NEGOTIATING VIOLENCE, NAVIGATING NEOLIBERALISM:

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCACY EFFORTS IN SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES

IN POST-9/11 NEW YORK CITY

by

SONIYA MUNSHI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

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12/7/12 — **Professor Barbara Katz Rothman**

Date — Chair of Examining Committee

3/29/13 — **Professor John Torpey**

Date — Executive Officer

Professor Patricia Clough

Professor Hester Eisenstein

Supervision Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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by

Soniya Munshi

Adviser: Professor Barbara Katz Rothman

This dissertation investigates the relationship between legislative acts and community-based efforts to address intimate violence in the lives of South Asian women in the New York City metropolitan area in order to analyze the complexities that community-based organizations, situated in the matrices of neoliberal governance, face in their everyday advocacy practices. The first chapter offers historical context of the role that South Asian women's anti-violence organizing in the U.S. has had in interrupting, forging, and replicating different forms of community politics and argues that the cultural frameworks utilized by South Asian women's organizations, and the construction of populations of South Asian survivors, are constituted by and contribute to the logics of neoliberalism. Chapter 2 examines the epistemological implications of funding and professionalization of anti-violence efforts to argue that the culture of funding has produced discourses of specialization and expertise that impact groups that work on gender-based violence as well as other community-based organizations that see domestic violence appear in their constituencies. Chapter 3 examines the treatment of immigrant survivors in the Violence Against Women Act, to argue that VAWA produces populations of recognizable battered immigrant women that are offered the opportunity to be folded into life, while

immigrant survivors of domestic violence whose experience is not legible are neglected, or, in Foucauldian terms, left to die. Policy advocacy discourses reveal that anti-violence efforts not only manage populations but also produce them. Chapter 4 examines how domestic violence advocates working with South Asian survivors of violence negotiate the everyday terrain that has been produced through the U.S. anti-violence movement's alliance with the criminal legal system and argues that advocates take up discursive strategies of "flexible ambivalence" with respect to the criminal legal system that are communicated through frameworks of "choice" that are compatible with the machinations of neoliberal governance. Chapter 5 offers case studies that present imaginative possibilities that community-based organizers forge to address the needs that appear in their communities, and looks at the constraints that they face, internal community exclusions that persist as well as potential openings for further connections.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation

in the memory of my father, Rajendra K. Munshi and my cousin-brother, Amitabh Munshi,

in gratitude for their unwavering faith and continued guidance

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Introduction

Endings/Beginnings

Meher

The story of this dissertation project starts with Meher[1], a young Pakistani woman from Brooklyn that I met while I worked at Manavi, a South Asian women's organization in New Jersey. A teacher at Meher's high school called us late on a Friday afternoon. She said they were experiencing an emergency: Meher's parents had just found out that she was dating a young man in her class and threatened to take her back to their hometown in South Asia to get her married. Meher was afraid to go home. Within hours, we had secured temporary shelter for her as well as obtained a Temporary Restraining Order against her parents.

The latter task had been a bit tricky. Meher was under eighteen, which made her ineligible to apply for a restraining order unless she was an emancipated minor. But, a local attorney who ran into us on his way out of the family court volunteered to take her case pro bono, or without any charge. The three of us met in a small conference room and Meher relayed the details of her situation. The lawyer turned to me, smiling. He was relieved; this was going to be an easy case. All we had to do, he said, was explain to the judge that if Meher had contact with her parents, she would be given a death sentence. They would force to her to get married and live in her hometown in South Asia, where she was surely going to be abused and potentially was going to be killed. He wanted me to attest to these "facts" in front of the judge, as an expert witness, so that he could work out the legal logistics to grant Meher the protection that she stated she wanted. I refused. Luckily, I came to this case with experience in negotiations with lawyers who were interested in using expedient and sensationalist racist depictions of South Asian

[1] All names, and any other identifying details, have been changed to protect privacy

cultures to win legal cases. And, although the process was fraught, I was able to strike a balance between representing and contextualizing Meher's needs without compromising my or my organization's social justice integrity and values. She obtained legal emancipation and won the temporary order.

The real complications in this case occurred about a week later, when Meher, her lawyer, and I (as her legal advocate) returned to court for the Final Restraining Order hearing. Meher's parents, working-class non-English speaking Pakistani immigrants, were in the courtroom without legal representation because their attorney was running late. (He never showed up.) The court had assigned a Hindi interpreter although the parents spoke Punjabi; the two languages are similar but they are not the same. As the hearing began, several issues quickly became clear: Meher's parents did not understand why they had received this restraining order; they wanted to talk to their daughter but understood that they were now legally prohibited from doing so; and, no, they did not want their daughter to date one of her classmates, and, yes, they did want to arrange her marriage. The final restraining order was granted. Meher's lawyer tried to high-five me in the courthouse hallway.

Although I lost touch with Meher months after she moved back to New York, when we last talked, she was living with her boyfriend and his family. Her boyfriend's mother called the police one night when her father and brother showed up to talk to her about coming home, and her father was arrested for violating the restraining order. He was undocumented, it was soon after 9/11, and it was possible that he was swept into the crisis of detention and deportation; she wasn't sure what had happened to him.

Meher's case has haunted me since that day, even though it was not in itself that unusual of a case. I saw myself in the details of Meher's life. I grew up not far from Meher's

neighborhood. I had many experiences that were stunningly similar to Meher's during my own high school years. Her father's nicotine-stained teeth, dry lips, and perfect fingernails reminded me of my own father. I do not doubt that Meher was afraid of her parents, much like I was often afraid of mine. I also do not doubt that in the urgency of the situation—whether based in Meher's own understanding of her reality of her family experience, or constructed through assumptions based in her teacher's cultural racism, or some other combination of factors that produce assessments of risk—our advocacy responsibilities, given the options, were to support her in pursuing legal action. I do have doubt, however, that the legal process she went through, in which we advocated for her, was ultimately the best solution for her and her family's safety and well-being. I wonder about other possibilities that may have led to different outcomes. What if there had been a mechanism that had facilitated a different kind of communication between Meher and her parents in which the validation of her fear and threat to her autonomy did not require criminalizing her family?

I wonder about Meher's mother. I wonder about her role in threatening her daughter with forced marriage and the dynamics in her own marriage; was she in an abusive marriage? There were some clues in the court room that day that led me to question whether she herself was living under everyday conditions of fear and threat. I remember the sadness and perplexity in her face when the court interpreter slowly translated her daughter's accusations, revealing the simultaneous possibility of her enacting violence against her daughter while experiencing violence perpetrated by her husband. What had happened to Meher's mother after the hearing and then after her husband had been arrested, and possible detained and/or deported? What types of options did Meher's mother have available to attain safety, especially given that she had

already been labeled a perpetrator of violence by the courts; the legal system is predicated upon binaries of criminal and victim, and "bad victims" are not treated with generosity or compassion.

I wonder about Meher's community. What interventions existed or could be built to both keep Meher safe but also not increase her family's vulnerability to state power? Was her family isolated or did they have friends, neighbors, or other family members that they could rely upon for support? Was their community encouraging the parents to send Meher to Pakistan, or were there people that she could have talked to for assistance? We did not ask these questions. Our work was vehemently against anything that looked like "mediation," stemming from feminist principles that critiqued these processes for being inattentive to the imbalance of power dynamics in violent relationships. Without any options to mediate, however, the only option became separation, isolation, and ending of the relationships. Did we know how to distinguish between different forms of violence so we could read relationships through nuance, not just theoretically but empirically? Our toolkit of responses require us to reduce or re-read dynamics of violence into a script that would be legible to the law, but were we building strategies that disrupted the epistemology of the law, or had this become our lens as well?

Ameena

In the first year after 9/11, a typical day started with me driving south on the B.Q.E. through Staten Island and across the Outerbridge to reach my office in New Brunswick, New Jersey. My daily activities included speaking with survivors on the phone, writing grants, attending staff meetings, planning outreach activities, and other non-profit professional duties. Many days included some time at the Middlesex County Courthouse, just a few blocks from our office, to advocate for South Asian women seeking legal protection such as a restraining order. I

spent countless hours in those courtrooms, holding hands, patting backs, supplying tissues and building strategies to support survivors in articulating their legal needs and then getting them met. I spent countless hours advocating for abusive partners to be held legally accountable for their violent actions; in many cases this meant criminal prosecution for restraining order violations or other abusive acts. This was my job.

In the evenings, I would drive back to the city, through Brooklyn, and make a stop in Queens to pick up other volunteers at a local immigrant rights organization before driving back to New Jersey; this time, I took the northern route, across the George Washington Bridge, to the Passaic County Jail. For many months, we went to do jail visits with post-9/11 detainees, who were mostly men in our South Asian communities that had been disappeared by the then-INS under the anti-terrorism guise of increasing homeland security. We sorted through the chaos and non-transparency of the immigration enforcement systems in order to find and connect with detainees who had been picked up; the organization also set up a hotline for detainees to call. Our work varied according to what was needed and ranged from bringing necessary items to people in detention, facilitating legal resources, communicating with family members here and in South Asia, taking collect calls at home or in the organization's office from detainees who were otherwise isolated, documenting the conditions at the jail, and building a larger social justice campaign that protested these repressive technologies of state power.

My everyday life felt marked by contradiction and disconnect: I spent my days working within a world in which we encouraged the criminal legal system to hold abusive South Asian men accountable by punishing them, imprisoning them, and potentially deporting them. I spent my evenings and weekends trying to get South Asian men out of detention/jail. The underlying

logics of my day job relied upon understanding the state as a potential source of protection for women; at night, we understood that the state was a site of contestation and violence, not safety.

We had big fights at my job about these disconnects and our organizational responsibilities during times of crisis. Some of us felt that we needed to attend to the changing conditions of the community in order to adapt to the emergent needs that were impacting our constituencies, especially working-class, Muslim, and/or undocumented women; these were the people who were most affected by the enactment of counterterrorism policies in the post-9/11 period. Others disagreed, arguing that this was a time of crisis and that it was imperative for us to remain steady, unchanged, and consistent so that we remained available for survivors of domestic violence who, in these chaotic times, may have even fewer resources available to them in their families and communities.

About a year later, I received a phone call from Ameena. Although we didn't know each other directly, she and I both volunteered for the same immigrant rights organization, and a staff organizer there had given her my work number. Ameena needed help. She was being stalked. For months, she had been communicating with several detainees as part of her volunteer work. One of these men had recently been deported. Another detainee, a young man whose family lived near her apartment in Brooklyn, had recently been released. "This was great news! At first." she told me. Over the last few weeks, he had been acting inappropriately. At first she dismissed it as friendliness and mild flirtation, but his behavior started to grow threatening and potentially violent. She had given him her phone number because he called her from jail and he knew where she lived because they had corresponded by mail. She felt unsafe. When Ameena talked to a staff person about this, she was told that she needed to be mindful of her second-generation citizenship privilege, and that she absolutely could not contact the police. They had

worked so hard to get this young undocumented Sikh man out of detention; did Ameena really want to be responsible for his incarceration and potential deportation? Ameena kept quiet. Later, when the phone harassment intensified, she talked to a different staff member who affirmed that this behavior was harmful and passed on my number.

What Ameena needed first and foremost was a space where she could talk openly about the fear she was feeling without being reprimanded about her relative privilege and responsibilities as a person without immigration status concerns. I was able to give her this space and time. She also needed a safety plan that did not incorporate criminal legal solutions; this was harder. We talked about different immediate options, including temporarily re-location, as well as longer-term ideas that involved the organization taking some responsibility in this matter. We had many ideas, including that their work with the detainee could be made conditional upon him changing his inappropriate behavior, holding trainings for volunteers to better equip them to communicate boundaries, and building infrastructure to communicate more openly about gender dynamics within the organization. Ameena brought these suggestions back to the staff members, but they were resistant and cited time constraints and other community priorities as obstacles.

My conversations with Ameena exposed how oversimplified our own organizational post- 9/11 internal debates had been: the question was not about whether to shift our organizational work to adjust to the crisis happenings or to remain consistent in our anti-violence platform. The questions we needed to ask were about how to grow our strategies, our social change methodologies, and our imaginations to remain an available resource for survivors of violence but within the context of the current conditions. Clearly, incidences of intimate violence not only continued but also grew in the time after 9/11. The shifting visibilities of

racism and other vulnerabilities to state violence mean that survivors' needs were also transforming. 9/11 did not begin conversations within South Asian anti-violence spaces about the consequences of relying on the legal system; these concerns have existed for a long time in South Asian communities and have an even longer history in anti-violence women of color spaces more generally. 9/11 did, however, shine a bright light on these limitations. I wanted to understand how and why anti-violence efforts responded—or did not respond—to these emerging needs for different strategic interventions; this concern prompted me to leave my job and start graduate work.

Mr. X, Community "Uncle"

During my research, I was fortunate to get an invitation to attend the 2011 India Abroad Person of the Year Awards. This annual event is a spectacle of the community highlights of the year, well-attended by prominent public figures who are situated in different realms of the Indian American community such as the arts/culture, politics, and activism. The food is delicious and plentiful, and the wine flows throughout the evening.

Over the course of many hours, different awards are given out. In 2011, the first award, the India Abroad Special Award for Achievement, was given to a spelling bee winner, a Jeopardy contestant, and a geography bee winner. Although this was a shared award, the announcements were made one at a time so that each individual went up separately to receive the award, beam a model minority smile, and receive enthusiastic applause from the audience. About two hours later, an award was given out for Lifetime Award for Community Service to four South Asian women's organizations: Apna Ghar (Chicago) Maitri (Bay Area), Manavi (New Jersey), Sakhi (New York). I sighed and mumbled to myself, disappointed that four

organizations were sharing the stage while the competitive gamers had each been individually recognized. At the tables next to me, other people were also mumbling to themselves, but out of disrespect and boredom. One older Indian man, married to a very prominent leader in the arts/culture world, was quick to express his displeasure: “What about the men? I’m so tired of these women.” He went on to disparage their work, appalled that these groups were receiving this community validation. Other people at his table nodded along, barely paying attention to the women on the stage. Although my frustration at the sexist grumbling was temporary eclipsed by outrage that the Person of the Year Award was given to Nikki Haley, the memory of this community elder has stayed with me. He reminds me of the important discursive work that South Asian women’s organizations continue to do and the challenges that they face on an everyday community level. I come to this project with a lot of questions, and many of my inquiries emerge out of disappointments in the constraints that South Asian women’s organizations are operating within but also produce. This project is invested in making visible that which often goes unspoken, and comes out of experiencing and witnessing the very unromantic realities of exclusion, marginalization, invisibility, and erasure—and the complicated conversations that surround these processes—in community-based work. But, importantly, this project is also grounded in a place of love, generosity, and belief in the possibility of individual, collective, and social transformation.

Chapter One

Cultural Contentions: Violence, Governance, and South Asian Women

Introduction

At South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)'s three-day national summit in April 2011, Shehnaaz Janmohamed, moderator of the panel, "Inclusive Spaces: Anti-Violence Organizations, Outreach and Organizing," asked the speakers, who were representing their work in the Muslim, Bangladeshi, working-class, new immigrant and/or LGBTQ[2] margins of the South Asian American[3] community, to comment on three issues that have emerged in anti-violence work[4] over the past two decades.

First, she asked the speakers to reflect on the issue of *accountability*; given the dominance of criminal legal solutions to domestic violence, and the increasing collaborations between law enforcement and immigration enforcement through policy initiatives such as Secure Communities, Janmohamed asked the panelists to reflect on effective strategies that can both support survivors[5] of intimate violence in accessing safety as well as hold abusive community members accountable, without relying on the state. Next, she raised the issue of *funding*; as anti-violence work has become increasingly funded through the federal government, such as

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[2] I use this acronym throughout the dissertation to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer individuals, communities, and populations and elaborate upon this usage, as needed, in the text itself.

[3] I use the phrase "South Asian American" to refer to people of South Asian descent who are located in the United States and do not use it to signify citizenship or any pre-determined or self-identified relationship to the U.S., nation, or the concept of "American." I opt to use this phrase for the convenience of language that indicates that these communities are geographically based in the United States.

[4] Here, I use anti-violence to refer to work that has focused on domestic violence and intimate violence; although different strands of anti-violence work have addressed different types of violence (including different forms of gender-based violence including rape, sexual assault) violence in intimate relationships, including familial relationships, has been most institutionalized in both the broader U.S. as well as in South Asian American communities; it is the effects of this institutionalization that is of interest to this project.

[5] In this project, I use "survivor" to refer to someone who has experienced violence in their intimate relationship, recognizing the complexities of assigning this term to individuals and populations who may not identity with this word. If and when I use "victim" it is because I am taking a policy or a practice on its own terms and using their language.

through the Office on Violence against Women in the Department of Justice, how do South Asian community-based organizations grow their work such that they can stay accountable to their constituencies and not their funders? Finally, Janmohamed asked about the *role of men* in anti-violence work. Historically, these efforts have been led by and for women[6] and predicated upon an understanding that it is more common for women to experience violence that is perpetrated by men; can they hold a more complex understanding of gender and sexuality to account for the myriad and intersectional forms of violence that impact South Asian immigrant [7] communities—including South Asian men[8]—in the U.S.?

Janmohamed's questions offer a snapshot of the interconnected dynamics of neoliberal governance that community-based organizations grapple with on an everyday basis. This dissertation project picks up these questions, attending to political, economic, and cultural forces that have produced, sustained, and shaped attention to gender-based violence in South Asian immigrant communities. Since the founding of Manavi, a South Asian women's organization in New Jersey, in 1985, efforts to address gender-based violence have become one of the most institutionalized forms of activism in South Asian American communities in the U.S. Currently, there are close to thirty anti-violence groups based in South Asian American communities[9]; almost every metropolitan area in the U.S. houses a South Asian women's organization

[6] On the whole, South Asian anti-violence organizations are primarily structured through an understanding of a gender binary, made up of cisgendered men and women (or men and women whose gender identity is aligned with their assigned sex). Their inability to account for nonnormative sexuality and gender identity deserves depth of attention that is beyond the scope of this project. I will address different aspects of their heterosexist and genderist (ie system of belief in only two genders) frameworks at points throughout the dissertation.

[7] My use of South Asian immigrant community also includes diasporic communities of South Asian descent who are not immigrants, or children of immigrants, to the U.S. Admittedly, these communities are not as well represented in the historical narratives that I present here, and the exclusion and other boundaries that have operated in these community spaces also deserve attention that is beyond the scope of this current project.

[8] I add trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people to this question.

[9] Many South Asian women's organizational websites make a national list of groups available as a resource; see Maitri's site (www.maitri.org) or Manavi's site (www.manavi.org), e.g.

(SAWO)[10] and almost half of the groups in the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations name efforts to address domestic violence as one of their principal activities (SAALT "Meet the National Coalition" 2012). Why has there been such a strong and consistent formalized response to domestic violence in South Asian American communities? Among the many complex issues that South Asian immigrant communities face in the United States, especially in the period since 9/11, why has "domestic violence" garnered consistent resources?[11]

This project looks at anti-violence work in South Asian American communities within its sociopolitical and economic context to engage the conditions that "facilitate certain forms or figurations of human suffering to become objects of earnest and widespread concern (Abu-Lughod 2011:51)." I examine the production and impacts of this concern by looking at the effects of legislative acts on community-based efforts to address violence in the lives of South Asian American women in the U.S. In reading anti-domestic violence activism through the relationships between state policies and localized responses, I aim to illuminate the complexities that community-based organizations, situated in the matrices of neoliberal governance, face in their everyday advocacy practices with South Asian survivors of domestic violence. This exploration is undergirded by attention to internal differentiations of vulnerability to institutional violence in South Asian American communities, and how these dynamics are addressed and/or avoided in community social change work.

In this project, I do not directly address the incidence of domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities in the U.S. Academic literature, mostly coming out of the social sciences, including applied disciplines of social work, public health, and clinical psychology, has

[10] This abbreviation for South Asian women's organizations (SAWOS) was first coined by Abraham (1995).
[11] A budget analysis of 12 SAWOs overall budgets over the past ten years revealed that although there are fluctuations and dips in total assets, these groups (except one) experienced growth over this period; more than one organization saw their total assets grow over 400%, though most were closer to 200%.

focused attention on empirical studies of prevalence and dynamics of domestic violence in South Asian communities to (1) refute model minority stereotypes in order to affirm that social problems, such as domestic violence, exist in these communities, (2) articulate culturally-specific needs of South Asian survivors to challenge assumptions of a universal experience of domestic violence, and/or (3) identify legal and other institutional challenges faced by immigrant survivors when they seek assistance (e.g. Dasgupta and Warrier 1996; Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio 1999; George and Rahangdale 1999; Mehrotra 1999; Preisser 1999; Abraham 2000; Ayyub 2000; Dasgupta 2000; Merchant 2000; Nankani 2001; Natarajan 2002; Raj and Silverman 2002; Ahmad et al. 2004; Gill 2004). This project, on the other hand, joins a growing body of literature about anti-violence work itself (e.g. Rudrappa 2004; Bhuyan 2006; Das Gupta 2006). I argue that attention to the practices of community-based efforts through, with, and against the modalities and technologies that implement neoliberal state policies (Trudeau and Veroniso 2009) is essential to understand how these groups mediate, but also produce and obscure, relationships between state institutions and survivors of violence.

This project takes as a core assumption that we "cannot escape neoliberal conditions of possibility but can, as changing, contingent subjects, not be incapacitated by this neoliberalism" (Grewal 2005:4). I ground my exploration in Janmohamed's three questions because they encapsulate the tensions that must be engaged as we collectively imagine and implement the future directions of anti-violence efforts in South Asian immigrant communities in the U.S. This dissertation hopes to advance these conversations by taking a step back to contextualize these emergence of these concerns, moving into the present to demonstrate how South Asian community-based organizations are engaging these tensions, and then looking ahead at possible reconfigurations of social change visions that fuel and grow this work. To do this, I seek,

address, and build upon illuminative political moments and questions (Duggan 2004:81), with an understanding that contestations and disjunctions are not failures, but can offer productive insights (Ang 2001; Varghese 2007).

This introduction sets up the theoretical and methodological context for my inquiries. I begin with a brief discussion of the evolution of the term "South Asian" as a political and cultural signifier. I then offer a history of South Asian women's anti-violence organizing in the U.S. and the role this work has had in interrupting, forging, and replicating different forms of community politics. The following two sections contend with culture and the various ways it operates in this context. South Asian anti-violence work has grown from a platform of culture-specificity, where a premise of shared culture is a mode through which South Asian women's needs, experiences, and life conditions are articulated. I explore why and how engagements with culture and cultural racism has been a critical component of this work. Then, I shift the discussion in order to read this site through a different cultural framework: the cultural logics of neoliberalism. I situate the growth of South Asian non-profit community-based anti-violence organizations within a period of a decline in state-sponsored social welfare and increased repression of immigrants at the same time that social policies that expand options for domestic violence survivors were crafted. I look at the implications of these simultaneous developments in freedom and violence for South Asian women's organizations, arguing that the cultural frameworks of South Asian women's organizations, and the construction of populations of South Asian survivors, are constituted by and contribute to the logics of neoliberalism.

Making Vocabularies: Productions and Circulations of *South Asian*

In this project, I use the term "South Asian" because I address political and community spaces that have historically organized under this rubric; however, I do so with caution and with recognition of the contestations and limitations embedded in this term. "South Asian" as a descriptive category started to circulate in the 1980s in U.S. academic and political spaces to refer to people who are descended from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka (and sometimes Afghanistan), including diasporic communities from East Africa, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and other parts of the world (Islam 1993). It simultaneously operates at a global scale that can hold diasporic multiplicities while attending to the local specificities of a particular region (Shukla 2001).

"South Asian" has been heralded within left, feminist, and/or secular spaces as a progressive concept, as it theoretically transcends nationalism to unite communities with shared and overlapping histories, geographies, languages, ethnicities, and religions (Vaid 1999/2000). It has also received criticism for its erasure of power differentials within the South Asian region and its diaspora, and, in particular, for privileging India and Hinduism. Visweswaran and Mir argue that the deployment of "South Asian" has assumed the Indian experience to be paradigmatic and, given that India is assumed to be monolithically Hindu, Hindu then functions as an "unmarked, normative category in much the same way as "whiteness" signifies "American"" (1999/2000:100). Islam (1993) notes that, accordingly, people who are from non-Indian countries are more likely to identify with their national identity (e.g. Bangladeshi, Nepali) than as "South Asian." Other critics of the term note that it obscures North Indian hegemonic dynamics within India and/or that it has, at best, been effective in adding in Pakistan and Bangladesh thus continuing to marginalize island countries (e.g. Sri Lanka and the Maldives)

and communities that don't share a relationship to Hindi/Urdu and related languages (Islam 1993; Kukke and Shah 1999/2000).[12]

In the period since 9/11, this term has become perhaps even more fraught as well as even more circulated as xenophobia, Islamophobia and generalized anti-terrorism anxieties have been directed towards South Asians, in addition to Arabs, non South-Asian Muslims and others marked as possibly-terrorist. The first reported post-9/11 bias crime was the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh gas station owner, in Mesa, Arizona just days after 9/11[13]. In the week after 9/11 alone, over 645 bias incidents were reported, and over 81% of the incidents involved South Asians. (In contrast, in 1998, 42 incidents were reported against South Asians; in 1999, 52 bias crimes). Anti-Muslim hate crimes increased 1600% between 2000 and 2001 (SAALT "Hate Crimes" 2005). Meanwhile, over ten years later, targeting of these communities continues. In the summer of 2012, within the span of one week, a gurudwara (Sikh place of worship) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, a mosque in Joplin, Missouri, and a mosque in the Chicago suburb of Morton Grove were all targets of violence; six people were killed in the gurudwara attack.

State policies to manage immigrant populations from these regions also have intensified in the post-9/11 period. For example, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policies such as the implementation of the NSEERS program (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) in 2002, which required non-citizen men from 25 mostly-Muslim countries to register with local immigration offices affected communities all across the U.S. Over 83,000 individuals registered through this program and almost 13,000 were put in deportation proceedings; meanwhile,

[12] Critiques of "South Asian" also come from the Right, such as religious fundamentalists and nationalists who see this term as "dangerous" because of their ideological investments in preserving national and cultural boundaries and exclusions (Shah 1997:53). The concept of South Asian disrupts their agenda.

[13] South Asians have a long history of experiencing racist violence, most notably through a 1980s configuration named the "Dotbusters," in New Jersey; they murdered Navroze Mody and perpetrated violence against countless others. In the late 1990s, South Asians were the Asian ethnic group with the most reported incidents of bias crimes (SAALT "Hate Crimes" 2005).

NSEERS failed to obtain even one terrorism-related conviction (SAALT "In Our Own Voices" 2012[14]). The Obama Administration has implemented Secure Communities, a DHS program that requires law enforcement agents to automatically forward the fingerprints of every arrested person to federal immigration databases (Families For Freedom 2012); over 166,000 immigrants have been deported through this initiative (Secure Communities 2012). The domestic repercussions of 9/11 continue to ripple throughout the U.S. in sociopolitical, economic, and cultural domains.

As a result, the post-9/11 period has racialized these groups in ways that have reconfigured South Asian identities,[15] dissolved or fractured historic alliances[16], and created new solidarities[17], both within and with other communities. Moving beyond frameworks of identity and geography, the South Asian has also become a figure that stands in for a racialized population; this terrorist figure challenges and disrupts heteronormative discourses of patriotism and the nation (Puar and Rai 2002; Puar 2007) which have relied upon mutually exclusive binary of the categories of citizen and terrorist (Volpp 2002).

The boundaries of this population are porous to encompass other people racialized through anti-terrorism discourses. This means, for instance, that non-South Asian brown and black communities experience the impacts of post-9/11 racist backlash and institutionalized

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[14] See SAALT's list of Reports/Publications (available at www.saaalt.org) for more documentation of the different types of conditions that South Asian communities have faced in the U.S. specifically since 9/11.

[15] For example, the phrase "South Asian/Arab/Muslim" and acronym MASA (Muslim/Arab/South Asian) have begun to circulate, especially in locations with less visible and/or populous South Asian communities (personal communication with a national-level organizer in South Asian communities, September 2011).

[16] This period has seen different dynamics and struggles, including religious divisions and displays of Islamophobia within South Asian groups; dialogues about the effectiveness of South Asians participating in Asian American spaces; anti-Black and Latino sentiments expressed by South Asian communities, etc.

[17] One example here is the shift in messaging in Sikh communities. Even in the immediate post-9/11 moment, progressive Sikhs were challenging dominant messages produced by mainstream Sikh organizations to disavow associations with terrorism (i.e. Muslims). We can see a shift in the general discursive production over the past ten years. From the time of 9/11 to the shooting at the Oak Creek Gurudwara in August 2012, there has been a move away from a differentiation from terrorist potential ("We are not Muslim") to shared struggle against racial profiling ("We are all Muslim") (Singh 2012).

violence (e.g. surveillance, increased immigration enforcement) even if there was a temporary lightening of these pressures in the initial period of the "war on terror" (Manalansan 2005) on the broader communities of color. Inderpal Grewal argues that this post-9/11 period has been marked by emergent racial formations, in which a new racial order is based upon a new racial Other of being Brown or looking like a terrorist, and that this can include South Asians but also Arabs, Iranians, Latinos, and others. New dynamics of racism are only made possible through a recuperation of technologies available through older colonial legacies, Orientalism, and racial techniques of profiling, criminalization, and other representational practices, re-activated for contemporary purposes (Grewal 2005; also, Volpp 2002). As Puar and Rai state directly, in the post-9/11 period, "what we see is the legitimation and expansion of techniques of racial profiling that were in fact perfected on black bodies" (2002:140).

In this contemporary moment, "South Asian" is formed, within domestic and transnational circulations of American nationalism, through disciplinary and regulative institutions and discourses. "South Asian" also appears in response to these modalities of power, both in relation to state power as well as within realms that appear to transcend, resist or be unrelated to state power. "South Asian" is produced, then, through a calculus of risk, both as potentially presenting a risk to national security as well as being vulnerable to risk, threat, and/or violence (Grewal 2003). Activations of "South Asian" discursively illuminate different distributions of risk and vulnerabilities with which South Asians, and other populations marked as potentially terrorist, contend. They also offer some disruption of prior deployments of model

minority frameworks, affirming pre-9/11 articulations from within these communities that have challenged elitist and homogenized characterizations of South Asian Americans[18].

To be clear, the contemporary ascendancy of the terrorist figure and reconfigured racial formations are not unique processes, and, instead, are part of ongoing management of racial populations (Razack 2008). However, the disaster of 9/11 has instigated a mainstream South Asian American conversation about racial and religious profiling as well as visible community action to engage the discriminatory and otherwise repressive effects of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-terrorism discourses (Maira 2008; Prashad 2012). My treatment of 9/11 in this project, then, is not because I see it as a break, or something new, but because the events of that day and their aftermath produced a sense of urgency with respect to conditions and questions in South Asian American communities that were otherwise dormant in many—but, certainly not all—of these community spaces. For example, in anti-violence organizational spaces, 9/11 prompted certain debates. In a time of community crisis, how do existing organizations respond: by adopting to the conditions or by remaining consistent and dependable? By evoking 9/11 in my research site, I explore the specific ways in which the shifting discourse in the broader South Asian American community interacted with ongoing dialogues and practices in the realm of anti-violence work.

This era has also grown networks of community-based organizations bolstered by funding channels that have opened up through and after 9/11 to address the rampant violence, discrimination, and fear faced by these communities; though some are based in specific ethnic or religious communities, many continue to organize under a "South Asian" framework, thus

[18] There are many disparities within South Asian immigrant communities based on education, immigration status, wealth, and more. One example: The 2000 census reveals that Indians report a household median income of $51,094 but 25% live in households with under $25,000 a year and 20% of Indians do not have health insurance.

renewing the value of this term[19]. These shifts produce growth in an investment and institutionalization of "South Asian" at the same time that its utility and assumptions are continuously contested. As I discuss later in this chapter, in the non-profit context, the category of "South Asian" becomes recognized and activated by neoliberal investments in multiculturalism, where attention to culture obscures race.

Making Communities: South Asian Women's Anti-Violence Work in the U.S.

South Asians have migrated to the United States since the late 1800s, but this project concentrates on the communities that have formed since the second major wave of immigration, the post-1965 era. Earlier South Asian immigrants were railroad builders, farmers, workers and political refugees, and were visible participants in radical immigrant culture committed to racial justice and anti-imperialism. Although they deployed problematic nationalist paradigms, these first waves of immigrants were often grounded in an understanding of imperialism and its consequences on diasporically dispersed immigrants throughout the world (Bhattacharjee 1992)[20].

This first wave of immigrants from the South Asian diaspora was engaged in complex negotiations of race, identity, and citizenship. As historians Shah (2006) and Bald (2012) demonstrate, immigration laws that privileged working-class bachelors to come to the United States produced different family formations, resulting, for instance, in the prevalence of Punjabi-

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[19] New racial dynamics are emerging, including that "South Asian" circulates as a hegemonic term that overshadows and even precludes non-South Asian communities of color. For example, in my research, several organizations that started as spaces for South Asians revealed that their constituencies were currently mixed to include other communities of color. Changing demographics emerge from complex relationships between funding opportunities, funder regulations, affective relationships, and more. This is an issue that deserves more discussion: What are the political implications when South Asian organizations maintain a South Asian identity, and maintain the space as by and for "South Asians" even if/when this is not reflective of their actual constituency, or their staff? What is the utility of "South Asian" in these contexts and what does its use produce?

[20] See Prashad (2000); Shah (2006); Bald (2012); Shah (2012) for fuller histories of pre-1965 South Asian migration.

Mexican relationships in the southwest U.S. and the patterns of Bengali men inter-marrying with African American, Creole, and Puerto Rican women in cities such as New York, New Orleans, Detroit and West Baltimore. Meanwhile, the legal question of whether South Asian immigrants could become citizens was a contentious one and reliant on understandings of whiteness. In the infamous case, United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind (1923), the U.S. Supreme Court found that Thind, an Indian Sikh immigrant living in Oregon, could not naturalize as a citizen in the U.S. because he was not "Caucasian." It wasn't until the Luce-Cellar Act was passed (1946), after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1943), that Indians were able to naturalize as citizens. This act also set a national yearly quota of 100 Indian immigrants (Das Gupta 2006).

