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April 20, 2015

**The Hidden Truth: The Role of Religion in Intimate Partner Violence in South Asian
Immigrant Communities**

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An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Rollins School of Public Health of Emory University
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ABSTRACT

The Hidden Truth: The Role of Religion in Intimate Partner Violence in South Asian Immigrant Communities

By: Anushka Rushna Aqil

Background: A hidden reality, intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant problem within the South Asian immigrant communities in the United States with approximately 40% of researched South Asian immigrant women reporting IPV in their current or most recent relationships. There is a dearth of literature understanding the role religion plays in the experiences of survivors of IPV in the South Asian immigrant communities. This study is first of its kind to fill that need and contribute to the understanding of religion's role in IPV.

Aims and Objectives: To document and analyze the role of religion in the experiences of survivors of IPV; to assess the knowledge of survivors and service providers on how religious texts are evoked in relation to IPV; to determine the role of religious leaders in IPV; and to discuss policy, program and research implications for the role of religion in IPV in South Asian immigrant communities.

Methods: Due to exploratory nature of the study, qualitative method was preferred. Six participants identified as service providers, five participants identified as survivors of IPV, and one woman identified as both a service provider and survivor of IPV. Data analysis was conducted with MAXQDA version 11.1.0 using a thematic analysis approach.

Results: The majority of survivors stated that religious leaders played a negative role in their experiences with IPV while service providers asserted that religious leaders could be either helpful or harmful to a survivor's experience. Neither groups could provide any textual references that condemned or condoned IPV. Lastly, both groups noted that gender norms, as influenced by religion or culture, had a more direct impact on survivors' experiences.

Conclusions: This study supports that religion can play either a protective or detrimental role in the experiences of South Asian immigrant survivors of IPV. Furthermore, gender norms are important factors that, influenced by either religion or culture, can affect a survivor's experience. These findings shed light on the importance of religious sensitivity training for service providers as well as the need for further research on the influence of religion on gender roles and their subsequent impact on IPV.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aasiya Zubair was murdered by her husband on February 12, 2009. On August 16, 2011, Nazish Noorani's murder was planned and executed by her husband and his girlfriend. Both women were South Asian immigrants and victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Project Sakinah 2009; Tumposky 2011). While the murders of Aasiya and Nazish are tragic, they highlight the significant problem of IPV within South Asian immigrant communities in the United States which is often hidden from the public eye.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 3 in 10 women and 1 in 10 men in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by a partner (CDC 2014). IPV is a significant public health problem in the United States with approximately 12 million individuals being affected annually, of which 22.4% of the women reported that their experience with IPV began between ages 11-17 years old (Spivak et al, 2012).

IPV often starts with psychological and emotional abuse, which then escalates to physical or sexual violence, although physical and sexual violence can also occur without the emotional abuse (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000; Saltzman et al., 2002; Ellsberg & Heise 2005). IPV can have immense consequences on a survivor's mental, physical, social, and economic status, which may further impact the family, the community, and society at large (Kanagaratnam et al., 2012). In 2013, the CDC reported that in the United States alone, IPV costs approximately \$5.8 billion annually, with \$4.1 billion associated directly with medical and mental health care costs and \$1.8 billion spent on the indirect costs due to loss of productivity (CDC 2013).

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that “the global lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence among ever-partnered women is 30.0%” with the highest concentration of IPV (37.7%) occurring in the South-East Asia region (World Health Organization 2013). In

South Asia region, 21% of ever-married women in India (Kishore & Johnson 2004) and 39% of ever-married women in Pakistan (Pakistan DHS 2012-2013) cited experiencing IPV while in Afghanistan the prevalence of IPV is 87.2% (Samar et al., 2014)

South Asia is made up of eight countries (Figure 1) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka with a total population of approximately 1.6 billion people (World Bank 2015). There are hundreds of ethnicities, languages, and religious belief systems. Therefore, it is almost impossible to characterize it as one culture or people; however, given that the Indian sub-continent was once a united country, and divided only during British colonization, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have common connections that transcend the geographic divides of the countries' borders (Rose 2013).

Figure 1. Map of the locations of the South Asian countries (World Bank 2015).



South Asians immigrants began immigrating to the United States in 1875 as laborers and migrant workers (Midlarsky et al., 2006). With the relaxation of immigration laws in 1965, the United States witnessed a large wave of South Asian immigrants moving to the United States for

educational and occupational opportunities mostly in the fields of engineering and medicine. While other immigrant groups were being marginalized for their differences, the South Asians were embraced for their professional success and joined the ranks among East Asians as being a form of a 'model minority.' As future generations migrated to the United States, the diversity of South Asian immigrants increased from professionals in these fields to the merchant classes, who, while not as educated, were more known to buy and run businesses in the United States (Panetta 2000). According to the 2010 Census, there are approximately 4 million South Asians living in the United States, of which Indians make up 80% of the community, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Bhutanese, and Malaysians (SAALT & AAF, 2012).

In gaining prominence as model minorities, leaders of the South Asian communities found themselves strongly engaging with and:

upholding an impeccable image of the community and thus, denying the existence of social problems such as sexual assault, mental illness, homelessness, intergenerational conflict, unemployment and delinquency. Absorbed in affirming group cohesion, all social problems were relegated to peripheral concern. Although the community turned a blind eye to many troubles, it denied abuse of women in particular, because it presumed that away from the structural oppressions of extended families and strict gender hierarchies prevalent in South Asian countries, women's independence and liberation were heightened in the United States. However, not all was well with the women's community (Dasgupta 2000).

While many South Asian immigrants assumed that immigration would serve as a protective factor against IPV, the dependent status of the women left them vulnerable and further

entrenched in the patriarchal system that South Asian immigrants sought to uphold in order to preserve their cultural identity in the United States (Midlarsky et al., 2006).

Given the prevalence of IPV in the South Asian region and the barriers for women seeking support, it is not a surprise that approximately 40% of South Asian immigrant women have reported that they have experienced IPV in their current or most recent relationship (Raj & Silverman 2003). Research has also found that survivors are not aware of the support services and resources available due to their recent immigration and language barriers. These issues further prevented them from seeking help (Dasgupta 1996; Patel & Graw 1996; Yoshioka 2003).

Most studies have attributed IPV within these communities to cultural traditions and practices. However, the role of religion in initiating, facilitating and continuing IPV in the South Asian immigrant community has not been well studied. In fact, the implications of religion have not been considered when developing policy, programs, and research recommendations for IPV survivors. Acknowledging this, I pose that religion is a large contributing factor to survivors' experience of IPV and it is important to understand the role of religion in IPV so as to support survivors during their experiences.

There are three main religions in South Asia – Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam – that are all known to have gendered concepts of women and men. Table 1 summarizes how these religions are practiced within the region, their main tenets, and their attitudes towards IPV.

Table 1. Overview of the main religions in South Asia.*

	<i>Christianity</i>	<i>Hinduism</i>	<i>Islam</i>
Major tenets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monotheistic - Salvation by accepting Jesus as the Son of God - Justification of faith - The Trinity - There is life after death¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polytheistic - Reincarnation - Karma or the sum of one's actions affect the fate of the next actions - Dharma or living life according to Hindu scriptures - Moksha or the journey for union with Brahman² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monotheistic - Praying - Giving charity - Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan - Pilgrimage or <i>hajj</i>³
Common practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attending worship services on Sundays - Reading the Bible - Baptism⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Puja - Attending temple - Namaste greeting⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Praying - Giving charity - Fasting during the month of Ramadan - Pilgrimage or <i>hajj</i>⁶
Religious texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Bible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bhagavad Gita - Ramayana & Mahabharata - Vedic Maths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holy book: Koran - Hadiths: sayings and teachings of the prophet
Attitudes towards intimate partner violence	“In the "Rules of Marriage" compiled by Friar Cherubino in the 15 th century (Bussert, 1986) we find the careful	Based upon the epic Ramayana, Sita was banished from her marriage by her husband based upon rumors of her infidelity. Even after she was proven	4:34 Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance]

¹The basics of Christian beliefs. (2009, October 14). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/basics_1.shtml

² The main tenets of Hinduism. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/hinduism101/a/tenets.htm>

³ What Muslims believe. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/etc/what.html>

⁴ Christian Rituals & Practices. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/practices.htm>

⁵ Hindu. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://www.religionfacts.com/hinduism/practices.htm>

⁶ Islamic belief, law, and practice. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/themes/beliefs.html>

	<p>instruction to a husband to first reprimand his wife; "And if this still doesn't work . . . take up a stick and beat her soundly . . . for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body" (p. 13).⁷</p>	<p>innocent, her husband did not accept her back to protect his reputation. Different versions of the tale end with Sita either taking her own life or living alone without any support. This is one of the many stories that highlights women's subjugation in Hinduism.⁸</p>	<p>from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.</p>
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* Note: The complexity of religious traditions cannot be examined in a summary table such as this. While this table lays out dominant beliefs, sources of authority, and teachings within each religion, there is great diversity within each of these traditions. For example, teachings on intimate partner violence within each tradition could vary drastically from (and directly contradict) the example cited. Nonetheless, the items in this table represent dominant characteristics of each tradition.

Little research has been done to explore how religion is evoked in the experiences of South Asian immigrant survivors of IPV from the perspectives of both survivors and service providers. The specific research questions are explored in this manuscript:

- a) What role is religion perceived to play in the experiences of survivors from both a survivor and service provider perspective?
- b) What role are religious leaders and communities perceived to play in the experiences of survivors from both a survivor and service provider perspective?

