voices of those who suffer in our world, in order to develop and refine the ways in which we serve communities in need.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Guide

PROJECT:
Surviving Domestic Violence in the Midwest United States:
South Asian Women

Interview Guide

Overview:

- This interview will consist of 4 grand-tour questions that are be open-ended in nature. These will ask about the participant's family history, immigration experience, as well as their perceptions about how violence is addressed in the larger community. The central question will ask about their personal experience with domestic violence.
- Additional probes will be used to identity socio-cultural content areas related to that experience, and to fill in gaps or content areas previously unaddressed in that particular interview. These probes are listed below each section.
- A closing question will be asked: Was there anything else involved in your experience that has not been discussed? When the response to this final question is completed, the interview will end.

Beginning of interview:

First of all, welcome and thank you for participating in this interview. We are very interested in learning from you and hearing the important reflections you have to share. What you share with me will help clarify the needs of South Asian survivors of domestic violence. Don't worry about giving any wrong answers, because all of your responses are important to us. You may stop the interview or skip any question at any time. You can also ask questions or for clarification at anytime.

Grand Tour Question #1

Please tell me a little about your family history in the United States?

Additional Probes:

- When did your family arrive?
- How old were you when your family arrived?
- What is your family's country of origin?
- What nationality do you identify with?
- Where were you born?
- What were things like during your childhood?

Grand Tour Questions #2

For non-immigrant women:

What was it like growing up in America?

For immigrant women:

What was your personal immigration experience like?

Additional Probes:
- How long have you been living in the United States?
- How long have you been living in the local area?
- What was the influence of the community in your upbringing?
- What was the role of religion or spirituality in this?
- Was education play a role?

Grand Tour Question # 3

How is domestic violence addressed in the South Asian community?

Additional Probes:
- Are you currently in a relationship?
- Have you been married before?
- How old were you when you entered in that relationship?
- How long has it been since your separation/divorce?
- What role does religion or spirituality play in these perceptions?
- What role does education play?

Grand Tour Question # 4

What was your own experience like with domestic violence?

Additional Probes:
- How is family involved in your experience?
- How is community involved in your experience?
- How is religion or spirituality involved in your experience?
- How are friendships involved in your experience?
- How was educational access involved in your experience?
- Do you have children? How many? How were they involved?
- What role did services play?

Final Question

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your experience?

End of discussion:

It was an honor to talk with you, and thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide (Online Version)

Online Interview Guide

Surviving Domestic Violence in the Midwest United States: South Asian Women

Q1 Are you a South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, or Bengali) woman, 18 years of age or older?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q2 Do you currently live in the Midwest United States? Note: For the purposes of this study, this only includes Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q3 Have you experienced domestic violence at some point in your life?
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q4 Are you currently experiencing domestic violence in your life? Note: If you are currently experiencing any active harm, and would like services, please contact support services as soon as you are able
- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

1 Please tell me a little about your family history in the United States? Suggested: Discuss when your family arrived, how old you were, your family's country of origin, your family's nationality, where and when you were born, and what things were like during your childhood

2 Please select what is accurate about you:
- ❍ I moved to the United States during my lifetime (1)
- ❍ I was born in the United States (2)

2a What was it like growing up in America? Suggested: Discuss how long you have been in the local area, how this compares to family members' experiences of growing up, the influence of the community in your upbringing, the role of religion or spirituality in your upbringing, the role of education in your upbringing

2b What was your personal immigration experience like? Suggested: Discuss what the move was like, how long you have been in the local area, how this compares to family members' experiences of growing up, the influence of the community in your upbringing, the role of religion or spirituality in your upbringing, the role of education in your upbringing

3 How is domestic violence addressed in the South Asian community? Suggested: Discuss domestic violence perceptions as they pertain to your current relationship status,

relationship history, if you were previously married, how old you were at the end of a relationship, how old you were at the beginning of a relationship, how long it has been since separation/divorce, conditions surrounding separation, conditions surrounding forming a relationship, the role of religion and spirituality, the role of education

4 What was your own experience like with domestic violence? Suggested: Discuss the role of family in your experience of domestic violence, the community's role in your abuse, the role of religion or spirituality, friendship involvement with your experience, the role of education and educational access, how many children you have, children's involvement in the violence, and the role of support services

5 Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your experience?

6 Thank you for participating! As a token of our appreciation, we would like to offer you a 20 dollar amazon gift card. Would you like to receive this gift card?

- ❍ Yes, I would like to receive my 20 gift card for participating (1)
- ❍ No thank you! (2)

APPENDIX C: Consent Form

PROJECT:
Surviving Domestic Violence in the Midwest United States:
South Asian Women

Consent Form

Our Study: This research project is being conducted to help us better understand the unique experiences of domestic abuse for South Asian women. We will attempt to gather this information by inviting you and other survivors in the local area to give individual interviews with us.

We believe that your participation in this study will help South Asian women survivors, because we will better understand what they go through, and how to respond effectively to their needs. Our goal is to use information in this study to increase knowledge about domestic violence in scholarship, and to create better services for the South Asian community. You may not directly benefit from your participation in this study.