The post-1965 South Asian immigrants, however, had a different pathway to the United States. Revisions to the Immigration and Nationality Act (in 1965) fell under civil rights legislative dictates to eliminate race-based exclusions in immigration policy. This reform, along with labor priorities for highly-skilled foreign workers that could address the needs of both U.S. social welfare programs (e.g. newly-established Medicare and Medicaid programs) and cold war competitiveness (e.g. aerospace, weapons development), facilitated the entry of new South Asian middle-class professional immigrants. These immigrants were folded into the racialized construct of "model minorities," a term coined by a sociologist, William Petersen, in 1966 and made popular by media outlets such as the New York Times and U.S. News and World Report. Petersen initially used this term to contrast Japanese and Chinese Americans with African Americans. The former groups were represented as self-sufficient and without need for state-supplied social welfare provisions or civil rights and in opposition to state-reliant Black communities; new South Asian immigrants occupied a "racially ambiguous identity…[but] were

amenable to be represented as nonblack, though also definitely not white" (Das Gupta 2006:34; also see Prashad 2000).

The formation of South Asian women's organizations complicated the model minority discourses by calling attention to inequalities within the community as well as in society more generally. Women's groups first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in large part to complement the male-dominated groups that organized around cultural identity preservation[21] (Vaid 1999/2000). Beginning in the mid-1980s, women's groups organizing around violence[22] in South Asian American communities began to form, primarily due to disappointments in the invisibility of the complex experiences of South Asian women in both South Asian community politics as well as the mainstream women's movement (Dasgupta 1993; Vaid 1999/2000; Abraham 2000; Das Gupta 2006; Dasgupta 2007). Manavi, the first organization to address violence against South Asian women, founded in 1985[23], offers a "herstory" in which six South Asian (Indian) immigrant women—a combination of academics, artists, and other professionals—formed a study group to better understand their own experiences of race, gender, migration and other intersecting forces. Their origin story states that the group received a call from a woman experiencing domestic violence who was having difficulty accessing mainstream social services; in offering support to this survivor, they began to see a community need, and

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[21] The Committee on South Asian Women at Michigan State University (1982) stands out as an unusual example during this time; it was different in its goals (focused on the women's movement in South Asia and the UK) and was primarily made up of students. Although COSAW moved homes over the years, it instigated a network of South Asian women activists (Vaid 1999/2000).

[22] This history intentionally takes anti-violence work as its focus, recognizing that women's organizing in the South Asian community has not been limited to anti-violence activism. See Varghese (2007) for a critique of the invisibility of working-class and/or labor organizations in South Asian women's histories, and Das Gupta (2006) and Varghese (2007) for ethnographic studies of groups in this sector.

[23] Manavi began as a local chapter of Asian Indian Women in America and became its own independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization several years later.

grew accordingly into an organization that both offers direct support to survivors of violence and engages communities on issues of gender-based violence (Manavi 2012).[24]

Many of the South Asian women's organizations that have formed over the last 25 years have a similar trajectory, and many of the groups have been interconnected since their earlier years. For instance, Sakhi for South Asian Women in New York City was formed in 1989 after its founding members, who were commuting to participate in Manavi, felt that the specificities of conditions in New York City warranted a separate organization (Das Gupta 2006). Saheli in Austin, Texas, also was formed (in 1992) through the support of already-existing South Asian anti-violence women's groups (Vaid 1999/2000). Currently, there are almost thirty South Asian women's organizations throughout the U.S., and since receiving funding through the Office on Violence Against Women's Technical Assistance grants in 2001, Manavi has formalized its efforts to cultivate these groups into a loose national network.

Early South Asian women's groups aimed to interrupt the racism of mainstream, or, hegemonic, (Sandoval 2000; Eisenstein 2010) feminism, as well as to challenge community silences that propagated mythologies of the model minority. In her ethnography of east coast South Asian American community organizations in the 1990s, Monisha Das Gupta (2006) names these women's groups (along with LGBTQ and labor organizations) as "space-makers" because of their examination of, and interest in transforming, the relationships between oppressive institutions and daily life. As their work addressed systemic problems of violence against women as intersecting with xenophobia, racism, poverty, and homophobia, Das Gupta contrasts them with "place-takers," whose political activities were elite, India-centered, and assimilation oriented. Place-takers attempted to restore the privileges that they had experienced pre-migration, and constructed monolithic problem-free communities of immigrant citizens involved

[24] This "herstory" is supplemented with my own knowledge from being a staff member at Manavi 1999-2004.

in charitable activities. On the other hand, space-makers sought and produced alternative liberatory narratives grounded in history, all the while striving to enact social change and challenging dominant community politics. Annanya Bhattacharjee, one of the co-founders of Sakhi, writes that "any organization that recognizes the other-woman and challenges her displacement also becomes the Other: the Other as a repository of that which threatens to crumble the imaginary world of bourgeois solidarity, and to expose the artificiality of the bourgeois landscape" (1992:31). Bhattacharjee continues to articulate that the South Asian immigrant bourgeoisie has been unable to see people who are in the margins (e.g. workers, undocumented immigrants, queers, and battered women) because to acknowledge their existence would enact the self-destruction of the model minority class (1992). According to Bhattacharjee, then, the existence of SAWOs interrupted hegemonic community dynamics by creating a space in which otherwise obscured power dynamics become visible.

Yet, the spaces that SAWOs have created have themselves been the site of contestation and complex distributions of power as well because of political and economic changes and consequent impacts on the demographics of the South Asian community. Immigration to the U.S. has been facilitated during this period by family reunification policies that grow a pool of deskilled and low paid labor that fulfill the needs of the post-recession re-structured economy. Since the 1980s working-class South Asian immigrants have been prominent in service sectors (Reddy 2003; Das Gupta 2006), producing class tensions within South Asian communities that had formerly been organized through similar labor migration patterns. The next wave of immigration, in the early 1990s, was characterized by an influx of professional, highly-skilled workers needed to fulfill labor gaps in the information and technology industries. Granted the privileges of the professional class, but with the tenuous immigration status of a temporary visa,

H-1B visa holders and their dependent spouses constitute a different grouping of new (mostly Indian) immigrant communities. In the last decade, since the early 2000s, the most visible demographic changes have occurred through the migration of Bangladeshi and Nepali communities, which have seen a 212% and 561% population increase, respectively, between 2000-2010 (SAALT "A Demographic Snapshot" 2012).

South Asian anti-violence organizations have theoretically been a space for all South Asian women, but many of these internal differentiations have been too great for them to hold well. Perhaps the most public illustration of internal political conflict occurred when Sakhi's board dissolved its Domestic Workers' Committee, made up of working-class new immigrant women, in April 1997.[25] This decision came about because of, and raised, critical questions about the possibilities of cross-class political work, definitions about gender-based violence and whether this space could encompass gendered labor exploitation and the ideological and pragmatic differences between service provision and organizing. The Sakhi/DWC split also brought into question the class structure of the organizational space itself, as representative of the South Asian American community more broadly, and as an entity primarily run by middle-class professional women; many of these volunteers were themselves in interdependent relationships with working-class South Asian immigrant women to fulfill their domestic responsibilities. As Das Gupta argues, to attend to these dynamics adequately, Sakhi would have needed to take on bigger political economic questions of gendered and racialized dimensions of reproductive labor, volunteering time, and care work; instead, the organizational response was to remove the DWC, which ultimately went on to form its own independent labor organization, Workers' Awaaz (Voice). Sakhi released a renewed mission statement three months after this split (July 1997) to

[25] For a fuller discussion of this time at Sakhi, see Das Gupta (2006) and Varghese (2007) who each offer a critical analysis of the conflict, in part based on the first-hand accounts written by Bhattacharjee (1997) and Abraham (2000) who were part of the Sakhi community in this period.

affirm that it continued to be "committed to ending the exploitation and violence against women of South Asian origin," (2006:135); at the end of the year, Sakhi wrote a public letter to affirm that the organization continued to hold a social change approach that "combines education, advocacy, leadership development, and community action" and that support services are a critical aspect to their work with "battered women and domestic workers" (2006:134-5). In practice, however, Sakhi's every day work grew its focus on the exploitation and violence that occurs primarily in intimate relationships.

Class conflict and the persistent inability for SAWOs to address the relationship between gender, sexuality, and gender identity (see also Mehrotra and Munshi 2011) leads Das Gupta to ask whether, over time, SAWOs will "replicate the limitations of the second wave of U.S. feminism despite the fact that they themselves are the result of resisting white women's exclusionary practices" (2006:157); had 9/11 already happened, she may have added religion and/or nationality as areas of fracture. This dissertation project aims to pick up these questions, in part, through looking at SAWOs as agents of neoliberal governance and how their everyday advocacy practices with survivors of domestic violence emerge from and also contribute to complex differentiations of identity and social location in South Asian immigrant communities in the New York City metropolitan area.

Cultural Racism and Feminism, or "Death by Culture"

Despite variations among South Asian women's organizations, existing scripts that link gender, culture, violence, and immigration (Narayan 1997; Volpp 2001) and, increasingly, religion (specifically, Islam) have located the work of these groups within these intersections. Culture, specifically, has been a terrain of struggle for Asian immigrant communities (Lowe

1996). As Radha Hegde, one of the founders of Manavi, reflected on her frustration in the women's anti-violence movement: "You come to the immigrant front where it's the personal is the private is the cultural . . . everything is cultural. Wife-beating is cultural, docility is cultural, everything is cultural. It's the reign of cultural, and nothing is political." (quoted in Sahota 2006:236). Contestations over culture—disrupting cultural essentialism and/or contending with cultural racism—have been a significant part of anti-violence work in South Asian communities, from the beginning and have set a foundation through which these efforts have evolved.

Cultural racism is a theoretical framework that asserts that there is a deterministic relationship between race, culture, and nation, which moves away from biology as the dominant explanatory framework for racial difference. Writing in the context of colonialism, Fanon (1952) argues that inherent in the system of cultural racism is the assumption that some groups are inferior or incompatible with dominant culture and that these constructions of foreign and/or primitive are deployed to justify racial subordination. This construction of difference solidifies a dominant culture, fusing race and nation in the process such that groups whose culture are not dominant are also then understood to be outside the parameters of national culture. Critical to the deployment of cultural racism is epistemic violence, which Volpp describes as discursive techniques that mark difference between dominant and marginalized cultures and serve to uphold fictional constructions of the West as modern and progressive. Volpp argues that epistemic violence works to erase the gendered violence and ethnocentrism that is embedded in the history of the making of the West. Postcolonial and third world feminists argue that Western imperialism has been predicated upon frameworks of cultural racism in which immigrant communities of color and their sites of origin in the Global South are locales of violence, where violence is embedded in the culture. Culture, thus, explains this violence whereas in the West,

violence is deviant behavior and motivated by choice (Volpp 1996; see also Narayan 1997), and the demarcation of this difference has been critical for Western imperialism to advance its goals.

There have been countless illustrations of "white men saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988) as well as brown men employing the figure of brown woman in anticolonial nationalist struggles in order to strengthen the relationships between culture, tradition, nation and construct an oppositional culture that is distinct from and superior to the colonizing culture (Narayan 1997; Narayan 1998; Volpp 2001) (see Mani's (1998) discussion on the debates over sati or Ahmed (1992) on the veil in Egypt in Narayan (1997), e.g.). The status of women has historically thus been used to measure markers of progress of culture, based on mythological narratives about a progressive West in which women enjoy liberation. Postcolonial feminism, then, recognizes that cultural imperialism was not about homogenization or a straightforward imposition of sameness. As Narayan argues, the colonial encounter depended upon the visbility of contrast or difference. This meant that even when sameness was being imposed, it was predicated upon an understanding of deficiency such that the potential for sameness remains impossible to fulfill, but continues to justify the colonial violence (1998). These colonial examples show the interconnection of biopolitics and geopolitics over time, in which the status of women victimized by patriarchal culture was used to produce free and healthy British populations (Grewal 2003).

Postcolonial feminists contend that Western feminism originates in these same imperialist frameworks. There are innumerable examples of how Western feminists utilized imperialist frameworks to forward their own agenda; for example, British suffragettes utilized the symbol of Indian women, referred to as their victimized sisters, to advance their campaign for formal inclusion in British citizenship. Their reliance on tropes of racial superiority and national pride

allowed them to distance themselves from the inferior, colonized women, even though, as Volpp notes, the British feminists could have aligned themselves with their “sisters” through shared experiences of immobility or economic dependence upon men (2001).

This historical context of cultural racism and its relationship to imperialism helps to ground the emergence of U.S. feminist debates over the relationship between culture and gender. U.S. hegemonic feminism has assumed a gender universalism in which gender is the primary axis of experience, and detached from other experiences (e.g. race, sexuality, class) (Crenshaw 1989; Volpp 2001). The primacy accorded to a universality of gender facilitated concerns over gender subordination in immigrant communities, creating tensions between cultural rights and gender rights, which, according to some liberal feminists (e.g. Okin 1999) are incompatible and has facilitated an evolution of practices of white women saving brown women, who are marked for “death by culture” (Narayan 1997:84) from brown men. (See Abu-Lughod (2011) for a discussion on the transnational circulation of “honor killings” as a culturally-specific form of crime or Eisenstein (2010) for the relationship between U.S. hegemonic feminism and Bush’s initiation of war in Afghanistan as two contemporary examples of these dynamics).

Women of color feminist theorists argue that the positioning of culture and feminism as oppositional is racist, and rooted in tropes of cultural racism that use culture as an explanatory framework for violence (Volpp 1996). These narratives also simplify culture to be a system of frozen, unchangeable beliefs and norms. One of the interventionist arguments that feminist theorists of color have made is to challenge the definition of culture such that it both allows that there are ongoing internal contradictions and contestations and that culture is produced through different forces, including political and economic pressures, racism, and migration, and that it occurs in a historical context (Volpp 1996; Narayan 1997; Narayan 1998). Given that the bind

that cultural racism produces is that it simultaneously overascribes culture upon communities of color while making dominant culture invisible,[26] many women of color feminist theorists have contended with culture in order to articulate it in and on their terms. This approach does not advocate for an erasure of cultural considerations, or a culture-neutrality—in fact, it aims to make visible dominant culture. In addition, actively interacting with cultural frameworks can serve to denaturalize culture by drawing attention to the ways in which it permeates all aspects of social life, including the legal realm (Rudrappa 2007).

Leti Volpp directly engages the dilemmas that emerge when working on issues of violence against immigrant women. She asks, "If we recognize that anxiety about forms of gender subordination practiced in immigrant communities can function as a proxy for xenophobia, then, all the while maintaining a commitment to eradicating gender subordination, how should we talk about cultural difference?" (2011:92). To be clear, to advocate for attention to cultural difference or context is distinct from a call for cultural relativism. For instance, Volpp asserts that it is critical to understand the complex subjectivity of immigrant women as beyond a framework of cultural victimization, and that attention to context does not preclude political or ethical judgments and practices (1996). In other words, attending to the cultural dimensions of violence is distinct from justifying violence as cultural. This distinction has been especially important to make in legal processes that have tried to utilize the argument of the cultural defense in cases of intimate violence, specifically murder. The cultural defense has been deployed by abuser-defendants to argue that their violent behavior could be justified by their cultural gender norms, which are usually positioned in binary terms with American cultural

[26] Prashad (2000) notes that the ascription of culture can also be a form of privilege. He cites the Afrocentricism of the Black Pride movement as an effort to claim culture, to resist the re-writing and erasure of culture and history.

norms, [27] as well as by survivor-defendants to provide context for their acts of violence, most often towards children who they were arguably trying to protect.[28]

Questions about how to talk about cultural difference are also intertwined with questions about cultural representation, and the position of the speaker. Narayan (1997) offers a helpful framework that distinguishes between the roles that insiders occupy when presenting cultural expertise: the Emissary who emphasizes cultural achievements at the expense of honest attention to injustice and oppressive cultural practices; the Mirror, who emphasizes the negative impacts of Western economic and political colonialism without attending to problematic indigenous institutions and practices; and the Authentic Insider, who is positioned as an authoritative, representative, and proprietary speaker that can perform the demands of multiculturalism's investment in difference. Strategic cultural representation often simultaneously moves through and differentially activates these roles. Narayan's approach, however, is limited by its assumption that the dilemma is simply about representation of a fixed cultural truth. Scholars such as Alcoff and Spivak contest the material realities and origins of that which is being represented. Alcoff argues that there is a slippage between speaking for others and speaking about others, and that this process is always based in situated interpretation where the truth is

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[27] People vs. Chen (1988) is a well-known example because of its egregiousness. In this case, Chen's lawyers, supported by cultural anthropologist Burton Pasternack's expert testimony, argued that Chen was justified in killing his wife because he found out she was having an affair and was driven to these actions because of traditional Chinese values about adultery and masculinity (Volpp 1994).

[28] Cultural defense has been a sticky arena for immigrant feminist theorists. Volpp's analysis of the cultural defense in the case of Narinder Virk (2001) illustrates the complexities. Virk is an illiterate Punjabi Sikh woman, prosecuted on two counts of attempted murder for trying to drown herself and her two children after experiencing extreme violence and abandonment in her marriage. News media quickly framed the case as one in which Virk was either a cold-blooded killer or as her defense attorney stated, "driven to madness by her culture" (Shulman 2001). Inderpal Grewal, a transnational feminist scholar, was asked to provide testimony, as a "cultural expert" to help to contextualize Virk's actions. Volpp discusses the dilemma that Grewal faced: Given that the law is the main apparatus through which cultural racism, based on ideas of a uniform law and nation, is implemented to regulate assimilability and inferiority (Volpp 1996), how could Grewal advance a more holistic and complex understanding of culture without risking that her refusal to transact the "currency of stereotype" would hurt Virk? (Volpp 2001). In the end, Virk was found guilty on one count of attempted murder but not sentenced on grounds of insanity; this resolution, of course, while better than many of the other options for Virk reinforces a set of linkages between mental illness, culture, and violence, which ultimately pose a slightly different but still difficult set of questions for scholar-activists working in these intersections.

being constructed through the representation (1991). Spivak argues for a "speaking to" in which the speaker occupies a discursive role in order to make transparent their power in representing a specific interpretation of experience, thus allowing for counter-narratives (1988).

Spivak has also famously advocated for a representational practice of strategic essentialism, arguing that the constraints of language are such that the only possibilities are to take a position of essentialism or anti-essentialism but that even the latter positions requires an engagement (albeit oppositional) that inevitably validates essentialist discourse. Instead, Spivak has argued that a strategic engagement with essentialism exposes its limits, accepts its inevitability, and allows for an exploration of elements of essentialist discourse that can be useful.[29] Strategic essentialism is often used alongside frameworks that hold the multiplicities of gender, culture, and violence and that allow for more flexibility. For example, the theoretical approach of intersectionality understands multiple and fragmented subject positions that come from social relations and are formed through different discourses; part of this approach is to specifically critique the political, structural and cultural discourses that require exclusive, separate, or single-axis analyses (Crenshaw 1989)[30]. Critical race theorist Angela Harris also argues for a simultaneous approach that both disrupts gender essentialism but utilizes representational categories, which are necessary for jurisprudence and social change, that are "tentative, relational, and unstable." But, Grewal (2005) advocates instead for the use of Stuart Hall's "points of temporary attachment" as a representational modality; she offers that identity is always strategic, in motion, potentially fleeting and in negotiations with the operations of power.

As domestic violence has became an issue that produced women as a stable category, and the universalization of this issue makes violence a stabilizing force, the assertion of culturally-

[29] Spivak herself eventually moved away from this strategy, because of its limitations through its reinforcement of ideas of authenticity and avoidance of the complexities of heterogeneity (Lee 2011).
[30] See Puar (2011) for a discussion of the utility and limitations of the intersectionality model.

specific needs has been an intervention into disrupting assumptions of universality of culture and universality of the subject (Grewal 2005). Anti-violence work in South Asian immigrant communities has been engaged in this discursive work since its origin: although this loose network of organizations varies with respect to programmatic activities and ideologies[31], most of them are predicated upon a platform of culture, in which provision of culturally-specific, culturally-sensitive, and/or culturally-appropriate supportive services to South Asian survivors of violence is a critical component of their work. In this next section, I take a step back to place anti-violence work in South Asian American communities within a sociopolitical and economic context of to illustrate how the emphasis on cultural-specificity has positioned these organizations in the intricate matrices of neoliberal governance by affording a mode through which to gain visibility, recognition, and responsibility in the social welfare marketplace.

From Cultural Racism to Neoliberal Cultures

In this project, I am interested in neoliberalism as a political and cultural project that reconstructs the everyday life of capitalism (Duggan 2004; also see Clarke 2008), and the array of techniques that implement neoliberalism in the realms of social life. I follow Aihwa Ong's use of "neoliberal governmentality" to interpret the relationship between political economy and governance. Ong draws from Foucault's concept of governmentality, a set of modalities and forms of knowledge that attend to the regulation of everyday contact at the level of the individual and the population. Neoliberal governmentality, then, is the infusion of this array of techniques with market-driven calculations in multiple domains, implemented by the state but also transcending it (Ong 2006). Anti-violence efforts in South Asian American communities are

[31] Abraham (2000) distinguishes the SAWOs by their relationship to ideology: value-oriented, diffused, or unspecified, and their relationship to their goals: organizing South Asian women, ending domestic violence, and community education.

situated in neoliberal governance and emergent through the intersections of multiculturalism and feminism. In this section, I demonstrate how the diminishing of social welfare functions by the state coupled with neoliberalism's production and exploitation of identity and culture has produced the conditions of possibility and growth of this realm of non-profit community-based organizations.

Lisa Duggan argues that the dominance of neoliberalism (and liberalism before it) in the United States has required the rhetorical separation of the realms of politics, culture, and economics. The economy then becomes immune from cultural critique and political accountability, while identity and cultural politics becomes distinct from economic concerns. The construction of neoliberalism, then, has required cultural and identity politics as a discursive ruse in order to obscure economic processes (2004). Meanwhile, in practice, material life is organized through formations such as race, gender, sexuality (Grewal 2005); these connections are also obscured. My dissertation project challenges the splintering of these realms by illuminating these interdependent and intertwined relationships through attending to the relationship between identity formations and the technologies of neoliberal governance. This project also disrupts the supposed coherence of neoliberalism (Grewal 2005), attending instead to its "productive incoherence" (Duggan 2004:14) as a flexible array of seemingly incompatible or even contradictory practices; however, what remains consistent is their rootedness an investment in values of privatization, freedom, personal responsibility and self-reliance (Maira 2008).

The era of neoliberalism[32] in the United States is marked, in part, by the dismantling of three decades of New Deal social welfare liberalism that was replaced by a new order that

[32] See Tabb (2001); Harvey (2005); Wood (2003); and Klein (2007) for a fuller discussion of the political economic history of the rise and dominance neoliberal ideologies and practice.

emphasizes free market principles, deregulated economies, competition, inequality, and public austerity, as well as law and order policies to maintain social control (Duggan 2004). The role of the state evolves under neoliberalism such that its power is not diminished, but reorganized. Neoliberalism simultaneously reconfigures social problems so that causal explanations become individualized and depoliticized (Grewal 2003), and not structural. At the same time, social problems become governance problems (Willse 2010) such that the solutions are about regulating and managing biological and economic risk, and life capacities, at the level of the population (Ong 2006). Similarly, Clarke notes that under neoliberalism, governmental intervention and innovation is concerned is about overcoming "crises, blockages, dislocations, and unruliness" that are threats to "optimization" (2008:143).

Although neoliberal ideologies have influenced U.S. public policy since the 1970s, the 1990s saw shifts in governmental policies that brought together market logics with approaches to social welfare (Grewal 2005), resulting in complex contradictions and incompatibilities that are necessary conditions for neoliberal governance. Power (2005) and Bhuyan (2006) argue that liberalism itself depends upon the contrast between freedom and denial of freedom. For some to enjoy the privileges of freedom, mobility, and rights bestowed by the state, others are governed through disciplinary technologies that secure their "unfreedom" (e.g. slavery, involuntary servitude, see Bhuyan 2006:118). Reddy adds another dimension to this analysis through his formulation of "freedom with violence." He argues that the state's promotion of racial equality within a context of U.S. capitalism has contributed to a complex growth of racialized inequalities as well as a growth in institutional apparatuses that secure and reproduce these inequalities, producing epistemological understandings of legitimate violence. Reddy's framework presumes

freedom with violence as a starting point that is normative and descriptive, not exceptional or surprising (2011).

Here, I, too, take this point of departure to understand the underlying logics of legislative enactments that are able to both grow the possibilities of freedom and violence simultaneously. These formulations are particularly helpful in understanding the reconfiguration of the relationships between immigrant populations and technologies of neoliberal govenmentality. Since the mid-1990s, U.S. legislative initiatives have produced different criteria to create internally differentiated populations of immigrants, where some are offered freedom while others are subjected to repression and punishment. For example, between 1994 and 1996, four major pieces of legislation were passed: the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) (1994), the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) (1996), the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) (1996), and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) (1996). The juxtaposition of these legislative acts exposes the neoliberal restructuring of social welfare and the role of the state, as well as neoliberal investments in personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and social control[33].

VAWA was passed as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act effectively cementing the relationship between the anti-violence movement and the crime control infrastructure that was growing in the vacuum created through the disappearing social welfare state. VAWA established a federal Office on Violence against Women housed in the Department of Justice, created a National Domestic Violence hotline, increased criminal legal penalties for perpetrating acts of domestic violence, and created funding streams for shelters,

[33] The juxtaposition of legislative enactments that specifically provide relief and support to domestic violence survivors at the same time that immigration restrictions are increasing is not limited to this moment in the mid-1990s. As re-authorizations of the Violence Against Women Act occur at the time of this writing in late 2011, moment, repressive immigration legislation is being implemented especially that reconfigures the relationship between law enforcement and immigration enforcement.

service providers, law enforcement, and prosecutorial efforts (Kandaswamy 2010). Immigrant survivors of domestic violence became eligible for specific remedies that accounted for the ways in which control over immigration status can be used as a tool to enact violence in an abusive relationship (Abraham 2000).

VAWA specifically directed money towards relationship building between non-profit organizations and policing/prosecution efforts and as well as monies to encourage arrest policies. Most of the money allocated through VAWA is earmarked for education, punishment, or temporary crisis services, and not towards welfare state provisions that could otherwise give material support to survivors. The institutionalization of criminalization as a primary intervention strategy occurs through VAWA despite two decades of inconsistent empirical research about the effectiveness of these strategies in incidents of domestic violence. Meanwhile, the Crime bill that VAWA was housed under allocated almost $10 billion for new prison construction, expanded the death penalty to be applicable in the case of more than 50 federal crimes, and added a mandate for life imprisonment for three federal violent offenses ("three strikes, you're out"), among other carceral expansions (Gottschalk 2006; Kim 2012). The passage of VAWA was a huge legislative victory for the anti-violence movement, whose advocacy efforts had, by then, adopted contemporary discourses of self-sufficiency, independence, and crime control, thereby fostering compatibility with the political economic transitions towards a neoliberal state (Kandaswamy 2010), and incorporating itself into the "apparatus of the regulatory state" (Bumiller 2008:5).

Feminist scholars have critiqued the contrasting dynamics of expressed governmental commitment to address the welfare of survivors of domestic violence at the same time that the welfare state was being dismantled (Adelman 2004), and for immigrant survivors at the same

time that state repression of immigrants was further institutionalized (Lodhia 2010). PRWORA effectively transitioned the U.S. from a Keynesian welfare state to post-Keynesian neoliberalism by replacing the federal welfare system (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, in place since 1962) with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), distributed through block grants given to individual states. PROWRA introduced new restrictions on public assistance, including a 60-month lifetime limit, work requirements, child support enforcement practices (including stricter paternity identification protocols) and limited or denied access to immigrants, teenage mothers, and people convicted of felony drug crimes (Kandaswamy 2010). PROWRA restrictions on immigrants include five-year bars on public assistance for legal immigrants (including TANF as well as Medicaid and Food Stamps), and bars preventing undocumented immigrants from any services except emergency Medicaid under specific circumstances. Although PROWRA did not necessarily diverge from racist and otherwise exclusionary welfare policies in the U.S. (Mink 1996), it reflected and advanced neoliberal discourses of personal responsibility, self-empowerment, and independence (Duggan 2004).

Also that same year, the combination of AEDPA and IIRAIRA effectively amended the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952), and furthered the criminalization of immigrants through a series of disciplinary and regulatory technologies including: re-characterizing, and thereby increasing, the types of crimes that constituted aggravated felonies for immigration purposes; removing legal barriers that protected immigrants from deportation and instilling bars to admissibility post-deportation; and intensifying border control. Although these acts primarily impacted immigrants who were in the United States without authorization and/or interacting with the criminal legal system, their reach extended even to possible legal immigrants; for instance, new regulations required an assessment of whether an applicant had the potential to become a

public charge as part of the approval process (VisaLaw 1996). Again, AEDPA and IIRAIRA did not necessarily depart from the historical practices of restriction, exclusion, and criminalization of immigrants through U.S. legislation. But they were passed during a time of developing neoliberal transnational economic agreements (e.g. the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994)) and consequent impacts on increased economic migration patterns[34], and furthered neoliberal ideals of a good cost-effective, self-reliant citizenry in which uncooperative immigrants would be disciplined and/or excluded.

The passage of VAWA followed by PROWRA and AEDPA/IIRAIRA exposed the contradictions of simultaneous gains and losses in freedoms, both occurring in different populations (e.g. battered women receiving protection from the state while undocumented immigrants are banned from food stamps) as well as within the same population (e.g. battered immigrant women can call the better-funded and presumably better-trained police department but if they are without status, they risk arrest and deportation when law enforcement arrives at the scene). Advocacy efforts on behalf of domestic violence survivors resulted in remedial gestures to ameliorate the harshness of these contradictions. For example, PROWRA included a Family Violence Option (FVO) through which eligible domestic survivors would be able to gain exemptions from work requirements and the 60-month lifetime limit (see Kandaswamy 2010 for a fuller discussion about the construction of eligibility). IIRIRA preserved the immigration remedies available to domestic violence survivors under VAWA and included other exemptions. (Orloff, Lewkowski, and Little 2008). The mechanism of exemption serves to discursively construct the domestic violence survivor as worthy of exception from otherwise repressive

[34] See Coleman (2007) for a discussion about the links between U.S., Mexico, NAFTA, the War on Terror, and immigration enforcement.

technologies. This construction of exception works well with the logics of culture-specificity, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

In the context of political economic transitions into neoliberal ideologies, practices, and logics, non-profit organizations become the vehicles through which social welfare functions are managed (Grewal 2005). When the state is no longer taking responsibility for the welfare of its population, the infrastructure of care and related dimensions of a regulatory apparatus are produced and located in the non-profit sector. Within this landscape, community-based organizations that are organized through logics of shared identity or culture serve as sites of ambivalence, simultaneously working to mediate, transmit, represent, and shape relationships between populations and states (Ong 1999; Clarke 2008). Community becomes a site and mode of neoliberal governance, working through assumptions of shared commonalities (Rose 1996), and the activation of shared "culture" is especially useful for technologies of neoliberal governmentality that operate through tropes of multiculturalism and diversity.

The activation of cultural racism in the realm of state governance has a history that pre-dates the transition from Keynesian economics. By the early twentieth century, theories of cultural racism started to become institutionalized in the United States, in particular through the work of U.S. social scientists (e.g. Gunnar Myrdal and Robert Park) that were attempting to explain the experiences of European immigrants, and, specifically, alternative processes to assimilation that may produce separate cultural communities. Although this approach was inadequate to theorize the experience of African-Americans, sociologists proposed that black racial inequality could be addressed through assimilation into dominant culture. This move away from biological racism, therefore, continued to obscure structural contributions to oppressions and opened up the idea that individuals and communities are thus, responsible for their own

uplift (Prashad 2000; Steinberg 2007). This shift facilitated "culture of poverty" arguments, circulated through social policy reports such as The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (also known as the Moynihan Report) (1965), which posited sociocultural explanations for the political and economic inequalities faced by African-American communities in the U.S. (Steinberg 2007).

Cultural explanations for sociopolitical and economic inequalities are compatible with neoliberal values of individualism, self-reliance, and independence. Cultural frameworks become a way to manage complexities of structural inequality, racism, and conditions of insecurity by focusing, instead, on unique needs and differences. Many South Asian women's organizations articulate an isolation or alienation from hegemonic women's spaces and ethnic community spaces because of their intersectional engagement with race, ethnicity, immigration, culture, gender and more. In organizing through assumptions of a shared cultural context, and shared engagement with the cultural racism faced in these other spaces, South Asian women's organizations also have an entry into the non-profit marketplace. Cultural-specificity is compatible with the logics of exemption that extract survivors of domestic violence out of otherwise disciplined populations, because culture-specificity also operates through an understanding that it sets the South Asian immigrant survivor apart from the broader population; her needs are unique, and need to be addressed in a different way than other survivors. Advocacy that focuses on the unique culturally-specific needs of South Asian women is the vehicle through which attention is afforded to this population. Culture, thus, becomes their methodology for neoliberal governance.

Culture facilitates the production of compliant populations who are incorporated into multicultural discourses without challenging the state. SAWOs become agents of cultural

discourses through their everyday work to participate in knowledge economies about culture, cultural needs, cultural barriers and cultural sensitivity. For example, framing the inability of immigrant survivors to access services from the police as a structural issue requires a confrontation of state policies and their biases, restrictions, and exclusions. Framing this issue as a cultural concern leads to cultural solutions, such as cultural-sensitivity trainings with police officers and empowerment work with survivors to un-learn their cultural fears of law enforcement. Most SAWOs do some type of work in this arena; Abraham (2000) found that all of the SAWOs in her study did cultural sensitivity trainings with the police, and all of the SAWOs in Das Gupta's (2006) ethnography did some form of cross-cultural anti-violence education work. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, funding channels become available for these groups, in part through streams of money directed into work that is culturally-specific. Of course, as discussed earlier in this chapter, many SAWOs have complex and critical approaches to their engagements with cultural racism. Here, my aim is to identify that these discourses serve as a pathway into neoliberal economies. Additionally, neoliberalism produces feelings of scarcity that pressure individuals and organizations into participating in these types of projects because they become a marker or a measure of recognition, and to not participate in neoliberal non-profit economy could mean losing one's place. One colleague shared with me her resignation of contributing to an anthology about culture: "If you are not going to write [the article about your specific community], someone else will. And, you feel like you can do it better so you have to do it."