⁷ Fortune, M., & Enger, C. (2011, January 1). Violence against women and the role of religion. Retrieved April 16, 2015, from http://www.vawnet.org/applied-research-papers/print-document.php?doc_id=411

⁸ Wanser, M. (2010, November 1). Virtue and violence: The treatment of women in Valmiki's Ramayana. Retrieved April 16, 2015.

- c) To what extent do the survivors and service providers offer specific religious textual references to describe the role of religion in IPV?

This paper is organized in four sections. Section one provides an extensive review of the existing literature on IPV in a South Asian context and examines religion's influence on IPV directly or indirectly through reinforcing gender roles. Section two describes the site selection, methods and analysis. The results are explained in section three and are organized around the research questions. Additional results explaining the new themes that emerged are also explored. Lastly, section four provides the major findings of the study along with the limitations and recommendations for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines how South Asian immigrant survivors accessed/used/employed religion in navigating their experiences with IPV. In order to conduct this review I utilized Emory's DiscoverE search engine that provided access to over 500 peer-reviewed journal catalogues and numerous databases worldwide. The initial search was conducted with the following combinations of terms: "religion AND intimate partner violence AND South Asia," "religion AND domestic violence AND South Asia." These two sets of search terms did not provide any literature that assessed religion as the main factor for IPV; instead, the produced results focused on IPV in South Asia and mentioned the differing degrees of prevalence of IPV given a certain South Asian religion. The other factors highlighted in these articles were then used as a guide to continue further review.

As a result, the following combination of search terms were employed: "religion AND South Asia," "Hinduism AND intimate partner violence AND South Asia," "Islam AND intimate partner violence AND South Asia," "Christianity AND intimate partner violence AND South Asia," "gender roles AND religion AND South Asia," "gender roles AND culture AND South Asia," and "South Asia AND immigrant AND domestic violence." It should be mentioned that domestic violence was substituted for IPV as well to ensure the capture of all available literature. A total of 41 articles were identified from peer-reviewed journals. Due to the scarcity of literature, books were also reviewed alongside other grey literature sources; grey literature here was defined as reports, discussion papers from think tanks, advocacy organizations or service or research institutions' literature that has not formally published in peer review journals. The culmination of the review is organized as follows: distinction between intimate partner violence and domestic violence; gender roles as influenced by religion in South Asia; gender

roles as influenced by culture in South Asia; religion utilized as a coping mechanism for survivors of IPV; and IPV in South Asian immigrant communities.

a. Intimate partner violence vs. Domestic violence

It is important to note that this study seeks to examine intimate partner violence rather than domestic violence because of the breadth of the field of domestic violence (DV). Moreover, internationally, DV is often thought of as violence that takes place in the home between married couples; however, the definition of DV can also include violence between children and their parents, parents and their grandparents, grandparents and their grandchildren, etc. (Gill 2004). Intimate partner violence (IPV) offers a more succinct definition: “the use of sexually, psychologically, and physically coercive acts used against an intimate partner...IPV can be perpetrated by men as well as by women with no restriction to marital, heterosexual, or homosexual relationship” (Ali & Naylor 2013).

At the same time, internationally, DV is often assumed to be the same as IPV (World Health Organization 2012). For the purposes of this paper, DV is subsumed under IPV and the term IPV will be utilized and when literature discusses DV. It should also be noted that this paper will deal with violence against women because of the prevalence of violence against women (Archer 2000); however, this does not negate that violence against men or violence against men perpetrated by women does in fact exist.

b. Gender roles as influenced by religion in South Asia

As discussed, there are three main religions in South Asia – Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam—that will be explored here. While these religions are often viewed to be restrictive and grounded

in patriarchy, there are other perspectives and practices that support a more balanced relationship between the sexes. For example, while many may regard the Muslim veil or *hijab* as a tool through which to control women, many feminist scholars and Muslim women have claimed that the veil is in fact a personal choice to uphold the principals of Islam as well as to counter the rampant Islamophobia in the world today (Güven 2013). Hindu feminist scholars have also argued that inherently women are placed alongside men as one scholar writes:

At the conceptual level, Hinduism affirms the spiritual equality and inseparability of male and female. As Shakti, the divine feminine power is already latent in the masculine, and without the activating power of Shakti, the masculine (Shiva) is rendered powerless. Hinduism is replete with a variety of feminine images ranging from gentler to fiercer forms, from the conventional to the unconventional. The feminine is associated with wisdom and fine arts (the goddess Sarasvati) wealth and prosperity (the goddess Lakshmi) and power (the goddesses Kali and Durga), all of these aspects traditionally seen as male preserves. Men have no spiritual qualms in worshiping these goddesses, but whether their appropriation of the feminine at the devotional level makes them devoted husbands to their wives is a different story. What I would like to point out is that in the religious domain, the feminine is not exclusive to women nor the masculine exclusive to men. The feminine is very much intertwined with the lives of both men and women (Sugirtharajah 2002).

Yet, while these interpretations and expectations of gender exist through the women who choose to wear the veil and those who believe in the feminine power, the predominant cultural norms do not reflect these practices.

An example of how the Hindu religion marginalizes women is seen in its selective invocation calling of the Hindu Goddesses Sita and Lakshmi (Niaz 2003). Sita is the ideal wife who suffers for her husband and is alluded to have committed suicide to prove her loyalty to her husband; Lakshmi is seen as the bringer of luck and wealth to her family and is meant to personify the ideal daughter-in-law because of the service she provides to her marital family. This is exemplified during the Hindu wedding ceremony when both Goddesses are evoked to ensure that the bride places her marital duties above everything thereby ensuring her and her family's honor. To the husband, the marriage ceremony demands that he be a model citizen within the community. Yet, while the Hindu wife is required to agree to practical terms of marriage, the Hindu husband is only asked to try to achieve his vows. "The image of the ideal wife also entails the power of devotion and self-sacrifice" (Goel 2005) in addition to the "central theme of the norms and guidelines for proper female behavior [in Hinduism]...is that men much control women and their power" (Wadley 1977).

While Hinduism is rooted in traditional and cultural practices, Christianity and Islam receive most of their religious traditions from their holy texts and scriptures. In order to provide a broad view describing how the three religions construct and comprehend gender, I looked to their religious texts and scriptures to provide a summary of the gender expectations (Table 2). The gender expectations explored are largely negative but are also the more pervasive ones observed in these religious communities.

Table 2. Examples of how women and men are viewed in the texts and scriptures of the main South Asian religions.

	Women			Men		
	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity	Hinduism	Islam
Modesty	<p>Corinthians 11</p> <p>But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with [her] head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.</p> <p>For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.</p>	<p>No references in scriptures or texts exist to provide support to this claim</p>	<p>24:31 And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands</p>	<p>Corinthians 11</p> <p>For a man indeed ought not to cover [his] head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.</p>	<p>No references in scriptures or texts exist to provide support to this claim</p>	<p>No references in scriptures or texts exist to provide support to this claim</p>
Place in society	<p>Corinthians 11</p> <p>But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.</p>	<p>“Day and night, women must be kept dependent to the males of their families. If they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one’s</p>	<p>2:282 ...And call two witness from among your men, two witnesses. And if two men be not at hand, then a man and two women...</p>	<p>Corinthians 11</p> <p>For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.</p>	<p>The man has to go through four stages of life: the student phase, the married family man, the hermit phase where he submits himself to prayer, and</p>	<p>No references in scriptures or texts exist to provide support to this claim</p>

Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. control. Her father protects her in childhood. Her husband protects her in youth. Her sons protect her in old age. A woman is never fit for independence.”⁹ the recluse phase where he is a devotee of God; although, in modern day practice, only phases one and two are observed.¹⁰

Roles in marriage	Colossians 3	She is a true wife whose heart is devoted to her lord (husband). ¹¹	4:34 Therefore, the righteous women Are devoutly obedient	Peter 3	I take hold of your hand for good fortune, so that with me, your husband, you may attain to old age. The gods, Bhaga, Aryaman, Savitur, and Pushan gave you to me for leading the life of a householder. ¹²	4:34 Men are the maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them to excel others...
	Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.		As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, Admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly)	Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.		

⁹ The role of women in Hinduism. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://hinduismbeliefs.blogspot.com/2008/12/role-of-women-in-hinduism.html>

¹⁰ The four ages of man - The 4 stages of life in Hinduism. (n.d.). Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/p/fourstages.htm>

¹¹ Ganguli, S. (n.d.). She is a true wife who is.... Retrieved April 16, 2015, from <http://www.hinduism.co.za/women.htm#She is a true wife who is....>

¹² V, J. (n.d.). The Hindu marriage, past and present. Retrieved April 16, 2015, from http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_marriage.asp

c. Gender roles as influenced by culture in South Asia

Gender roles are clearly demarcated in the South Asian communities with the women managing the private domain and the men managing the public domains (Ibrahim et al., 1997). However, this would suggest that women and men have autonomy within the South Asian communities; this is often not true as the man is seen as the head of the household and ultimately, the one who controls both the public and private domains. This is characteristic of patriarchal societies. While patriarchy as a term denotes that power is held and passed down by and to men, modern feminist theories have postulated that patriarchy is a socio-political tool used to systematically sideline and discriminate against women. This notion is exemplified by women's limited representation in decision-making positions, key state institutions, and in employment and industry ("What is patriarchy?" no date). It should be noted, however, that this form of equality is based in Western feminist thought and one that does not always apply to the South Asian culture.