You can decide to stop the interview at any time if you choose, and you can skip any question that you are not comfortable answering. You will be able to do this without giving up your benefits for participating. Your responses in this interview are completely confidential. No written track of your participation will be produced, and you will not have to sign any documents. Instead, pseudonyms or numerical codes will be placed on all documentation. Consenting in the audio recording at the beginning of the interview will count as your consent. Recordings of these interviews will be transcribed (written on a computer program) so that we can collect your responses along with all of the others we speak with. There is the risk that discussing this issue may bring to mind some bad memories.

Who is in charge?
The investigators responsible for this project are researchers Zain Shamoon and Dr. Marsha Carolan, in collaboration with (AGENCY INFORMATION OMITTED). Only Mr. Shamoon and (AGENCY WORKER'S NAME OMITTED) will be present with you at your interview. Dr. Carolan can be reached at her office for questions or concerns at (PHONE NUMBER OMITTED).

The Interview Process: Prior to the interview, all participants will be notified about the instances in which investigators and all members of the research team are required to report abuse or neglect of children or elderly persons, or in the instance of intent to self- harm or to harm others, as is required by law. If any threat to a participant or another individual is discovered throughout the research process, the interview will be discontinued and appropriate services will be contacted. Otherwise, participants will be provided strict confidentiality to the fullest extent allowable by law.

When you arrive for you interview, the consent form will be read to you out loud and fully. To participate, you will be required to affirm your consent on the audio recording before we begin

with interview questions, and you will receive your 20 dollar gift card at this time. You will not have to sign your name anywhere, but may request a copy of the consent form. Mr. Shamoon will then interview you with a set of open-ended questions, for 30 minutes to 1 hour. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer, and may choose to discontinue the interview at any time without any consequences. All interviews will be conducted at (LOCATION NAMED OMITTED), or at a pre-arranged and mutually agreed upon private location.

Study Rationale: Large resource and service gaps exist for US-minority women who have experienced domestic violence. South Asian women in the United States (US) are at increased risk for experiencing domestic violence. Services for domestic violence are not complete in the US, and do not always have appropriate resources. There is a lack of information in scholarship as well. The current study hopes to fill those gaps, so that we can better serve South Asian women.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No identifiable information will ever be placed in any presentation or publication of the study. A coded list matching numbers to participants will be kept in a protected, terminable, excel file in the primary investigators office at Michigan State University. The computer containing information will be password protected, and will be accessible only in the primary investigators office, which has restricted access only for the research investigators listed on this project. The data will be accessible to researchers and the MSU HRPP and it will be stored for at least three years after the project closes.

Risks and Benefits: You may experience slight discomfort in reflecting upon your personal experience with domestic violence. If you report overwhelming distress or discomfort, or if you request wanting to explore topics outside of the scope of the interview, the student researcher and (SERVICE AGENCY NAME OMITTED) will make arrangements upon your request to direct you to appropriate services.

Incentives for participation include a $20 dollar gift card for every participant. This will be given to you when you demonstrate consent, and you will not have to return it if you choose to end the interview early, or in the case that you choose to skip any question. Additional benefits you may experience are: a sense of relief by having someone listen to your story, helping us increase knowledge on the topic in academic literature, and to increase quality services for the South Asian community.

Questions and Concerns: If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact Dr. Marsha Carolan at (CONTACT INFORMATION OMITTED) or you may also contact Mr. Zain Shamoon, MA LLMFT at (PHONE NUMBER OMITTED) or email him at (EMAIL INFORMATION OMITTED) or (SERVICE AGENCY WORKER AND CONTACT INFORMATION OMITTED).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study. You may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research

Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Drive, Room 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

To participate, you are acknowledging the following:

- You are providing voluntarily consent to participate by completing the interview and by being audio-recorded.

- You agree to participate in the study, and know that you can refuse to answer any question without penalty. You can discontinue the interview at anytime without penalty.

- You are an adult woman, have experienced domestic violence in the past, and are at least 18 years of age or older.

- You are not experiencing active or ongoing harm/violence at this time.

- You are currently living in the local area.

- You identify as South Asian (i.e. Pakistani, Indian, Bengali, etc.).

- You will obtain a gift card for your participation that is $20 in value.

APPENDIX D: Consent Form (Online Version)

PROJECT:
Surviving Domestic Violence in the Midwest United States:
South Asian Women

(Online) Consent Form

Study Rationale: Large resource and service gaps exist for US-minority women who have experienced domestic violence. South Asian women in the United States (US) are at increased risk for experiencing domestic violence. Services for domestic violence are not complete in the US, and do not always have appropriate resources. There is a lack of information in academic scholarship as well. The current study hopes to fill those gaps, so that we can better serve South Asian women.

Our Study: This research project is being conducted to help us better understand the unique experiences of domestic abuse for South Asian women. We will attempt to gather this information by inviting you and other survivors in the Midwest United States (Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota) to complete individual online survey interviews.