Methods: Movement Between Induction and Deduction, Intimacy and Distance

I conducted most of my primary research in New York City, which is an ideal site for this inquiry. South Asians are one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in New York City and across the United States. Yet, research indicates that they live in relative isolation and continue to be underserved by public institutions, exacerbated by post-9/11 effects of discrimination and fear of immigration enforcement (Chhaya CDC 2001). For South Asian domestic violence survivors, seeking supportive services from state agencies, particularly the criminal legal system, is not viable because of real and perceived vulnerabilities due to limited English proficiency, insecure immigration status, social stigma, unfamiliarity with legal processes, and other variables. New York City is also the home of both some of the oldest South Asian community-based organizations in the United States as well as newer entities that have emerged in the post-9/11 era to respond to evolving conditions that affect community members' everyday lives. Issues of gender-based violence, as well as the impacts of a changing criminal legal system, new immigration laws at the federal level, and barriers to access to social and health services, are addressed by many of these groups.

New York City is a local site, but my methodological approach is informed by scholars who link geopolitics and biopolitics through the study of the transnational production of subjects and populations in a neoliberal context (e.g., Grewal 2005; Ong 2006). Ong, in her challenge to approaches to globalization that separate the global as political economic from the local as cultural, offers an analytical model that accounts for both "the horizontal and relational nature of the contemporary economic, social, and cultural processes that stream across spaces" and their "embeddedness in differently configured regimes of power" (2006:4). Ong argues for attention to the relationship between "the economic rationalities of globalization and the cultural dynamics

that shape human and political responses" (2006:5). I follow this model's centralization of the interrelationship between political economy, cultural logics, and everyday practice. And, so, although I focus on New York City to better understand localized manifestations of neoliberal governance, I interpret this site as produced through and participating in transnational circulations of knowledge and power.

New York City is also an ideal site for this inquiry because it is the geographic site where the myriad forms of violence stemming from the 9/11/2001 attacks began. While I attend to the local specificities of 9/11, I am informed by the caution expressed by scholars such as Maira (2008) and Prashad (2012) that it is dangerous to disconnect the domestic from the global; the post-9/11 era has been marked by broader dynamics of U.S. domination around the world and they encourage these linkages and explicit connections. As Prashad writes about post-9/11 South Asian American community politics:

> In truth, 9/11 is all about foreign policy. Its aftermath inside the United States affected desis, who then forged responses of various kinds to racism and profiling. Little was done for the root problem: the exertion of U.S. power into the lands that stretch from the western Sahara to the Philippines. The 9/11 racism is a symptom of a much deeper problem…We've been able to acknowledge the hurdle of race; the next hurdle is imperialism. (2012:47)

The post-9/11 responses from South Asian women's organizations were complicated in divergent ways, however. In the immediate aftermath, women's groups in the NYC metropolitan area were *more* likely to connect to global matters, such as anti-war activism (Munshi 2011), and less visible in the racial justice and immigrant rights work occurring on the local and national levels. This project is located in this disconnect, and situates anti-violence work within local discourses about reconfigurations of the relationship of South Asian immigrant communities to technologies of discipline and regulation. I do so with the understanding that U.S. foreign policy is linked to the ways in which domestic racial formations are policed and

regulated, and that U.S. imperialism abroad is enacted in part by subordinating groups in its domestic realm (Maira 2008). My hope in this project, then, is to shed light on the ways in which different interactive transnational political, economic, and cultural forces are enacted at the everyday level within specific spatial parameters in the United States[35].

Finally, New York City is also my home—I was born and raised in Queens—and the place where I have participated in community-based activism and organizing, as well as conducted my graduate studies. I bring to this project a deep familiarity with, connection to, and investment in, this landscape. My research interests came out of my work as a full-time staff member in a mainstream domestic violence shelter, as well as in a South Asian women's organization, and as a volunteer in several community-based organizations in New York City, for over ten years before I started my work as a researcher. This experience served as informal ethnographic research and informed the research questions that this dissertation addresses. This background has also benefited my research in many ways, especially given the limitations in available source materials in the South Asian American community. Although there is scholarship about many South Asian community-based groups from their formative years (the late 1980s through the 1990s) little has been written on the intersectional impacts of 9/11 on South Asian community activism. Primary sources have been inconsistently preserved due to limitations of resources and technology. My research thus required the assembly of this archive, a living archive that is present, continuing, unfinished.

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[35] This project's focus on the United States illustrates specific developments within anti-violence work within this context. Although beyond the scope of this project, it may be productive to compare these processes in the U.S. to other sites in which South Asian communities have organized around gender-based violence while attending to the specificity of racialization processes within post-colonial relationships. For example, in the U.K., groups like Southall Black Sisters, founded in 1979, made up of Asian and African-Caribbean women, have always organized through the racial identity as Black women with an analysis of racial justice as inherent in their work. A cursory examination of their current work reveals that they are grappling with some of the same effects of neoliberal multiculturalism and criminalization of immigrant communities/immigration enforcement. Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver also have significant South Asian populations with varying demographics, including large numbers of working-class multi-generational families, and would be useful sites to examine.

Stuart Hall cites Foucault's analysis of the archive as something that exists between the 'langue,' which is the language of practice, and the 'corpus,' which is a relatively inert body of works that have been produced and have survived. Foucault understands the archive as contained within critically specified boundaries so that it is heterogeneous but not amorphous. The archive is a discursive formation that consists of diverse topics and texts, and consists of gaps, ruptures, and transformations. The archival process is also heterogeneous, consisting of continuous collecting and archiving of ideas and materials that are partially public and partially private. In Hall's discussion, he notes that the archive can never be finished or described in totality; the process of the living archive inherently contradicts a "fantasy of completeness (2001a:91)." The living archive, according to Hall, is about the past but it is always re-read in terms of the present and the future, which affirms its continuous growth and impossibility of completion. Feldman (2007) articulates a similar idea when he asserts that the archive is constructed, not as a passive repository but as a cultural production, where the intentionality of the archive is itself a reconstructive practice. This project makes no claims to completeness and calls into question the possibility of full representation and linear progressions, especially given my research methods, such as interviews, which are themselves live and inherently partial representations. Instead, I attempt to understand the depth and breadth of this discursive space by selecting specific nodes that can illuminate how and where ideas and practices accumulate, converge, diverge, and disperse, through reading both what is articulated and what is left unspoken.

My use of theory in this project follows accordingly. I use theory in fragmented ways: instrumentally, pragmatically, and disloyally (Halley 2008:7), drawing from different lines of scholarship—for example, from social science disciplines (e.g. anthropology, geography, and

political science as well as sociology), interdisciplinary writing in Asian American Studies, American Studies, Cultural Studies and Women's and Gender Studies and applied disciples (e.g. social work, public health)—to make visible the different forms of knowledge, stakes, and impacts that are relevant to conversations about gender-based violence in South Asian immigrant communities. I am not seeking theoretical coherence, and, instead, look for what is productive in the friction among different lines of thought.

This project formally utilizes a methodology of feminist grounded theory, a fluid and interpretive theory-building process that accommodates different qualitative methods and centers epistemological concerns. While traditional grounded theory is a pure inductive process in which theory surfaces from the research, a feminist grounded theory methodology expects that the research may also emerge from a set of pre-existing theoretical concerns and, therefore, allows for a bidirectional engagement between analysis and data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Letherby 2003; Charmaz 2006). This methodological approach allowed for me to move between my theoretical expectations and the empirical data I collected, and to grow and shape the direction of the project accordingly. For example, as I mentioned in my preface, this project began with experiential and scholarly observations that led me to expect that criminalization of domestic violence would be the focus of this project. Early in my data collection, I noticed that few interviewees were willing to engage the issues of criminalization and I started to think differently about the potential direction of the project. Preliminary analysis of my data, however, revealed that the logics of criminalization are so embedded in the discourse about domestic violence that the interviews were actually saturated with information and analysis about criminal legal interventions in domestic violence. Interviewees engaged these issues in indirect ways throughout our conversations, including through their silences (Briggs 1986). I renewed attention

to criminalization and this ultimately became the focus of one of my chapters. Feminist grounded theory encourages this ongoing movement between inductive and deductive processes such that analysis is informing the data collection that is informing the analysis (Charmaz 2006).

To construct this archive of the discourse of anti-violence work in South Asian communities in New York City, I concentrated on conducting ethnographic interviews, following social scientists such as Bhuyan (2006) who assert that these research methods provide tools that allow for the "epistemological orientation of social actors in relation to hegemonic ideological investments produced through discourses of violence, family, gender, and empowerment" (Bhuyan 2006:20; see also Manalansan 2000). This dissertation is based primarily in data collected through in-depth semi-structured ethnographic interviews with thirty-one current and former staff members and volunteers that work in South Asian organizations in the New York City metropolitan area; most of these interviewees work in local organizations but some work at the national level[36]. I also interviewed four people who have long-standing experience working with minoritized communities (e.g. LGBTQ communities, incarcerated survivors) and issues (restorative/transformative justice, e.g.) in anti-violence movements in the U.S. My prior experience in community activism facilitated many openings, including pre-

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[36] This project's methodology, and concentration on advocacy discourse (or, how anti-violence advocates produce interpretations of their work), led me to limit attention to tensions about sexuality and heteronormative frameworks employed by the SAWOs. Because of my interest in understanding how political economic trends shape how advocates understand their work, I interrogate the work of community-based organizations, for the most part, on their own terms and in their own language. A deeper analysis about the historic and contemporary exclusions that the fundamental frameworks of anti-violence work have produced will be addressed through a forthcoming research project that I am working on with my frequent collaborator, Dr. Gita Mehrotra. This project seeks to distinguish between symbolic politics for which South Asian women's organizations have often been celebrated (e.g. Sakhi standing with the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association when it was banned from participating in the India Day Parade) from the everyday work of supporting LGBTQ survivors and conducting community-based education. This project asks why South Asian women's organizations have, for the most part (South Asian Network in the Los Angeles area is one notable exception), been unable to address the needs of LGBTQ South Asians. We will argue, in part, that symbolic political gestures have precluded a deeper understanding of homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, and genderism and the ways in which these women's organizations' fundamental approach to gender and violence can not adequately address concerns that emerge from LGBTQ communities. See Mehrotra and Munshi (2011) for a preliminary engagement with this complex set of intersecting issues.

existing professional relationships with members of community organizations in New York City. Given that these organizations experience high rates of turnover and that ex-staff members do not always stay connected to the work, these linkages have been particularly useful. My background in advocacy and organizing helped me to build trust with potential interviewees, especially with direct service providers who are often wary of researchers inexperienced in the complexities of intimate partner violence, and to bring grounded expertise to our conversations.

I selected interviewees through a purposive sampling technique, sparked by snowball sampling, through which the goal was to construct a sample of interviewees that illustrate the different dimensions of South Asian community-based work in New York City in the post-9/11 period. The people I interviewed were positioned in different types of organizations, which can loosely be categorized as 1) community-based organizations (led by and for South Asian communities) whose primary work explicitly includes intimate violence; 2) community-based organizations (led by and for South Asian communities) whose primary work is about issues other than intimate violence; and 3) mainstream social service organizations that include a programmatic focus on intimate violence in South Asian immigrant communities[37]. These categories are somewhat fluid, in part because some of the interviewees have worked in various types of organizations and so their perspectives are shaped by these multiple experiences, and in part because the organizations themselves do not always fit in a consistent category. For instance, an organization may represent its work in somewhat different ways to its constituency, to funders, to the broader community, and to other organizations; I take this issue up in greater detail in Chapter 2. The community-based organizations can also be loosely categorized as

[37] In this project, I intentionally did not include faith-based groups unless 1) their primary work is about intimate violence; or 2) their work is based in a religious identity but not housed in a religious institution (e.g. a civil rights non-profit organization vs. a youth group in a church). I made this decision because of the strong secular intention of anti-violence work in South Asian communities but later iterations of this project may incorporate explicit faith-based work, particularly in Muslim and Sikh communities.

either pan-South Asian or rooted in a specific minoritized sub-community within the South Asian community such as by nationality, ethnicity, class, sexuality/gender identity. Another way to categorize these groups is by their time of origin: pre- or post-9/11. To be clear, this project is not an ethnography of organizations, but rather an exploration of the relationship between social policies and advocacy practices that address domestic violence in the lives of South Asian women; most of this work is sited in community-based organizations that formally engage with domestic violence and come out of the historical trajectory of South Asian women's organizing that is detailed earlier in this chapter. Recognizing, however, that responses are formed in unexpected places, especially for an issue that is often not aired publicly, I wanted my research site to be flexible.

In addition to ethnographic interviews, I conducted ethnographic participant observation of relevant South Asian community events, including but not limited to those that were hosted by the organizations included in my study (e.g. community forums, fundraisers, town hall meetings, conferences). I also conducted interpretive content analysis of organizational print and web-based literature, tax returns, annual reports, and advocacy materials. My discussion of the Violence against Women Act includes both an interpretive policy and budget analysis.

For the purpose of my analysis and discussion, I treated all data within its holistic context (Briggs 1986). In other words, I analyzed data in the context of its source. In my writing, I sometimes provide some contextual information about interviewees and/or their organizations to illuminate the position from which they responded, but I am careful to not reveal any identifying information; this community is relatively small, and I offered my interviewees anonymity so that they could speak without concern about being named. When I do name specific groups or quote

specific community activists, I cite information that is publicly available (i.e. not derived through my data collection)[38].

An underlying tension throughout this research process has been my own past, present, and future relationships to this site, both actual and perceived. Although I intentionally decided not to be in any leadership and/or decision-making positions in any relevant organizations for the duration of this research project, and only volunteered with groups if it was clear that one of my current roles is as a researcher, my history with these organizations, neighborhoods, and communities led to ongoing negotiations of intimacy and distance. In their writings on intimacy in research, Fraser and Puwar (2008) argue that considering the role of intimacy in the process of research activities exposes the false binaries that modern science idealizes, such as the rational and irrational, subjectivity and objectivity, and, analysis and imagination; their intervention encourages creativity and risk-taking in the production of new ideas.

The intimate connections I have to this research site, through varying forms of relationships with some interviewees, allowed for certain challenges and openings. Sometimes respondents saw me as an expert in their work, especially if they knew about my prior role as a staff member at an anti-violence organization. Some interviewees revealed this awareness in their responses (e.g. "You already know this…" or "You must know this better…"). In these cases, the conversational format of the interview was helpful in dissolving binaries and acknowledging our shared, overlapping as well as distinct, expertise. These connections allowed me to invite interviewees to participate in the creativity of the theory-building process of this project. I was transparent about my research questions and the different thoughts I was

[38] A consequence of anonymity is that I am not always able to insert ethnographic details that may be useful for the larger goals of the project. I am considering whether future iterations of this project may include identifying information, with respondents' permission (which is the condition I listed in the consent forms).

grappling with and, in many conversations, asked interviewees to think through these ideas with me. For example, before I wrote my dissertation proposal, I invited a group of activists, lawyers, and scholars to a weekend brunch, generously hosted by my advisor, Dr. Barbara Katz Rothman. This meeting allowed me to receive feedback on possible dissertation directions as well as to ground my research questions in collective inquiry. Another example, after I started interviews, was that I asked interviewees to reflect upon the question that was one of the starting points of this dissertation: Why are there so many anti-violence organizations in South Asian immigrant communities? As there is no one right answer to this question, I engaged my interviewees in conversation that went beyond a traditional social scientific question and answer interview format so that we could collectively think through these ideas together and try to understand why domestic violence had become such a visible community issue.

Fraser and Puwar (2008) also discuss the role of social relations as well as the sensory, emotional, and affective dynamics through which knowledge production occurs. My interviews revealed these complexities at the level of social relationships, especially through the in-between moments, when the digital recorder was turned off, in which interviewees wanted to relay stories or names, try out ideas off-the-record, talk about their personal histories, or their work/romantic/friendship/activist joys and woes. Several interviews began or ended with tearful stories about unrelated issues, an invitation to a party, a cocktail, and/or gossip. On the flip side, however, other interviews felt like scripted performances, in which it was clear that I was an outsider to the organization and that certain information was to be protected from me, as I was someone who, among other positions, is a university researcher. Sometimes these dynamics occurred upon predictable lines of existing relationships and/or power differentials based on social identities and locations, but sometimes they were also about mood, space, timing, or other

variables such as interviewee pressures of accountability to their employing organization. For example, one interviewee was not allowed to talk to researchers without going through an extensive internal process in her workplace to gain permission; she decided that she could not invest the time and so she only spoke about her experience in a position she had previously held in a different organization. Another person went through the internal permission process at her organization and participated in a two-hour interview. Immediately after the interview was over, and the digital recorder was turned off, she told me that she had to promise organizational leadership that she would not say anything that portrayed the organization in a negative light. She then spilled the negativity she had been holding in for two hours. During the interview, she had said a few things off-the-record and/or asked not to be quoted directly, but, how did this directive impact her on-the-record responses? Meanwhile, it was only because of our informal connection as acquaintances in South Asian community spaces that she felt comfortable to reveal that she wasn't completely honest in her answers; I do not know how many of my interviewees felt that comfort.

Throughout the course of this project, I negotiated these moments of intimacy but also struck distance. Hall (2001) states that, in the context of the archive, there is also a need for self-reflexive distance. The archivist needs to be able to withdraw her investment in the archival project in order to discern the discontinuities in history. Hall sees the role of the archivist as one that is responsible to not only make discursive links between histories but also to mark and interrogate moments of rupture, the emergence of new paradigms, and unexpected complexities. In order to do this well, the self-reflexive archivist needs to be open to contradiction, because, as Hall observes, glossing over inconsistencies and translating contradictions into more comfortable theoretical simplifications does not serve to advance the revolutionary quality of an archival

project (2001a: 260). Haraway, like Hall, is concerned with both the researcher's ability to fluidly move between locations as well as to keep critical distance. She states that "a commitment to mobile positioning and to passionate detachment is dependent on the impossibility of innocent 'identity' politics and epistemologies as strategies for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugates in order to see well (in Marcus 1998: 85). Haraway encourages a shift from questions of resistance to questions about the shape of processes that can enable mapping new objects of study. Both Hall (2001) and Haraway, then, underscore the need for the researcher to let go of the idea that a radical or revolutionary social research project can be pre-determined or only confirm expected findings that are compatible with a pre-existing theoretical framework. Additionally, Mahmood critiques Western feminism's tendency to read women's enacted practice as resistance, especially in communities of color. Mahmood encourages critical scholarship that can hold the multiplicities of gendered practice that can include complicity and the desire to conform (2005).

This emphasis on self-reflexive distance and expectations has been critical to my analysis of my research site, especially because my project is invested in illuminating the everyday logics of anti-violence work—with all its complexities and inconsistencies—without the pressure of telling a story that romanticizes resistance. Of course, there is a lot in this site, currently and historically, that deserves celebration, but this current project looks to the mundane everyday experience and the circulations, interactions, and interventions of power that are being produced, contested, re-formed, and transformed in anti-violence advocacy work in South Asian communities; these moments include resistance but they also include complicity, incorporation, and conflict and all of these enactments produce anti-violence discourse in South Asian communities. By looking at the everyday from a distance, I also take the risk that my

representations will not resonate with those people who are enacting these everyday experiences. My vantage point allows for ways of seeing and interpretation that can be impossible to discern from within the hectic and continuous challenges of doing the everyday work. And, on the flip side of this, there may be elements of this project that read as repetitive or obvious, or irrelevant, to the people whose experiences are included in this sociological analysis. These risks are worth noting here because they have been an undercurrent in the methodological approach of this project, and because, in interpreting anti-violence discourse I contribute to this discourse as well.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation examines how sociopolitical economic forces have shaped the landscape of anti-violence work; each chapter is organized around a specific node that has emerged over the last several decades as a particular trend that directly or indirectly impacts everyday work. I attend to the dynamics that have been produced by funding and professionalization of anti-violence work (Chapter 2), availability of immigration remedies for some domestic violence survivors through VAWA (Chapter 3), and the dominance of criminal legal interventions as a strategy to address domestic violence (Chapter 4). All of these dynamics are co-implicated, and the site where they most clearly converge is through the Violence Against Women Act. Throughout the chapters, I focus on discursive production to better understand how advocates, organizers, social workers, lawyers, community activists and others make sense of these broader forces. Throughout the chapters, I have an underlying concern with the ways in which anti-violence trends reflect as well as produce internal differentiations of forms of violence, and classifications of survivors, communities, and populations. These differentiations are made through various technologies of governance that operate through neoliberal logics, appearing at

the every day level through discourses about access to resources, punishment/incarceration, funding constraints, as well as frustrations, complaints, unexplained barriers and denial. Finally, I also look at modes through which community-based work disrupts the logics of neoliberalism to forge different convergences that can construct other possibilities for engagements with domestic violence.

The next chapter, "Silos and Pipelines: Making Expertise in the Multicultural Marketplace" demonstrates how anti-violence organizations are situated within the contemporary landscape of South Asian community-based organizations in the NYC metropolitan area. This site has evolved within the context of two major developments: growth in funding for anti-violence work, and proliferation of non-profits in South Asian communities since 9/11. My inquiry in this chapter grows from Dylan Rodriguez' critique of the evolution of the non-profit industrial complex as a political epistemology, or as a way of knowing social change and resistance praxis (2007) In this chapter, I examine the epistemological implications of funding and professionalization of anti-violence efforts on South Asian community-based organizational work in New York City. I argue that funding, and the culture of funding, has produced discourses of specialization and expertise that impact both groups that work on gender-based violence as well as other community-based organizations that see domestic violence appear in their constituencies.

Chapter Three, "Making Populations: (Already-Neoliberal) H-4 Visa Holders and the Violence Against Women Act" examines the treatment of immigrant survivors in VAWA, reading this legislation as a biopolitical technology of neoliberal governance. I trace key changes in re-authorizations of VAWA, attending to *which* expansions have occurred and the underlying biopolitical logics (Bhuyan 2006; Wang 2012). I argue that this occurs through

VAWA's production of a population of recognizable battered immigrant women that are offered the opportunity to be folded into life, while immigrant survivors of domestic violence whose experience is not legible are neglected, or, in Foucauldian terms, left to die. I show that the production of a population of legally-recognized immigrant survivors of violence occurs through a process that Clough and Willse call population racism, in which racialized populations are differentiated through a calculus of risk that enables their management and regulation (2010). Finally, I explore the implications of this discussion in the South Asian American context to look at the role that anti-violence advocacy work plays in managing and reconfiguring populations. I trace public advocacy discourse that focused on the experiences of survivors of domestic violence on temporary, dependent H-4 visas to discuss how efforts to incorporate these survivors in VAWA are situated in the complex workings of population racism. I argue that anti-violence efforts not only manage populations but also produce them.

In Chapter Four, "Carceral Logics and Flexible Ambivalence: Engagements with the Criminalization of Domestic Violence in South Asian Communities," I interrogate this nodal point where the state, community-based organizations and/or non-profit social service providers, and survivors of violence interact through the organizing logics and practices of the criminalization of domestic violence. I examine how domestic violence advocates working with South Asian survivors of violence negotiate the everyday terrain that has been produced through the U.S. anti-violence movement's alliance with the criminal legal system. Given this historic alliance, I am particularly interested in the period since 9/11 during which state policies initiated under the guise of homeland security have facilitated the growth of South Asian community discourse about criminalization of immigrants. This shift has placed South Asian groups that work on domestic violence in a unique position and to grapple with a unique set of tensions. I

argue that advocates take up discursive strategies of "flexible ambivalence" with respect to the criminal legal system, and that they communicate these strategies by activating frameworks of "choice" that are compatible with the machinations of neoliberal governance.

Finally, in Chapter Five, "Methodologies of Disruption: Bypassing Neoliberal Logics through Building Communities," I offer case studies that present imaginative possibilities that community-based organizers forge to address the needs that appear in their communities, the constraints that they face and the internal community exclusions that persist as well as potential openings for further connections. I conclude with a short Epilogue to offer some reflections on this project and possibilities for future directions.

Chapter 2

Silos and Pipelines: Making Expertise in the Multicultural Marketplace

> *I found working at all these organizations that everyone is like, "Oh, [the SAWO] is doing it. You know, [a SAWO] is doing that work, [another SAWO] is doing that work." There's almost this kind of laziness.* –Y, ex-staff member at a South Asian community-based organization

> *I talk to groups in [NYC neighborhood populated by South Asian immigrants] and they don't necessarily talk to each other that much. And they are within two miles of each other. It's because they are so siloed by issue, so siloed by constituency. [This is a] [c]lear example: we need to do the work differently.* –X, staff member working on a national South Asian civil rights project

This chapter is sited within the landscape of South Asian community-based organizations in the NYC metropolitan area to explore what happens when the issue of "domestic violence" emerges in community spaces that have not been intentionally formed to address gender-based violence. These instances happen on an everyday level. For example, what happens when a young person writes about violence in her poetry group in an after-school program; a volunteer in a social services organization reveals details about her intimate life while helping to stuff envelopes; a tenant organizer witnesses verbal abuse between family members during an outreach and information session; a client comes in to learn more about her eligibility for food stamps and informs the case worker that she is in an abusive relationship; and/or, a staff member at a community organization learns that her cousin is experiencing violence in her relationship? In some ways, the answer is simple: sometimes the survivor is referred to an anti-violence organization and sometimes she is not. The underlying logics are more complex. Here, I

explore what underlies these moments to understand how and when community-based organizations respond to appearances of intimate violence in their constituencies.

My inquiry in this chapter grows from Dylan Rodriguez' critique of the evolution of the non-profit industrial complex as a political epistemology, or as a way of knowing social change and resistance praxis (2007). Rodriguez' work, along with his counterparts in the anthology, *The Revolution Will Not be Funded,* interrogates the landscape of non-profit organizations in the United States and the recasting of social justice efforts into this form. As I discussed in my Introduction, many scholars demonstrate that neoliberal reconfigurations of state power and its institutions have relegated social welfare responsibilities to the non-profit realm (see Grewal 2005; Clarke 2008). The anti-violence movement has grown because of, and through, these political economic conditions, and, yet, there has been ongoing concern and caution about the myriad consequences of this growth from within the movement itself (Bumiller 2008). Critical analyses range from empirical research about the effects of funding and professionalization on the anti-violence movement's ability to advance social change work (Reineltl 1994; Lehrner and Allen 2009) to theoretical reflections that question the fundamental tethering of this work to the state (e.g. Bierria and CARA (2007); Kivel (2007)) to transformative community-building alternative approaches that challenge and disrupt non-profit epistemologies (INCITE 2007).

Political and economic developments that have grown the sphere of anti-violence non-profits have produced definitions of violence and who does anti-violence work. In this chapter, I examine the epistemological implications of funding and professionalization of anti-violence efforts on South Asian community-based organizational work in New York City. I look at how South Asian community-based organizations understand their engagements with domestic violence in their constituencies, and with each other, on these issues. I argue that funding, and

the culture of funding, has produced discourses of specialization and expertise that impact both groups that work on gender-based violence as well as other community-based organizations that see domestic violence appear in their constituencies. This chapter is interested in what these understandings mean at the meso-level of community-based organizations, and how this vantage point reveals workings of power within the South Asian community. I situate my inquiries within the context of two major developments: the first is the growth in funding for anti-violence work, and the second is the proliferation of non-profits in South Asian communities since 9/11.

Anti-Violence Funding and its Cultural Logics

Since the early 1970s, funding streams to support anti-violence efforts have been established through public, private, and corporate monies. Governmental funding is allocated for domestic violence services through different legislative acts, such as the Victims of Crime Act[39] (first passed in 1984), the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (1984), and, of course, the Violence against Women Act (1994). Although other federal funding had been available for domestic violence work pre-VAWA, this legislation significantly increased the amount of available funding (e.g. In the last ten years, FVPSA budgets have hovered around $150 million, whereas VAWA budgets have been closer to an average of $400 million.). VAWA also institutionalized anti-violence efforts at the federal level by establishing the Office on Violence against Women (OVW) in the U.S. Department of Justice to "provide federal leadership" to address violence against women. OVW currently administers financial and technical assistance to organizations throughout the U.S. that work on different types of violence against women. Since 2005, federal monies have been allocated for culturally- and/or linguistically-specific

[39] Domestic violence funding through VOCA primarily comes out of the Crime Victims Fund, established through a 1988 amendment.

services (CLASP) (OVW 2012). In the years 2009-2011, these funds made up less than 2% of the total VAWA budget, which is relatively minor especially as compared to the funds that explicitly encourage criminal legal interventions[40], which make up an average of 46% of the budget for these same years. Yet, in actual dollars, the amounts are significant for small to mid-sized non-profits, averaging about $9 million per year distributed among 32 organizations.

The anti-violence industry has grown through the material support of VAWA and other federal and state dollars, which, in turn, has also helped to produce "domestic violence" as an object for charitable giving and corporate philanthropy. Companies such as Adidas, Air Tran Airways, Allstate Insurance, Avon, Liz Claiborne, Mary Kay, Phillip Morris, Verizon, and many more donate money, cell phones, toiletries and other resources and in-kind services to domestic violence programs[41]. Here, too, the dollar amounts are relatively low, and the funds are not easy to access. Some corporations even have giving policies that allow for them to maintain flexibility, so although their public materials indicate that they are participating in charitable giving, the amounts they give away are variable and depend upon their profits in a given year (e.g see AirTran Corporate Giving 2012).

My approach towards the effects of funding in this chapter, however, is to look beyond the literal streams of monies that are funneled into different types of organizations. Instead, I am interested in the cultural logics that have been produced by these political and economic trends in

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[40] This amount is calculated through combining the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecution) formula grants + Grants to Encourage Arrest allocations. Both of these grants include explicit goals to develop and improve law enforcement and prosecution strategies to respond to domestic violence.

[41] Donations are, of course, not indicative of need. Fiscal donations with restrictions on use can lead to imbalanced budgets and/or unnecessary programs and activities. Material donations also can become a burden when non-profit constituencies do not have a need but the public is looking for a convenient way to recycle or rid themselves of excess waste. For example, one interviewee shared with me that her organization regularly receives donations of gently-used South Asian clothes; often these donations are once-worn party clothes. The needs of the survivors who are part of her organization are not compatible with the volume of material that is coming in. Meanwhile, she is on several listserves made up of South Asian women, and she repeatedly sees inquiries that ask: "Where can I donate old Indian clothes?" and are then followed by suggestions of different women's organizations, because "they always need donations." According to my interviewee, the opposite is true.

funding appropriations for work that addresses violence against women (Duggan 2004). How does the transformation and solidification of domestic violence as a fundable issue impact understanding of the work itself, and what is possible, in this realm?

These dynamics have been well-documented in anti-rape movements in the U.S. which have a more radical feminist origin than the battered women's movement, and so shifts have been easier to discern in that context. For example, Gottschalk discusses the impact that LEAA (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) funding had on *all* rape crisis centers, even those that explicitly rejected direct LEAA funding. First, even through certain groups rejected direct federal governmental funds, they often accepted state-level monies that were administered through block grants; STOP is the equivalent of this funding in VAWA. Next, because LEAA funding required significant reforms to criminal legal approaches and law enforcement practices, it weakened the anti-rape movement's critiques of the state, which trickled throughout and down to the everyday level of crisis support and advocacy with survivors (2006; see also Fried 1994; Baker and Mazurek 1998; Maier 2011). Anti-violence work, in all forms and spaces, is shaped by cultural logics of funding and pressures of professionalization, so even if specific organizations are not actual recipients of government or corporate monies their work is informed by the broader sociopolitical and economic frameworks through which these activities are implemented (Bumiller 2008).

In South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities working on gender-based violence, funding has not been a straightforward matter. The early cohort of South Asian women's organizations, in particular, grappled with ideological concerns about accessing available government funds and resisted potential constraints on organizational autonomy. Different groups made different decisions that were, in part, influenced by the availability of other sources

of money; for example, groups with access to wealthy individual donors in the South Asian community had less motivation to pursue public dollars. Ultimately, however, many of the earlier organizations utilized a strategic and pragmatic approach so that they could both garner government funding for their work and, as Sujata Warrier, one of the earliest members of Manavi states, maintain a refusal for "funding agencies, whether South Asian or the state, "[to] dictate what we can and cannot do"" (quoted in Das Gupta 2006:116).

State funding, however, is difficult to calibrate. It rushes in like a flood. Once the opening for these resources has been made, it becomes difficult to abstain especially because these monies become a necessary condition for organizational infrastructure such as office space, staff salaries, and other basic organizational needs. A review of federal tax returns for twelve SAWOs that accept public funds illuminates how quickly government monies can grow, and then become sedimented in, organizational budgets. For example, Group X had publicly disavowed government money for the first decade of its existence and chose instead to rely on financial support from its community. After accepting its first government grant through VAWA, its budget grew over 200%; state monies have consistently made up between 65-88% of this group's overall budget since then. Group Y did not take any significant government funds for over ten years of existence. Once they accepted public dollars, these funds grew from 2% (in that first year) to 35% of the organizational budget within six years. Organizations that have been able to pace their state funding and to prevent these monies from overwhelming their budgets are the ones that had, and continue to have, significant community-based funding comprised of both wealthy individuals and community or family foundations.

Although accepting government monies can greatly expand the capacity of non-profit organizations, South Asian anti-violence groups that are accessing government monies are

actually still relatively few in number. For example, from 2009-2011, the Office on Violence against Women's Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services for Victims Program, which targets community-based programs providing culturally and linguistically specific services and other resources, only gave out 10 awards (out of 97) to 8 South Asian anti-violence organizations[42]. And, generally, all South Asian women's organizations name that they are under-resourced and do not have sufficient funds to sustain and grow their work in the directions they envision, as is typical of non-profit community-based organizations providing supportive services. In 2007, Manavi commissioned a report, funded by a Technical Assistance grant administered through the Office on Violence against Women, to assess the access and utilization of funds by South Asian women's organizations in the U.S. This report reveals that limited funding is articulated as a continued barrier to this work. Without sufficient resources, newer organizations have not been able to establish infrastructure; this, in turn, makes them less competitive or even ineligible for grants and other funding opportunities. The report recommends that SAWOs prioritize becoming more prepared to apply for state funding (Rajan and Jethwani 2007). Notably, this report does not offer any information about unanticipated challenges that come from obtaining funding; but, again, as this report was funded and approved by OVW, its content may have been constrained by these conditions.