According to scholars, due to the patriarchy rooted in South Asian culture, gender has been constructed as the following – femininity is defined in terms of "submissiveness, inferiority, self-sacrifice, nurturing, good moral values, docile demeanor, social dependency, and chastity" while masculinity has been positioned in terms of a "man's power, virility, and ability to control women's morality and sexuality" (Abraham 1999). Furthermore, this adherence to gendered norms is a function of maintaining social order as well as ensuring legitimate inheritance (Ortner 1978).

d. Religion, spirituality, and IPV

While the intersections of religion and IPV have not been heavily examined within a Muslim and a South Asian context, there are many studies that assert that religion and spirituality play a

significant role in the experiences of survivors; that is by either acting to enhance survivor resilience or further complicate violent situations (Hassouneh-Phillips 2003; Jayasundara et al., 2014). Others have asserted that religion can only be used as a tool used to inflict abuse as noted by one scholar:

...abusers...misuse and distort scripture to justify their choice to harm another person because they have power over that person. It is very easy to misuse and distort sacred texts. All you have to do is to lift something out of context with no understanding or appreciation of its history and meaning and use it to justify your personal beliefs. When you combine that with a blatant disregard for the fundamental teaching of the faith tradition, you end up with a perverse, dangerous distortion, which can fuel hatred and violence in the direct contraction to the teaching of the faith (Fortune 2009).

Yet, most research has shown that religion and spirituality, when practiced by the survivor, is often cited as a source of strength and peace that supports survivors in moving on from their experiences as well as in the restructuring of their own belief systems and politics (Pargament 1990; Gillum et al., 2006; Yick 2008).

e. IPV in South Asian immigrant communities

Intimate partner violence is a significant problem within the South Asian immigrant communities in the United States. Asian American and Pacific Islander women in the United States are significantly under-represented in studies of partner abuse, which can be attributed to language barriers as well as the absence of women seeking support for the violence they experience (Gupta & Upadhyay 2002). While there is limited available data on IPV within the South Asian communities, a study of 160 South Asian women living in Boston, MA who were mostly

immigrants is commonly cited. Approximately 40% of the participants reported living in an abusive relationship, 50.3% reported being aware of services available for IPV, and only 11.3% reported ever accessing IPV services; the same research group conducted another study with a larger cohort (n=231) and found that the number of women reporting IPV did not differ (Raj et al., 2002; Raj et al., 2006). While quantitative studies are rare for this topic, a number of qualitative studies conducted with small groups of South Asian women have found that IPV is a common phenomenon within the South Asian immigrant community living in the United States (Dasgupta & Warrier 1996; Abraham 1999; Kallivayalil 2010; Chaudhuri 2014). Another study examining help-seeking behavior of survivors found that South Asian women were more likely to seek help from family members than their African or Hispanic American counterparts who mostly sought help from external organizations. In the same study, they also found that following disclosure, South Asian women were significantly more likely to be advised “to stay in the marriage” (Yoshioka et al., 2003).

i. Forms and methods of perpetrating IPV in South Asian immigrant communities

There are a number of ways in which IPV is perpetrated and documented within the Power and Control Wheel (Figure 2). However, the wheel is not generalizable to all communities because it does not account for the additional complexities observed within the South Asian immigrant communities. The additional forms of violence that South Asian immigrants endure include but are not limited to: heightened social isolation due to immigration and distance away from one’s natal family (Abraham 2000); the “Green Card Factor” in which women are dependent on their spouses for documentation (Gupta & Upadhyay 2002); the “Saving Face” phenomenon in which women are expected to uphold their moral values and protect the family, even at the risk of

themselves (Gupta & Upadhyay 2002); and, cultural chauvinism in which mainstream South Asian community states that their cultural values, especially in terms of gender relations, are the norm and must be upheld at any cost (Abraham 2000).

Figure 2. The Power and Control Wheel (National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence).



III. METHODS

This study examined the role religion plays in South Asian survivors' experience with intimate partner violence through perspectives of both survivors and service providers. A qualitative, conventional content analysis was used to showcase the inductive discovery and the unique and nuanced aspects of this topic. We hoped to identify salient themes that would eventually aid in addressing religion as an influence of IPV while also improving service for survivors through building a religiously competent service provider network.

a. Site Selection

Raksha, Inc. is a nonprofit organization for the South Asian communities that addresses the following: family and sexual violence; divorce; issues concerning children, senior citizens, and new immigrants; and providing support to survivors of IPV. Since Raksha, Inc. serves IPV survivors from various religions, it was natural choice for studying the role of religion in South Asian survivors of IPV. Raksha, Inc. was informed of the purpose of the study and the methods used to conduct the study. In support, Raksha, Inc., provided a Letter of Agreement to aid with and participate in the study and was also shared with Emory's Institutional Review Board.

b. IRB Approval

Emory's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was provided with the Letter of Agreement from Raksha, Inc. and a research protocol, which included the consent forms and interview guides for both survivors and service providers. IRB approved the study on January 2, 2015.

c. Recruitment and sample

In order to garner and encourage participation in the study, upper management at Raksha, Inc. was provided with an email flyer that detailed the study, its objectives, and the methods through which to participate, along with my phone number and email address for circulation among employees and clients. Interested survivors and service providers contacted me directly at which point I provided them with a brief summary of the study and its methods. If the individuals were interested in participating, we scheduled a time to speak or meet in person. For in-person interviews, participants received a copy of the consent form while they verbally consented to participate as well as be recorded. Phone interviewees consented verbally and a copy of the consent form was offered to them via email upon request. All phone numbers and email addresses were deleted at the end of the interview.

All service provider participants were identified and recommended to participate in the study by upper management at Raksha, Inc. In addition, survivors were identified and encouraged to participate by service providers. Of the 12 participants in this study, six identified as service providers, five identified as survivors of intimate partner violence, and one woman identified as both a service provider and survivor of IPV. The six service providers were either interns or employees at Raksha Inc., and their roles varied. One participant was part of the upper management while another was a social work intern; two service providers were therapists, one was a case manager, and another was an advocacy services coordinator. The service provider, who is also a survivor of IPV, provided language translation support and also participated in a survivors support group. Survivors of IPV all came to Raksha Inc. learned of Raksha Inc. through various communication channels such as friends or the internet. All survivors were first-generation South Asian immigrants to the United States; three survivors identified as

practitioners of Hinduism, one identified as a Muslim while another survivor mentioned converting from Hinduism to Christianity; the survivor who was also a service provider identified as an atheist but had been a practicing Muslim up until the end of her marriage. All survivors identified their abusive partners as their former husbands.

These semi-structured in-depth interviews ranged from three minutes to over an hour. All interviews were recorded with consent of the participant (Appendices A and B) and deleted once the interviews had been transcribed. Two interview guides were created to effectively capture both the service providers as well as the survivors' perspectives; however, follow up questions varied depending on the answers given by the participants (Appendices C and D). The interview guides were reviewed for content appropriateness by upper management at Raksha, Inc.

Eleven of the twelve interviews were transcribed verbatim; one interview was transcribed based on themes as it was conducted solely in Urdu. For the other interviews in which participants utilized Urdu or Hindi phrases, the English equivalent was provided.

d. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in MAXQDA version 11.1.0 using a thematic analysis approach to identify how religion was evoked in South Asian survivor's experience of IPV from survivors and service providers' perspectives. Survivors and service providers' data was analyzed separately. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to inductively generate codes and were compiled in a code book with categories and sub-categories that captured the various descriptions and understandings of religion's role in IPV in South Asia. Specifically, the first set of codes was created based on answers provided to the interview questions. Additional codes were generated based upon other topics that were discussed. Using the similarities and unique

findings of the codes, themes and sub-themes were designed to provide a cohesive view of how religion factors into experiences of survivors while also highlighting other influences as shared by survivors and service providers. A summary of the codebook and the resulting themes are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the codes and resulting themes as generated by separate reviews of survivor and service provider interview transcripts.		
	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Based upon interview guide	Religion and IPV	Perceptions of religious leaders’ influence on South Asian IPV survivors’ experiences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious leaders - Religious texts and scriptures 	Perceptions of religious texts and scriptures’ influence on South Asian IPV survivors’ experiences
	Religion	Practices of religion as a support system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious rituals - Role of religion in life 	
	Support systems	Practices of religion as a support system
	Knowledge of Raksha, Inc.*	
Additional topics	Culture	Perceptions of gender roles’ influence on South Asian IPV survivors’ experiences
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceptions of religion, religious texts, leaders, and communities’ influence on gender roles - Perceptions of culture’s influence on gender roles as supported by perpetrators[¥] - Perceptions of culture’s influence on gender roles as supported by family and friends[¥]
	Loss of faith*	
	Spirituality*	
	Coping methods*	
	Methods of violence*	
*There was not sufficient support to build themes of off these codes		
[¥] Only available from a survivor perspective		

IV. RESULTS

The results presented are organized according to survivors and service providers' perspectives and are categorized in the following main themes: 1) perceptions of religious leaders' influence on South Asian IPV survivors' experiences; 2) perceptions of religious texts and scriptures' influence on South Asian IPV survivors' experiences; 3) perceptions of religion as barriers to leaving abusive relationships; 4) practices of religion as a support system; and 5) perceptions of gender roles' influence on South Asian IPV survivors' experiences.

a. Survivors' perspectives

For the purposes of this study, survivors were asked to think about religion, religious leaders, practices, texts and scriptures when sharing their experiences of IPV. Their responses discussed the ways in which religious leaders, texts, and scriptures facilitated IPV as well as provided support against IPV. Additionally, gender roles, as created and upheld by religion and culture, as a contributing factor to IPV will also be examined.

i. Perceptions of religious leaders' influencing survivors' experiences

When survivors were questioned about how religious leaders could influence a survivor's experience with IPV, only one survivor stated that religious leaders had no bearing on their experience with IPV, while the remaining five asserted that religious leaders, either directly or indirectly, affected their experience with IPV. Specifically, one survivor summarized a feeling held by the majority of the survivors that "... religious leaders have a lot of power. Because they project themselves as being the pathway to God or getting a stairway to heaven."