We believe that your participation in this study will help South Asian women survivors, because we will better understand what you and others go through, and how to respond effectively the needs of survivors in this population. Our goal is to use information in this study to increase knowledge about domestic violence in scholarship, and to create better services for the South Asian community in this region of the United States.

Investigators: The investigators responsible for this project are Mr. Zain Shamoon and Dr. Marsha Carolan, of the Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) department at Michigan State University (MSU). These are the only two investigators that will come in contact with confidential data during collection, analysis, and afterward. For questions or concerns, each investigator's contact information is available at the end of this document.

Procedures: To participate, you will be required to affirm your consent at the end of this document. Following this page, will provide a set of screening questions to assess for eligibility criteria. If you are eligible, the interview will begin afterward. Your participation is voluntary. We will ensure that no written track of your participation will be produced, and you will not have to sign any documents. By agreeing to this consent form, you are providing consent for participation.

You may take as little or as much time as you would like. Your responses will be viewed by the investigators, to be compared and contrasted to the responses of other participants. As you move through the interview, you will be able to stop and save your responses, to be continued at another time if you choose. You may refuse to answer or skip any questions by clicking the next button on the online survey. You can withdraw participation at any time or skip any questions you do not wish to answer without forfeiting your incentives for participation. There is one question (Question 2) that must be answered in order to proceed further in the interview and

access subsequent interview questions. This is because the next question is reliant on how you respond to Question 2.

Benefits and Risks: You will not have to give this up if you choose to end the interview early, or in the case that you choose to skip any question. You may also decline the offer after completing the interview. If you choose to receive it, we will provide a specific email for you to contact at the end of the online interview. For verification, please note the date and time you completed this survey in your email.

You may experience slight discomfort in reflecting upon your personal experience with domestic violence. If you report overwhelming distress or discomfort, or if you request wanting to explore topics outside of the scope of the interview, we encourage you to contact appropriate counseling or advocacy services for support.

Additional benefits for your participation may include: a sense of relief by having someone listen to your story, helping us increase knowledge on the topic in academic literature, and to increase quality services for the South Asian community. We encourage you to let others know about the study if you choose, so we can learn from more people about their experiences.

Compensation: Incentives for participation include a $20 Amazon gift card for every participant who chooses to receive it, so long as consent is given and eligibility criteria are met.

Confidentiality: There are instances in which investigators and all members of the research team are required to report current and ongoing abuse or neglect of children or elderly persons, or in the instance of intent to self- harm or to harm others, as is required by law. If you are experiencing any current threat to yourself or another individual in, we encourage you discontinue your participation, and to contact appropriate emergency or counseling services immediately. If you are currently experiencing domestic violence, and would like services, please contact support services as soon as you are able. Other than in these cases, participants will be provided strict confidentiality throughout the project, to the maximum extent allowable by law.

No identifiable information will ever be placed in any presentation or publication of the study. The only time the identities of potential or current participants will be known to the two investigators is when: 1.) you choose to contact the investigators for question or concern before, during or after the interview, or 2.) you contact the investigators to receive your 20 dollar Amazon gift card. For this purpose alone, a separate email will be provided at the end of the online survey, and identities will never be disclosed elsewhere outside of this email exchange. Only the two investigators (Mr. Shamoon and Dr. Carolan) will be able to access this email for communication with participants.

Data collected will be stored on a laptop designated to be used for this study. This laptop is password protected and only accessible to Mr. Zain Shamoon and Dr. Marsha Carolan. Information stored in this online database after you complete your interview will only be made accessible and visible for these two investigators. We will never ask for identifiable information in this study. If any identifiable information were to emerge in the data, pseudonyms or

numerical codes will be placed on all documentation to replace it. In such cases, a coded list matching numbers to participants will be kept in a protected, terminable, excel file in the primary investigators office at Michigan State University. The computer containing this information will be password protected, and will be accessible only in the primary investigators office, which has restricted access only for the research investigators listed on this project. The data in this project will be accessible to Dr. Carolan, Mr. Shamoon and the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program (MSU HRPP) and it will be stored for at least three years after the project closes.

Questions and Concerns: If you have concerns, comments, or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report a problem, please contact Dr. Marsha Carolan at (CONTACT INFORMATION OMITTED). You may also contact Mr. Zain Shamoon, MA LLMFT at (CONTACT INFORMATION OMITTED).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the MSU HRPP at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Drive, Room 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

To participate, you are acknowledging the following:

- You are providing your voluntarily consent to participate by completing this consent form.

- You agree to participate in the study, and know that you can refuse to answer any question without penalty. You can discontinue the interview at anytime without penalty.

- You are at least 18 years of age or older.

- You identify as a South Asian woman (Pakistani, Indian, or Bengali).

- You have experienced domestic violence at some point in your lifetime.

- You are <u>not</u> experiencing active or ongoing harm/violence at this time.

- You are currently living in the Midwest United States. For the purposes of this study, this only includes persons currently residing in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, or Minnesota.

- You may choose to obtain an Amazon gift card for your participation that is $20 in value.

By providing your consent below, you affirm that you have read and understood this document, and would like to participate.
- *I affirm my consent to participate in this study*
- *I do not provide my consent to participate in this study*

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