All of the organizations that participated in my current dissertation research project—regardless of size, budget, and funding sources—spoke about concerns regarding funding, but the specifics of the organizational profile affected the focal points of our conversations. I interviewed people who represented a spectrum of organizations: large mainstream social services agencies with South Asian-specific services; community-based anti-violence organizations with mid-sized budgets derived from multiple funding sources; smaller and newer

[42] Two organizations in this pool received awards in multiple years.

organizations funded mostly through private foundation grants for emerging groups; and, community-based projects that are not incorporated as their own independent 501(c)3 but, instead, exist within a larger organization and/or employ fiscal sponsorship services from a related non-profit. The organizations on the less-institutionalized end of this spectrum were usually rooted in a minoritized community within the South Asian community (i.e. not a pan-South Asian group but based in shared ethnicity, language, class, etc.). This latter set of groups expressed frustrations about funding that reflect broader power dynamics and distributions of wealth within South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities that shape how resources are accessed. I will take these concerns up later in this chapter (and in Chapter 5).

The related issue of professionalization of anti-violence work is also not straightforward in the South Asian American context. South Asian community-based organizations have not necessarily followed any linear or expected path towards professionalization as directly linked to funding sources. For example, in my interview pool of staffed groups that work primarily on gender-based violence, one organization, mostly funded by state monies, has intentionally not hired lawyers or social workers to conduct direct services work. Another organization, mostly funded by private foundations and individual donors, adopted a social work methodology in its direct services work and actively sought out professional social workers to join its staff. Tensions over professionalization in the South Asian community, then, do not emerge from the growth of outside funding; they pre-date as well as transcend these fiscal transitions. Instead, they are indicative of dynamics of class, wealth, and resources that have produced different forms of anti-violence work. Some South Asian anti-violence organizations, particularly the older groups, have been founded and staffed (through paid and volunteer positions) by people who occupy a professional class; even if their degrees are not directly related to work around

gender-based violence, they were professionals in some sphere (e.g. finance, law, academia). Other anti-violence groups, including some that were originally started by college-educated professionals, are made up of members that are a mix of middle-class professionals, low-wage workers, and working-class homemakers. These differences also correspond to other identities and social locations, in which the former groups were more likely to work within a South Asian identity but replicate Indian hegemony and the latter were more likely to work in a specific community within the South Asian diaspora. The issue of professionalization as it operates in this site, then, is about class dynamics that reflect and produce fissures within South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities in New York City. Although I take up community-level engagements in the last chapter, here, I want to attend to discourses of professionalization as they operate beyond actual social workers, lawyers, and doctors conducting anti-violence work through these organizations. Instead, I look at discourses of professionalization as a circulating set of expectations about authority, responsibility and expertise to address domestic violence.

9/11: Proliferations of Violence and Awakening

> *It threw the community into a tailspin, right. A lot of good things came out of it, right? We became awoken.* — Z, Executive Director of a non-profit organization that was already based in South Asian communities when 9/11 occurred

As discussed in the Introduction, South Asian immigrants and diasporic communities have long histories of political and community organizing in the United States, as part of domestically-oriented as well as transnational struggles. Immigrants from the post-1965 generation leaned towards creating civic and/or cultural institutions to facilitate their integration into the U.S. while still preserving their identity and connection to South Asia. In the mid-1980s,

South Asian women's organizations began to appear in response to the needs that were visible in various community spaces. One of the major contributions that South Asian anti-violence organizations have made to community-based activism has been their insistence to make visible the variant forms of violence and oppression experienced by South Asian immigrants in the U.S., by focusing on gender-based violence but not remaining limited to this. South Asian women's organizing took, as one of its aims, the puncturing of model minority stereotypes that popularly circulated both in and outside of South Asian American communities (Bhattacharjee 1992; Dasgupta and Warrier 1996; Dasgupta 1998; Abraham 2000). Their efforts also emerge in the context of changing demographics in the South Asian community and neoliberal policy initiatives; the decline of the social welfare state and consequent unmet needs produced the growth of a non-state and secular institutional infrastructure of care. South Asian women's organizations occupy a specific historic position in the evolving landscape of South Asian community-based activism as they existed at a time when there were few other resources available for community members in need of immediate and/or ongoing support.

Through the 1990s, other South Asian community-based groups grew and organized around and through issues such as gender-based violence, sexuality-based rights, labor rights, youth rights, immigrant rights and racial justice, arts/culture, and other intersectional sociopolitical and economic concerns. Many of these projects utilized a community organizing methodology in which they grew a membership base of people directly affected by the issues of concern to build power and claim rights. Other initiatives focused their efforts on community-level social change work while also providing social services and other forms of support to community members. Most groups conducted simultaneous activities at different points on this spectrum, and, in doing so, challenged the falseness of binary approaches that positioned

community organizing and social services as mutually exclusive. Most South Asian community-based groups emerged through one of two paths: 1) as organic and affective or other relationships among community members who decided to address an issue that they were experiencing or witnessing or 2) as an incubator project of a larger, usually pan-Asian, organization that later broke off into their own independent organizations (SAALT "Building Communtiy Strength" 2007).

In May 2001, community activists organized a conference, Desis Organizing, in New York City, to bring together different individuals and organizations working in South Asian communities on political, economic, and social justice. The demographics of this conference reflected the dominance of non-profit professionals in social justice efforts in the South Asian community at that time. These class dynamics were challenged by a letter, read out loud to interrupt the closing plenary, authored and co-signed by organizations based in working-class immigrant communities. Despite internal tensions about these and other power differentials within the South Asian activist community, Desis Organizing spawned a national network that continues to exist through a still somewhat-active national listserve of over 150 members.

9/11 happened just a few months after this conference. In the moments, months, and even years immediately following this day, existing community-based organizations stretched, finding themselves overwhelmed by but also motivated to address the intensities and complexities impacting their already-targeted constituencies of working-class immigrants, many whom had insecure immigration status (Kateel 2011; Maulik 2011). New groups appeared to accommodate the myriad crisis needs that afflicted South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities directly and indirectly related to 9/11. In a 2007 report, South Asian community-based organizations indicated that their constituencies were still grappling with the after-effects

of 9/11—there is no reason to think that this is not still true at the time of this writing in late 2012, only weeks after a white supremacist gunman terrorized a Sikh community in Oak Creek, Wisconsin by murdering 6 members of a local gurudwara during the same week that two masjids, in Mississippi and Illinois, were targets of violence. In the years since 9/11, we have seen a) demographic changes in South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities that have grown undocumented, low-wage workers and/or non-Indian Hindu populations as well as burgeoning populations of second and third generation South Asians as well as immigrant seniors (SAALT 2012)[43]; b) an economic recession and housing crises that have disproportionately impacted lower middle and middle-class communities of color[44] (Chhaya Press Release 2009), including South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities and c) increases in state institutional and interpersonal targeting of South Asians through Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist anti-terrorist frameworks, and community-wide fear of these forms of violence (Prashad 2012). This period has also been marked by increases in funding and other resources that have sustained and grown community work at local levels as well as emergent national-level organizing (e.g. the short-lived South Asian Task Force (2001-2005), a convergence of left and progressive community-based groups that formed in the wake of 9/11; and, SAALT (South Asian Americans Leading Together), a civil rights organization that shifted focus after 9/11 to engage local organizations in policy advocacy).

In 2007, SAALT commissioned a report, *Building Community Strength,* about community-based organizations serving South Asians. This report offers a useful snapshot of this

[43] This information is pulled from demographic Census data that is available in different reports on the SAALT website.

[44] In 2008, over 6000 foreclosures were filed in Queens, the most affected borough in New York City, and particularly in Jamaica, Richmond Hill and Jackson Heights, all neighborhoods densely populated by South Asians (and, the first two, by Indo-Caribbeans and African Americans as well). South Asians made up as many as 50% of the owners in foreclosure processes in Queens. (Chhaya Press Release 2009).

current landscape, documenting that there has been a growth in the types of issues that community-based organizations have taken up, but immigration, domestic violence and civil rights are the most common areas of work. The attention to civil rights is a post-9/11 effect; Vijay Prashad notes that one of the most distinctive political shifts in South Asian community organizing post-9/11 has been the deployment of a civil rights discourse to address conditions of injustice (2012a). This report also documents that in many cities, anti-violence organizations are often the oldest and most formalized organizations. In mid-sized cities, almost all organizations in their sample reported that domestic violence is their primary area of work[45]. This report gives examples of how domestic violence organizations in these cities have participated in multi-issue organizing, such as Raksha's work against a law enforcement initiative that targeted South Asian small businesses in Atlanta, Daya's post-Katrina crisis response work in Houston, and Chaya's efforts on anti-bias xenophobic incidents in Seattle. In mid-sized cities, the anti-violence organizations are often a central resource for the community (SAALT 2007).

In larger cities with bigger South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities—like New York, the geographic site that has been most directly connected to 9/11—there is a greater span of organizations, specialized around their specific issue area or within specific constituencies; the landscape of community-based groups extends beyond the pan-South Asian anti-violence institutions. What happens to the issue of domestic violence within this expanded community infrastructure?

[45] The National Coalition of South Asian organizations, founded in June 2008, is currently made up of 41 organizations. 45% of these groups name domestic violence as one of their organizational priorities. Another 12% are women-led organizations working predominantly on other issues, such as workers' or immigrants' rights. See Varghese (2007) for a discussion of the invisibility of non-domestic violence organizations in community narratives about contemporary women's organizing.

Knotting Power and Knowledge

Neoliberalism has and continues to re-shape the relationships between power and knowledge, knotting together assemblages of technologies, techniques, and practices of governance. These assemblages are not fixed, but mobile, and can be decontextualized from the original sources (e.g. state power, and/or funders) and re-contextualized in locally-specific forms (Ong 2006:13). It is perhaps unsurprising that the localized specialization of organizations around issues or minoritized communities within the South Asian American community yields official scripts, often clearly stated in mission statements, grant proposals, and outreach materials: X organization works with low-wage workers, Y organization works with Punjabi-speakers, Z organization works in Coney Island.

But, at the level of everyday interactions between community-based organizational staff and clients and/or members, these processes are not necessarily formulaic or predictable. Even if neoliberal governance encourages the production of different populations, the issues, identities, and needs appear in embodied form as complex and overlapping such that they refuse to neatly oblige categorial, or population, parameters. Interactions between staff or volunteers and the community members who come to the organization involve negotiations of information and boundaries that are reliant upon specialization and the evocations of discourses of expertise. Certain forms of knowledge become accepted because of their usefulness to the status of professions and reinforcement of internal hierarchies (Bumiller 2008). Neoliberal logics require this distinction between governing and governed or, producer and consumer. Professionals, whose authority is based in expertise, administer social services to users or consumers. Expertise is also, in part, determined by the ability to be discreet, to be able to exercise the professional judgment to know when and how to hold knowledge and not disseminate it widely (Clarke

2008). Experience is dismissed because everyone can have experience; it is not limited to experts, even if we understand experience to also be itself constituted through relations of power, as a subjective production (Scott 1991).

In the context of South Asian community organizations, two patterns emerge: 1) Funding, and perceptions about funding, contribute to the extraction and isolation of "domestic violence" from a more holistic definition of gender-based violence. This serves to normalize a traditional definition of domestic violence. 2) Discourses of expertise are deployed by practitioners even when this requires a disavowal of the knowledge and practice that they are enacting in their work. Here, I show that the economic and political forces of funding and professionalization have produced a power/knowledge knot that requires authorization of knowledge.

From Gender-Based Violence to Domestic Violence?

In the very early 2000s, I ran into B, a member of a local domestic workers' organization, at a conference. She was worried about one of her group's members; a young undocumented monolingual Bangla speaker had just fled an abusive live-in nanny position and was now without a place to live. X had spent the morning pacing outside the conference rooms on her bulky cell phone, calling various contacts within her network to find temporary shelter for this woman, who was waiting in their organizational one-room office with a small suitcase. I asked B if she had called Manavi—where I worked at the time—to see if we had space in our transitional home, Ashiana, and was unsurprised at her response: "I thought Manavi was a domestic violence organization." I encouraged X to call, giving her our organizational script about our philosophy about gender-based violence: we saw it as broader than intimate violence; capitalist exploitation was part of our definition of gender-based violence; the transitional home was founded to

support displaced South Asian women to have space and time to set up a safe independent living. All of this meant that this worker would be eligible to stay at Ashiana. I hoped to be convincing but B was skeptical. In the end, B was able to find the member housing with another person in their group, and the situation was temporarily alleviated.

My conversation with B illuminates several aspects of relations and perceptions between South Asian community-based organizations. My articulation of Manavi's organizational philosophy expressed a holistic political analysis of power, gender, and violence, and our work was indeed grounded in this understanding. Monisha Das Gupta's ethnographic study of community-based organizations in the Northeast U.S. in the 1990s similarly found that anti-violence groups strategically used broad and complex definitions of violence as part of their social change methodology. Yet, B's understanding of our organization as a "domestic violence" organization was a common perception in the community, especially given the recent difficult split between Sakhi for South Asian Women and its internal Domestic Workers' Committee (1997). The DWC became its own organization, Workers' Awaaz, which then later split to create a low-wage workers' organization, Andolan (Organizing South Asian Workers). One of the outcomes of this conflict within Sakhi was that it discursively extracted labor exploitation from a broader platform of gender-based violence (as well as materially removed DWC's resources and their staff organizer).

B's perception was not inaccurate. Although, Ashiana was open to any South Asian woman displaced due to any form of violence, the reality was that most of the residents, and most of our work overall, focused on intimate violence. It was important for us to claim a broad philosophical understanding of gender-based oppression, but, simultaneously, our day-to-day work rested in a narrow place on this broader spectrum of violence.

This dialectical relationship between theory and practice is not unusual for social justice groups that also provide direct support or services to community members with immediate needs. But, what has perhaps shifted is the insertion of attention to funding or attribution to funding, and its impact on how advocates relate to their work because of real or perceived funding restrictions, in anti-violence discourse. One of the outcomes of the growth of a funded anti-violence industry is the specialization of the work. Anti-violence work in South Asian communities has transformed accordingly, according to many of my interviewees that work(ed) in these community-based settings. Some of them communicated a self-consciousness and/or skeptical critique about these trends. As one former staff member at a SAWO stated, "*I don't even know if it's a movement, it's become more of an industry, service industry.*"

Other interviewees spoke frankly about the relationship between the mainstream anti-violence movement, funding and their approach to the work. For example, the following interview excerpts from current staff members in South Asian women's organizations exemplify different limitations that emerge from funding:

> *I don't know how many programs are funded to work on sex-selective abortion, forced marriage. Federal funding is restricted. We are funded to do domestic violence and sexual assault work and we come across issues of child sexual abuse and we might not be able to directly address it, under that grant…Our funding says we are only going to work on violence against women issues: domestic violence and sexual assault.* – C, a grants administrator

> *Funding tells you what you can and can not address. Transnational abandonment: we haven't received funding for transnational abandonment because it is not really defined as violence against women. Hitting, abuse, none of those fall into the category, you are just leaving somebody in their home country so that connection is not being made. So for transnationally abandoned women, unless there is physical abuse or a police report or whatnot, she is unable to file for any VAWA relief. Transnational abandonment is not a recognized form of abuse in our [understanding of] violence against women here [in the U.S.]. So obviously if you go to the Office on Violence against Women and ask them to fund you for your transnational abandonment project, I doubt if they are going to be able to recognize it.* –D, a community educator and advocate

> *[Our organization's] approach to violence against women has always been very broad: violence defined along a continuum from birth to death. But the domestic violence movement has segregated by husband against a wife—and that definition has become broader to include intimate partner violence also—but largely domestic violence has been segregated out of that whole spectrum… So there is not much room for LGBT same-sex violence, there is not much room for sexual assault, sexual violence, campus crimes, violence against women crimes on campus. And I don't mean just sexual assault, I mean harassment, stalking, they are not really associated with these other things. …They are talking about bad husbands who beat up their wives.* –E, Executive Director

> *What we believe as an organization is very pure. But the fact remains that most of the women who come to us come out of marriages, heterosexual relationships. Not just heterosexual relationships, but marriage relationships. That does seem to be the bulk of our work.*—G, advocate

These conversations expose the constraints of the anti-violence movement's growth towards a specialization of domestic violence, or violence that occurs between people in an intimate relationship, at the interpersonal level. Each interviewee offers examples of forms of violence that she considers to be gender-based violence that are outside the parameters of funding: child sexual abuse, stalking, transnational abandonment, and same-gender violence. These types of gender-based violence are not recognized both because of restrictions from existing sources of funding (i.e. funders who will only support domestic violence and sexual assault) as well as their inability to find funders who will support these other issues.

Yet, some of this work occurs anyway. Many people I spoke with referred to the myriad issues that they engage on an every day level that transcend funding. In these cases, they have developed internal practices and systems of documentation to stay within their funder guidelines while not compromising their services. These non-fundable issues primarily still fall under the rubric of domestic violence, however, and mainly affect straight cisgendered married middle-class women. For example, they work with women who have been abandoned, H-4 visa holders, and other domestic survivors who have been unable to be "folded into life," as detailed in

Chapter 3. These survivors see their experience as legible to the heteronormativity of South Asian women's organizations; survivors calling are not concerned with whether their needs are within funding parameters, but with whether they think that the organization will understand their experience. Without a doubt, advocates name that the inability to garner resources for these activities affects their ability to advocate for these survivors whose experiences of domestic violence are outside the scope of mainstream understandings of domestic violence. The extensions that are made possible are those that stretch *within* the domestic violence framework—to add forms of domestic violence that are more specific to the conditions of South Asian women's lives—but not those that move beyond it. (The technologies through which some experiences become recognized as "domestic violence" and the role of immigrant women's activism in these processes will be discussed in Chapter 3).

And, some of this work does not occur. Child sexual abuse and same-gender violence are brought up repeatedly as issues that are not fundable as well as topics that the South Asian community is not ready to address. Given that anti-violence groups have been heralded for their path-breaking work to make domestic violence visible in a community that was at best, indifferent, but more often, hostile, to this issue it is remarkable to hear this script—across organizations—about the lack of community readiness to engage challenging issues. It is even more remarkable to hear this position within the context of funding restrictions when other forms of work do happen without direct funding. This reveals a possible inverse dynamic where funding does not shape what happens but is deployed as an explanation for work that pushes organizations outside their parameters of comfort by challenging their fundamental framework. A former staff member at a South Asian women's organization bluntly conveys this point when she says:

I am trying to think if I—I feel like [homophobia and heterosexism] came up, but I feel like in a large way, [SAWO's] homophobia looks like invisibility. It just doesn't, it wasn't coming up, it wasn't named, that was like, by far the, 90% of how [SAWO] is homophobic. I think you can say all sorts of things around intention, or we don't have the capacity to work with everyone. Or we need to build resources. Like all of those things, which, yeah, which are all you can say that in a lot of ways and all of those things can be true, but that can still point to homophobia. And I feel like that in the end is how I understood it. Yeah.

Ultimately, most interviewees expressed that funding restrictions have not necessarily altered their understanding of gender-based violence; ideologically, they maintain their broader analysis. But, that anti-violence organizations are willing and able to challenge funding constraints to "make room" for some forms of violence and some survivors (e.g transnational abandonment, H-4 visa holders) brings into question whether this broad analysis can also be intersectional, to incorporate different identities and conditions (e.g. child sexual abuse survivors, LGBTQ survivors, among others) and to transcend a universal South Asian domestic violence survivor subject.

Meanwhile, the "domestic violence" framework may have its limits but it can also provide a strategic opening for other issues to emerge; for instance, one community advocate expressed a common feeling when she said:

Our framework is supposed to be all issues of violence against women. I would say though [that the] primary issue that most people come to us with is domestic violence. That is usually what we are dealing with: safety planning, accessing resources. So the primary issue is usually domestic violence, and the immediate needs of women in their day to day lives to protect themselves from the abuse that they are facing at the hands of their husband. But, then it slowly turns into issues of immigration, or transnational abandonment, or sexual assault, which comes up later on.

Demarcations of domestic violence guide the creation of boundaries such that the needs of survivors of domestic violence are distinct from other needs in the community. South Asian anti-violence organizations express a responsibility towards the former population,

whereas the larger community is outside these parameters, as illustrated in this interview with a staff member at an anti-violence organization. Unlike in mid-sized cities, where anti-violence organizations occupy a role of a centralized resource, here, in the NYC metropolitan area, anti-violence organizations can afford to be more specialized, as exemplified when the Director of a South Asian anti-violence organization states:

> *But there were also a number of people who called because they were trying to get a job, or immigration-related issues not related to domestic violence. So, certainly [this SAWO] was a place, in the last few years especially, where people just saw it as a resource center, as a place to get access to information as well. The initial call, everybody got as much information or assistance as needed, but on an ongoing basis, we would only work with survivors of domestic violence. So, everybody else who called- if they were male survivors, or if they were non-domestic violence related calls- those folks all got referrals to other agencies.*

Funding influences form. South Asian women's organizations, increasingly responsible to fulfill the neoliberal gap in social welfare provisions, experience a growing imbalance among their different organizational activities. South Asian women's organizations have started through a two-prong approach in which they provided culturally-specific support to survivors as well as engaged communities to address domestic violence. Although there was always a tension between responding to immediate and concrete needs of survivors and conducting the longer, slower work within communities, over time the social service components have started to dominate the work. The challenges with funding, then, are not simply about organizational philosophy and autonomy or government funders directly telling them what they can not do. Instead, funding becomes a mode through which organizations become incorporated into governance, reconfiguring their roles such that they can enact technologies of neoliberalism (see Chapter 3 for a more extended discussion). Some organizations have shifted their internal

practice accordingly; for example, through intentionally taking on more of an identity as a social services organization with licensed social workers, and building capacity to fulfill this role:

> *[We brought on] professional social workers who were case managers as well, so that brought a whole different level of thinking about the population. We referred to survivors as women we work with, but over time as we got social workers […], it became clients. I definitely think there was more consistent case management, more accurate documentation.*

At the same time, the material realities of their organizational budgets mean that these organizations can not afford to *not* be specialized. A lawyer working in South Asian communities nationally sees SAWOs from a distance and hypothesizes that these groups' funding limitations are what shape their praxis, their internal assessments of what work to address and what work to leave behind:

> *But I would say, like every other organization with the economic downturn, with government funding cuts, it's been difficult for many organizations to even do what their primary mission was to do and they are dealing with that day-to-day reality every day. So, understandably they will need to prioritize what it is that they can devote most of their attention to and that's why it's all the more important for the community, for foundations, for the government to really give support to SAWOs.*

Ultimately, this combination of forces—reconfigurations of neoliberal governance and the increased social welfare functions of non-profit organizations, explicit funding restrictions, and heteronormative ideologies that have replicated hegemonic understandings about gender-based violence –contributes to an isolation of SAWOs from other community-based organizations. (Another contributing factor is their emphasis on confidentiality, which I will address in Chapter 5.) Although this is a larger phenomenon, as indicated through the opening quote in this chapter, SAWOs, in particular, are perceived as operating from a single-issue platform. For example, an activist lawyer noted:

> *[We're hoping to see if organizations […] can build bridges, […] to begin thinking about our communities beyond single-issues… And to also move beyond the narrow lens of domestic violence to start looking at intersectional work, so whether it's violence against LGBTIQ individuals, whether it's around immigration reform, whether it's around [racial] profiling local organizations. [I]t's not an issue of philosophically not wanting to expand beyond gender-based violence necessarily, it's about […] the time and resource-intensive nature of doing direct services work and gender-based violence work can be, can limit the ability for local organizations to engage in broader social justice work or employ strategies like organizing or policy advocacy to the extent that they may want to. [and then, as a response to how to address this limitation: [I]t's about trying to do whatever they can to be supportive [to work happening around different issues, in different arenas], even if it's not possible for them to be as engaged as maybe they would like to be.]*

This lawyer's critique is ironic given that the formation of South Asian women's groups was precisely to insert an understanding of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, and violence in mainstream feminist and elite community discourses. Her critique offers an important insight, however, in that SAWOs are, perhaps not single-"issue" so much as single-"constituency": domestic violence survivors. As the interview excerpts above suggest, advocates in SAWOs can hold the complexity of different issues that come up in the lives of survivors that they are assisting, even if the survivor's needs "*slowly turn into issues of immigration, or transnational abandonment, or sexual assault."* But, immigration needs of a non-survivor of domestic violence or immigration reform activism more generally (i.e. not reform that is specifically for survivors of domestic violence) would likely be out of the purview of their work which is enacting neoliberal responsibilities to assess, sort, and manage populations according to criteria that defines legibility as a survivor of violence.

Funding Absences

My discussion has centered on the anti-violence groups that are independent, funded, incorporated 501(c)3 non-profit organizations that provide direct services to survivors of

domestic violence. For many anti-violence organizations, however, questions of funding and implications for governance are configured differently because they have less access to resources. Most of the groups in my interview pool that faced these challenges were newer, based in a minoritized community within the South Asian community, and focused on community-building and prevention work instead of direct support services. One interviewee, who currently works in a working-class new immigrant group, emphasized throughout our conversation, that, although her organization has been extremely creative about working with limited funds, their inability to demonstrate a sustainable infrastructure to funders is what prevents them from accessing resources. They also are resisting transforming into a more services-oriented organization and this makes them ineligible for many funding opportunities. The members of this organization work for free and pay for most expenses out of their own pocket even though they have very limited, if any, disposable income. As one member describes:

> *[The work] shifted from being something that women feel, initially, women felt like this is our job and we are doing it. And it became something more like this is something we are passionate about, and that is why we are doing it.*

The members of this group face the consequence of their labor not being professionalized (Nair 2012); although they take on responsibility towards their community, their expertise is not compensated. They struggle with the tension of desire and passion to work for social justice in their communities along with material realities and the difficulties of finding time to volunteer without compensation.

An interviewee at a different organization questioned why pan-South Asian organizations received funding to provide culturally-competent services when they had not demonstrated that they were experts in the specific language or immigration needs in her community. This person also is actively involved in a small, barely-funded group that utilizes a bigger organization's

fiscal sponsorship services. She expressed that her organization does want to grow and sees a need to offer culturally-specific support services to domestic violence survivors in her community—whose needs are not being met by the pan-South Asian groups—but they currently do not have the internal capacity to demonstrate the sustainability they would need to show to convince funders to give them money.

This offers another way to think about the distinctions and specializations that emerge through funding, beyond a demarcation of internally-differentiated populations of domestic violence survivors and others. Funding also fractures the anti-violence landscape along the lines of professional paid workers and community-rooted unpaid/little-paid workers as well as along the lines of organizational strategies that are dominated by service provision or prevention/education. These are not mutually exclusive categories, or fixed binaries, and there are examples of partnerships that have brought different forms of anti-violence organizations together, coordinated efforts to support survivors in their shared constituencies, and blurred lines within these community-rooted groups. In the last chapter, I discuss how these distinctions—between professionalized service-dominated groups and minoritized community-building groups—are reflected in and shape their social change methodologies.

Meanwhile, I want to offer a short piece from a conversation with a founding member of a small anti-violence group rooted in a specific language/ethnic South Asian community:

> *Unlike other South Asian organizations that employ professionals or social workers who try to penetrate the community, we felt strongly that we needed to look at people who belong to the community in terms of, if we wanted to bring change to community members who don't necessarily access all the things, that have easy access to doctors or lawyers or other professionals… It's not always outside the group, sometimes our group members have faced violence, or are facing violence, or know people. […] It depends on what the need is. If there is somebody who needs to immediately leave a situation, we've reached out to [a SAWO] for shelter space, or [another SAWO]. We've reached out to different resources as needed. Sometimes women have accompanied other women to go to court. Those things are not that common, but they have happened. We are doing*

preventative work, but if these things come up, we're not going to be like, oh, we can't handle it, we're sorry.

This respondent blurs the lines between services and support such that her emphasis is on both the needs of the survivor in question and on the relationships among the members of the organization, which do not constitute a professional/client model. Based on the specific situation, she is able to contact resources in the community that do offer specialized services for domestic violence survivors, but this is not merely a referral to an outside expert. There are multiple strategies and processes occurring simultaneously.

Organizations that are not already deeply mired in the non-profit industrial complex are also carefully thinking about how to not replicate some of the patterns that have emerged in the previous generation's trajectory towards institutionalization. For instance, several interviewees from these groups spoke with me at length about their critiques of the domestic violence framework, citing that it too limiting to encompass the complexity of gender-based oppression. Most often, they expressed excitement about utilizing different ways of thinking, such as a reproductive justice analysis, to fuel their social change work. From their perspective, reproductive justice offers an intersectional understanding of how power, gender, and violence operate in public and private spheres, beyond the level of individual relationships. Another interviewee also felt hopeful about the social change possibilities that a reproductive justice framework was offering her organizations' work. She also mentioned that available reproductive justice funding opportunities had been the impetus for her organization to have this internal conversation. Time will tell whether the frame of reproductive justice will ultimately move towards becoming less politicized and more institutionalized or whether it will be able to hold on to the complexity it seems to currently allow. Both reproductive justice and anti-domestic

violence movements have held a mixed heritage of political alliances to move their agenda forward. They also have some of the same challenges in that there is an easy slippage into reducing the analysis of structural power to a decontextualized micro-context. The question here remains, what lessons are to be learned from the anti-violence movement's relationship with state power and governance?

Ultimately, however, funding, resources, and organizational growth present contradictory and confusing dilemmas. One person I interviewed is part of a little-funded organization that has moved back and forth between having part-time staff, to stipends for workers, to no money at all. The lack of financial stability was very upsetting to this interviewee, who stated:

> *I would say the biggest obstacles these days is not having financial support to build our structure and to have, instead of thinking month to month, day to day, year to year, we do have a long-term, short-term vision. But it's difficult to do that when we don't have financial support. That's been our biggest challenge, really.*

In part, her frustration was also about intra-community politics. She asked why staff members at various SAWOs get paid a full salary when her organizational membership was working for free? But, she reconciled that they were still building their internal capacity at the same time that she felt disappointed by this reality:

> *The idea is that we have the potential and we do do so much interesting work that is missing in mainstream DV orgs but I guess we don't have the PR, we don't have that structure yet, where we can really be solid. I wish that there was a way for us to be really stable and continue the work, because there is so much potential.*

Interestingly, at different points in the interview, she also granted that maybe money didn't matter. They were a resilient group, and, as primarily working-class women, they were not only surviving but thriving without many resources. Although she did eventually conclude that lack

of financial resources and stability was the most difficult part of their organizational work, there were moments of optimism and disruption of neoliberal funding logics:

> *But I also feel that we have also survived for so long with very little money. If I tell you how much money we had for our programs and we did so much work, it would be really surprising because organizations that have ten times this budget do this much work. It's kind of challenging but it also shows that you can do a lot of work in the community without having a lot of money as well.*

Expertise, Disavowal of Knowledge, and Crafting Pipelines

As South Asian women's groups have become more specialized as anti-domestic violence organizations, the approach to domestic violence itself has changed as well. The specialization of domestic violence sits in tension with community education approaches that have emphasized the ordinariness of domestic violence, as something that cuts across lines of class, education status, religious identity, and more. Domestic violence has become understood as an exceptional form of violence that needs to be professionally managed. How does this specialization impact workers in community-based organizations that interface with South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities through other modes, seemingly unrelated to the specificity of domestic violence? When they learn about a client or community member's experience of domestic violence, what do they do?

In these situations, most of the people I interviewed refer the survivor to a SAWO. Often this referral occurs with reluctance or hesitation, especially if the survivor is a member of a minoritized linguistic and/or ethnic community; pan-South Asian anti-violence organizations have been consistently perceived to be inaccessible to these communities. Often these referrals also occur with some pipelining: a staff member at a community-based organization will make the call to the SAWO with the survivor and follow-up, or a volunteer will accompany the survivor to her first appointment with the advocate at the anti-violence organization. These

gestures help to secure that the referral does not fall between the bureaucratic cracks, and, as one community organizer asserted, her connection is primarily with the survivor and she would not want to risk breaking trust if the referral was a dead end.

Through my interviews with different activists and advocates in community-based organizations, I saw the utilization of discourses of knowledge and expertise as a mode through which perceptions of ability and responsibility were formed: Who can do this work? Who is supposed to do this work? When talking about issues of responses to intimate violence, interviewees were careful to position themselves accordingly, usually corresponding to wherever they were paid to work, or organizationally-affiliated. This occurred despite any otherwise acquired expertise or knowledge in these issues, including relevant formal degrees and prior professional experience working in anti-violence settings.

My discussion here does not aim to dispute who is really an expert in domestic violence; I do not want to assign expertise to people who do not claim it nor do I want to deny that anti-violence advocates acquire everyday knowledge and information through doing their work that sets them apart from people who are not engaged in these issues. Instead, I want to interrogate the premise and interpretation of expertise and to look at the distance that emerges between experience and authorized knowledge. This distance is produced through the operation of neoliberal non-profit logics that value and affirm professionalized knowledge and dismiss knowledge that comes out of experience.

To illustrate these dynamics, I offer three interview excerpts to demonstrate how the professionalization of anti-violence work has impacted perceptions of expertise, ability and responsibility to respond to survivors of violence.

Excerpt #1 comes from an interview with an employee at an organization that offers social services to South Asian communities on a variety of issues, including healthcare and immigration. This person is a first-generation immigrant from South Asia who has herself received immigration status in the U.S. through a legal remedy based on her experience of gender-based violence:

> *So, if, for instance if I get a call that is about domestic violence where domestic violence is the issue, I would tell them that there is [a SAWO], there is [another SAWO], and [a mainstream domestic violence organization]. […] I just let them know that these are the options, because* I am not trained *to deal with domestic violence. It's a very specialized area, in a way. I hate to use that sort of clinical social services language, but I don't want to give the wrong advice to someone. And I would rather send them to someone who actually knows, who deals with these things everyday*.