Another survivor sharing her thoughts on religious leaders stated: “Their only role is to feed themselves; they don’t care about anything else.” This claim was further substantiated by the experience of another survivor who sought help from her religious leader, the Imam, saying:

So this guy [the Imam], I talked to him, and you know, he said that okay he will try to bring my husband and we can set up a meeting. I was desperate. I needed help so bad at that time. So I talked. And then, on one fine day, he said no, your husband is not willing to talk. So I said, what should I do, and he said, go file for divorce. He said, he told me, that he doesn’t suggest it to anyone but in your case he’s just not willing to do anything. And the thing is, to make the long story short, I was this person who went to this imam to ask for help...And he said I’ll help you but he didn’t help. He didn’t help. To make the long story short, again, he, I don’t know what happened, but he is, like you know, my ex-husband is his right hand man right now. To such an extent that they even started a new mosque somewhere [name omitted for confidentiality reasons] together. So this imam knows that this guy has a lot of money and he wants to impress everyone. He wants to make a place for himself in the community.

The above experience supports the common belief among survivors that religious leaders possess a lot of power and also highlights the self-serving attitudes of these leaders.

In addition to the direct influence religious leaders have on IPV, survivors detailed some indirect ways in which religious leaders effected the community and thereby the survivors’ experiences with violence. For example, in some interviews the survivors suggested that religious leaders were evoked as individuals to emulate and follow. Specifically, one survivor shared that she and her Sikh husband continuously fought on how to raise her son and recalled that, “...he felt that, you know, the son had to be strong, he had to be courageous and he had to

be fighting somebody, you know, like the religious leader.” As such, this survivor experienced indirect effects of religious leaders as her husband sought to impose ideals on their son, which mimicked those as portrayed by the religious leaders, regardless of their violent nature.

Main findings:

- Religious leaders are viewed as pathways to God
- Religious leaders are viewed as being self-serving
- Religious leaders can be viewed as role models
- Negative findings: Survivors did not perceive religious leaders to play a positive role in their experiences with IPV

ii. Knowledge of religious texts and scriptures as related to IPV

Survivors were asked to recall religious texts or scriptures that were used during their experience with IPV; however, none of the survivors provided any direct textual references that supported or condemned IPV. This was especially true for Hindu and Christian participants. Furthermore, one survivor asserted that she did not believe in religious texts because they are written and interpreted by men acknowledging the Islamic Holy Scriptures:

I don't believe in Hadiths¹³. How can you say that this is what the Prophet said? Hadiths are completely man made and so there is no proof of their authenticity... How can you tell that these are the true words? If man is being given an upper hand, how is it possible that this is written by God who is meant to be equal and all-loving? I also believe that through translations, a lot is lost. So I do not believe in the word of the Koran [Islam's holy text] either.

¹³ Hadiths are sayings of the Islamic Prophet quoted by his friends but their authenticity has been questioned by many religious leaders and scholars

According to this survivor, men write religious texts therefore, they are inherently flawed.

In contrast, another survivor did allude to how she experienced religious texts being used to inflict violence upon her as she shared an example:

Well, you know. In Islam, after you get married, you know, it's, I cannot quote, exact lines I cannot say but it's something like this – the husband and wife are each other's garments¹⁴...It also says that the wife should listen to whatever the husband says.

She went on to further explain that while the religious text expected her to listen to her husband, the text did not put forth expectations for her husband and thereby, allowed him the freedom to utilize the scriptures to inflict significant emotional and mental abuse as she continued:

But the wife has to listen to the husband in what way? If the husband says, no, don't talk to your parents, don't call your brother, don't do this, don't do that. I think that is wrong. Misinterpreting religion, ya okay, you have to listen to your husband, Islam says that but the husband has to think to what to talk to the wife. And he telling the wife, don't call your brother. I think that's wrong and that's using the religion for wrong.

This survivor's experience is unique in that while the religious text does not directly sanction violence, the words are misconstrued to inflict violence.

Another Hindu survivor also shared her viewpoints on the misuse of religious texts as she shared:

They [religious texts] don't ever talk about men being violent to the women. There have been places, I think, I'm not, like I said, I'm not very ritualistic, so, what bit I have read, if a woman does something wrong, any of the sins, then she has to be treated a certain way or she has to undergo some sort of penance and that is given by the men.....So,

¹⁴ “They are your garments and ye are their garments.” [Noble Koran, 2:187]

why should, why should a man have to judge, execute what a woman needs to be, you know, undergoing for something she's committed. That is one thing I have always wondered. But there's nothing I can, it's always been a male dominated society, everywhere.

Here, the survivor highlights that regardless of whether religious texts discuss violence against women, if a woman makes a mistake, she is punished at the hands of a man, which may be a form of violence in and of itself.

Main findings:

- Survivors did not provide any direct religious textual references
- Christian and Hindu survivors spoke of religious teachings in general terms
- Religious texts are man-made and therefore, not reliable
- Religious texts can be interpreted to inflict violence

iii. Perceptions of religion as a support system

Of the six survivors of IPV interviewed, only two survivors cited religion as a support mechanism during their experience with violence. One survivor mentioned that while she was experiencing violence, she used religion not just to instill peace in herself but also to give faith to her son as she recalled:

At night, before sleeping, I would want my son to say some prayers with me which I learned in my childhood. So some Shukar or Gayitri Mandir, very few ones. But just to instill some kind of faith in him because my son was also going through this. He was living the same life I was. Seeing the environment in the house. He was also not going out, making friends, he also became very withdrawn. I knew I had to instill some kind

of faith in him. So I did that, I started prayers with him at night because he used to get nightmares. So this I did. And also, not just my religion but I also taught him a couple of, you know, some small prayers from my husband's religion.

Above, the survivor described that she utilized religion for herself as well as a support system for her son. She went on to mention that while this practice has ceased since she ended her marriage, she still continues to converse with particular Hindu Gods for peace and guidance during difficult times.

Another survivor shared the importance of religion during her experience with violence stating, "It gave me a method to find peace. Religion gave me a path to peace. Many of these scriptures and even though rituals they did play a part in giving me some sort of peace when I was going through my struggles." She further mentioned:

It's just that the religion is somewhat restricted and you can't, they have specific rules that you need to follow and you don't follow then there is a lot of conflict within yourself. As I grew up, my struggles made me take a look at the religion and the broader aspect of what they are teaching in the religion. So for me, the Bhagvad Gita itself, it teaches you how you should be in day to day life. It can also be just means to an end. The end is you attain peace. So it's not what you do as much as what you become.

For this survivor, religion, as she came to know of it, became a significant support mechanism during her experience with violence.

Main findings:

- Survivors use religion to instill peace within themselves
- Negative findings: Survivors did not find religious communities to be support systems

iv. Perceptions of religion and culture mediating IPV through gender roles

While gender roles were not a focus for this study, all the survivors interviewed shared that religion and culture reinforced gender roles, which affected their experience with violence in their relationships. These findings are presented in the subsections on how religion and culture produces and sustains gender roles and consequently influencing IPV indirectly.

1. Perceptions of religion perpetuating IPV through gender roles

All survivors mentioned that religion influenced the ways in which they were supposed to behave as women and subsequently, had an impact on how they experienced violence in their relationships. Specifically, one survivor recounted:

The religion [Hinduism] itself is beautiful. Women have a very high place in the religion as you know, mothers, everything feminine, female, is revered. But, as it has, you know, trickled down to humans, the interpretation has changed and I think men have realized that women have way too much power, so they wanna, they've always wanted to control it.

This survivor highlights that even though the original intent of religion may be to revere women and femininity, when controlled by men, religion becomes a tool to control women, enforce gender norms, and inflict violence.

One of the Hindu survivors of IPV discussed the expectations placed upon her role as a woman and wife:

A woman has to, let's say, listen to her husband, her father, and it always needs to be, a male has to be there to direct her. Protect her. The limits set for her are by men. So she never had a say...So, religion has a lot to do with it. When people, when you go, they

[religious leaders] say you're a woman, you're not supposed to do that. They quote so many other holy scriptures. And not really, you're just interpreting it the way you want to.

The above quote exemplifies how religion, along with religious leaders and texts, are used to enforce one form of womanhood.