The interviewee then proceeded to tell a detailed story about a case in which a client needed information about navigating public benefits as a domestic violence survivor. She relayed the questions that she asked the survivor, as well as the information that she provided so that this client could get the assistance she needed. She then qualified this story by stating:

Respondent:	*Well, usually the thing is [survivors] need a social worker who works on domestic violence cases.*
Interviewer (me):	*What type of specialization is needed to work with survivors of domestic violence?*
Respondent:	*Well, specialized is that…for example, if you are in an immigration situation, domestic violence organizations would know about things like U-visa. If you are just…I know about U visa, but* I don't really have to know about it. *I know it because I care about it. And I know that I am going to see clients like that. But not all* those people *would know what a U visa is.*

The interviewee knows the types of information that a domestic violence survivor would need. In fact, throughout the course of the interview, she referred to several cases where she helped

clients in navigating public benefits and legal remedies. She also mentioned her volunteer work in another small informal community-based organization through which she had provided support to several domestic violence survivors. But, this expertise is disavowed because it is not a requirement of her formal paid professional position in this social services agency; she did not *need to know* this information. That she has attained this knowledge, on her own accord, because of her own interests, investments and personal experiences, is illegible. Hypothetically, a survivor could interact with one of the interviewee's colleagues, one of "those people," who is not fluent in relevant social services options. This possibility means that she herself will not claim that she has the expertise to work with survivors, and asserts that she must refer them out to professionals. This boundary presumably emerges from the staff person's own understanding of appropriate protocol and decision-making about these lines—she does not, for instance, make any reference to organizational practice or expectations that dictate that she must make these referrals.

Excerpt #2 comes from an interview with a staff member at a multi-service neighborhood-based South Asian community-based organization. Earlier in the interview, she told me about her former position in a South Asian anti-violence organization in which she became experienced in doing trainings on domestic violence. When she first started in her current position, she conducted trainings about domestic violence with the membership. But, this year she decided otherwise:

> *I feel far removed, so I was like, "Ok, you know what […] I should take a step back and have another organization do it. So this time, I really am going to make sure an [anti-violence] organization comes. Like if [specific anti-violence organization] or an organization comes in, it's usually not as personal, it's almost clinical. […] When an organization comes, it takes out the intimacy of it-- which is a good or bad thing too, it depends. I mean, I'm not an expert on any of this stuff.*
>
> *[…]*

> *The* real work *comes in when they talk to [another staff] or me one on one, and then we give our personal experiences. So there's the overt curriculum and then there's the indirect work we get to do with the [constituency]. […] What ends up happening is that the workshops, the formal workshops are there, but the informal conversations are when you talk about real experiences and that's when trust is built. And that's what I have noticed, that most of my job, in the sense of building up trust relationships happens outside of that. […]It doesn't matter how much you do this. […] It's when you finally see them and talk to them that they feel comfortable enough to share things with you. Or things just come up because you are hanging out with them, you are there with them, and that I feel comes out more than in any workshop.*

Here, the community-based worker is informed by her own history of work as a trainer in a South Asian women's organization, but, because she is not in this position anymore, she is no longer an expert. She differentiates between forms of expertise; the official overt curriculum is distinct from the indirect work. The interviewee is not necessarily devaluing this—here, she refers to it as the "real work,"—but her comments expose that this is not the work that is visible or formally recognized but the work that happens in between, informally, when it's not expected.

The last excerpt comes from an interview with a lawyer who works at a mainstream social services organization that has a program that specifically outreaches to South Asian survivors of violence. This excerpt is in contrast with the previous ones because in this case, the interviewee authorizes her expertise even when it is outside the bounds of her professional position:

> *Well, you know, I also don't really stick to what I do. I do a lot of…and I didn't get trained in this right away, and […] I don't get paid for this, I just do it. I do [financial literacy support], and, again, this is not a part of my job. I am not being [names her title], but I do it all the time. I went to some center and I got trained on some [of these issues]. […] A big problem for [survivors] is that their credit scores were ruined because either the batterer had taken out credit cards in their names or they just didn't know how to navigate the system. They didn't know how to build credit. They didn't have bank accounts. I have gone with my clients and opened bank accounts with them. I have gone with…they have no idea what credit means. It's really hard.*

In this last example, the staff person actively rejects the boundary of her position. She has been hired by a non-profit organization to fulfill a very particular role; however, through the course of

this interview, she cites numerous examples of these transgressions and is unconcerned with maintaining the boundaries of her position, or with the need to locate an expert to attend to her client's specific needs. She refers to herself as a lawyer several times in the interview, and she is affiliated with a program for South Asian survivors; these two factors grant her professional authority such that even in the absence of knowledge or experience, she has expertise.

Dynamics of expertise produce expectations of responsibility. If anti-violence organizations are perceived to be absolute experts in domestic violence, this can lead to unrealistic expectations about what South Asian women's organizations can do. One of my interviewees was very frustrated with SAWOs. A former Executive Director of a community-based organization that worked on many issues with a heterogeneous South Asian constituency summed up this perspective:

> *[Domestic violence] is so pervasive. I think every woman should know what their rights are, what are the signs of abuse, what's right, what's wrong. And should know what to do.* And when something happens, they should have tentacles in the community, *[…] a pathway for information to get to an organized body that is going to respond. […] We need that energy. That group does not exist. How many women in the South Asian community know about [SAWOs]? They don't! You talk to the everyday person, they don't know about [SAWOs]. [SAWOs] should be on the tip of every woman's tongue. From where I stand, [a SAWO] was completely useless. There was a number of times where we needed a shelter space and I should have been able to make one call to [SAWO] and say, we have a crisis.* We're not a domestic violence organization, we do not know what to do with it. *They should have an army come up to [our organization] and take the woman and deal. And that was never the response. You couldn't reach them. So it was always so complicated, stupid shit, like, you know, whatever. They're useless.*

Once a Sakhi, Always a Sakhi

For many South Asian women, involvement in South Asian women's organizations serve as an opening for a pathway to a lifetime of community-based social justice work; for others, it is a sideways trip, a detour. When they take a step back, a slight shift out of the machinations of neoliberal governance, their authority and expertise travels with them in other non-professional

realms. One of my interviewees, an ex-staff member at a South Asian women's organization, was happy to talk to me; she had left her position almost five years earlier and now worked in a corporate position in a completely different field. She remembered her time at this job fondly. Although she was no longer with this group, and didn't keep in regular contact with them, she was still recognized as an expert in her community:

> *There are a lot of people that know me, family or friends, that know that I used to do the work so sometimes I'll get: can you help me please? Or can you help this person? And then I'll have to get in touch with them…It's just no matter where you go, it'll always follow you- which is a good thing.*

Similarly, another interviewee talked about being positioned in the community as someone who has expertise in domestic violence because she worked in an anti-violence organization a decade earlier. She continued to work in different non-profits in the South Asian community over these last ten years, but in organizations that worked on different issues. In one of our conversations, she told me about incidents of domestic violence that had affected members of her current organization. She had watched from a distance; her position was in the administrative arena and she did not usually get involved with program issues. In this case, even though she had prior experience working in an anti-violence group, she disavowed this expertise in her professional context. On the other hand, in family and other community spaces, she had a less-boundaried approach:

> *I worked at [organization] 10 years ago, it was so long ago. But I still have family members or family friends that still call me because (laughing) they know that I worked at [organization] 10 years ago. And they're like, they dance around the issues… I know someone who knows someone and it'll really be their sister or whatever who is in some kind of you know traumatic situation and needs an immediate out and wants to do some safety planning and is there someplace within an hour or 2 of a South Asian Domestic Violence organization, and I don't think that had they not had a personal connection to someone who has been at one of these organizations, they would have thought to call them even if they knew it was out there. So I think that to that extent, that these*

organizations exist helps to demonstrate that it's not just one person's problem, that there are many people going through many different situations and people are not alone. What people took away from the safety planning I was doing with them, whether the stigma is real or not, they are not the only one going through this, and that conversation with people who are not political and not part of the social justice movement is happening….right? It's not like we have degrees in this *(laughing)*.

Chapter 3

Making Populations:

(Already-Neoliberal) H-4 Visa Holders and the Violence Against Women Act

Designations and Demarcations: Battered Immigrant Women and "Battered Immigrant Women"

In early fall 2011, during a sunny lunchtime break at a national conference in Washington D.C., several anti-violence advocates talked over sandwiches and fruit salad, comparing notes about our work. We chatted about budgetary restrictions, the differences between bad and good judges, and racial politics within our organizations. After this conversational warm-up, we started to trade stories about dilemmas that come up in our direct services work with survivors, or, as some say, clients. An older lawyer whose work for a non-profit organization spanned Latina, African American, and new South Asian immigrant communities in upper Manhattan remarked that one of the most difficult aspects of her job was the lack of legal remedies and public resources available for her immigrant clients. Another advocate, working in a shelter in a largely African American and indigenous community in the Midwest, expressed surprise: "I thought VAWA covered all battered immigrant women." The lawyer leaned in with an exasperated grimace, "Yes, but all battered immigrant women are not *battered immigrant women.*"

This distinction is important. The circulated phrase "battered immigrant women" has many meanings that are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Most broadly, it refers to people whose legal immigration status is a factor in their experience of domestic violence. This can include direct control over immigration status, such as in situations where an abusive partner utilizes control over a visa or Green Card sponsorship as a tool to wield power. It can be indirect

as well, such as in situations where a partner threatens to report an undocumented survivor to Immigration and Customs Enforcement as a mode of abusing power; in the latter case, the survivor's immigration status is not literally dependent on the abusive partner, but her insecure immigration status creates a vulnerability that can be exploited by an abusive partner. For battered immigrant women, immigration status can impact safety planning options including eligibility for public benefits and legal services; although some immigrant survivors of domestic violence are eligible to receive public assistance, other survivors are barred from utilizing any public resources. More specifically, "battered immigrant women" is a legal designation in the Violence Against Women Act that refers to a narrow subset of survivors who are eligible for certain immigration remedies (Bhuyan 2006). Here, I am interested in the sociopolitical implications of the distinction between "battered immigrant women," along with other immigrant survivors of domestic violence that have been subsequently recognized by and included in VAWA and battered immigrant women who are not given this designation.

One of the problematic epistemological outcomes of VAWA's recognition of "battered immigrant women," as indicated in the opening anecdote, is that this category becomes a universal signifier. This slippage is dangerous because it reifies the plights faced by "battered immigrant women" as the experience of all immigrant survivors of violence. One of the many consequences of this slippage is the misinformation about options available to survivors, such as when social service agencies incorrectly publicize that *all* immigrant clients are eligible for public benefits or to adjust their immigration status when neither of these claims are legally accurate[46].

[46] My research revealed many examples of these processes, including struggles that advocates for immigrant women face in dialogue with "mainstream" women's organizations about the challenges in access to public resources that immigrant survivors continue to face despite the passage of VAWA.

In my discussion in this chapter (and throughout the dissertation), I use the phrase "immigrant survivors" to refer to *any* survivor of domestic violence who is not a U.S. born citizen and, therefore, had and/or may continue to have interaction with USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) and/or ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the components of the Department of Homeland Security that administer and regulate immigration policies. My usage differs from the legal definition of immigrant, which only refers to migrants with intent and status to settle permanently in the U.S. such as Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs or Green Card holders). I expand the term to include, for instance, asylees, refugees, nonimmigrant visa holders, and immigrants without status or undocumented immigrants. I use this definition because the risks and vulnerabilities to institutional violence are greater for those survivors who are technically *not* considered "immigrants" under the law (e.g. nonimmigrant visa holders or people without legal status).

This chapter looks at the treatment of immigrant survivors in VAWA, reading this legislation as a biopolitical technology of neoliberal governance. I trace key changes in re-authorizations of VAWA in order to disrupt a liberal or modernist interpretation of VAWA's trajectory that evaluates greater expansions of remedies available to immigrant women as improvements. Instead, I attend to *which* expansions have occurred and the underlying biopolitical logics through which these expansions have occurred (Bhuyan 2006; Wang 2012). I argue that these shifts occur through VAWA's production of a population of recognizable battered immigrant women that are offered the opportunity to be folded into life, while immigrant survivors of domestic violence whose experience is not legible become neglected, or, in Foucauldian terms, left to die. I show that the production of a population of legally-recognized immigrant survivors of violence occurs through a process that Clough and Willse call

population racism, in which racialized populations are differentiated through a calculus of risk that enables their management and regulation (2010). Finally, I explore the implications of this discussion in the South Asian American context to look at the role that anti-violence advocacy work plays in managing and reconfiguring populations. As political problems become re-cast as population problems, non-profits increasingly become the site through which these problems are managed (Smith 2009). Community-based organizations are in the position to administer social services and legal remedies made available through VAWA as well as to contend with the subsets of the community that transcend the survivor populations created through VAWA, or, those who are not legible as survivors of violence. I trace public advocacy discourse that focused on the experiences of survivors of domestic violence on temporary, dependent H-4 visas to discuss how efforts to incorporate these survivors in VAWA are situated in the complex workings of population racism.

Population Racism as a Technology of Neoliberal Governance

The theoretical construct of population racism grows out of Michel Foucault's discussion of the operation of state racism within biopower. Foucault argues that a new form of power arises in eighteenth century Europe—biopower—that entails two trajectories of power that bring life itself under the domain of political calculation. One is anatomopolitics, or discipline, which monitors behavior through the implementation of microlevel power over the subject within ordered spaces of surveillance, like the school or the prison. The other is biopolitics, which is concerned with the regulation of both biological as well as economic life capacities at the population level ([1978] 1990). Whereas prior power apparatuses were predicated upon sovereign power to kill (or, to make die), biopolitical concern at the population-level yields an

investment in vitality and health (or, to make live). To do this, biopolitics, then, requires a diffuse set of technologies through which "power relations are played out in how [and which] bodies are aggregated [into populations] and individuated, healed, buried, made indistinguishable and marked" (Stoler 2006:13). To be clear, Foucault's discussion of biopower asserts that disciplinary technologies, enacted at the level of the individual, and biopolitical technologies, enacted at the level of the population, occur concurrently under biopower ([1978] 1990). He also asserts that biopower does not replace sovereign forms of power. Rather, he theorizes the simultaneity of these apparatuses of power as a "triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security." (1991:102). In her discussion of contemporary geopolitics, Grewal also clarifies that sovereign power and biopower are not demarcated spatially (e.g. specific forms of power in specific parts of the world) or temporally (e.g. where one always follows the other) but that their workings are intertwined in complex arrangements (2005).

As discussed in Chapter 1, this concurrence is evident through deployments of freedom with violence (e.g. VAWA's contribution to the expansion of the carceral state and technologies of punishment at the same time that survivor populations are included under the purview of state protection; the legislative simultaneity of repression of (most) immigrants and protection of (some) immigrants). These legislative enactments activate biopolitical logics through a sorting of populations such that some are folded into life while others are neglected or left aside, to be potentially punished and forcibly excluded (Puar 2007). Recognition through experience of injury (e.g. intimate violence) is a mode through which biopolitical inclusion can occur as the right to make live includes the right to rescue, to recover injured populations and bring them into life (Grewal 2005; Rose 2006). The constitution of some immigrant domestic violence survivors

as a recognized injured population that is brought into the purview of state power moves their biopolitical location from proximity to death, or the precariousness of the abusive intimate realm, to a possibility of life.

Biopolitics is centrally focused on the proliferation of vitality, and the growth and improvement of life of the population; as such, death also plays an important role. Death, either through the power to kill or to let die, is enacted by the biopolitical project through state racism, or the legitimated death of populations that are marked to be harmful to the larger population or the larger body of the nation (Foucault 1997). Clough and Willse re-interpret Foucault's concept of state racism as population racism, which involves a "manipulation of life capacities [and] vitality" at the population-level (2010:50). Clough and Willse use this term in order to emphasize the distributions of populations, and within populations, with respect to life capacities. They also prefer to use this term because in its de-emphasis on the state, it opens up the possibility of the everyday pervasive ways in which this racism operates and circulates in non-state sites of power, and as well. In neoliberalism, an ordinary deployment of population racism occurs through technical solutions—including, as I suggest, legislative initiatives such as VAWA—that bring together economy and governance for the primary function of evaluating and managing of risk to the population (Clough and Willse 2010; see also Clough 2008; 2009).

In her work on liberal discourses of tolerance and sympathy, and the racialization of Muslims and Arabs in the U.S., Mitra Rastegar introduces population racism as a framework to supplement cultural racism in order to demonstrate the technologies—in her case, liberal media and activist discourses—that organize and manage racialized populations as "distinct, yet internally differentiated population perceived as having a specific distribution of characteristics" (2011:26). Rastegar argues that population racism conducts an assessment of interconnected

variables that indicate characteristics of trustworthiness or threat (e.g. religiosity/secularism, views on gender/sexuality, alliance with the "West") to determine the "distribution of threat" associated with Muslims and Arabs. Critical to Rastegar's argument is an understanding that "threat" is not only the risk of undermining of "Western" cultural values but of economic and political conditions that are necessary for the vitality of the population at large, for the population to thrive. The 9/11 attacks and the consequent threats of terrorism become dangerous then to both the cultural domain of values as well in their potential to debilitate the economy. Whereas cultural racism assumes a relatively stable and coherent understanding of cultural heredity and identity, especially as to demarcate categories of us vs. them, population racism is incoherent, fragmented, dynamic, and differentiated through a calculus of risk. As such, it does not utilize paradigmatic binaries of inclusion and exclusion but, instead, operates through processes of continual assessment and reconfiguration (2011).

Population racism operates through granting some populations the possibility of improvement through regulation, determined through different epistemologies and calculations of risk and safety. Grewal illustrates how "race and gender become modes of knowledge that produce the figures of danger and risk" such that racial, gender, and sexual minorities are a danger to others but also to themselves (2005:202)[47], but some can be recuperated. Grewal argues that the "terrorist" has even less recourse than the "criminal," because the terrorist's existence threatens the health of the nation. In the context of intimate violence in South Asian communities, however, the terrorist and criminal can become conflated or interchanged as both are enemies of security, vitality, and happiness. To obtain the possibility of freedom entails a

[47] Grewal offers an example of the processes of becoming a (gendered) subject of the U.S. state: asylum-claims by Sikh women in the U.S. who claimed persecution based on vulnerability to the police and the Indian state (including vulnerability to sexual assault). To seem credible to the logics of asylum, they had to toe a line of claiming political persecution but disavowing political membership in groups labeled terrorist by the Indian state.

disavowal of associations with the terrorist/criminal. Through VAWA, populations of immigrant survivors are created, internally-differentiated along a spectrum of risk and as distinct or exempt from more threatening potentially-terrorist/criminal populations.

Producing "Battered Immigrant Women" as Neoliberal Citizens

In this section, I trace the production of immigrant survivors of domestic violence as a legible population that is created by and for neoliberal governance through the different authorizations of the Violence Against Women Act (1994; 2000; 2005; 2011 (re-authorization pending))[48]. Following Bhuyan's lead (2006) in examining the methodologies and implications of inclusion in VAWA, I discuss how and why immigrant survivors of violence become an object of concern in VAWA, and the consequent legislative mechanisms that produce, internally differentiate, and subsequently regulate this population. VAWA legal regulations vary but what they have in common is an investment in survivors who are convincingly worthy, powerless, in need of state protection and willing to re-make themselves into self-sufficient and autonomous citizens. Previous state-sponsored remedies for women relied upon moral discourses to determine worthiness; in the context of neoliberal governance, one dimension of morality and deservedness is the potential to be both financially independent but also willing to be under the regulation of the government.

The specific complications faced by immigrant survivors of violence first emerged as a concern in public policy discourse in 1990 (Bhuyan 2006) in response to the Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendments (1986), passed within a context of public concern about illegal immigration. IMFA established a two-year conditional status on Green Cards issued to people through sponsorship by their U.S. citizen or Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) spouse.

[48] My analysis of VAWA excerpts the sections that specifically address immigrant survivors of domestic violence.

Previously, Green Cards obtained through marriage were issued as permanent; post-IMFA, conditional status was removed only after the two-year waiting period if the then-INS was convinced that the marriage was a legitimate "good faith" marriage. Although spousal immigration sponsorship is itself rooted in a legacy of coverture[49] and produces structured dependence, this policy change directly empowered abusive partners with a specific modality to exert control over their spouses, and, thus, placed some immigrant domestic violence survivors in a bind: if they left their marriage for safety reasons within those first two conditional years, they risked losing their Green Card. They would then likely need to choose between two difficult options of either returning to their natal country as divorcees or staying in the U.S. undocumented and at risk for deportation (Abraham 2000; Orloff and Kagatuyan 2002). Anti-violence activists in immigrant communities called attention to this intersection of institutional and interpersonal violence made possible through IMFA, where these new regulations "reproduce[d] structural inequalities that increase vulnerability to abuse, while empowering abusers in their efforts to exert power over their victims/survivors" (Bhuyan 2006:48). IMFA exposed the intertwinement of the violence of state policies and the violence of intimate abuse.

Advocacy efforts contributed to the creation of a battered spouse waiver in the Immigration Act of 1990. This waiver exempted survivors of domestic violence from the conditional two-year period if they could demonstrate that they entered their marriage in "good faith," experienced violence in the relationship, and would experience hardship if deported to their home country[50]. Congress allowed that all petitioners who met the requirements would be

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[49] See Abraham (2000) for a discussion of the history of coverture in immigration policy.

[50] The original IMFA did contain a waiver of conditional status, available at the discretion of the Attorney General. But the evidentiary requirements included a demonstration that the marriage was entered in good faith as well as had ended for good cause, which were often difficult for survivors to show without state validation that domestic violence could have been a good cause to end of the marriage.

granted a waiver (i.e. there were no caps or quotas) unless, of course, they were found to be a threat to national security. The battered spouse waiver, then, did offer an opening for survivors impacted by the IMFA (Abraham 2000), and the policy recognition of immigration abuse as a dynamic of domestic violence set a precedent in advocacy and legal discourse.

But, the gap between Congressional intent and INS evidentiary requirements for the battered spouse waiver presented a challenge for immigrant survivors who did not have access to the documents that proved the legality of their marriage and/or access to the professional evaluations that were necessary to demonstrate the occurrence of emotional abuse. It also did not offer any relief for immigrants whose spouses refused to file for the conditional Green Card in the first place. Anti-violence advocates for immigrant survivors of violence pressed on for more effective remedies, ultimately securing attention to these dynamics of immigration control through the Violence Against Women Act's recognition of "battered immigrant women." (Abraham 2000).

The first authorization of VAWA (1994) included immigration remedies for "battered immigrant women" collectively grouped under Subtitle G of the Act (Kwong 2002). These remedies are available to immigrant survivors who can demonstrate that they (or their children) were subject to extreme cruelty during their good-faith marriages to LPRs or U.S. citizens: 1) the self-petition, through which an immigrant survivor can petition for her own permanent Green Card; and 2) cancellation of removal, through which an undocumented survivor can suspend deportation proceedings (Women's Law 2011). The provision for a battered spouse waiver through which a survivor can adjust her conditional Green Card into a permanent status continued to be available to eligible immigrants. In addition to these criteria, VAWA-eligible

survivors need to show that they have "good moral character," an evaluation made through a review of criminal history (Legal Momentum 2004).

Later authorizations of VAWA made revisions to these remedies for "battered immigrant women" to improve the efficiency of the provisions and remove obstacles that were preventing eligible survivors from accessing available relief. For instance, the next version of VAWA (in 2000) relieved some of the evidentiary responsibilities on survivors, allowed that changes to an abusive partner's status (e.g. death, loss of immigration status) would not adversely impact the survivor's application, clarified and revised the "good moral character" requirements to exempt criminal histories that were a consequence of the abuse (e.g. self-defense, coerced activity), and removed the requirement that the applicant demonstrate she would experience hardship if deported (Kwong 2002). These corrective revisions refined the specificities of the remedies available to "battered immigrant women" but the basic premise for eligibility remained the same.

The remedies that were secured for "battered immigrant women" through VAWA have been won, in part, because they do not challenge the dismantling and restructuring of social welfare or restrictive immigration policy. These forms of immigration relief do not expand or create new immigration provisions for immigrant survivors of violence. They simply remove the obstacles that are presented at the interpersonal level by addressing the barriers that emerge from an abusive partner's refusal to cooperate with the processes of sponsorship. The immigrant survivors who can self-petition, apply for a battered spouse waiver, or request a cancellation of removal are already potentially en route to legal permanent residence by virtue of their marriage with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident[51] (Chen 2000).

The Violence against Women Act produces "battered immigrant women" through the making of immigrant survivors into neoliberal citizens (Bhuyan 2006; Berger 2009), who enact

[51] Unmarried survivors who have parented a child with a U.S. citizen or LPR are also eligible.

"the civic duty of the individual to reduce his or her burden on society, and instead build up his or her own human capital" (Ong 1996:739). VAWA eligibility requires a demonstration of capacity to move from a position of powerlessness into becoming a self-reliant household head with entrepreneurial spirit, and willingness to privilege the individual relationship to the state over any other relationships and identities that emerge from ties to family and community (Bhuyan 2006; Berger 2009). "Battered immigrant women" distance themselves from the threats of criminality and/or terrorism represented by their abusers. In contrast, "battered immigrant women" are safe entities; the state has nothing to fear from them as they are essentially like "puppy dogs" (Dinnerstein, quoted in Berger 2009:206). In exchange for being disciplined into neoliberal citizenship and then subjected to state welfare regulations, the authority of social service agencies, and the purview of the criminal legal system (Bumiller 2008), "battered immigrant women" are offered the promise of freedom (Bhuyan 2006).

From Neoliberal Citizenship to Population Racism

The next authorization of VAWA (2000) widened the parameters of inclusion for immigrant survivors of violence. This version created special visas, such as the U-visa,[52] designed for immigrant crime victims who have experienced substantial physical or mental abuse, and are willing to cooperate with criminal legal investigation and/or prosecution of the perpetrator(s); cooperation is verified through certification from a government official. The U-visa protects people with insecure immigration status from deportation by providing them with a temporary visa and work authorization. After three years, the Attorney General has discretionary

[52] The T-visa was also created in 2000; it is similar to the U-visa in structure but is specifically for people who have been trafficked and it does not include any pathway to permanent residence. Some domestic violence survivors have applied for this visa on the grounds that they were labor- or sex- trafficked, but as it is generally not applicable in cases of intimate abuse, I do not take it up in this discussion.

power to grant permanent residence if the adjustment of status can be justified on humanitarian grounds, family unity or that it is in the public interest. If a U-visa holder, at any point is found to be unreasonably uncooperative with criminal legal investigation or prosecution, she is ineligible to adjust her status to permanent resident. The U-visa was designed in 2000, but the regulations for its implementation were not issued until 2007. Eligible applicants were given interim work authorization. Since 2007, U-visa holders are also eligible for some public benefits; until then, they were barred from receiving any form of public assistance. (Legal Momentum 2007). In the case of the U-visa, then, the immigration status of the perpetrator(s) of violence is not relevant; the survivor of violence does not become eligible for the visa because of her relationship to someone who is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident. Her eligibility is based on her willingness to offer evidence to the state to strengthen its ability to prosecute. She demonstrates that she is not a threat through her disassociation with threat.

The U-visa adds another dimension to the technologies of population racism enacted by VAWA, because the eligibility criteria is de-linked from the relationship between the victim of violence and the person who perpetrated it; this means that the violent incident itself provides the eligibility criteria along with the willingness of the survivor to participate in the criminal legal prosecution). Unlike the "battered immigrant woman" who was abused in the context of an ongoing relationship—not necessarily long, but long enough for a legal marriage to take place—the U-visa applicant can become eligible in a flash, the length of a violent incident. Similarly, she can become ineligible as quickly; a simple refusal to cooperate with prosecutors, and she is no longer able to obtain this visa. U-visa applicants are also inherently associated with crime and risk because they are produced only through their victimization to violence. They are able to distance themselves from being read as a threat through the application, but if they lose

eligibility, they also slip towards the unworthy end of the spectrum of risk. The U-visa creates flexibility in which the logics of inclusion are tenuous, requiring a continuous re-assessment, ongoing demonstration of worth.

Becoming VAWA-eligible also means becoming legible to state power. For example, although the designation of "battered immigrant women" is created through VAWA, it circulates in other realms of state governance. For example, in 1996, the U.S. welfare system was dismantled and replaced with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Undocumented people and non-immigrant visa holders were cut off from all benefits except emergency medical care, and recent legal immigrants were blocked from accessing public benefits during their first five years of residence. TANF also instituted a lifetime 60-month limit and work requirements for all recipients of public assistance. Yet, TANF also offered states the option of adopting a Family Violence Option (FVO) for domestic violence survivors, which relaxes work requirements and "stops the clock" on the 60-month lifetime limit on public assistance. "Qualified immigrants" who meet VAWA's "battered immigrant woman" standard can apply for the FVO (Kandaswamy 2010). U-visa holders are not eligible for the FVO. The regulations have changed since the visa was created; as of 2010, U-visa holders are eligible for some select public benefits, but do not have the same level of access as "battered immigrant women" (AALDEF 2010). Immigrant survivors of domestic violence who are ineligible for consideration as "battered immigrant women" are excluded from the FVO, and generally are limited in the forms of public assistance that they can receive.

Reconfiguring Populations: H-4 Visa Holders as Already-Neoliberal Citizens

In 2005, Manavi, a South Asian women's organization, held the third *Aarohan: South Asian Women Rise Up against Violence* national conference for anti-violence organizations in South Asian communities. After two and a half days of workshops, panel discussions, and informal conversations, the closing plenary, "Twenty Years of South Asian Women's Organizations: Looking Back, Looking Forward," drew attention to critical questions and future directions of this work. During the open discussion, a young South Asian activist lawyer spoke up about the invisibility of H-4 visa holders who were survivors of domestic violence. She gave a short but very passionate speech about the particular dilemmas that her H-4 clients faced and encouraged this national network to work towards inclusion for H-4 visa holders in the Violence Against Women Act, which was up for re-authorization. One of the plenary speakers, a seasoned activist, expressed caution about the lawyer's platform because it used discursive techniques that placed H-4 visa holders as disproportionately worse off than other immigrant survivors of violence. This activist was critical about advocacy strategies that positioned some survivors as more worthy of support than others, reminding the group of the importance of an intersectional understanding of the violence faced by immigrant survivors. This speaker insisted that attending to institutional violence, and, specifically, the ways in which criminalization of violence has impacted South Asian communities was essential to the future direction of anti-violence efforts.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, anti-violence work in South Asian communities is predicated upon ideas of shared culture and culture-specificity but, the needs and experiences of South Asian survivors are discursively constituted and circulated through dynamics of power *within* these diverse communities. The discussion post-plenary at the 2005 Aarohan conference exposes the workings of advocacy discourse, and reveals tensions imbued in anti-violence work

in South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities. Here, I explore how these anti-violence efforts have addressed dynamics of recognition and legibility of immigrant survivors of violence. I show that their work involves both regulating and managing populations as well as reconfiguring, or making, populations. First, I trace the public discourse that has been making visible the specific plight faced by H-4 dependent nonimmigrant visa holders, and, in part, argued for the inclusion of H-4 visa holders in VAWA[53]. These efforts were somewhat successful: the 2005 re-authorization of VAWA included a provision for work authorization for H-4 visa holders who could demonstrate that they were survivors of domestic violence[54]. I am interested in the logics that were activated to make a compelling case that this subgroup of immigrant survivors of violence are worthy of inclusion in the population produced by VAWA[55]. Remedies that are available to immigrant survivors of domestic violence—as discussed in the previous section—facilitate the process of neoliberal citizenship for eligible survivors. In the case of H-4 visa holders, it is the argument they are *already*-neoliberal subjects that makes them eligible for inclusion.

[53] My discussion draws from multiple data sources. I examined print and web-based news media articles, blog discussions (posts and comments), advocacy materials (e.g. online petitions, websites) and secondary sources such as essays and articles authored by lawyers, activists, scholars and/or anti-violence advocates. My methodology here treats these different data sources together, recognizing the slippage in public discourse between discussions about the everyday constraints that face H-4 visa holders, both through their own representations and others' writings about these issues, and discussion that emphasizes the specific impacts on H-4 visa holders who are experiencing domestic violence. I intentionally take these discursive materials collectively because they share a concern with the structural, and particularly, the economic, dependence inherent in the H-4 visa and attend to the power dynamics that the visa produces (even in relationships that are not marked by violence). However, my emphasis remains on the figure of the explicit domestic violence survivor, how and where this construction emerges in the public conversations about the visa.

[54] As of this writing, work authorization for survivors of domestic violence has been approved through VAWA 2005, though the regulations have still not been issued (Kelkar 2012).

[55] This critical look at the discourse does not aim to challenge the subjective experience of suffering that is expressed by H-4 visa holders, but about the discursive tools that are mobilized to convey this suffering, what it relies on and what it produces.

The advocacy efforts to incorporate H-4 visa holders who are survivors of violence into VAWA build from the discursive strategies documented by sociologist Monisha Das Gupta through her ethnographic research of South Asian women's organizations in northeastern U.S. in the 1990s. Das Gupta finds that South Asian women's organizations deploy a framework of a transnational complex of rights in which they articulate the rights of their constituencies on the basis of their status as immigrants, irrespective of citizenship, such that rights are disconnected from national membership (2006). Here, I show that the advocacy arguments for H-4 visa holders similarly de-center the nation where the platform for inclusion in VAWA is not predicated upon literal citizenship, or even loyalty to the nation (e.g. through participation in criminal legal processes facilitated by the state). Instead, the advocacy discourse employs neoliberal market logics of economic potential and an investment and loyalty to the transnational economy as a mode through which to affirm that H-4 survivors of violence pose a low risk to the nation. Attending to the dynamics of advocacy work around the H-4 visa holder illuminates the transitional relationships between the nation-state and the market within neoliberal economics, and, importantly, demonstrate the continued prominence of the state even as the power of the transnational market is reconfigured.

In her discussion on the cultural politics of Asian America and the role that Asian immigrants have played in the formation of the United State, Lisa Lowe argues that contention over the meaning of the Asian immigrant subject has been critical. Lowe asserts that contradictions between political and economic needs "have given rise to the need, over and over again, for the nation to resolve legally, capitalist contradiction around the definition of the Asian immigrant subject (1996:10)." The story of H-1-B nonimmigrant visa holders and their H-4

dependent spouses illuminate the tensions that mark contemporary neoliberal political and economic engagements.

The H-1B visa was originally created in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 as part of a guestworker program to ensure specialized labor for a growing U.S. economy. It grew out of the Bracero program (1942-1964) that was a mechanism to bring Mexican temporary workers into the U.S. When the program was formalized, it included an allowance for employers to sponsor temporary foreign workers with "exceptional" abilities through the H-1 visa (Rudrappa 2004). In 1990, through the Immigration and Reform Control Act, the H-1B visa was revised to reflect a need for formally educated workers in specialized occupations such as technology industries; since the early 1990s, the largest proportion of H-1B visas (between 40-45% annually, on average) have been issued to Indian nationals working in jobs based in the United States (Bhuyan 2006; Lodhia 2010; Bhatt 2011). The H-1B visa is a six-year temporary visa, but, at the end of this period, H-1B visa holders can apply for permanent residence if they obtain employer sponsorship; most H-1Bs do ultimately receive a Green Card, which, arguably, makes this visa dual-intent as it offers temporary status but with a pathway to citizenship. (And, at the same time, the bureaucratic backlog at USCIS has meant that, in reality, many H-1Bs spend time in an interim undefined status, waiting for their application for permanent residence to be processed and hoping for continuing extensions of their visa in the meantime.)

As transnational feminist scholar Bhatt states, "the dialectical effects of the H-1B visa program [is that it creates] a class of workers that is seen as both valuable and threatening to American industries and labor" (2011:8). H-1B visa holders occupy a controversial position in the landscape of debates about immigration, citizenship, transnationalism, the U.S. economy, and outsourcing. These visa holders offer an opportunity for U.S. corporations to hire temporary

skilled workers who migrate here, pay taxes and social security to the U.S. government but are not, in exchange, guaranteed any long-term security here and are often indirectly scapegoated in public discourse that builds connections between migration, unemployment and other effects of the economic recession here in the U.S. This tenuous position is further complicated by the positionality of the H-1B visa category more generally in the economy of immigration regulation. For example, Bhatt (2011) notes that the bipartisan 2010 Emergency Border Security Supplemental Appropriations Act included a $600 million emergency border fund to pay for 1,500 federal agents and surveillance drones at the U.S./Mexico border. The primary funding source for this initiative to curb unauthorized border crossings would come from increases in fees for non-U.S. firms that send workers to the U.S. to work on professional visas like the H-1B. The H-1B visa, then, functions in flexible terms in a variety of different settings, deployed to fill political and economic purposes that create boundaries between legal and unauthorized immigration and skilled and unskilled labor.

Bhatt makes a critical intervention in the literature about the position of the H-1 visa holder, dubbed techno-braceros by Rudrappa (2004) by focusing on social reproduction and intimacy in her writing. Most discussion of the H-1B visa have focused on the political economic determinants that shape the constraints on their access to benefits and resources, delays in adjusting immigration status, and limitations on career advancement. Bhatt posits a framework of semi-nationality, in which the H-1B visa holder occupies partial citizenship in multiple nation-states and, in fact, is most fully incorporated as a citizen of their employing corporation. Although her research finds that many H-1B visa holders do experience isolation as neoliberal workers without security or community, Bhatt argues that H-1B visa holders shape and maximize the possibilities that are available through this liminality. She focuses on the intimate

ties that are built through the transnational households made through H-1B visa holders' circulation in relationship to multiplicities of place and space. Bhatt's discussion attends to the role of women and the intimate sphere to make visible the multi-layered complexities of migration and labor.

Family reunification policies allow H-1B visa holders to sponsor their spouses for an H-4 visa, a nonimmigrant visa with dependent status. In practice, these policies enable the formation of households that operate as sites of care for immigrant workers. As Reddy argues, family reunification policies facilitate the growth of surplus populations, made up of both immigrants in the workforce who are paid below market wages and/or without job and immigration status security as well as unpaid workers who provide domestic labor to their immigrant family members (2005). Bhatt asserts that, as a consequence, the state uses family reunification policies as a way to deny responsibility towards immigrants; the heteronormative gendered household that is produced through these policies offers the necessary infrastructure of care for the temporary immigrant workers which makes it more possible for them to stay here longer on insecure terms (2005). But, the limitations on the H-4 visa shape the internal dynamics of these households: this dependent visa is constrained in many ways, including that H-4 visa holders are unable to legally work or apply for a social security number; the latter restriction makes it difficult in many states to obtain a driver's license, open up a bank account, or do anything legal (e.g. rent an apartment) in one's own name. The H-4 visa holder is structurally dependent upon the H-1 visa sponsor (Bhuyan 2007; Rudrappa 2007; Lodhia 2010.).

All H-4 visa holders experience economic dependence upon their sponsoring spouses. But, for H-4 visa holders who are in situations of domestic violence, these dynamics can be exploited by abusive partners to further enact control in the relationship. H-4 visa holders are

dependent upon their spouses for legal immigration status, so if the marriage is ended, by their own initiative or their abusive spouse's, they will lose their status; this is the same dilemma that prompted immigrant women's advocates to lobby for VAWA remedies such as the self-petition. Survivors of violence who have children with their abusive partner are vulnerable to separation from their children if deported. The difference in this case, however, is that until H-1 visa holders petition for permanent residence through employer-based sponsorship, they are on a temporary visa which makes dependent survivors of violence ineligible for available remedies for "battered immigrant women." There are a few legal remedies that H-4 survivors of violence can access to become independent from their sponsoring spouse, such as applying for independent visa status, like an F-1 student visa or their own H-1 employment visa, or even availing of the U-visa option through VAWA. One of the characteristics, then, as in any of these dependent visas is an inherent tenuousness where the status can change abruptly and without the person's control or consent. Also, to pursue any of these options would require legal services, which generally requires funds to hire a private attorney as most free/low-cost legal services have eligibility requirements that H-4 visa holders can not meet.

Advocacy for H-4 visa holders, and survivors of domestic violence especially, rests on a multi-tiered premise that engages the interaction between economic potential, class entitlements, gender, and good citizenship. Their class position is especially important; as Shivali Shah states, "because H-4 visa holders appear to be middle class and have legal status, their plight is not seen as pressing. The sad reality is that they enjoy these two privileges only so long as their husbands will allow them to." Shah's argument here is that these survivors' position is tenuous because it relies upon their husbands' cooperation (Shah 2004); what is more precise, however, is that their immigration status is what is dependent upon their spouses as, for many H-4 visa holders, their

class position pre-dates their marriage. Generally, the representations of these visa holders repeats their demographic profile as educated and English-speaking, highly-accomplished professionals who have begun promising careers in their natal countries, pre-marriage and migration to the United States (Bhandari 2008; Lodhia 2010).

What is the pressing plight of the H-4 visa holders? H-4 visa holders, generally, suffer from surplus time and accompanying frustrations, based on education and/or professional experience, of unmet career expectations and a nonconsensual relationship to the domestic sphere: “involuntary housewives” or “desperate housewives” are repeated descriptors. The contrast between their pre- and post-H-4 visa lives are highlighted in many of the discursive materials; for example, Shah states, in an article in the online IndUS Business Journal, “[t]hese are women who were changing the face of the corporate world in India […] and here, they are trading recipes for making chutney using American ingredients" (Trumbull 2006). As one H-4 visa holder states in an article in The Hindu Business Line, “Once my husband leaves in the morning, I have nothing much to do. I spend my day surfing the Net for new recipes and news from India and, of course, watching television” (Mathews 2009). In India, on the other hand, she had a professional career as an executive in the finance industry. An article on an Immigration Law website/blog quotes another H-4 visa holder, “"It is not everyday that you are told you must not work," says Sharanjeet, 29, who was a career woman for four years before marriage. In the United States for three years, she has taken up photography and painting.” Shah found these attitudes to be widespread. Through a survey she conducted with H-1B and H-4 visa holders, that most H-4 visa holders “could not list any benefits to not working, giving answers such as “Is this question a joke?””. Shah does find, however, that some H-4 visa holders have utilized their

"involuntary housewife status" to volunteer at community organizations or, like Sharanjeet, take up a new hobby (Shah 2005).

The effects of the constraints on the H-4 visa holder manifest in shame, depression, and isolation. One H-4 visa holder describes that her dread about being asked how she spends her time ("what do you do the whole day?") became so intense that she stopped attending social functions with other Indian community members (Sweas 2012). Another H-4 visa holder asserts that her shame about financial dependence on her husband impacted her mental health to the point where she started "having suicidal thoughts and felt guilty about things like eating out" (Mathews 2009). The website for Hearts Suspended, a documentary made by an H-4 visa holder about the experience of being in this status, summarizes the experience: "Once independent, now completely dependent, they face loneliness, depression, loss of self-identity, strained marital relations and - in extreme cases - exploitation and abuse" (2012)

The sentiment expressed by and about H-4 visa holders in public discourse invokes assumptions about the distinctions between productive and unproductive time, as well as the loss of time. H-4 visa holders are "forced to stay at home for an indefinite period of time, life becomes standstill" (NJISACF 2008) and "[m]any are abused, exploited or in just plain denial that they have lost the most precious years of their lives - irrevocably" (Hearts Suspended 2012) A blog comment that appears on both the Immigration Law Watch blog and an online petition advocating for rights for H-4 visa holders states, "I see plenty of young smart people, highly educated, brilliant innovative minds, well versed in the English Language, Very Knowledgeable spouses, here in the US, living & wasting away their talents. Their Crime? An H-4 visa status that currently keeps them from being in Gainful Employment? How terribly sad!" (ILW 2012; Change.org 2012). Similarly, another blog comment states, "I know a few H-4 holders who are

just sitting around New York, most of them with postgraduate degrees. They are all women. It's dispiriting, really, to think about what they could contribute" (Feministe 2009). As articulated by an H-4 visa holder, "There are a lot of people who are qualified and we have a lot to give to the community, but we are wasting our lives" (Trumbull 2006). Similar frustrations were expressed by H-4 visa holders who called in to an episode of a radio show that that focused on the experiences of people with this immigration status. For example, one caller brought attention to her wasted potential through addressing her age ("we are so young") (Peerally Law 2012).

According to these advocacy discourses, the H-4 visa holders are wasting away and losing time because they are not legally able to participate in the formal economy. But, they want to do so; they are already prepared for neoliberal citizenship. As one caller in the above-mentioned radio show directly stated: "I want to contribute to the economy" (Peerally Law 2012). But, instead of continuing to cultivate their economic potential, they are "being brought in [to the United States] only in the most base functions as women: housewives, babymakers, and sex partners" (Shah, quoted on Hearts Suspended 2012). As one H-4 visa holder writes in a poem on a blog, "But now it kills sitting at home/Doing modern maid servant job…/Let our degrees fly high/Let us too contribute to professional side" (Peerally Law 2012). The unpaid domestic labor of social reproduction is explicitly de-valued (Katz Rothman 2000) in this discourse presumably because it is not occurring out of consent but because of the constraints of the visa[56].

But, making a distinction between unpaid labor and professional participation in the workforce is also critical to the advocacy argument that H-4 visa holders should obtain authorization to legally work in the United States. And, it is not within the realm of possibility

[56] Bhatt (2011)'s research with H-1 and H-4 visa holders is not limited to advocacy discourses in which the limits on the H-4 visa are being challenged. Her work, instead, looks at the transnational intimacies that emerge from the geographic multiplicities that are inherent in the conditions of the visa.

that H-4 visa holders would work in low-wage, less professionalized, positions or work without legal authorization, even though thousands of immigrants do this every day. These differentiations are necessary for the logics through which H-4 visa holders' value as good, neoliberal economic contributors are made. Their "potential" is evoked as good for both the economy and the nation; their idle time is a drain on the nation's time. For instance, one blog poster comments, "To have smart educated women sitting here twiddling their thumbs is not only a waste for their own lives, but to America as well." (Feministe 2009). A website for a law firm that has taken up advocacy efforts for H-4 visa holders argues, "[m]any on H-4 visas are very talented/educated individuals and are already in the United States. We might as well take advantage of their knowledge and talent!" Another blog commentator advocates for H-4 visa holders to gain legal permission to start their own small businesses: "Many are very talented and can generate income for themselves, help the U.S. economy with taxes and provide employment to U.S. workers" (Peerally Law 2012). Not only do H-4 visa holders have the potential and desire to contribute to the economy, but they also demonstrate compliance to the nation through neoliberal values of choice, and with reminders that the United States claims freedom as a central value. These H-4 visa holders subtly critique U.S immigration restrictions but through the discursive tools of choice: For example, one H-4 visa holder invokes freedom when she writes on a blog, "But I feel, I have lost my independence as H-4 has taken away my right to work …rather right to choose – to work or not! Everyone should have a choice to decide what is good for them and their family…more so, in a free country like America" On this same blog, another H-4 visa holder states, "I too would like to work or at least would like to decide whether or not to work myself…rather than the US government" (trappedinH4mess 2007).

Making a distinction between the legal status of the H-4 visa holders and undocumented status is also critical for the advocacy arguments. This differentiation is implicit throughout, but is also emphasized in some spaces. Advocacy efforts such as an online petition for H-4 work authorization and self-petitioning provisions in VAWA, started by the Peerally Law firm includes text such as, "Give a chance to those who are already LEGALLY living in America!" (Change.org 2012). Similarly, the website for Hearts Suspended argues for respect and dignity of immigrant communities, "especially in the case of H-4s who are LEGAL immigrants" (2012). Some comments are even more explicit, deliberately invoking logics of comparison. For example, one blog comment states, "it is so unfair that illegal immigrants end up with jobs all over the united states, while we the legal H-4 visa holders have to watch the world go on without being able to hold a simple job" (Sepia Mutiny 2005). Of course, technically, this blogger could "hold a simple job" as well; undocumented immigrants work without legal authorization and so H-4 visa holders could do this, too. But, the kinds of jobs that undocumented workers occupy are not the professional positions that H-4 visa holders expect to hold, allowing for these comparative logics in which undocumented immigrants somehow fare better than the H-4 visa holder. According to this view, the undocumented worker is "free" to work in a likely low-wage position with long hours and no job security but the middle-class H-4 visa holder is trapped, unable to get legal permission to work the kind of job that she is worthy of holding.

Despite class differences, undocumented immigrants and H-visa holders are subject to similar consequences of the social and economic insecurities that are produced by neoliberalism. And, this parallel has not gone unnoticed by anti-violence activists. In fact, in one essay, Shah argues that "anti-domestic violence organizations must reconceptualize the H-4s as a subcategory of undocumented and indigent immigrants and provide services and advocacy

appropriate for battered women" (2007:196-7). Here, Shah draws connections between undocumented women and H-4 visa holders, analogizing their limited work options which increase the likelihood of their working illegally in "low-paying, low-profile jobs," and the lack of legal remedies available to them because they are not eligible for consideration as VAWA-recognized "battered immigrant women." This call to reconceptualize legal non-immigrants and undocumented immigrants as members as subject to similar vulnerabilities offers potential in disrupting hegemonic understandings of migration and globalization by exposing that the violence of capitalism cuts across class. However, Shah's argument ultimately recuperates the H-4 visa holders from this association by advocating for their inclusion in VAWA based on their already-neoliberal status of economic potential; this requires a severing of any possibility of alliance with undocumented immigrants. Citing precedents that provide work authorizations for other dependent spouses, and claiming that the underlying principle of VAWA acknowledges that battered women have human rights, Shah questions the exclusion of H-4 visa holders from these provisions. In this disregard of the economic security needs of undocumented survivors, however, Shah reifies the population racism logics of VAWA.

Most South Asian women's organizations in metropolitan areas report that a significant percentage of survivors contacting them for services are H-4 visa holders. An article in the Hindu cites that 20-50% of SAWO clients are H-4 visa holders (The Hindu 2004). Although this statistic is described as "shocking" in the article, it is actually not that surprising given that a) Indian immigrant middle-class survivors of violence have historically made up a significant percentage of SAWOs' constituencies and H-4 visa holders are generally middle-class; b) these percentages reflect the demographics of the South Asian population, especially new (Indian) immigrants, in metropolitan areas; c) the visa inherently has structural vulnerabilities that create

conditions for possible exploitation and violence; d) non-profits offer free or low-cost services and H-4 visa holders generally are economically dependent upon their spouses.

The attention that the plight of H-4 visa holders has received has been productive in many different ways. By illuminating the dynamics of exploitation that are made possible through this visa, these discourses continue to expose how state policies empower abusive partners with technologies of control, forging an interaction between institutional and interpersonal violence. H-4 women are middle class and have status in the U.S., but immigration laws can make them indigent and undocumented at the whims of their husbands (Shah 2007). That these middle-class educated women are the ones most vulnerable in this context also offers some disruption to mythologies that domestic violence is a concern for women who are working-class, less educated, non-English speaking; although the anti-violence movement has been challenging these class mythologies since its inception, they continue to remain powerful, especially in South Asian communities which are heterogeneous in class composition. Bhandari's summary is echoed in the literature and popular discourse: "In spite of being from middle and educated class, [H-4 visa holders] are trapped in a "catch 22" situation, in which leaving the abusive situation means losing immigration status, and staying in the abusive situation means continuing to experience intimate violence" (2008:46). Ultimately, however, the outrage that this violence is occurring to middle-class women serves to reinforce neoliberal ideologies of worth and that value is determined by economic productivity.

Another dynamic that occurs is that the conditions that H-4 visa holders face have become the representation of insecure immigration status, overshadowing and even replacing the violence experienced by undocumented survivors of violence. I saw this pattern in my interviews with South Asian community leaders. In several conversations with advocates who

work(ed) in South Asian women's organizations, when asked about working with undocumented survivors, the interviewee re-interpreted the question as though I was asking about H-4 visa holders. For example, the following is an excerpt from an interview with an ex-legal advocate as a SAWO:

> Interviewer: *What happens when undocumented survivors come to your organization for support? What types of support are you able to offer them?*
>
> [silence]
>
> Advocate: *So, the H-1s? [pause] you mean… like that?*

This was a common response from advocates, who essentially conflated non-"battered immigrant women" survivors into one category, and then reinterpreted this category to be solely the specific plight of H-4 visa holders. I saw a similar re-cast occur in conversations with community activists who work on the national level. In these interviews, one question I asked was about how South Asian anti-violence efforts responded to the challenges faced by undocumented survivors. One organizer responded:

> *Definitely. [Challenges that face undocumented survivors is something] that we have heard from the SAWOs that we work with. It's not that the H-4 issue is the exclusive issue that many of the SAWOs see as something to work on.*
>
> [pause]
>
> But*, one thing, stepping back…*

The interviewee then went into a lengthy response about immigrant rights work, and the importance of fighting for legalization of all undocumented immigrants, including undocumented survivors of violence; she side-stepped my question. Another community activist working on the national level used the same strategy. When asked about undocumented survivors, she talked about the Dream Act and the work that was happening across the United States with young undocumented South Asian women. Here, there is an important discursive

pattern that requires attention. In the case of advocacy efforts for H-4 visa holders—all H-4 visa holders, even non-survivors—due to their economic dependence on their spouses are generally folded into the arguments made by advocates working on gender-based violence, at least discursively. The structural violence enacted through this dependent visa and the related immigration policies become an anti-violence concern. On the other hand, undocumented survivors' experience of violence are re-cast as an immigrant rights concern, effectively positioning the structural violence that they experience—even if/when it is enacted at the interpersonal level—as beyond the purview of gender-based violence. While this is no surprise, given the historical trajectory of anti-violence movements in the U.S. broadly and within the South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities specifically, these political convergences and divergences are critical to examine in that they reveal not only class and other power inequalities but also the underlying neoliberal logics that shape the direction of social change work and expose its limits.

Transcending Population Racism

If VAWA enacts population racism through its production of an internally-differentiated survivor population, what happens to the immigrant survivors that are not given the promise of freedom, or the opportunity to be folded into the life-making technologies offered through state legislation? South Asian community-based organizations are in the position of sorting, managing as well as co-producing populations of immigrant survivors, but they also contend with the challenges of advocating for survivors that transcend the parameters of VAWA. My interviews with community-based advocates reveal the complexities of the everyday advocacy practices through which those survivors needs are addressed or avoided. Most often, the most difficult

cases involve the ones where temporary immigration status, or lack of legal immigration status, prevents survivors from accessing the legal system. Some advocates were unable to engage my questions about strategies in these situations. For instance, a legal advocate in a community-based women's organization was surprised that I would even wonder about immigration status:

> *[Questioning look] That doesn't affect…. [pause]… you still have access to all of the family court, and the Supreme Court, like the divorce and stuff. All those rights are there [regardless of immigration status]. The difficult part would be when you would need to file for your permanent residency status and so you would need a lot of paperwork that he might withhold and not give you, but that's where the battered spouse waiver would come in. and you would have to provide all sorts of affidavits. So I would always tell women: keep every single document that you have, every single one, every police report, every hospital report, things like that.*

I asked a follow-up question to clarify that I was asking about undocumented survivors or survivors who are otherwise not eligible for VAWA remedies. Her response refers to the battered spouse waiver, which would only be something that would apply to undocumented survivors who are or were married to U.S. citizens or LPRs, which would not be the case for most people without status. There was an uncomfortable silence in the room, and after a few moments, I asked a different question: Immigration status may not prevent someone from accessing certain legal rights, like obtaining a restraining order, but in practice, survivors may be wary about interacting with the legal system; was this something that came up in her work? Another uncomfortable silence led me to move to a different set of questions.

In another interview with another advocate, I asked a similar question, and she responded:

> *Yes. And those [cases with undocumented survivors] were the tough ones because those are, sometimes, those we would always refer to lawyers right away, immigration law specialists, and [legal organization] was one of them that was really good at those kinds of things.*

I asked if she knew what lawyers were able to do in these situations; were they able to find legal or immigration remedies for their clients? She was unable, however, to give me more information about the processes that these survivors were able to go through, because once an undocumented survivor was referred to a legal specialist, it was unlikely that she maintained a connection with them. In my interviews with anti-violence advocates, their lack of engagement with the conversation about immigration status often indicated an inexperience with these issues, either because they directed these survivors to other resources or, more importantly, because they were not seeing these survivors in the first place.

In other interviews, however, with community-based organizations that do not explicitly work on issues of gender-based violence, I noticed a different kind of uncomfortable silence, one that was perhaps marked by a "refusal to say" (Visweswaran 1994). One conversation in particular stands out as an example, an interview with a staff member in a organization that is made up of a new immigrant sub-community that is a minority in the South Asian community due to nationality, ethnicity, language, and class. I met my interviewee at a local coffee shop in the early evening; although it was not crowded and we found a table in a quiet corner, there were other people sitting at tables nearby. As our interview moved towards questions about the organization's activities, I asked how their group addressed needs of undocumented community members. A recent publication that they had issued revealed that a significant (though not majority) of their constituency was out of status, and surely this must be something that they had to continuously strategize about as an organization. She paused, and then offered different responses, which largely felt generic and scripted; it was in this moment that I understood that this information was not mine to know. I asked one follow-up question, and she responded that

they know that their undocumented constituencies are most vulnerable in many ways—including with respect to participating in the economy—and that that they have their own strategies to address their needs. With that, she made clear that it was time I moved on to another set of questions[57].

Other advocates made distinctions between what they were able to offer survivors with insecure immigration status, and noted that their organizations did not have any explicit eligibility constraints and that they tried to find other resources for these survivors. They wanted to assure me that they did not discriminate against undocumented people. A social worker at a mainstream agency who works primarily with South Asian immigrant women stated,

> *We do have resources in terms of where they can go for ESL where they are not asking for photo id. We have places where… job… that's something where even legally we can't say this is something you can do. But [a company] does, […] they will allow people who don't have immigration status, they may be able to sell some of their items. But they do have to have a photo id. So there are some things that may not necessarily work. Yes, we do have resources. We don't, we see clients who are undocumented, who have legal status, so we don't, that's nothing that we are looking for. Our legal department can also work with clients who are undocumented who may not even be able to get documentation because of their case, and they can get free consultations.*

When I asked a follow-up question about the legal consultations, there was a frustrated silence. To not discriminate against a group is different than actively creating resources. The social worker admitted that often times, there was actually nothing much that survivors could obtain through interacting with the legal system or social service agencies. As a long-time staff member at a SAWO told me, in many cases, "*There are no tools. There is no method.*"

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[57] Here, the silences and gaps in the conversation were perhaps the product of power differentials between us as well, two South Asian women who, in that moment, were in two very different positions: I am a U.S. citizen, born to two North Indian parents, currently a doctoral student, asking about immigration status while she is an organizer and an immigrant from an ethnic/national minority community in South Asia. This was one of our first formal conversations even though we had crossed paths before. Later conversations with this interviewee were marked with more ease and openness, but it was this initial interview that established clear boundaries.

Many interviewees spoke at length about the “unworkable cases” (Rudrappa 2004:61) or the ones that “fall through the cracks” (Bhuyan 2006); they were not exclusively unworkable because of complex dynamics of state recognition but, because anti-violence efforts have become so deeply steeped in the logics of criminalization and the legal system (as I discuss in the next chapter), advocacy strategies are often constrained in working beyond this framework, even in South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities. But, what is provided in these situations is space and time and peer support/peer counseling. Anti-violence advocates working in community-based South Asian organizations told stories about survivors who would come to their offices every day, just to talk. One story in particular involved a transnational legal case in which the abusive husband had kidnapped the children and taken them back to South Asia. Her visa had expired, and she was here without status, but did not want to go back to her natal country. Her children were U.S. citizens and so she thought she had a better chance of regaining custody through legal channels here. Although they had tried advocating for the survivor through many channels, ultimately, there was nothing that the organization could do to improve her legal options. But, the woman came to the office every day: she spoke to the advocates; cried; made phone calls to lawyers, community leaders, elected officials and anyone she could think to contact; told her story; talked about her feelings; and, more. In this case, when, after describing this situation, the staff member said, “*There are no tools. There is no method,” I* was the one who was surprised. I asked, “Doesn’t this work that you do—like the affective labor of offering a supportive ear, providing a way to make phone calls, legal research, etc.—constitute tools and methods?” She was unconvinced, because these strategies didn’t lead to the desired outcome: the woman was not reunited with her children. All the other parts of the work just did not count as they were indecipherable through the epistemology of the law.

Chapter 4

Carceral Logics and Flexible Ambivalence:

Engagements with the Criminalization of Domestic Violence in South Asian Communities

Contradictory and Consistent Negotiations

About halfway through an interview with a long-time staff member in a South Asian community-based organization, our conversation turns to the issue of criminalization of domestic violence. After a lengthy response about the various impacts of criminal legal responses on South Asian survivors, including the potential harms, I ask the advocate whether her organization has any internal protocol or way of thinking that guides how they speak about law enforcement interventions to survivors. She immediately states, without a blink:

> *When a woman calls, we* definitely *don't say go to the police.*

Her unflinching clarity, however, is quickly followed by exceptions, elaborations, and explanations. Over the course of the next few moments, this advocate continues:

> *But, what we* do *say is that if you find yourself in a situation of danger, then in order to keep yourself safe, going to the police might be the best way. Of course, if you have other ways of keeping yourself safe, like…running out and going to your neighbor or making a decision that you want to leave, those are also very good decisions.*
>
> *So, we certainly don't promote the police* at all.
>
> *But, we* do *tell women that if you are going to go forward with any case, you are going to need some documentation. And if women are telling us, I just want to leave, I'm done, I don't ever want to see him again, then they don't ever need to go to the police, or the courts or anything…*
>
> *So we would* never *say police.*

This advocate then names specific circumstances in which survivors may want to, or need to, contact the police:

> *It's critical [to have evidence]. For [immigration remedies available through] VAWA, it's* absolutely *critical. And then it makes it easier for us to write the affidavits if she has some documentation with the systems.*
>
> *If someone comes to us saying I need a Restraining Order, then we say you* must *call the police the next time there is an incident. You must call the police. If that's what you want, if that's your objective, to get a Restraining Order, then it's going to have to be the police.*

She concludes with a reminder, however, that there is no guarantee of an effective police intervention even if it is initiated for an instrumental purpose such as obtaining documentation of the incident of violence:

> *And then there are police reports where the cop has just signed off but written nothing.*

This interview excerpt illustrates many of the tensions and hesitations that anti-violence advocates experience in their work in South Asian American communities. On one hand, the anti-violence movement's reliance on criminal legal system responses has produced variant and complicated outcomes for South Asian survivors, especially those who are in insecure positions with the state because of immigration status. But, at the same time, participation in criminal legal processes where authoritative evidence (e.g. police reports) provides legibility of violence and categorizes survivors as bonafide victims can be a required entry point in accessing the web of public assistance and other social services. How do advocates in community-based organizations grapple with these constraints? The reconfiguration of basic social welfare provisions into the non-profit sphere (see discussion in Chapter 1) situates these organization within the "matrix of

governmentality" (Bhuyan 2006), in between their constituencies and state institutions; it is the consequent binds that I will explore in this chapter.

Historically, South Asian women's organizations have engaged critiques of state policies that further violence against women (e.g. immigration policies, see Chapter 3) and, albeit less frequently, governmental initiatives that repress immigrant communities more generally. Many groups have taken on reformist projects to increase law enforcement's cultural competency (Abraham 2000) or to respond to and shape the use of discourses of culture in the legal system more generally (Volpp 2001; Dasgupta, 2007; Rudrappa 2007). Yet, little attention has been paid to how advocates themselves reconcile—or do not reconcile—the contradictory and convivial negotiations that mark their everyday advocacy efforts with survivors within the context of the criminalization of domestic violence[58].

In this chapter, I interrogate this nodal point where the state (and, in particular, criminal legal institutions), community-based organizations and/or non-profit social service providers, and survivors of violence interact through the organizing logics and practices of the criminalization of domestic violence. I examine how domestic violence advocates working with South Asian survivors of violence negotiate the everyday terrain that has been produced through the U.S. anti-violence movement's alliance with the criminal legal system. Given this historic alliance, I am particularly interested in the period since 9/11 during which state policies initiated under the guise of homeland security have facilitated the growth of South Asian community discourse about criminalization of immigrants. This shift has placed South Asian groups that

[58] See Dasgupta (2007) for a notable exception; in this essay, she discusses how advocates interpret their work on behalf of South Asian women within the racial, anti-immigrant and other biases of the criminal legal system.

work on domestic violence in a unique position and to grapple with a unique set of tensions.[59] This exploration is informed by Foucault's discussion of governmentality, in which he articulates that regulatory forms of government engage social actors at all levels of society, such that power is located in government institutions as well as exercised in many other sites throughout society (1991); here I focus on the power dynamics at the site of non-profit organizations. In this chapter, I follow scholars such as Mimi Kim (2012) to question the larger implications of these dynamics: what has the reliance on criminalization meant for our interpretations of possibility; what has it produced and what has it foreclosed?

In this chapter, I examine the modes through which advocates reconcile—and, do not reconcile—the contradictions and conflicts that their every day advocacy efforts entail, deciphering the "theoretical logic" (Tiger 2008:15) that they create in attempts to make this space coherent, however impossible this task. I argue that advocates take up discursive strategies of "flexible ambivalence" with respect to the criminal legal system, and that they communicate these strategies by activating frameworks of "choice." I follow Ong's evocation of the term "flexible" (in her term "flexible citizenship") to mean the "cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions" (1999:6). I follow Trotz in her use

[59] An important note to make here is about the ways in which advocates utilize 9/11 in this context. Many of the complications that arise for South Asian immigrant survivors (as well as other immigrant survivors and/or survivors of color) in their engagement with the criminal legal system are not new; and, at the same time, since 9/11, these connections have gained a different visibility because of heightened and targeted immigration surveillance and enforcement in these communities. This was reflected in my interviews: when asked questions about criminalization, most, though not all, advocates utilized the "post-9/11" framework to respond. This was especially noticeable as advocates often hesitated to engage questions about criminalization until it was within the scope of 9/11. This is a complicated gesture because it simultaneously creates an opening into a dialogue about state interventions and policies in these organizations' constituencies as it also precludes—or at the very least, obscures—the realities of these connections in the pre-9/11 era. Through this amnesic move, 9/11, then, becomes an origin point, marking the beginning of a specific discursive time period, and serving as a lens through which advocates working in community-based organizations develop a vocabulary to articulate issues that impact survivors. 9/11 also then becomes an undercurrent such that even when post-9/11 conditions are not specifically evoked in the interview excerpt in this section, they are always lingering in the background.

of ambivalence, as "not in its usually negative sense (denoting the co-existence of opposing feelings or sentiments) but to describe a state of hesitancy, to signify the unsettled nature of conversations" (2007:2) and to see what is produced in the interstices of the variant strains of analysis and practice.

Context: Complications of Criminalization in South Asian Immigrant Communities

Strands of the anti-violence movement have allied with the criminal legal system, and other governmental institutions, from early on in their efforts to make intimate forms of violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape/sexual assault) visible (See Chapter 1). There have also been, from the beginning of anti-violence organizing, critical interventions, opposition, and interruptions to this trajectory (Thuma 2011). Alternative analyses and practice mostly grew out of women of color, immigrant, and LGBTQ segments of the anti-violence movement, as well as in the intersectional spaces of cross-movement conversations (e.g. between anti-violence advocates and prison abolitionists, as I will discuss later in this section).

In this section, I want to review some of the critical interventions that have challenged criminalization as a response to domestic violence in order to offer context for my interrogation of advocacy discourses around criminal legal strategies in South Asian communities. I focus this review on perspectives that center survivors of color, immigrant survivors, and LGBTQ survivors as it is in the intersections between gender, race, citizenship, and sexuality that the complicated harms of criminalization have been most illuminated. These approaches demonstrate the entwined relationship between violence in different realms, at the interpersonal and institutional levels (see hooks 1984; Crenshaw 1991; Richie 1995; Roberts 1998; Mohanty 2003; Alexander 2005; and, Dasgupta 2006). Scholar-activists such as Mimi Kim also emphasize

the need to situate present concerns within a historical context by evoking the impacts of legacies of violence that communities of color, immigrant communities, and/or indigenous folks have faced in the United States (2012).