Another Hindu participant provided further support of how gender roles were created as she recalled the mention of two Goddesses and how they portrayed womanhood and femininity:

In the Mahabharata, on the other hand, we have Draupadi who is the most stronger personality. She refuses to be bowed down and she is dragged... And then she says, I can't remember because I am not a great scripture person, is that is a woman the slipper of a man?¹⁵ How can she be a possession of a man? And again, no one has an answer to that. She is to me a much, much more stronger woman than Sita who is more of the quiet type and is focused on taking care of the household.

The survivor's knowledge provides two forms of femininity: one that is strong and the other that is docile. However, it is important to note that the survivor mentioned that the men shunned the stronger feminine presence.

Alongside the gender roles imposed upon the women, one survivor also raised the expectations of how men should behave and how masculinity was constructed. She shared the difficulties she had in raising her son as her expectations varied significantly from her husband's. Specifically, she stated, "So there was this incident specific thing I felt was coming out of the religion because he felt that, you know, the son had to be strong, he had to be courageous and he had to be fighting somebody, you know, like the religious leader." This example sheds some light into how masculinity is imagined within South Asian cultures.

¹⁵ No textual reference in Hindu scriptures was found for this claim.

Survivors also explained that religion's influence on gender roles was also used to inflict violence during their experience with IPV. One survivor recalled:

But the problem in Islam is that the father has right over the children...when I told my parents about my in-laws and how badly they treated me, my parents said just quietly take it because can you live without your children because end of the day, your husband can take away your children. So that was my weak point. I had a support system but I had no right over my children. That's the problem in our community that our children are taken advantage of in that they are used against the mother so the mother has to stay and that's the problem with Islam. Men have the upper hand on everything.

This survivor's experience is an example of how the interpretation of the religion was biased towards the husband and used as a tool to force the participant to remain in her abusive relationship.

Another Muslim survivor shared a similar instance of how religion was used to inflict violence upon her by citing religious texts:

Well, you know. In Islam, after you get married, you know, it's, I cannot quote, exact lines I cannot say but it's something like this – the husband and wife are each other's garments¹⁶. And how they should protect each other no matter what, and protect each other always.

She further explained that in addition to protecting each other, the religious scripture also required her to *do* for her husband as she continued, "It also says that the wife should listen to whatever the husband says." However, she found that her husband utilized such religious textual references to inflict violence as she shared:

¹⁶ Noble Koran, 2:187

But the wife has to listen to the husband in what way? If the husband says, no, don't talk to your parents, don't call your brother, don't do this, don't do that. I think that is wrong. Misinterpreting religion, ya okay, you have to listen to your husband, Islam says that but the husband has to think to what to talk to the wife. And he telling the wife, don't call your brother. I think that's wrong and that's using the religion for wrong.

Thus, this survivor's experience sheds light on both how religion was used to impose gendered expectations on her as well as inflict violence against her. These findings suggest that religion does not only affect IPV directly but also augments IPV through reinforcing gender roles

Main findings:

- Religious texts and leaders support that a woman is inferior to men, regardless of the original intent of the religion
- Hindu religious scriptures support that docile woman is more appreciated than a strong woman
- Religious texts and leaders influenced perceptions of masculinity
- Religion can favor men and therefore, force women into staying in their violent relationships

2. Perceptions of culture perpetuating IPV through gender roles

Survivors attributed much of the expectations of their gender roles to the South Asian culture and specifically, to their perpetrators of violence. The findings strongly show that cultural values around gender roles legitimize IPV, which is further reinforced by perpetrators of violence as well as family and friends.

a. Survivors' internalization of gender roles and its impact on IPV

One survivor summarized how women are expected to be in South Asian culture as she stated:

But then, typically, according to the Indian culture, we are brought up, girls are brought up, we have to listen to the husband, his family, and you know just compromise and compromise. And that's what I did, just to take care of the family and, you know, keep everything, everyone together.

Another survivor stated, "I was basically programmed to just be subservient and always be less than. That kind of, I had an abusive father too." According to these survivors, a woman is meant to be subservient to her husband and his family. Meanwhile, her needs and the needs of her family are expected to fall behind her husband's. Such a concept was further highlighted by another survivor who shared her experience by discussing how femininity is built in opposition to masculinity. Interestingly, she shared that whilst undergoing chemotherapy treatment, she could not partake in her household duties of cooking, cleaning, and caring for her husband and children. Though her parents came into town to support her, her husband still expected her to fulfill her duties as a wife. She recalled a specific fight in which her father intervened:

And my dad tried to come in between because he [husband] was yelling and coming in my face and saying that I'm going to break your legs and your hands and your face today. And he turned around to my dad and said, I'm not a dog like you who runs back and forth and around your wife like you do. I am a man.

This survivor's story shows how gendered norms manifested in her relationship and escalated the violence she experienced.

Main findings:

- Culturally, South Asian women are meant to serve their husbands
- Culturally, masculinity is characterized by strength and power

b. Family and friends' internalization of gender roles and its impact on IPV

It is also important to note that gender roles within culture were not just upheld by those perpetrating violence but also by family and friends of survivors of IPV. Survivors alluded that culturally expected gender roles had further implications than just the violence they experienced within the partnership. Specifically, survivors noted that this affected them greatly when they sought refuge in their families' after experiencing violence but were often turned away and sent back to their husband's home because culturally, the wife belonged to her husband. One survivor explained that even if she did have a support system, it would not make a difference because:

...family is not going to support you in that way. Always, family backs the home. They say it doesn't matter the way it reached you, you have to maintain the relationship, it doesn't matter. Whatever you have been through doesn't matter, you have to maintain the relationship.

Another survivor substantiated the lack of family support and discussed her own experience when initially sought support from her parents while she was undergoing abuse, they declined to help her as she explained:

I would cry to my mom on the phone, mommy come, I can't live like this. I'm going to die. I feel like my spirit is dying, it's being killed. Can you just come and stay with me for some time? And she would say, child, you know this is your life, you know, you

need to deal with it, you're grown up, how can I come there? My life is here, your life is there. And, this is the way it feels, she is very traditional.

This quote illustrates how gender roles as viewed through a cultural lens greatly impact a survivor's experience with violence as well as their ability to seek and receive support from their families. This was also replicated within friend-circles of survivors. One survivor distinguishing between her Indian and her American friends remarked that her American friends would always sympathize with her experience but her Indian friends would not. Elaborating she recounted:

But a couple of Indians that I've shared it with, women, my age, the first thing they say, oh my God, you should've come to me one year back [Name omitted for confidentiality purposes]. I would've actually helped you deal with this. You need to be more manipulative with your husband.

The same survivor also shared that due to cultural norms and expectations of gender roles, her Indian friends could not support her. In fact, she believes that her friends were barrier to her escape from abusive relationship since they reinforced the gender norms. She remarked:

And I think that's one of the biggest problems I have faced in trying to share it with Indians over here. A lot of Indian friends are like, oh ya, it will be fine, it's not a big deal. It just happens. You just need to be strong. You just need to be strong. You just need to be, that's how men are. Just listen to him.

Thus, culturally imposed gender roles had a large impact on a survivor's experience with violence, their ability to seek and build support networks, as well as the ways in which husbands interacted with the families of their wives.

Main finding:

- Culturally, seeking support is difficult as women are expected to listen to their husbands and live in their abusive relationships

b. Service providers' perspectives

The service providers interviewed for this study were all individuals who worked at Raksha, Inc., and therefore offered perspectives that were specific to the South Asian survivors. Service providers were asked to think about the ways in which they observed their clients consider religion within their violent relationships and how religious leaders, communities, and texts were evoked in survivor's experiences. As such, service providers discussed how religious leaders, texts and scriptures, and communities could be both barriers for survivors as well as strong support systems. Additionally, as observed with survivors, gender roles also came up as a salient theme for service providers as a contributor to how violence was experienced by survivors and will be explored as well.

i. Reflections on religious leaders' influence on survivors' experiences

Service providers placed significant importance on religious leaders and communities as being instrumental in the experiences of South Asian survivors. Of the six service providers interviewed and one service provider who is also a survivor, three service providers put great emphasis on the importance of religious leaders as one service provider stated:

I think they [religious leaders] have almost everything to do because you know, most people feel comfortable to go talk to their religious leader, especially if it is one person, you know, who is providing counseling or even just like support services. So it can be

either very detrimental or very helpful, you know. For example, if you go and they say no, no, no, you should stay together, that's where you're meant to be, you can work it out, that can be very detrimental for the survivor.

The above quote highlights how influential religious leaders can be to the experience of a survivor. Furthermore, service providers found that religious leaders had the potential to be very harmful to a survivor's ability to heal or leave their situation as another service provider shared:

I think it [religious community] has made it harder coming out of it [abusive relationship]. Sometimes it's the reason that deters them from taking the step to leave. A lot of it has to do with other family members and religious leaders who impose certain religious beliefs upon them that make them feel that if they are going to take a step out of that abusive situation, it's going to be viewed as wrong and bad and make them feel guilty.

In addition to highlighting how religious leaders can harm survivors, this service provider also puts forth the negative impact the religious community can have on survivors as they can vilify the survivor for trying to leave. Another service provider shared an instance of their client's:

So, for example, there, you know, we had one client who was very religious and her husband was also religious, like he would go to various religious conferences and he was very well respected in the community. But in the home, there was a lot of domestic violence. And then, when she left, she was still fearful, because you know, he would try to have contact with other congregation members or other members of that faith, you know, of that faith to talk to her.

Here, the religious community was significantly detrimental to the safety of the survivor than a protection of her from her abusive situation.

At the same time, while some service providers put forth examples of when religious leaders and their communities were harmful to the survivor, they equally provided instances of when religious leaders and their communities supported the survivor. One service provider shared an experience of her client as she stated:

To where we've had religious leaders in that same community helping a survivor, you know, by finding a place for her to stay and being supportive. And maybe even helping her get remarried, you know if that's something important for her survival, they may arrange another marriage.

The service provider continued to provide an additional example of where the religious community rallied together to aid a survivor as she recalled:

I can think of the Jain community, they all mobilized, they helped her get an attorney, did everything for her, helped her with so many aspects right. And she decided to go back. And of course, you know. But they were still there for her, consistently. They helped with the legal stuff, helped raise the money. They tried to like mediate at first and then realized it was a bad idea and then they ended up providing her with a lot of support system, emotional support system.

Here, the religious community was an important positive influence in the experience of a survivor.

Main findings:

- Religious leaders and communities are very influential and can be supportive or detrimental to a survivor's experience
- Negative findings: Service providers did not state that religious leaders and communities have only negative influences on the experiences of survivors

ii. Reflections on religious texts and scriptures as related to IPV

Similar to survivors, the majority of service providers were not able to give direct textual references to how religious texts and scriptures were utilized to further IPV. However, of the service providers that did have knowledge of religious texts and scriptures as well as how they were evoked in the experiences of their clients, the main theme that came forth was how religious texts and scriptures were misconstrued to inflict violence. Specifically, one service provider summarized her experience working with clients and consolidating that with her own knowledge of the South Asian religions:

I see a lot of just has to do with how often those certain scriptures and texts get misconstrued because how other people impose their own interpretations onto to it when in actuality, from everything I know and my knowledge of religion, religion condemns violence, any violence.

While the service provider stated that her knowledge of religion does not support any form of violence, another service provider stated:

But, I know, like Islam and Christianity both have texts, at least by the actual word, justify violence against women. But I think in modern day practice, modern day practitioners, I don't know if they necessarily prescribe to that. I know what the text says but not how that translates in culture.

The examples above support how service providers have witnessed survivors experience violence due to the interpretations of religious texts and scriptures.

Main findings:

- Survivors did not provide any direct religious textual references
- Religious texts and scriptures can be construed to further a specific agenda

iii. Reflections on religion as a support system

Of the six service providers interviewed, all brought up that religion could be a source of strength for survivors; the service provider who was also a survivor, however, did not see religion as a support system. One service provider summarized the sentiments of all the service providers interviewed as she said “Lots of clients we work with see religion as a source of strength.” This theme continued to be supported as another service provider shared:

It [religion] can be strength from the beginning of that [violent relationship] and has helped them get through it, by having that faith. But I think, what I’ve noticed, it’s often times when, if religion isn’t the most important factor in them leaving, it’s usually still strength.

This dichotomy – if religion was not a barrier then it was a strength – was elaborated upon by another service provider as she said:

Yes, so things when they are pulling on to kind of get them through. Or something that they find out be empowering as they come through or travel that path of healing, of emotionally healing or I guess, just finding a place of peace or a place of understanding of what they’re going through. It’s just a processing thing pretty much.

As such, when religion was important and evoked as a strength, it became a tool through which to heal and process the violent experience. Another service provider also commented:

Yes, religion has come up with a few of my clients. It usually comes up when talking about strengths. Things that pretty much get them through the process of healing. And that's when it comes up...But, nevertheless, it is something that seems to be important, an important aspect of their lives and they talk about it when coming through or processing their issues. It's something that's very important and seems to be I guess, holds, a powerful part of their healing.

While the above mentioned examples brought forth religion as a form through which to heal, other service providers shared how religion was used as a method of support. One service provider recalled one of her client's experiences as she shared, "So it can be something that like, I remember one woman who would always pray and that's what always got her through the abuse. And that was her way to seek strength and support." Another service provider followed additional support for religion as a supportive mechanism for her clients as she discussed:

So, I've had similar experiences with a couple of clients. One said she prayed for like an hour straight every day while she was living with her abuser to keep her at peace and help her feel better and avoid kind of suicidal thoughts. And another client said she was also suicidal and she gotten out of an abusive relationship too and she said going to temple and that kind of practice was a really peaceful place for her and that helped her avoid a lot of suicidal thoughts.

Through their experiences with clients, the service providers were able to observe the significance of religion in their clients' lives and how that could support them through the violence as well as after the violence. One service provider summarized these themes by explaining one way in which her client utilized religion:

And I've had some clients who have found religion or their belief to give them understanding of why they're in the situation that they're in. To give them a guide I guess of why they're going through this. So they have an understanding of a higher power...But it kind of gives them a guide, a codebook, I'm understanding why or I have an idea of why I'm going through what I go through because you know, it's a part of my life or it's my purpose.

Thus, through the perspectives of service providers, religion was able to offer significant support and solace to the survivors.

Main findings:

- Religion can be a strength during and after the experience of violence
- Religion can provide reasoning for why violence occurs

iv. Reflections on religion's influence on gender roles

Of the service providers interviewed, three mentioned how religion affected the gender roles of their clients, specifically, the gender roles as associated with womanhood. One service provider shared her Christian client's experience with how religion reinforced gender roles while subsequently perpetrating violence as she explained:

For instance, I've had a client, whose husband is actually a preacher and other people in the community encouraged her not to leave because it would ruin his reputation in the community. They went to go get counseling within the church and again, she was given verses on how to be a good wife and what that constituted... So the religious leaders never addressed the violence and how it played in religion but the kind of messages she

was getting was this is what you're supposed to be doing because this is how religion defines your role as a mother or a wife.

In this example, it was not just the religion but the religious leader and community that were upholding gender roles and forcing the survivor to remain in her violent relationship. While religion was not utilized to inflict violence in this other client's story as shared by another service provider, it nonetheless impacted how the survivor viewed herself:

To where she felt like her role was a daughter, a mother, - a daughter, a wife, and a mother and when her role as a wife was going to end because she was getting a divorce...And of course, some of, and it may not necessarily be the religion but the culture of how the religion has been taught and in that community that she felt like she had to do this.

This sentiment that religion affected how a woman saw herself was further substantiated by another service provider as she mentioned:

All the women have said that their husband is God. Doesn't matter what religion – be it Hindu or Muslim or Christian – the woman is taught that she needs to fulfill her husband's every wish and desire and this is what the religion teaches so the husband expects it and the woman is supposed to deliver.

Thus, service providers saw religion play an important role in how survivors perceived and enacted gender roles.

Main findings:

- Religious community's perceptions of religion effect on gender roles are enforced and upheld
- Religion favors women's roles as subservient caregivers

- Negative findings: Service providers did not offer any concepts of gender roles influenced by culture. They also did not discuss sensitivity training on religious issues for supporting IPV victims or survivors

c. Comparing survivors and services providers perspectives

A number of similarities and differences were noted in the perspectives of survivors and service providers when speaking of religion’s role in IPV. These findings are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Similarities and differences among the main findings between survivor and service provider perspectives of religion’s role in a survivor’s experience with IPV			
<i>Main findings</i>	<i>Both groups</i>	<i>Survivors</i>	<i>Service providers</i>
Religious leaders can negatively impact a survivor’s experience	X		
Religious leaders can positively impact a survivor’s experience			X
Religious communities can positively impact a survivor’s experience			X
Religious communities can negatively impact a survivor’s experience	X		
There are no direct religious textual references for condoning or condemning IPV	X		
Religious texts can be misconstrued to support IPV	X		
Religion can act as a support mechanism for survivors	X		
Religion influences gender roles	X		
Culture influences gender roles		X	
Religious communities uphold gender roles			X

V. DISCUSSION

This study is unique because it sought to examine how religion was evoked in the experiences of South Asian immigrant survivors of IPV which is unlike existing literature that focuses on culture as the predominant factor influencing IPV in South Asian immigrant communities. The most significant finding, as expected of this study, was that religion plays a crucial role on the experiences of survivors as substantiated by both survivors and service providers. However, this study also found that religion did not play a unidirectional role but instead, could have either a positive or negative impact on a survivor's experience dependent on who is practicing and preaching the religion. Religious text, religious leaders, and religious communities were all also found to affect how South Asian immigrant survivors negotiate through their abusive relationships.

Another interesting finding was the different ways in which survivors and service providers in this study viewed religious leaders. While service providers shared experiences with religious leaders as being helpful as well as harmful to survivors, all the survivors who had experiences with religious leaders cited them as selfish, self-serving and siding with the perpetrators. While prior research does not support the direct claims of the survivors, studies have shown that due to being unequipped to deal with IPV or wanting to avoid dishonor to their communities, religious leaders will ignore or choose not to support survivors and as a result, become an additional detriment to their healing (Whipple 1987; Geisbrecht & Sevick 2000; Nason-Clark & Neitz 2001).

Furthermore, contrary to study expectations, participants were not able to offer any direct textual references that either positively or negatively referenced IPV. It is not clear whether this was due to limited knowledge of the religious texts or if the knowledge of texts was conveyed

through community values which the survivors may have accepted as fact. While one survivor and two service providers alluded to how religious texts did mention the role of women or sanction IPV, none of the participants could provide exact examples nor suggest where to find the references. This was exceptionally surprising given that many scholars and religious leaders have cited that wife-beating is permitted by the Koran (Ammar 2007), yet none of the Muslim survivors substantiated this actuality.