Critiques of the criminalization of domestic violence can be loosely categorized into two main approaches, which, although not mutually exclusive, address different issues. The first approach centers on the experience of survivors of violence, and is concerned that criminal legal interventions increase the vulnerability of survivors by further exposing them to risks of institutional violence; these risks are, of course, greatest for people who are already in precarious relationships with the state, such as poor women of color and undocumented immigrant women, LGBTQ survivors, and sex workers (Coker 2000). For example, mandatory arrest and prosecution policies can lead to dual arrests or survivor arrests when law enforcement agents can not identify, or mis-identity, the perpetrator of violence. Although many survivors use physical violence as a self-defense tactic or as retaliation to patterns of abuse in a relationship, these enactments of physical violence do not necessarily induce fear, which makes these incidences distinct from ongoing patterns of abuse of power. For immigrant survivors, specifically, other factors can contribute to arrest, such as limited English proficiency that enables the abusive partner to convince the police of his narrative.

Domestic violence arrests and prosecution can have adverse consequences for survivors; in addition to potential jail time, an arrest can cause retaliation from her abuser, family and/or community, jeopardize her employment, adversely affect access to public benefits, and/or child custody agreements. These policies also produce impacts when the abusive person is arrested without the survivor’s consent. Survivors of violence may not want their abusive partners arrested for reasons as variant and complicated as love, fear, economic (inter-)dependence,

(inter-)dependence for mobility, fear of retaliation, shame or embarrassment, and/or immigration status dependence. Criminal legal response to domestic violence can open up a home to further state intervention and surveillance, such as involvement of child protective services (Osthoff 2002; Coker 2000; Coker 2004; Kim 2012). State agents can exploit their power; for example, rampant incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by law and immigration enforcement officials against survivors of color have been documented (Hing 2008).

For South Asian immigrant survivors, additional repercussions can arise that may impact her or her partner's immigration status and/or her ability to access immigration remedies available through the Violence against Women Act. Arrest can potentially cue deportation proceedings, especially because conviction of domestic violence is currently a deportable offense (made possible through IIRIRA in 1996). The post-9/11 reconfiguration of immigration services and enforcement, now folded under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security, has heightened these risks. Specific policy initiatives that have facilitated the direct relationship between law enforcement and immigration enforcement further already-existing dilemmas for immigrant survivors of violence. For example, Section 287 (g) is an initiative that empowered local law enforcement agencies to serve as immigration enforcement agents, adversely affecting survivors with temporary or no immigration status. If called to a scene of a domestic violence crime in a jurisdiction with 287(g), police officers were able to question all parties about their immigration status and, if they are without status, initiate enforcement action against them (ICE 2010). Even though it was created as part of IIRIRA in 1996, it was dormant until Florida signed on to 287(g), in 2002, as part of an anti-terrorism initiative. As of 2009, sixty-three jurisdictions had active 287(g) agreements, in twenty states, with 840 police officers trained and certified (ACLU 2009).

The Obama administration suspended the 287(g) program in June 2012 in order to grow Secure Communities, a "simple and common-sense way to carry out ICE's priorities," according to the Department of Homeland Security. Through this information-sharing initiative, an arrest for any reason entails mandatory fingerprinting at the time that the person is booked into jail. In addition to the existing protocol that forwards these fingerprints to the FBI databases to check for the arrestee's criminal record, the prints are now also forward to the immigration databases at the Department of Homeland Security. If the person is found to be potentially deportable, because they are without legal status or because of a criminal record, ICE can initiate enforcement action (Secure Communities 2012).

For South Asian survivors in the post-9/11 climate, according to South Asian women's organizations throughout the U.S. and including the New York City metropolitan area, broader crises—of both rising interpersonal and institutional targeting of South Asian communities, as well as domestic and transnational consequences of the "War on Terror"—led South Asian survivors to be less comfortable to talk about violence in the intimate realm. Women's everyday safety in the home became less of a priority as communities focused on protection from outside violence, furthering dynamics of community insularity and isolation, and increasing the invisibility of domestic violence. According to community-based groups, survivors of violence indicated that they were more afraid to engage with law enforcement because of heightened fears of deportation or harassment. Additionally, existing barriers to access to mainstream social services, such as a lack of culturally or language-appropriate services, and relevant legal/immigration resources, were exacerbated during this time, resulting in more resistance on the part of survivors to seek support (Sthanki 2007; Munshi 2011)

The second approach is concerned with the consequences of the reliance on criminalization as the solution to domestic violence and, specifically, how these logics transcend the specific sphere of the criminal legal system[60]. For example, to be read as a "domestic violence victim" by state and quasi-state institutions, a survivor of violence often needs official verification of her experience. Many services and remedies that are available to survivors of domestic violence require documentation that proves that violence occurred, which is most directly attained through police (or medical) reports. This means that certain forms of violence (e.g. physical violence) become more legible to the state, which produces hegemonic understandings of the dynamics of domestic violence.

How criminalization of domestic violence produces sociocultural understandings of the dynamics of intimate violence (Adelman 2004; Bumiller 2008; Kim 2012) is perhaps a more pronounced concern than the barriers posted by social service evidentiary requirements. Specifically, the logics of criminalization necessitate a binary relationship between a victim and perpetrator in which the best, most effective solutions require them to be separated from one another. This means that, for instance, even if a survivor wants to bypass the criminal legal system by obtaining a civil order for protection, she is either required to include a no-contact clause or this is implicit in the terms. Even civil protection orders, then, open up criminal law control in the domestic realm, prohibiting and/or punishing intimate relationships. Violations of civil restraining orders are criminally prosecutable, so the goal of successful criminal enforcement is the end of the intimate relationship. Some jurisdictions have practices of conducting surprise visits at homes where there has been an incident of domestic violence,

[60] The political and cultural implications of the legitimization of criminalization as a technology to respond to intimate violence are vast and transcend the anti-violence movement, creating, for example, models for other social movements that are working on forms of everyday violence (e.g. hate crimes).

making the home a continued site of surveillance in which the mere presence of the abusive partner is a violation (Suk 2006). Because many survivors want to continue the relationship, they routinely violate their own restraining orders which, consequently, harms their credibility as victims (Kim 2012). Similarly, many domestic violence shelter policies assume that the survivor wants to be separated from the abusive person, and behavior such as calling the person who caused harm can be seen as an indication that the survivor is not yet ready to leave, rendering her potentially dangerous to others in the shelter because of her contact with someone who has been violent.

Criminalization shapes cultural ideas about good, cooperative victims (Bumiller 2008), monstrous criminals (who enact violence, unlike "respectable citizens") (Adelman 2004). Kim argues that these logics depend upon and produce a fetishization of safety, where the goal of attaining "safety" is prioritized above all other factors, which can range from emotional attachment to economic needs (2002). As addressed in Chapter 3, in the South Asian immigrant context post-9/11, these classifications of victim and perpetrator are overlaid by frameworks of citizen and terrorist, where (cultural, as well as possibly legal) citizenship is attained through disassociation with the dangerous, disloyal terrorist/criminal/abusive partner.

One of the most vital forms of internal movement dissent about this dominant trend towards criminalization was made visible through the formation of INCITE! Women of Color against Violence in 2000. This activist organization was developed after an inaugural gathering that addressed the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of violence, at both interpersonal and institutional levels, and centered women of color in its analysis and practice. The following year, in collaboration with the prison abolitionist organization, Critical Resistance, INCITE! released a statement, "Gender Violence and the

Prison Industrial Complex[61]," which articulated cross-movement attention to the consequences of criminalization of domestic and sexual violence. This statement is based in an understanding that criminalization does not work to protect survivors of color from violence. It articulates, as above, that criminalization has had adverse impacts on women of color by further exposing them to institutional violence, and that increased policing and prosecution has not led to decreases in domestic violence. INCITE! and Critical Resistance argue that the strategy of criminalization has also shifted power to the state at the expense of collective and creative organizing to address violence. This model renders these forms of violence as individual problems, detached from the broader conditions that produce violence in the first place, which also has served to disconnect anti-violence movements from other social movements that may address inequities of power in a more holistic way. The joint statement does not romanticize other movements, however, and calls for the prison abolition movement, in particular, to take responsibility to develop strategies that keep survivors safe and hold abusive people accountable that do not require utilizing the criminal legal system (INCITE 2001).

Over the last twelve years, the work of INCITE! has grown into a national membership-based organization that, among many different activities including conferences, local organizing and the publication of two anthologies, has consistently articulated the intersectional concerns of survivors of color and centralized the reliance on criminalization of intimate violence as ultimately harmful, not helpful, to communities of color. The implementation of this analysis through INCITE's work has helped to grow discursive space and tools for change within social movements. We can see alternatives to criminalization—primarily through frameworks of

[61] The statement was revised in 2004 to attend to gender identity and expression, the inadequacy of a binary system of understanding gender and the violence experienced by trans and gender non-conforming people of color.

transformative and/or restorative justice—have been increasingly emerging over the past ten years, but these approaches are fraught with their own challenges, as I will discuss in Chapter 5.

From Multiple Consciousness to Flexible Ambivalence

My framework of flexible ambivalence draws from work by feminist and critical race theorists about knowledge that emerges from the multiplicity of position, perspective, and voice inherent in the experiences of women of color. These theorists utilize and move beyond transformative approaches to identity, race, and colonization, such as W.E.B. DuBois' concept of "double consciousness" as "the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others… two warring ideals in one dark body" ([1903] 2012) and Frantz Fanon's "dual consciousness" as the relationship between the colonized self and the internalization of the culture of the colonizer ([1952] 1980). Transcending these frameworks to account for the possibility of multiple, intersecting, overlapping, contradictory, and compatible locations, Angela Harris utilizes the term "multiple consciousness" to refer to "a process, a constant contradictory state of becoming, in which both social institutions and individual wills are deeply implicated" (1990:584). One of Harris' core assumptions is that the self is not a unified, complete entity but partial, possibly contradictory, potentially antithetical selves. Similarly, Mari Matsuda argues that this ability to move between dominant discourse and that our own positioned knowledge facilitates the production of madness and genius, both (1989). Harris and Matsuda, both critical race scholars, in addition to Crenshaw (1989), are particularly focused on the consciousness that is produced through the intersection of variables such as race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Moving away from intersectional models that depend upon a holistic subject, Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of "mestiza consciousness" highlights assumptions embedded in these

variables themselves by articulating the uniqueness in the position of the "mestiza" Chicana who lives in the ambiguous and contradictory site between the U.S. and Mexico borderland (1987); her framework's emphasis on the in-betweenness of this space challenges the concept of borders. Similarly, Maria Lugones' concept of "world-traveling" is a critical politics of location in which she rejects the concept of a progressive and singular development of consciousness; by challenging assumptions about temporality, she allows for the past to be interpellated into the present (1987). Ultimately, these theoretical claims, as Grewal (1994) articulates, offer a critical disruption to nostalgic readings of "the full subject as the basis of praxis" (244) and allow political power to be built from this position of multiplicity, fragmentation, and decenteredness in space and time.

My understanding of the position of South Asian anti-violence organizations, and the advocates that work in them, draws from these theoretical understandings of knowledge produced through experiences of race, migration, gender, sexuality, class. The framework of flexible ambivalence highlights critical dimensions of their location and engagement with the logics of criminalization. As noted earlier, I use the term, "flexible" to draw attention to the relational dynamics that require these advocacy organizations to adapt their discursive strategies according to the pressures of neoliberal governance. This position is not oppositional; it can be, and sometimes is, but these groups are also simultaneously assimilated into the machinations of the state, in the web of technologies of governance. I use "ambivalence" to evoke the hesitations that emerge as advocates grapple with disconnects embedded in criminal legal intervention approaches. Here, I move away from an analysis that reads these various strategies as contradiction but rather as continuous, albeit interrupted by discomforts, with the logics of criminalization.

Anti-violence advocates express reluctance and ambiguity, moving between theory and empirical experience, when describing the role that criminal legal system interventions play in crisis moments. For example, one staff member at an anti-violence organization states:

> *[The] only thing that is useful is that* sometimes *[the criminal legal system] provides crisis benefits to a woman. At any given time, any time a woman's life or safety is in jeopardy and she needs an intervention, if she is going to die, it's better to have the police come and remove her, or remove the abuser. Or if she is going to be seriously hurt, or the children are going to be seriously hurt, so that's a direct intervention in a crisis.*

She continues, however, by referring to the potential problems, including those based in her own organization's experience:

> *But even in that, even in that, there is no guarantee that the intervention will benefit her.* Because of what we see… *the woman calls the police, the police come in, meanwhile the man has scratched himself with a blade, he is bleeding, he says actually she is the abuser. Meanwhile, the woman is screaming and scared and so she's labeled neurotic and taken away.*

And then, she continues with a more balanced take on the question:

> *In some cases, it* does *benefit women, not all cops are one way. Many times, the police are trained and do remove the abusive partner from the scene, do give restraining orders, and many times the courts do understand and give final restraining orders and things do work out for women. But when things don't work out. […] it's become commonplace now for men to immediately go to their own lawyer, the lawyer advises them to also charge the woman with a similar crime and show a few bruises so now they are counter-crimes. […] If there is blood or a bruise or something, now she is stuck in a criminal case… so I don't know which is worse.*

The advocate here evokes the inherent variability between survivor, abuser, and law enforcement agents. By focusing on these interpersonal relationships, including the abuser's use of the police to perpetrate violence, the advocate breaks down the institutional impact of the criminal legal system into an issue about the competency and discretion of specific officers and courts. This interpretation is conducive to the interventions that SAWOs have made in the realm of cultural

competency and other services that aim to enhance systems to be able to work with South Asian immigrant communities.

Criminal legal engagement serves as instrumental function, especially when officially-sanctioned evidence of violence (e.g. a police report) can affect survivors' eligibility for social services. Many advocates express frustration at this bind and at the importance given to documentation of violence, in part because of the difficult mechanics of producing evidence to law enforcement officers. How does one prove violence occurred when often times there are no visible traces, physical proof, or witnesses? The reliance on official evidence empowers these literal agents of the state to validate or deny women's experience. For example, one advocate shares:

> *A woman can apply for a U- or T-visa, specifically U-, which is more often the case, but she has to be able to prove criminal activity on the part of the abuser and it's just very difficult to prove, not everyone can prove it. And if you didn't call the police—you could have been beaten black and blue, but what difference does it make if you never called the police? It doesn't count.*

For many anti-violence advocates, their solution to this dilemma has been to provide domestic violence and/or cultural competency trainings to police officers (and medical practitioners) so that they understand better the stakes involved in documentation. As one advocate, working in a community-based South Asian women's organization, describes:

> *[W]hen we would talk to the hospitals or the police officers, we'd be like put everything you saw on that piece of paper because that document is going to follow her for the next 5-10 years. And if you don't write on there that she was physically abused, how am I going to convince the judge that she was physically abused?*

An ex-staff member at a South Asian women's organization was blunt about the dilemma that she felt with respect to her own responsibility as a source of information, mediating between criminal legal institutions and community members:

It's really frustrating to tell, to want to be able to tell someone, yes, you can do something, [you can call the police] if there's an incident of violence in your home and then feeling like I can't say that because of the risk that that carries with it [but then having to say it any way.]

Other advocates take on a different approach. One lawyer, working in a social services agency that services South Asian women, explains:

You know I understand that not everybody wants to be involved with the criminal justice system but the whole housing system is based on the criminal justice system. So Section 8, now it's over, but, before [there used to be] years and years, decades, on waiting lists, but if you want [to be] a priority, and you want emergency housing, domestic violence is a priority. You need to have either a hospitalization record or you need to have two police reports or two Orders for Protection based on different incidents. Obviously the more people had those records, the more easily they found housing…It was really hard to get people housing if they didn't have that documentation.

Another advocate gives me an example that she says is typical of her client base. A neighbor called the police upon hearing a violent incident that involved a young limited-English speaking Bangladeshi survivor. Her abusive partner was arrested without her consent or cooperation, and the survivor was taken to a shelter. The survivor in this case did not want to pursue any legal action against her abusive partner, but:

For one of [the resultant cases] she did have to testify, and we ended up getting a criminal order for protection. [pause] And, actually, she got housing after that.

During our conversation, the advocate struggled to evaluate this example; could she define it as a success? The survivor did not initiate the police intervention, did not express that she wanted to go to a shelter, nor did she want to follow through with the criminal legal case against her abusive partner. But, ultimately, the advocate states that the survivor obtained housing through a Section 8 priority voucher, which, in New York City, was extremely difficult to gain; this housing voucher presented her with more possibilities than were previously available.

Throughout the course of this interview, this advocate wobbled between different feelings and interpretations of the general impact of criminalization on her client base, eventually landing upon a pragmatic conclusion: advocacy efforts were clearer, easier and smoother when her clients were already hooked in and navigating the different pathways that stemmed from criminal legal system involvement. A legal advocate working in conjunction with a domestic violence social services program focused on South Asian communities felt similarly. She, too, expresses critique but then resolves this frustration through an appeal to practicality:

> *And [the reliance on restraining orders as evidence of domestic violence] was a huge problem we had. Because I would constantly talk to [the NYC Housing Authority] and we would have discussions about why would people have to put themselves in harm's way again just to get housing?* It was ridiculous. *But there was no way. Those were the standards that were set. They are still there today. […] I don't agree that housing should be based on the criminal justice system but if that is there and police reports or arrest, if that helps you get housing, then why not, right? Because that's the stuff that's out there for you.*

The criminal legal system then can also offer survivors—and their advocates—something concrete in a situation that is filled with uncertainty and overwhelm. The following two excerpts from interviews with advocates, both staff members at a social services agency that works with South Asian clients, show that this is of particular value to these survivors, especially in working with new immigrant women who are not accustomed to institutions or services in the U.S. :

> *When they are coming in for counseling sessions, they don't really identify or understand what they are doing and what that means. So often times they will be coming in for concrete needs, concrete. What can you do for me? Oh, so I can get my status that way. Or, I can get into a housing program that way. So sometimes we have to use the concrete also to understand it, that there's some stability, that there are some advantages to also utilizing the legal system.*

> *I know what my clients would say- particularly for the clients, they never like to utilize the legal system.[…] For them it's really hard because they have never really exercised their rights, and they don't know what that means. But for some South Asian women, I*

can imagine and I know that it is empowering, in the end, and that's only maybe a year afterwards can they see that there are many some benefits to it.

The pragmatism that underlies feelings of flexible ambivalence requires an acceptance of the authority of the criminal legal system to validate experiences of violence. Here, the logics of criminalization operate such that engaging the criminal legal system is internalized as recognition that the violence is wrong. These logics also put forth an acceptance of a linear process through which reaching the point of engaging the police does become, or at least feel like, a success. One community activist, in talking about the specific challenges faced by the undocumented survivors in her organization's constituency, exemplifies these ideas.

> *So I think [our work is] all about changing how people are socialized to think about violence. […] Changing the understanding that if something happens to you that you don't have to just take it, you can actually get out of that relationship, you can actually report it […] Where a woman who was undocumented would feel safe enough to actually report a crime, to feel that it was something that was wrong. So I think it's a huge shift that has to happen.*

For this activist, a survivor calling the police indicates that she believes it is wrong that she is being abused; it becomes a goal to work towards. Other advocates picked up this idea as well, to talk about how criminal legal engagements can validate survivors and their sense of accountability and justice, especially if they see the state as a site of authority; here the advocacy strategies utilize that authority to affirm survivors' experiences. This process is not necessarily about the legal outcomes, then; instead it is about the emotional impact of moving through a legally valid process, even if it is complicated and contains harmful experiences. For instance, one advocate, speaking from her position at a community-based organization, states:

> *I think for some survivors of violence […], they really see it as an issue around justice. Someone is recognizing the experience that they have gone through. [Legal remedies] feel like wins in a situation where one doesn't feel like one has much control or power or*

> *has felt victimized. It is definitely a space that some survivors see as a way to get their journey to safety moving forward.*

She qualifies this, however, which, again, exposes the ambivalence inherent in these strategies:

> *I wouldn't say that the women necessarily got what they wanted or ever feel completely vindicated. And, the courts can be re-traumatizing for survivors, especially survivors who find it difficult to engage the court system because of their traumatic experiences and/or language issues.*

How does this position organizations and their organizational strategy? I had a long conversation with an ex-staff member of an anti-violence organization about when and how survivors in her ex-organization's constituency engaged the police. She had a thorough and complicated analysis of these issues, affirming many of the barriers and challenges that immigrant communities face when engaging state institutions as well as the benefits—generally expressing the flexible ambivalence I illustrated in the previous section. However, the tone shifted when the advocate spoke to me about internal research her organization had done to better understand how non-English-speaking South Asian survivors of violence perceived the police. She was surprised to see the results:

> *[It] was amazing to us, […] all of them […] wanted other survivors to call the police or to see the police as a resource. […] There were survivors who responded with horror stories of not getting respect or not getting appropriate follow-up from police officers. But then there were survivors who said, my detective saved my life, and that was really moving too. I think at the end of the day there has been an increase in terms of use of law enforcement methods and I think survivors themselves have really felt like getting an OFP or engaging the legal system particularly has been a way to get more of what they wanted out of a terrible scenario. I don't necessarily know if there has been an increase in terms of police, the urge to want to call the police per se but I think that survivors definitely want to see the police and the courts as a resource. Historically, the organization had an anti-criminal justice bias, which is common across the field, because you know how complex the issues are for minority communities and criminalization…I think it was* really shocking *to get this information from survivors.*

The advocate immediately qualifies these findings by noting that the organization did not necessarily see survivors actually calling the police. But, there was a definitive feeling, a desire, for the police to be an available resource. The advocate's own interpretation of the results from this research project reveals the logics of criminalization, which have conflated intervention and criminal legal response so that there is no distinction between the two; from this focus group, we don't know what else beyond more police response survivors may have wanted to see as possible. The advocate interprets these results as "shocking" because they expose continuities in the logics and practice of criminalization where we may expect to see more contradiction. She expected the focus group participants to intentionally express hesitations based on law enforcement experiences that South Asian women's organizations have empirically observed over many decades; but, the respondents' replies are in line with the political, economic, and cultural logics through which state power is authorized to validate experience.

What is needed to disrupt this authority? Another advocate told me a story about a restraining order hearing that she attended with her client, an older Indian immigrant. Her client's experience of violence had been very complicated, and involved a long history of deceit on the part of her husband and his family. She called the police after an incident in which she obtained proof of some financial manipulations and was granted a temporary restraining order. When she appeared in front of the judge a few days later, she won the case by default because her husband did not show up and, in this jurisdiction, his absence meant that the temporary restraining order automatically became permanent. Although she won her case, the survivor cried inconsolably for hours outside the courthouse: she wanted to both tell her story to the judge and for the police officer to publicly affirm her experience. Obtaining the permanent restraining order was, to some extent, beside the point.

Reconciliations through Choice

Many of the advocates I interviewed were explicit, although not always intentional, about expressing hesitation with respect to the criminal legal system, and did not attempt to make sense of the inconsistencies. In other words, they let the messiness be. At the same time, other advocates engaged this space of flexible ambivalence differently, by trying to explain these unsettling tensions, to offer some coherence. To do this, they activated discourses of choice; specifically, though framing survivors' engagement with the criminal legal system as about their choice. This discursive maneuver serves two aims: one, it erases the power differential between survivors and state institutions, and two, it creates distance between the advocate/community-based organization such that they are situated as neutral mediators who are merely helping to facilitate survivors in implementing their choices.

The concept of choice is central to both neoliberalism ideology and practice as well as second-wave mainstream U.S. feminist approaches to empowerment (Grewal 2005). As Rose (1999) articulates, if freedom marks the modern individual, loss of choice is a threat to freedom; however, the practice of making choices is in itself a mode of regulation. Social theorists concerned with the ideological, political, and discursive effects of neoliberalism on social welfare argue that the emergence of frameworks of choice is part of a larger transformation that neutralizes power differentials. Grewal examines these technologies and processes, specifically in the context of social movements that are predicated upon identity. She argues that rights discourses in liberalism have become transformed through the consumerist emphasis of neoliberalism, produced through attachment to multiculturalist identity-based discourses. As a result, diverse markets are created—including the market of social welfare—that are marked by

difference, different needs, and different marketing practices (2005). Inequality is transformed into multiculturalism and agency is transformed into choice; both of these shifts function to flatten structural and infrastructural difference. Within a context of social welfare, these shifts allow for the dominance of market logics, where "choice" becomes independent from the provision of resources and services that actually create the conditions and capacity for agentic decision-making. These changes have turned relationships between public services and service users into one of producers and consumers whose interests are inherently in opposition. These changes further split populations into different groups such as "consumer," "taxpayer," and "scrounger" (or, illegitimate consumer) (Clarke 2004).

Choice has been an essential concept for mainstream feminism in the U.S. Although hegemonic feminism has critiqued the liberal state for dividing public and private, it has still utilized a binary framework` of choice in which the possibilities are having choices or being oppressed; this is most evident, perhaps, in feminist responses to right-wing attacks on reproductive health in which choice rhetoric has been at the center of that struggle. In the context of the anti-violence movement, the question of choice has been utilized in a variety of ways, primarily to advocate for the idea that survivors should be able to self-determine their own life and relationship trajectories. This perspective, however, often relies on the erasure of power differentials that shape the options that are available to survivors to "choose" from. For example, scholar/activist/survivor Linda Mills makes an argument that survivors need to be able to exert absolute choice over decisions that impact their safety. Mills is critical of the criminal legal system, especially because these interventions generally require survivors to separate from their abusive partners in order to access resources or support from the legal system, and this diminishes survivor choice. Mills uses this argument to call for an end to mandatory arrest

policies and other practices that remove decision-making capacity from the survivor and require the survivor and the abuser to be separated (1999).

Feminist scholars who critique Mills, however, are dissatisfied with her inattention to power dynamics. They counter-argue that her framework of choice is detached from the political and economic forces that shape options. Mills operates on an assumption that all involved entities are on equal terms with one another, disallowing for the power relations between people who experience violence, people who enact abuse, social service professionals that serve as (sometimes indirect) agents of the state, and law enforcement officials that serve as agents of the carceral state. These power differentials shape opportunities for survivors' "choices" and it is not as simple, then, as survivors simply choosing what they would like to have happen in their relationships with the state institutions that are purporting to support them (Coker 2004; Bumiller 2008). These debates are engaged in my interviews; for example, one staff member at a community-based organization states quite bluntly that survivors' choices are constrained within a "*given set of pre-determined options*"; survivors who want to stay in their relationships are actually not given much choice.

Some advocates offer a narrative that is about absolute choice or as close to it as possible. In these articulations, advocates almost take an our-hands-are-tied step back; here, their responsibility is to facilitate the survivor in enacting her choices and the larger context of political, economic and social forces that may shape her decision-making fades to the background. But, what is important to name here is that the advocates, because they work within the complex contexts of South Asian American communities, are not oblivious to these forces; how they engage these dynamics is what I am looking at here.

A useful illustration, from a social worker working in a social services organization, occurs over the course of one interview. She begins:

> *A lot of the cases that end up coming to us are unfortunately those in which somebody found out about their secrets, somebody outed them, it wasn't in which they necessarily started the process. […] Their partner got arrested. They called 911 but said it was a mistake, or the neighbor called 911 and then it went through the whole criminal process and it's all out of their hands because the district attorney is now prosecuting the person. […] It's* not their choice *to participate. They have* no choice *but to participate in some way.*

She re-iterates:

> *[These survivors] are in a place where they have* no choice. *They have to participate in some way, shape or form.* They feel like they are being forced *[to be in the criminal justice system].*

But, then, moments later, her candor is followed by an un-doing of her otherwise clear statements, adjusting back into the dominant discourse of choice. She states, in a faux-formal voice and with a professional smile: *Of course,* there's always a choice.

She continues:

> *And, we do emphasize that.* We don't want anybody to feel that they are being forced into doing something. *[…] She doesn't necessarily have to testify. I have never been in the place where the DA ever had to subpoena one of my clients [laughs] to testify. It's never come to that point.*

Although she begins this section of the interview being clear that survivors feel forced to participate in the criminal legal system, she quickly transforms her position into one that highlights the absolute choice of the survivor, claiming that none of her clients have ever actually been made to testify against their will. But, why has it never come to that point? The advocate exposes the mechanics involved:

> *That's where I come into play and I will talk to the client about her options. We definitely are not forcing the client in any way to make that choice. [pause] Sometimes a U-visa is*

> *a good push for someone, if they don't have legal status. We talk to them about why the legal system is the way that it is, what the faults are, what the disadvantages are. I work really closely with [the District Attorney's office]. They also come into the phone conference or the room, so I try to make it as if it is a collaborative decision. Because it also mimics what they are used to, a family life, right? A family decision.*

This perhaps unintentionally frank and transparent articulation reveals a lot about the workings of choice discourse in the context of anti-violence advocacy. Here, the advocate is insistent that the survivor is not required to testify, no subpoenas have been needed, and that she is not being forced into making a choice. But she also notes her role in this—"it's never come to that point"— because she intervenes and offers the clients options. The implication here is that a review of the options, as noted earlier in this chapter, will likely reveal the pragmatic and concrete openings into navigating the network of social service, public assistance, and legal systems; possibilities such as the U visa can be "*a good push*." Within the course of a few minutes, the advocate's narrative moves from being clear and direct about survivors' lack of consent in criminal legal processes to a reworking and reassurance that actually the survivor is the one who ultimately is making this choice to participate in criminal legal processes. The discourse of choice, in its erasure of power differentials, allows for the constitution of this process as participatory and democratic. The legal system is neutralized, assessed through pros and cons, by this emulation of an ideal family that makes collaborative decisions. The conversational format she describes, however, mimics a heteronormatively-gendered family construction, with the District Attorney, the social worker, and the survivor fulfilling the roles of father, mother, and child, respectively; in this metaphor, the survivor/child is traditionally disempowered in decision-making processes, including ones that are organized around her own experience.

It is important to note, however, that for anti-violence advocates working in South Asian immigrant communities, when specifically engaging the issue of criminal legal intervention, the framework of choice is also used to articulate the impossibility of choice. Several interviewees expressed frustration about critiques of criminalization because they work within South Asian communities that are—because of factors such as religious identity, geography/neighborhood, and/or class—at risk of police surveillance but whose needs are also neglected by state institutions. In these cases, advocates argue that thinking about criminalization is almost a luxury, as the survivors in their communities are already entwined in criminal legal processes (usually due to police intervention that they did not initiate) or that it is impossible for them to get "culturally-appropriate" police attention in crisis situations—or both (e.g. survivors who have been arrested because the law enforcement agents were unable to determine the abusive party). Here, the advocates express that the survivors that they work with have no choice; a relationship with the criminal legal system is a given.

For instance, a long-time anti-violence activist who has worked in many different settings within South Asian communities stated that any ambivalence about criminalization of domestic violence itself didn't matter because her organization needed to be able to increase the resources and access to institutions for its constituency. For her organization, this meant an emphasis on cultural competency work with police departments so that they would be better equipped to respond to domestic violence incidents within this community. Another activist who has worked in both South Asian-specific community organizations as well as in mainstream social service settings noted the stark difference between the populations in these spaces. She contrasts the groups through her observation that many survivors coming to South Asian community-based organizations usually still have the choice to call the police or not whereas for South Asian

survivors who are coming to mainstream social service organizations, it's too late. They are already routed in the criminal legal system; a stop in the social services organization is just a routine part of that process.

Logics of Criminalization, Limits of Imagination

The logics of criminalization shape the ways in which anti-violence advocates think about their work, about strategies to construct to engage violence in the community, and what is even seen as possible. Through my interviews, I learned that these logics—specifically, that the policing and prosecution of violence, which require a separation between a victim and perpetrator, are the best solutions to violence—work to silence questions, preclude alternative approaches, and limit imagination. In my conversations with people about criminalization, I saw self-censorship and verbal hesitations among advocates. Yet, what was noticeable, in contrast, was that interviewees who had transitioned out of their organizations, or were about to leave, were more reflective about these limitations. This was even more noticeable when the interviewees had experience working in other social movement spaces, such as immigrant rights work, sex worker organizing, arts/cultural work, and/or in non-South Asian dominated community spaces. These distances from the workings of anti-violence efforts gave them permission to think and speak through openings that had not been as available to them when they were involved in everyday advocacy practice. The following interview excerpts, in which advocates who have been part of South Asian women's organizations reflect on these impacts of criminalization, help to illustrate this:

> *So I think it's hard because not only is funding and systems delivery designed [through a criminalization model] but I think that you are spending less time, usually in terms of community-oriented solutions in terms of domestic violence. And also those solutions are*

more long-term, they are less ingrained and systematic, and so it's difficult to imagine what those things would be as well on an everyday level.

I wish I had an answer [for what needs to change] I think that what happens for many movements is that certain thoughts become allowed and not allowed, and [working outside the criminal legal system] is an unallowed thought. *You can't even voice this.*

I don't relate to that model as much as I used to. The sort of assumed, the criminal-justice-system-is-where-our-solutions-lie model. I think part of it is just personal experiences and witnessing personal experiences within that context and feeling like that solution feels way more complicated then it felt in terms of the ways it felt presented to me when I was at [her previous organization]. [I am also] feeling surprised in retrospect that that wasn't more talked about at [organization]. And, I mean, I think, based on what I know about a lot of different people who have had involvement in [organization] I don't think that model is the only way that people think. At all. So I am sort of almost surprised that that's the model that everyone agreed to work on, and that there wasn't more work at the edges of that. Or even if that's the model that people are working in, then exploring what else could be, or even having conversations about what else could be.

Some interviewees were even more philosophical about the implications of criminalization, and talked at length about how these logics prevented dialogue about intimacy and the complicated nature of relationships. They noted that the anti-violence movement's reliance on criminalization makes assumptions about what survivors of violence want and need. Implied in this critique is an evocation, again, of frameworks of choice; these advocates, however, were more apt to question what types of choices survivors are offered.

And of course this does not justify the abuse in any way whatsoever but this complicated relationship between intimate partners, we sort of let it go in the work and we just focus our attention on the key words of safety and security and independence. And we assume that all women want to be independent, and I feel like who am I to decide that she wants to lead an independent life? Maybe she wants to be dependent, who am I to tell her? That she should not be dependent? Maybe out of that dependence comes something that she seeks.