As expected of this study, both survivors and service providers cited religion as a support system. It was interesting to notice that only two survivors commented that they utilized religion as a source of strength while all service providers mentioned that their clients had used religion as a source of support in many instances. This distinction in viewpoints can be attributed to service providers' knowledge of a number of clients versus the small pool of survivors interviewed for this study.

It is also important to note that of the six survivors interviewed, only two utilized religion as coping mechanism and support system during their experience. This finding is also substantiated by previous research that has shown survivors to use personal practices of religion as a method for coping, healing, and rejuvenating from their experiences with IPV (Pargament 1990; Yick 2008; Jayasundara et al., 2014).

Of the four survivors who did not use religion as a support mechanism, one survivor stated that they are more spiritual but do not belong to an organized religion, one changed their religion, and two declared that they had given up religion altogether. What is important to note is that their attitudes towards religion changed due to their experience with IPV.

An additional finding of this study was how gender roles factored into the experiences of IPV. All participants stated that gender roles could be cited as a tool through which violence was

either experienced or inflicted given the concepts of masculinity and femininity. It should be noted that femininity was characterized as docile, subservient, and caretaker, while masculinity was defined by control, strength, and power. It was interesting to observe that participants either attributed the formation of gender roles to religion or to culture. Participants continued to further delve into this topic as they attributed perceptions of religion to impact gender roles as well as how religious leaders, communities, and family and friends all upheld such gender roles by citing either religion or culture as a defining factor. These conceptions that gender roles are influenced by religion and culture was also observed by previous research as well as in the religious texts and practices of the Christian, Hindu, and Muslim traditions (Abraham 1999).

Yet, while religion does have specific values for femininity and masculinity, one can argue that religion is not the only influencing factor. The maintenance of gender structures is attributed to religious leaders, communities, family, and friends. Further research would be necessary to assess what religious values are upheld as they relate to gender roles and responsibilities by examining a larger cohort's perceptions as well as conducting more extensive review of the religious texts.

This study expected to observe religion become more apparent in the lives of the survivors because of immigration to the United States; however, immigration status as a contributor to enhanced religiosity and cultural identity was not brought up by survivors. While prior research has found South Asian immigrants to become more traditional and therefore, less flexible around changing gender norms and expectations, this was not observed as a salient theme in this study (Dasgupta 2000). Thus, we can infer that moving to the United States did not aid in the escalation of religious practice, which sanctioned violence, although, some survivors did mention that the forms of abuse became more violent after they moved to the United States.

This study also raises the issues of understanding and working with the differences between the three main religions of South Asia despite highlighting the commonality of religion's role in survivors' experiences. How can the different religious communities be mobilized against IPV? Can religious texts be used as aids in condemning IPV while supporting survivors?

Both Islam and Christianity have traditions of reframing their teachings to align with changing contexts over time. Islam has the principal of *ijtihad* or the “process by which legal rulings are thought of, deduced, abrogated, and suspended under changing circumstances and due to new readings of the sacred texts” (Hallaq 1994). Another Islamic tradition of reframing is the dialogue of *fiqh*, or Islamic jurisprudence which are the understandings of the laws put forth by the Divine (Sayed 2011). In relation to Christianity, Fortune (2009) discusses that reframing may have an impact in the ways in which IPV is discussed within communities as well as upon the interventions that are built to directly impact IPV at the community level. As observed within the Christian tradition by scholars such as Fortune, religion has the potential to be misused to inflict violence.

In public health, religious scholars from Christianity and Islam have utilized these concepts of reframing to promote public health interventions such as family planning and promoting safer sexual practices to control the HIV epidemic (Roudi-Fahimi 2004; Stawski 2012; Raushenbush 2013). Many Islamic scholars from various African countries have argued that Islam can be re-interpreted to support a viewpoint that requires married partners to disclose their HIV status while also using protection during sex – a perspective that chooses committing a lesser harm to obtain a greater good for the larger community. Yet, while the scriptures do support such an argument, traditions, as upheld largely by religious leaders, show significant

restraint in accepting this or any reframing which further brings to light the complexities as well as the challenges Muslims face while seeking to interpret their scriptures away from the norm for a greater good (Sayed 2011).

Hinduism is a religion largely based upon epic stories, folklore, and text (Wanser 2010). As such, unlike the other religions, Hinduism perpetuates lessons from its epics which may be applicable to current life while at the same time, be in complete contrast to them. For example, Kali Devi is the Goddess of Time, Change, Power and a figure of Destruction of evil forces and is commonly perceived as a benevolent mother goddess and symbol of female empowerment (Jayaratnum 2011). Similar is the story of Draupadi who is another symbol of female empowerment. Yet, while strong role models of women exist in Hindu scriptures, there is limited research and practice that has shown a successful reframing or invocation of these Goddesses that supports female independence and subsequently, condemns IPV.

Yet, while such a re-envisioning can be empowering for survivors, women, and communities, it would also have to transpire alongside the norms of a male-centered reading and sharing of religious knowledge which begs the question: can reframing of religion occur within a patriarchal society and if so, will it be widely accepted? Furthermore, how dominant can the argument against IPV be if a similar case is made using religion to support IPV? Lastly, how can we support religious reframing within one context without accounting for others?

In examining religion's role in IPV within the main South Asian religions, it can be inferred that religion is a complex entity without a singular agenda or solution through which to prevent IPV. Instead, what is significant is that religion has an important function at both the individual and community levels, which have direct impact on how public health practitioners can build interventions to influence attitudes and practices around IPV. As noted in this study,

when religion is practiced at the individual level, it is often used as a coping mechanism or a support system; when it functions at the community level, religion was observed to be more detrimental to the survivors' experiences. Thus, it can be argued that when religion's flexibility is accounted for, it can be a more supportive tool than a harmful tool.

This study has made significant contribution in understanding the role of religion in the experiences of South Asian immigrant IPV survivors. It showed that religion has a direct role in creating and reinforcing gender roles as well as indirectly through reinforcing cultural values and norms for gender. Perspectives from survivors and service providers emphasized that religion can either harm or support survivors depending on the situation and who is practicing that given religion. This study also underscored the complexity of religion and the importance in engaging with religion, religious texts, religious leaders, and religious communities when building interventions for IPV for changing community adverse norms around IPV and generating support for IPV victims and survivors.

Limitations

It is important to note that I identify as a South Asian woman which may have influenced participants as they shared their experiences of IPV. Furthermore, given the timeframe and financial resources, I was the only one conducting the study and thus, had no opportunity to involve other researchers, check differences due to interviewer's bias, increase number of study participants for getting wider ranges of responses, or triangulate the findings and have it validated by other researchers. Additionally, as this study was focused on South Asian immigrants who had knowledge of how to access to Raksha, Inc., there is a self-selection bias which may make these results not generalizable to the whole South Asian immigrant population.

However, since the study is exploratory in nature to understand role of religion in South Asian immigrant IPV survivors and qualitative in nature, selection bias is limited and countered by triangulating findings from survivors of different religions and service providers' accounts.

Triangulating information of survivors with service providers addressed interviewers and self-selection biases and increases validity of the collected information. In addition, there is consistency and repetition in study participants' responses despite belonging to different religions, validating that religion played a strong role in their past experiences as well as moving forward in their lives.

Program and research implications and recommendations

Overall, this study found that religion can play a multifaceted role in the experiences of South Asian immigrant survivors of IPV from being a support system to upholding gendered norms that support IPV. Religion is seen as a vehicle through which expectations can be fulfilled and experiences be validated. Specifically, religion can be interpreted to inflict violence while at the same time, be reimagined to be used as a support system to deal with the violence. Thus, role of religion cannot be denied and needs to be dealt with.

Such an understanding of religion's role in IPV within the South Asian immigrant communities can have important implications for public health. Specifically:

Program and advocacy

1. Programs should be developed to support service organizations as well as conduct advocacy to increase the visibility of IPV issues within the South Asian immigrant communities.

2. Religious leadership should be involved in developing religious sensitivity trainings curricula for services providers as well as South Asian immigrant population on the role of religion in condemning IPV.
3. Conduct community mobilization and education campaigns to engage with the interpretations of religious texts and teachings around gender norms and violence against women.
4. Conduct IPV sensitivity training for religious leaders for getting their support for condemning IPV and promoting support for IPV survivors.
5. Service providers should receive religious sensitivity training to better support their clients, especially within the South Asian immigrant communities.

Research

1. There is a need for more research for creating an understanding of the causal pathways of how religions affect IPV and consequently the health of the survivors, especially South Asian immigrants.
2. Research on effects of reframing of religious texts in changing community knowledge and practices and reducing the prevalence of IPV, especially in South Asian immigrants populations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent form – Survivors

Study No.:IRB00075568

Emory University IRB
IRB use only

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**Emory University
Consent to be a Research Subject**

Title: Religion & Intimate Partner Violence – Gaining a Deeper Understanding of its Intersections

Principal Investigator:

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Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University

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Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University

Funding Source: None.

Introduction Hello, my name is Anushka and I am a student at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. I am currently working on my Master's thesis to better understand how religion and religious practices affect the occurrence of violence in intimate partnerships. Specifically, I would like to better explore how religion can impact intimate partner violence.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as someone who has experienced intimate partner violence and are of a religious background. This consent form will give you information about why this study is being done and what you will need to do to participate. I will review this form with you and provide you with a copy as well.

Do you have any questions or comments before we proceed with reviewing this form? Please remember that it is entirely your choice to participate in this discussion today. If you decide to take part, you may still withdraw or skip questions you do not wish to answer at any time.

Study Overview The purpose of our study is to understand the intersections between intimate partner violence and religion. Specifically, we are interested to see how religion can affect intimate partner violence and how religious practice and religious texts may (or may not) support violence in an intimate partnership. We aim to recruit 12-20 participants for this study.

Procedures If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask to interview you either by phone or in person at a public space such as a library or a room at Emory University. If you agree to participate, all information will be used without sharing any identifiable information. However, with your permission, I would like to audio record our sessions with you so I can make sure that I do not miss any information you provide during the interview. The decision to participate is yours; if you decide to take part, you may still withdraw or skip questions you do not wish to answer at any time. The interview may take anywhere from 15 minutes to 1 hour.

Risks and Discomforts There are minimal risks from participation in this study which may include emotional distress when discussing your experiences with intimate partner violence. Additionally, the time commitment may be an inconvenience and there may be a risk of loss of confidentiality of the information provided.

Study No.:IRB00075568

Emory University IRB
IRB use only

Document Approved On: January 2, 2015
Project Approval Expires On: January 1, 2016

Benefits You may not get any direct benefits from this study. However, we hope that the findings from this study may benefit your community with respect to religious women and survivors of intimate partner violence.

Compensation You will not be offered payment for being in this study

Confidentiality We would like for you to speak freely and share with us your experiences and opinions. Your ideas and opinions are important and will help us to better understand the intersections between religion and intimate partner violence. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and any identifying information will be removed from the data and any reports we make. All the information we collect will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only the research team and Emory’s Institutional Review Board will have access to the information.

In order to capture the whole discussion and not to miss anything, I would also like to record this interview. The recording will be encrypted and safely stored; nobody outside the research team and the Emory IRB will have access to the recording. May I record this interview? You may stop the recording at any time during the interview if needed. May we begin?

All collected data will be disposed of in a confidential manner at the conclusion of this study. Specifically, all audio recordings will be deleted once they have been transcribed and all transcriptions will be shredded once the study is complete.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study Participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate at any point during this study. Please speak freely about your opinions and experiences; your responses are important to help us better understand the intersections between intimate partner violence and religion. Do you have any further questions about this study?

Contact Information *If you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research then please contact:*

Anushka Aqil at 240.380.5862 or a.r.aqil@emory.edu. You may also contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or irb@emory.edu:

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

Consent Please provide verbal consent to the interviewer. By providing verbal consent, you will not give up any of your legal rights. We will give you a copy of a consent form to keep for your records.

Yes _____ No _____
Verbal consent received (please circle answer choice)

Date

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Date

Appendix B: Consent form – Service providers

Study No.: IRB00075568

Emory University IRB
IRB use only

Document Approved On: January 2, 2015
Project Approval Expires On: January 1, 2016

Emory University
Consent to be a Research Subject

Title: Religion & Intimate Partner Violence – Gaining a Deeper Understanding of its Intersections

Principal Investigator:

Anushka Aqil
Hubert Department of Global Health
Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University

John Blevins, PhD
Hubert Department of Global Health
Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University

Funding Source: None.

Introduction Hello, my name is Anushka and I am a student at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. I am currently working on my Master's thesis to better understand how religion and religious practices affect the occurrence of violence in intimate partnerships. Specifically, I would like to better explore how religion can impact intimate partner violence.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as someone who has experience working with survivors of intimate partner violence who are of a religious background. This consent form will give you information about why this study is being done and what you will need to do to participate. I will review this form with you and provide you with a copy as well.

Do you have any questions or comments before we proceed with reviewing this form? Please remember that it is entirely your choice to participate in this discussion today. If you decide to take part, you may still withdraw or skip questions you do not wish to answer at any time.

Study Overview The purpose of our study is to understand the intersections between intimate partner violence and religion. Specifically, we are interested to see how religion can affect intimate partner violence and how religious practice and religious texts may (or may not) support violence in an intimate partnership. We aim to recruit 12-20 participants for this study.

Procedures If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask to interview you either by phone or in person at a public space such as a library or a room at Emory University. If you agree to participate, all information will be used without sharing any identifiable information. However, with your permission, I would like to audio record our sessions with you so I can make sure that I do not miss any information you provide during the interview. The decision to participate is yours; if you decide to take part, you may still withdraw or skip questions you do not wish to answer at any time. The interview may take anywhere from 15 minutes to 1 hour.

Risks and Discomforts There are minimal risks from participation in this study which may include emotional distress when discussing your experiences with intimate partner violence. Additionally, the time commitment may be an inconvenience and there may be a risk of loss of confidentiality of the information provided.

Study No.: IRB00075568

Emory University IRB
IRB use only

Document Approved On: January 2, 2015
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Benefits You may not get any direct benefits from this study. However, we hope that the findings from this study may benefit your community with respect to religious women and survivors of intimate partner violence.

Compensation You will not be offered payment for being in this study

Confidentiality We would like for you to speak freely and share with us your experiences and opinions. Your ideas and opinions are important and will help us to better understand the intersections between religion and intimate partner violence. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and any identifying information will be removed from the data and any reports we make. All the information we collect will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only the research team and Emory’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to the information.

In order to capture the whole discussion and not to miss anything, I would also like to record this interview. The recording will be encrypted and safely stored; nobody outside the research team and the Emory IRB will have access to the recording. May I record this interview? You may stop the recording at any time during the interview if needed. May we begin?

All collected data will be disposed of in a confidential manner at the conclusion of this study. Specifically, all audio recordings will be deleted once they have been transcribed and all transcriptions will be shredded once the study is complete.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study Participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate at any point during this study. Please speak freely about your opinions and experiences; your responses are important to help us better understand the intersections between intimate partner violence and religion. Do you have any further questions about this study?

Contact Information *If you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research then please contact:*

Anushka Aqil at 240.380.5862 or a.r.aqil@emory.edu. You may also contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or irb@emory.edu:

- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

Consent Please provide verbal consent to the interviewer. By providing verbal consent, you will not give up any of your legal rights. We will give you a copy of a consent form to keep for your records.

Yes _____ No _____
Verbal consent received (please circle answer choice)

Date

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion

Date

Appendix C: Interview guide questions – Survivors

Client Interview Guide – Religion & Intimate Partner Violence

Once again, thank you for taking the time out of your day to speak with me today. As we discussed in the consent form, the goal of this interview is to better understand if and in what ways do religion and intimate partner violence or violence in the home intersect. Please share your experiences and opinions freely –any identifying information will be kept confidential.

The interview should take anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour.

I appreciate your openness and willingness to speak with me!

1. How did you come to know of Raksha?
2. Are you comfortable sharing what religion do you identify with today and is it the same or different religion you practiced as you were growing up?
 - a. Probe – with what religion did you grow up?
 - b. Probe - could you give some examples of religious practices you took part in growing up?
3. What role does religion play in your life today?
 - a. Probe – can you describe the ways in which your religion/religious practices affect your daily life?
4. Do you believe that your experience of religious belief and practice is the same or different now than it was when you were growing up?
 - a. Probe—if different, how so? What factors have contributed to the different experience?
 - b. Probe—if different, what are your feelings about these differences?
5. Thinking about your experience with intimate partner violence/domestic violence, did you have support systems in place?
 - a. Probe – If so, what were those sources of support? Think about friends, family, religious leaders, religious centers, religious texts, etc.
 - b. Probe—If not, what kind of support could have been helpful in your opinion? Were there factors that impacted your ability to seek out support? If so, what were they? Think about family, stigma, religion, immigrant status, etc.
6. What role does religion play in your experiences with violence in your relationship?
 - a. Probe - how do you think religion affects your experience with violence in your relationship?
 - b. Probe - could you provide examples of how religion may have impacted your experience with violence in your relationship?
7. Do you think sacred texts or teachings in your tradition address violence? If so, how?
 - a. Probe - could you give examples of situations/contexts where religious texts or teachings talk about violence?

- b. Probe - what do you think is specifically said about violence against women?
- 8. Do you think religious leaders affect violence? If so, how?
 - a. Probe - could you give examples of situations/contexts where religious leaders talk about violence?
 - b. Probe - what do you think is specifically said about violence against women?
- 9. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for participating. If you have any further questions, my information is on the consent form.

Appendix D: Interview guide questions – Service providers

Service Provider Interview Guide – Religion & Intimate Partner Violence

Once again, thank you for taking the time out of your day to speak with me today. As we discussed in the consent form, the goal of this interview is to better understand if and in what ways do religion and intimate partner violence intersect. Please share your experiences and opinions freely –any identifying information will be kept confidential.

The interview should take anywhere from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

I appreciate your openness and willingness to speak with me!

1. What is your role at Raksha?
2. What role do you think religion plays in the experiences of your clients?
 - a. Probe - how do you think religion affects your clients' experiences with intimate partner violence?
 - b. Probe - could you provide examples of how religion may have impacted your clients' experiences with violence?
3. Do you think sacred texts or teachings in your clients' traditions address violence? If so, how?
 - a. Probe - could you give examples of situations/contexts where religious texts or teachings talk about violence?
 - b. Probe - what do you think is specifically said about violence against women?
4. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for participating. If you have any further questions, my information is on the consent form.