What does it mean to be in society that has said that this is not a correct relationship to be in? I was with a friend yesterday and she was telling me that her husband often loses his temper and does all these things and she decided that she, at some point, sat down

and thought to herself, is there anybody she could love more? They had been with each other for so long and she realized that there was nobody else. So she is willing to put up with his crazy outbursts and she said that he is in therapy so it is getting better. So she was just basically trying to tell me that I have to decide whether that aspect is making me unhappy. If I am happy then I would feel guilty- if I was happy, why am I happy I am in a relationship that is treating me really badly?

What really bothers me from 50,000 feet above, very large view, without getting into details is that if you really look at the end point, the end result of working with women, most often, our movement is basically telling women to leave. If you look at all the options we give women—go to an attorney and get a restraining order, file for divorce, move away to a shelter… of course, I realize, you need to move to a shelter if you are getting beaten up. So I recognize the need for the shelter, the need for the transitional home, the need to help women become independent, get jobs, I recognize the need for all of these things and they are all critical needs. But the end result of all of this is what is the message that we are giving women without telling them so, is that when facing abuse, leave. In individual situations of women facing abuse, yeah, she has to leave if she is being battered. But if you look at the overall work of anti-violence, of anti-domestic violence work, thousands of individual women leaving their intimate partners, does that resolve the overall issue of violence against women?

These excerpts are all part of longer conversations, most of which had some element of awkwardness and/or self-consciousness; what did it mean to say these thoughts out loud, and into a digital recorder, no less? Even though I had promised confidentiality and that names would not be attached to any of my writing, several participants expressed that it was scary to put these ideas into words. On the other hand, one of the interviewees quoted above made clear to me, early in the interview, that she was planning to leave her position at an anti-violence organization and stated, "*I don't really mind speaking my mind now*." At several points in the interview, she reminded me that she was speaking her honest feelings, implicitly and explicitly letting me know that during her tenure in this organization (over five years), she had not been able to express these thoughts. On the other hand, however, the silence around criminalization sometimes showed up in the other direction. Several interviewees offered hearsay, anecdotal guesswork, and/or off-the-record stories about survivors benefitting from the post-9/11 security

initiatives because their partners had been deported. Although interviewees made reference to this indirect knowledge, this was also not an allowed formal conversation. It was also taboo to say that repressive state policies that were negatively impacting the community as a whole could have positive impacts on their constituencies. While taking a neutral or passive position on this topic had proven to be a safer and less controversial route for anti-violence organizations, these anecdotes reveal the need for dialogue and practice that can hold the intersectional complexities of South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities experiencing different forms of violence, enacted by different sources, often simultaneously.

Chapter 5

Methodologies of Disruption:

Bypassing Neoliberal Logics through Building Communities

> *Human freedom demands that we dismiss the politics of fear and offer a program for authentic security… Everybody dies, but not everybody lives. Everybody has to have a chance to live.*
>
> --Vijay Prashad 2012:x

In this chapter, I explore different strategies that community-based organizations have used to engage domestic violence in their constituencies that disrupt—or attempt to disrupt—neoliberal logics. I offer three case studies that differently engage co-implicated neoliberal trends of funding/professionalization/specialization (Chapter 2), internal differentiations of survivor populations along lines of worthiness (Chapter 3), and the dominance of criminal legal interventions in cases of domestic violence (Chapter 4). Throughout this project, I have depicted the relationship between political and economic forces and everyday advocacy practices. Through these case studies, I discuss the imaginative possibilities that community-based organizers forge to address the needs that appear in their communities, the constraints that they face, and the internal community exclusions that persist as well as potential openings for further connections. The case studies exemplify the everyday challenges that community-based organizations construct given that we "cannot escape neoliberal conditions of possibility but can, as changing, contingent subjects, not be incapacitated by this neoliberalism" (Grewal 2005:4).

The strategies I highlight all engage the production of "community" in complicated ways. I follow Miranda Joseph's (2002) critique of "community" as a discursive production that serves to validate and replicate inequalities of power, particularly through hierarchies of social

identities. As I discuss in Chapter 1, South Asian anti-violence work has been predicated upon ideas of shared culture but these groups have historically been constructed by immigrant women who occupied, and challenged, elite professional formations. Their development of a politics stemming from a platform of cultural identity both contested hegemonic expectations of South Asian survivors of violence as well as produced a intersectional but universal South Asian survivor subject. Recent anti-violence formations that have since emerged in the South Asian community have followed this traditional trajectory. Others have built membership bases and leadership in communities that have been marginalized or excluded by North Indian middle-class Hindu hegemonic politics; community here is still developed through logics of multicultural difference (Mathew 2008) but also interrupt power dynamics within South Asian immigrant and diasporic communities. Still others have worked with a hybrid of strategies and in multiple community spaces that are not as easily discernable. The discussion I offer here is not an idealization of "community" but instead aims to expose the mechanics of community production to analyze the strategic evocations as well as fundamental limitations of this discursive formation, in the context of anti-violence work with South Asian American communities.

I am most interested here in strategies that intentionally require the collectivity of community in order to occur, and, as such, aim to build community. This is a specific methodology that is not inherent in community-based work. The term "community-based organization" generally refers to a structural form in which the organization is made up of—through staff, volunteers, and constituency/clients/members—people who share identity, geography, interest, and also often have a leadership structure in which the people making decisions reflect the constituency. In the context of South Asian women's organizations, definitions of "community-based" can be contested, particularly in settings where the non-profit

professional staff members occupy different locations of privilege than the clients or constituencies, such as class position or other identities. It is also very unusual for South Asian women's organizations to have "out" survivors that emerge from their client/constituency base in their leadership; although many staff members, board members and volunteers have experienced violence, and this is often a motivation to work on these issues, their experiences are distinguished from those of survivors who access formal supportive services from the organization. Although these dynamics yield questions about what it means to be "community-based" organizations when they are constructed through these internal distances and demarcations (Rudrappa 2004), in this discussion, I am more concerned with the modes through which community is built and how and when these constructions can disrupt the logics of neoliberalism. In the context of anti-violence strategies, methodologies that are predicated upon community, collectivity, and shared responsibility are disruptive of neoliberal values of individualization, independence, and self-sufficiency (Duggan 2004). Responses and interventions that do not engage the state also resist, or at least interrupt, neoliberal's investment in incorporating social problems into the machinations of governance (Willse 2010).

Case Study #1: Community Accountability Practices

Criminal legal strategies have emerged over the past three decades as the dominant societal response to domestic violence, and, as I show in Chapter 4, anti-violence organizations express a flexible ambivalence towards these strategies. Social service providers, in particular, articulate that engagement with the criminal legal system offers a pathway through which to navigate public assistance systems. When the possibility of alternatives to criminalization came up in interviews, in addition to the earlier-mentioned limitations of imagination (Chapter 4), I

also noticed fear: fear of liability, fear of not doing the right thing, fear for advocates' own safety. Advocates and community-based organizations are not exempt from feeling scared even if their work is explicit about challenging fear. For example, a spirited discussion took place at a meeting of advocates working on community-based interventions to domestic violence that do not rely on the criminal legal system. One of the elders in the room expressed concern about moving away from criminal legal interventions. This opened up a conversation about risk, and arguments about which risks to take when. We take for granted the risks involved for survivors when they engage state institutions, even though we know that there are many, but the risks involved in building community-based responses can seem worse because they are unknown. This evaluation of risk is not based in any empirical reality—because there hasn't been enough space to really create alternatives to the criminal legal system—but it is based in fear and anticipation. Ultimately, the criminalization model has presented anti-violence work with a set of rules, and deviating from these expectations can produce discomforts and anxieties for advocates who are in a position of responsibility towards their constituencies (even if this position is impossible to fulfill). A long-time activist fighting for survivors who have been incarcerated admitted that if a survivor has a harmful experience with law enforcement, we are not directly responsible. But, if we botch a community-based intervention, we are the ones who have caused harm, and that risk, and the accompanying fears, reflect the ameliorative politics of the anti-violence movement overall.

However, relaying this ethnographic anecdote is not to imply that anti-violence advocates and community activists will not bend, break or recreate the rules; community-based organizations in the South Asian community have changed the terrain of social change work, and have historically experimented with different strategies and methodologies that meet the needs of

their constituencies of South Asian survivors. Although most anti-violence organizations do not work directly with abusive partners, and will not directly mediate in relationships (despite this being a very common request from survivors), some groups have tried to advance strategies of community accountability. These approaches draw from feminist and other social movement activism in South Asia; and use the spectacle of public protest to maneuver concepts such as honor and shame (Abraham 2000; Das Gupta 2006).

For example, Sakhi for South Asian Women has famously engaged in public protest and shaming techniques to hold abusive partners (and exploitative employers, during the time that it had a Domestic Workers Committee) accountable for the violence that they enacted. For example, in 1996, Sakhi members demonstrated in front of the house of Mohammed Mohsin after he attempted to murder his wife, Syeda Sufian. Evoking a discourse of community as family to account for shared responsibility, Sakhi members chanted slogans like, "Wake up fathers. Wake up brothers. If you abuse, you will lose." (Das Gupta 2006:127). These strategies derived from an intentional politics to claim space in public community events to make violence against women visible. They also derived from a claim to authority to make the determination that violence against women is wrong. By addressing the broader community with their message, Sakhi's protest strategy does not see the individual abuser as the target; yes, they want Mohsin to be held to account for the violence he inflicted upon Sufian but they do not fall prey to neoliberal's tactics of individualization. In Chapter 4, I ask how the authority of the state to validate experiences of violence can be disrupted? Access to state authority to legitimate experiences of violence can underlie the motivation to participate in criminal legal processes, especially for survivors who are seeking affirmation of their experience. Public community accountability strategies build public authority, disrupting the logics of criminalization, even if

they occur alongside legal processes. In this case, there was a criminal legal case pending against Mohsin.

However, Sakhi ultimately gave up this methodology, for a combination of reasons including: threats of lawsuits and limited resources to pursue legal challenges; leadership transitions that occurred during and after the forced removal of the Domestic Workers Committee, and, relatedly, a shift in organizational direction. As of this writing, Sakhi is starting to try a different entry into alternative approaches to community accountability. They have partnered with the Center on Violence and Recovery at NYU to implement a restorative justice model, in which they will work with survivors and their chosen community members to move towards healing, affirmation and other practices that build towards creating cultures of collective responsibility.

Although a full examination of community accountability strategies is outside the scope of this chapter, here I want to take a look at some of the specific dynamics in this arena of work that emerged for anti-violence organizations in the post-9/11 period. On the one hand, the shifts in conditions, specifically in the form of state policies that curtailed rights for immigrants, made South Asian communities' relationship to the state a more visible concern. As one advocate stated:

> *I think there was also a lot of pressure, internally—not within the organization as much—but from the base of people that we worked with as well as from other partners to start to think about accountability outside of the criminal justice system, or the justice system. And I think it had a lot to do with 9/11 and the criminalization of South Asian men.*

In this time period, survivors were hesitant to look outside their own communities for support, including community-based organizations. Ethnic-specific domestic violence organizations in pan-Asian, South Asian, Arab and/or Muslim communities all reported fewer calls from

survivors in the post-9/11 period (Sthanki 2007). As a result, many advocates recognized that their organizations were seen as outside-enough that survivors were not reaching out to them. They saw that they needed to cultivate different strategies that would support survivors without using the criminal legal system; many advocates expressed that they shared the worry that survivors held about putting their family members at risk for state-based violence, particularly immigration enforcement. But, at the same time, these organizations were also limited by the racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic environment, and felt reluctant to—for instance—use public tactics that may make gender-based violence visible and fuel existing stereotypes about these communities. During this time, the overlay between cultural racism and population racism was unavoidable. Technologies of neoliberal governance were being deployed to regulate immigrant populations and were bolstered by ideological discourses about culture, violence, gender and Islam. Mainstream feminist organizations were key players in circulating discourses about patriarchal violence in Islamic countries and communities, citing their concern about gender-based violence in their alliances with U.S. imperialist war projects (Eisenstein 2010; Abu-Lughod 2011). At the time of 9/11, anti-violence organizations were some of the most established community-based organizations in the South Asian community, which also meant that they took on this additional role of representing the South Asian community and to counter these cultural racist ideologies.

Another complicated dimension during this time was that staff and volunteer members of anti-violence organizations—generally South Asian women—were themselves vulnerable to violence. For organizational members who were Muslim, this dynamic was especially prevalent. One advocate describes how right after 9/11, the organization went through a shift:

> *[Our work changed from] survivor-based work to all of a sudden, condemning violence on behalf of religion and to stand up for religion and to be like, this isn't something that*

Muslims advocate. And, on top of that, I was […] Muslim […] so [those of us in the group who are Muslim] all of a sudden became the faces of [Islam]. It was a lot of pressure.

Several advocates who worked in anti-violence organizations at that time spoke about the different work that they did to counter Islamophobia; the following three excerpts are from three different interviewees with ex-staff members of a South Asian women's organization. None of them was in a position where their primary work was community engagement, but during this time, everyone's work changed somewhat to accommodate these broader crisis needs:

A lot of other groups asked us to come in and speak up on behalf of being either Muslim, or being South Asian in general, and peace and what that meant. And that we condemn violence and things like that.

We had to battle those prejudices with certain judges, social workers, cops, hospital workers. […] So we had to go out there and start doing some of that work, too. To say, hey, just because… you know some survivors would hear from the cops that responded, oh isn't that in your religion? Aren't you supposed to be submissive to the man otherwise you will get beat? And so we had so many of those questions that came up all the time.

Pre-9/11, [domestic violence in the community] could still be about a South Asian community issue and that I think was one of the things that would have changed in terms of the post 9/11 context. And certainly there was much more awareness across the South Asian domestic violence organizations about the use of religion as a way to excuse violence. Or scapegoating particular religions as being inherently oppressive to women. So, I remember in the situation that happened a few years ago where a Muslim woman was killed in NY. That there was a lot of controversy because people associated it with Islam and so a number of us responded as organizations to break down the idea that it was the religion that led to this behavior and to re-center it on the dynamics of domestic violence.

Anti-violence activists in this time were not immune to the difficulties that survivors were facing in light of the broader sociopolitical conditions of Islamophobia and anti-terrorism discourses. They were also trying to figure out how to navigate these new forms of community scrutiny. The simultaneity, however, presented a dilemma. At a time when community accountability strategies were perhaps more necessary, there were also more constraints on the

conditions within which these types of strategies could be implemented. Anti-violence activists were nervous about exposing their constituencies to more risk. One advocate laughed as she imagined the possibility of a public community accountability strategy in the post-9/11 time. She giggled out of the sheer nervousness of the idea of this, the possibility of publicly shaming a Muslim or Sikh man, doing something that would in any way make him and his community vulnerable to further state surveillance. It was unthinkable. These possibilities were also unthinkable for another reason. Another former staff person at a SAWO reflected that the post-9/11 period really illuminated how their organization was not in the communities that were most targeted post-9/11 (e.g. Muslim, Sikh, working-class, undocumented, and/or LGBTQ. What did it mean that, during a time of crisis, survivors were not calling their organizations, even for basic resources or support? She relayed that it felt clear that they occupied a position just outside these communities, such that they were legible as existing within the larger South Asian community but removed enough from these communities that it did not feel as possible to claim authority in those spaces. They could represent the community, conduct educational sessions to challenge cultural racism in external spaces, advocate for the rights of South Asian women in media and policy arenas, but she was not sure that they had enough meaningful connection to South Asian community members to be useful or feel trusted.

Case Study #2: Producing Affective Ties

In this chapter, I return to the anecdote that framed the opening of this dissertation to pick up the questions that Shehnaz Janmohamed, moderator of a panel at a national conference, had presented about the challenges and future directions of anti-violence work in South Asian American communities. Janmohamed identified three impactful trends that South Asian anti-

violence efforts contend with, and asks whether we can collectively imagine strategies that transcend these challenges. The panelists responded to her inquiries about the constraints produced by anti-violence work and the particular implications of this for communities that are vulnerable to state power. The speakers on this panel represented different communities within the South Asian American community that are minoritized, due to class, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, immigration status, diasporic identity among other variables. First, she asked the speakers to reflect on the issue of community accountability and strategies that can create safer conditions for survivors and hold abusive partners responsible for their actions without going through the criminal legal system. Next, she raised the issue of funding and how to keep their programs accountable to their constituencies, avoiding funder-driven work. Finally, she asked about the role of men, and whether anti-violence strategies can hold the complexities of gender and violence in our communities.

Janmohamed's questions are useful for the anti-violence movement generally; this is why I opened my project with them. However, they also had and have particular resonance for the communities that are outside the hegemonic identities in South Asian community spaces. (In contrast, at this same conference, the "Gender Equity Panel" three of the four panelists were representatives from South Asian anti-violence women's organizations; in this space, the conversation focused on the need for policy advocacy to meet the needs of H-4 visa holders, transnationally abandoned women, and language access. This distinction reflects the patterns within anti-violence work of population racism, or which survivor populations are positioned to have the possibility of being folded in to life. Even policy advocacy for language access, which is developed for non- or limited- English speaking survivors, aims to create equitable language access in public courts to assist survivors who are framed as less experienced with the legal

system here. The conversations that occurred in these two spaces indicated the position that SAWOs occupy, or do not, in neoliberal governance.)

In this section, I want to highlight the community-building strategies taken on by organizations that are not traditional SAWOs, although they have had, over the years, varying affiliations with them. These groups are organized around gender-based violence; this is their focus. Their approaches, however, are not service-oriented but rather seek to build community. One group (Group A) is based in a new immigrant working-class shared-language community. The other group (Group B) is based in a diasporic community that has its roots in South Asia, but because of their migration history, do not have the same language or cultural ties to the region that are often assumed to be shared in South Asian American spaces.

Group A uses a community organizing approach that is actively disruptive of binaries of client and professional or survivor and other; their analysis and practice stems from a belief in building shared collective power. While some of their activities are similar to the tactics employed by many non-profit organizations (e.g. community outreach, community education), albeit creatively thought through (e.g. street theater is one of their practices), their underlying premise is to build community relationships and community capacity to address gender-based violence. Many anti-violence community engagement strategies aim to increase community knowledge about domestic violence as well as about organizations and resources that are available for survivors in need of assistance (Mehrotra and Munshi 2007). These strategies emerge from non-profit organizational incorporation into neoliberal governance and the assumption of this responsibility and identity. Group A, on the other hand, is not asking community members to call them when they learn of domestic violence but is trying to build community-based responses starting with fostering open dialogue about violence and skills

development to offer peer support to survivors experiencing violence in their relationships. By utilizing a membership structure, there is no organizational hierarchy that can be exploited to further power differentials based in social identities and forms of privilege that may exist in the group. Their work is based in their belief that they are the experts of their own lives:

> *That's the whole point- you know a lot because you are doing the work, and you are coming from the community. So really having to talk that through. And you have to talk about it. Just because you have a MSW or you have a title doesn't make you any more knowledgeable about something.*

Key to their social change methodology is relationship-building among the group. If domestic violence breeds under conditions of social isolation and stress, this approach, instead, builds social relationships through shared values of creating meaningful relationships. When domestic violence has arisen as an immediate concern for one of the group members, they take on the issue together to strategize and safety plan. Group A does not purport to be a holistic organization that can meet all its members' needs. In fact, it is the existence of pan-South Asian anti-violence organizations and programs for South Asian survivors within mainstream social service organizations that takes some of the pressures off Group A to navigate social and legal services for its members.

Group B does not see itself as a domestic violence organization, in part because they see those groups as social services-driven whereas their work is grounded in other types of activities, including arts and cultural work, education, and community organizing. Group B's work uses a social change methodology that centralizes healing in intergenerational community spaces. Their analysis of gender-based violence is a historical one, as it traces back to their community's shared history of forced migration, indentured labor, poverty, and other sociopolitical conditions that have produced generations of trauma and violence. Many feminist anti-violence

organizations in South Asian communities articulate a need to address the roots of gender-based violence, most directly linked to patriarchy (although capitalism, imperialism, and other systems of oppression are included in some of these analyses as well). For Group B, an analysis of the roots of gender-based violence must take history, and intergenerational transmissions of trauma, into account. This group was not the only one that actively incorporates this into its analysis; organizers and activists that work in communities that have historically experienced some form of deep political trauma spoke about the present-day impacts on immigrant and diasporic communities living in New York City. For members of group B, who also work in a collective structure that prioritized building shared power, their work is flexible to account for their members' needs. For example, although they do not see themselves as a domestic violence organization, inevitably, work on domestic violence, in some form, occurs regularly among the group. As one organizer shared:

> *It's kind of crazy, because even though we have been very intentional about having those [meetings] as starting to address different issues, domestic violence conversations (laughing) always end up happening anyway. I think because there is not enough women's spaces, and I think it becomes like, it just becomes a healing space where women feel safe to actually vent and to actually share and to go deep. Women talk about past experiences that they were involved in, or someone that they currently know and they want to figure out how they can help that person, a situation of someone they know, is actually in it, and they just want to bring it up and talk about it. And we'll always be supportive of that- we'll stop and we'll have that conversation. It always blows my mind, that no matter what issue we decide to focus on that month, a domestic violence situation or domestic violence conversation will still happen.*

Group A and Group B offer a different model for anti-violence work. Currently, both of these groups are small and have limited resources. Neither of them is staffed. They each want to grow bigger, citing the lack of funding as the biggest obstacle to their work. Group B, in fact, has a vision of obtaining funding to be able to provide culturally-specific social services to its members. Although they are each located in more specific subsets of the South Asian community

than the original South Asian anti-violence women's organizations (which were ethnically and linguistically more diverse), they share a similar interpretation of the gaps and unfulfilled needs of their community members. Will they be able to grow in resources and activity without being incorporated into the machinations of neoliberal governance?

Case Study #3: Unofficial Interventions

In Chapter 2, I discuss the modes through which community-based workers disavow their own expertise in order to make boundaries between themselves and anti-violence work. On the flip side of this, there are every day interruptions through which community-based organizations take on and engage domestic violence in their communities, intentionally or because it surfaces and there is no way to avoid it. Here, I offer a counter-example that illustrates how communities and community-based organizations respond to domestic violence in unofficial ways, and discuss how the physicality of space can impact strategies. I spoke with several staff members, current and former, of a community-based organization that conducts various programs and activities out of an organizational space that is open to all of its members. This organization does not have any specific or intentional relationship to domestic violence work, although it holds gender-segregated programs and groups as well as individualized supportive services; all interviewees I spoke with mentioned that domestic violence comes up, in different ways, at different points, in their work. Several of these conversations included a detailed analysis of a particular incident; although it had happened years before our interviews, they recalled vividly the different complications that had arisen through this situation.

An incident of violence occurred between two people in an intimate relationship at the organizational site. It was after the end of the business day, and so there were few people in the

building. One staff member, leaving for the day, saw the couple in conflict, and upon approaching them, it was evident that physical violence had taken place. The staff member was not sure what to do but asked the person who had been abused if she needed help getting somewhere, and she asked to be put in a cab. Her partner slipped away during the course of this conversation. The next day, the staff learned about the incident, and two critical strains of debate emerged. First, there was internal disagreement about the appropriate protocol in this situation: should the staff member have called the police? Several people believed yes, because they believed that the police should help in incidences of violence or, as some argued, because the organization should not be held liable in any way; they should remove themselves from the situation as quickly as possible. (After all, this was not a domestic violence organization!). Other people felt that the police should not be automatically called but that the staff member could have provided additional support to the survivor beyond putting her in a cab. What if her abusive partner was waiting for her at her home? There was a dialogue about safety planning and communicating well with survivors to help to identify their needs in moments marked by the immediacy of violence. There was general agreement that the staff, overall, felt unprepared to address violence and they decided to prioritize professional development training and other mechanisms to increase their internal capacity and confidence to respond in cases of intimate abuse.

The next strain of debate concerned their relationships with the members who were involved in the incident. The woman who had been abused decided not to pursue a restraining order so the abusive partner was not banned from the organizational space. But, did the organization want to prohibit him from coming? Some argued that his presence there would make the space unsafe for her, and potentially, others. Others felt that removing him from the

space was an undue punishment given the lack of other options for free services and programs in the community. Ultimately, the organization decided not to allow him back for a given length of time; the young woman, on the other hand, continued to participate in the activities that she was involved in.

When speaking about this incident, interviewees were conflicted. The situation had been very confusing and it brought up a lot of internal tensions between different staff members, exposing different philosophical understandings about their shared work. Their internal conflicts also surfaced many gendered dynamics that had otherwise been avoided by the staff in their everyday work, as it was a big enough organization that it was easy to avoid people you did not want to see.

The interventions may not have been smooth, nor collectively determined, nor survivor-led; many of the staff members felt unhappy about the ways that the organization responded. I raise this example, however, because it illustrates the possibilities for engagements with violence in spaces that are comprised of heterogeneous communities. Community-based organizations that are not explicitly working on gender-based violence offer a different potential for safety, as articulated by an activist who has worked in both anti-violence as well other types of community groups:

> *[And, meanwhile,] there are also interventions [happening] because we are actually in the community vs. [the SAWO] and…probably women would rather go to [a community-based organization] because it doesn't have the same stigma as a domestic violence, anti-violence, organization. I think that might be a lost opportunity in New York, having these larger conversations and identifying these more nontraditional players.*

In addition to the lack of stigma involved, the openings that are created in these spaces come, in part, through two variables that distinguish them from anti-violence organizations. One is that most anti-violence organizations are in confidential spaces and so they are regulated and less

organic. This create conditions of safety for some survivors because it intentionally is separated from the everyday experiences of violence that they may be facing in other spaces in their lives; a community-based site with a public address does not have that same boundary. Next is that these organizations are not explicitly regulated by gender. Transphobia and genderism notwithstanding, community-based organizations that do not maintain lines between women and men have different options for cross-gender dialogue about shared experiences. For example, one community organizer who works on an anti-violence project for a group that is based in a specific ethnic community states:

> [*9/11 opened up conversations.] Interestingly, it helps, it allows us to have much more open dialogues with men, to talk about common impressions that we share as immigrants in the US. because if you talk about, we don't just go in and say hey! Let's talk about DV. We'll try to connect it to whatever issue our movement that we see, if we are going and talking to a bunch of workers, garment workers, we'll talk about the oppression that they are facing as workers, and then tie it to them home. So talking about our oppression as immigrants allows us to talk about, what is happening at the home after, okay, you are facing this outside, what's happening inside? It allows a lot of that dialogue to take place as well.*

Some women's organizations strike a balance, because they do not want to lose the purpose of the space as a women's space. One organizer from a community-based organization that works on gender-based violence in a diasporic community states:

> *We have been critiqued that there are men who are interested in ending violence, too, and we should bring them in or why aren't we bringing them in? But for me that goes back to why have a people of color organization for people of color; it's a type of self-determination, a type of energy that is created out of a space like that, that would change if you actually had men actively involved.*

> *But if you start thinking about men as allies, that's entirely different. That's something that came out of [an event]. That was the first time we even had a man perform! But we do recognize that there are men who are allies in this work and there have been conversations about some of those allies starting a men's group, to start having these type of conversations, that's part of our…we recently had a retreat where we came up with a ten- year vision, and that's part of our vision. So that we don't have to take the lead on coordinating men. Later on, if we bring men into the work, they can be in charge*

> *of coordinating that kind of space. So we could focus on, I just feel we can't focus our energy there yet. There' so much work that needs to be done with just women.*

Both of these organizers reflect that these community-building dialogues and opportunities for alliances make it more likely that men will come to their public events and other activities that are more intentionally focused on violence against women. They see this as part of their groups' long-term community-building work to create solutions to domestic violence that are led by and for people who are already in existing relationships with one another. These activists, like so many in my study, are frustrated by the criminal legal dictates that require survivors to sever ties with their abusive partners, families, and communities to obtain legal protection.

Constraints of Confidentiality

The case studies above reveal a fundamental difficulty in anti-violence work in South Asian immigrant communities. Neoliberal governance—through the logics of professionalization and criminalization—constructs safety and confidentiality as critical to anti-violence strategies. Clarke (2004) notes, professional expertise in the realm of social services is in reliant upon the skills and authority to exercise judgment with respect to discretion. The carceral state, meanwhile, has grown systems of punishment to fill in social welfare gaps; these strategies rely on some separation between the person who has committed harm and the person upon whom it was inflicted. Mimi Kim (2012) questions whether the anti-violence movement has fetishized safety such that safety—which is actually unachievable as a pure state—becomes the goal in itself and the ultimate priority regardless of situation, context, and survivor self-determination. This concern with safety, in turn, precludes community-building models that are open to the possibilities of change, amenable to taking responsible risks, and concentrated on producing affective ties that are grounded in values of holistic well-being and interdependence.

Epilogue

Reflections/Directions

Washington D.C., Fall 2011

The lunch break was not quite over but I settled back into my seat with a coffee and a cookie, hoping to use these last few moments to write some observational notes about the morning's plenary session and discussion. I was at a national meeting for anti-violence advocates of color hosted by a group that worked with a mainstream anti-domestic violence organization. This particular type of space was one that I had not been in since 1998, when I left my position as a staff member at a domestic violence shelter in a Minneapolis suburb to move back to my home city, New York. Lost in a train of thoughts and memories about many early lessons I learned about racial politics in the anti-violence movement in the U.S., I was easily startled when a figure slid into the chair beside me and whispered in my ear, "I need to talk to you, now." My colleague looked upset. I followed her out of the conference room into a quiet corner of the hotel lobby. She confessed: "I was in the bathroom, in a stall, and I overheard a conversation."

She had just overheard several advocates chatting about the meeting; they were overall frustrated, and some were angry. The bathroom conversationalists were all African American advocates, working in the Midwest, the South, and the Southwest regions of the U.S. They felt that their issues were not being addressed at the meeting, and, instead, that it was all about immigrants. Why was so much time allotted to talk about policing and surveillance of Latino and Asian communities, but no space on the agenda to talk about incarceration and underemployment in Black communities? Why was criminalization being addressed as though it was a new phenomenon, without any historical context or connections? They elaborated these

complaints. At least one of them expressed anti-immigrant sentiments and used a racist stereotype to refer to one of the morning's panelist. My colleague relayed all the details she could remember, ended with a big sigh, and exhaled: "I thought you should know," followed by, "I have to catch a train back home in an hour so I am leaving the meeting. It was great to see you!"

I felt conflicted by this news. On the one hand, I had been pleasantly surprised that immigration enforcement was given attention in this meeting space; based in my prior experience, I was not expecting there to be any conversation about the risks and vulnerabilities that survivors faced when interacting with the state. In these spaces, conversation generally did not allow for questions about the effectiveness of criminal legal interventions. On the other hand, I also had been noticing the lack of connection being made to the broader systemic roots of policing, punishment, surveillance and other technologies of criminalization of communities of color. Here there was an opportunity to build a strategic alliance between immigrant, indigenous, and Black anti-violence advocates, but, instead, there was a splintering among the group.

Connecting Racisms, Building Strategic Alliances

When I started this project in the mid-2000s, I was interested in the effects of the changing relationship between South Asian communities and state power on anti-violence work. There was sporadic attention being given to these shifts but I wanted to use this research opportunity to further examine the ways in which the everyday advocacy work was being affected by the broader sociopolitical and economic conditions within which these efforts were taking place. To do so, I intentionally kept my focus within the South Asian American

community, assuming that the parameters of these spaces are contested. However, upon concluding this iteration of this project, I can identify that what is sorely needed, at this point, is a re-situation of anti-violence work in South Asian communities within a larger context of women of color feminisms and activism. This re-positioning is necessary in order to identify and build upon these points of historical, contemporary and potential strategic alliances so as to thwart the effects of splintering and division. I intend to grow this project in this direction in its next iterations.

Given the history of South Asian anti-violence organizing in the United States and its foundation in engaging and challenging cultural racism, these connections are not necessarily organic. In Vijay Prashad's *The Karma of Brown Folk*, he argues that the racial positioning of South Asians in the U.S. as model minorities historically situated them as a wedge within black and white racial politics in which South Asians become "not simply a solution for black America, but, most pointedly, a weapon deployed against it." (2000: 7). Monisha Das Gupta (2006) challenges Prashad's premise that South Asians in the U.S. have ignored questions of race and racism by noting that South Asian women's activism has produced new understandings of the relationships between race, nation, and gender.

I agree with Das Gupta that the intellectual production that has occurred through South Asian women's anti-violence organizing has disrupted many dominant discourses. I also want to bring her observation back in conversation with Prashad's intervention to note that these intellectual disruptions have not generally engaged a broader understanding of structural and experiential racism, but, rather, have deployed and reified multicultural logics of unique differences. In their emphasis on the culturally-specific aspects of cultural racism, there has been a gap in attention to both the technologies of state racism that differentially impact people *within*

South Asian communities as well as *across* racialized populations. What are the implications of these gaps, especially within the context of burgeoning non-profit "solutions" to social problems? What are the implications of the predominance of cultural frameworks as a mode through which inequality is addressed across communities with very different histories of engagements with culture? While South Asian women's organizations grapple with inundations of culture and struggle to claim it on their own terms, Prashad (2000) also notes that ascription of culture can be a form of privilege. He cites the Afrocentricism of the Black Pride movement as an example of an effort to claim culture, which is about resisting the re-writing of erasure of culture and history. Meanwhile, another example in the realm of governance comes from the 2012 call for proposals for CLASP (Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services for Victims Programs) funding, the Office on Violence against Women identified two priority areas: one was for culturally-specific services for sexual assault survivors, and the other was for "[t]he development and/or enhancement of culturally specific services to victims from underserved African-American communities (OVW 2012)." What are the implications of the re-introduction of a cultural lens to understand social problems in the African American community? How does this move avoid addressing structural inequality?

In the next iteration of this project, I intend to pick up this set of questions in order to explore the tensions inherent in both articulating unique or specific dimensions of an issue (e.g. effects of policing in immigrant communities) and building connections that do not need to be predicated upon sameness or commonalities but upon shared investments and strategic alliances. These linkages have been forged, to some extent, in immigrant rights work (e.g. see *The War Abroad and the War at Home: Immigrant and Black Communities at Stake*, an article published by Maulik and Ahmad (2008) to connect concerns about policing across communities of color)

but, again, given the emphasis on cultural-specificity in anti-violence work, there have been different challenges in engaging these connections.

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