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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Globalization and Changing Family Relations: Family Violence and Women's Resistance in Asian Muslim Societies

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Abstract There is a growing body of research on family relationships and the nature of family violence in Muslim-majority countries of Asia. However, patterns and trends around family dynamics and violence do not remain static. Despite the diversity of South Asian societies, all are being influenced by a constellation of globalized social, economic, political and religious forces that manifest in unique ways in different contexts. To date, there is little written about the implications for women's rights and gendered violence when globalization remolds religious, cultural, geographic and other social realities. This critical review presents a review of feminist literature on gender, family and violence in Asian Muslim-majority countries – notably Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh – from a feminist globalization theoretical perspective. The article uses the Maldives as a case study to map how globalized socio-economic and political trends are changing the terrain of family and society in ways that both advance and retract women's rights and contribute to their increased risk of violence. This paper advances the literature on feminist perspectives on family relationships by demonstrating the importance of considering localized problems within a global sphere. This approach will allow researchers to systematically assess the influence of global processes on changing family relations and implications for family structures. The paper concludes with applications for feminist approaches to globalization, gender and violence. In particular, an increased focus on global processes and the shifting dynamics of family relationships will better inform global feminist activism, and feminist activism in Asian Islamic communities.

Keywords Globalization · Islam · Asia · Violence · Domestic Violence · Intimate Partner Violence

Introduction

The issue of women's rights and violence against women has gained increasing political capital in recent years reflected by events such as the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, hosted by Angelina Jolie and William Hague (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2014), and the likely inclusion of a target in the Sustainable Development Goals 2015 on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (United Nations General Assembly 2014). A number of highly publicized incidents of violence in Asia, including the gang rapes of girls in India and Malaysia and the beating to death of a pregnant woman in Pakistan for marrying against her family's wishes, have contributed to increased global awareness of the issue (BBC 2012; Boone 2014; Leong 2014). Importantly, the communication of these stories and responding protest movements have been driven in part by multiple vectors of globalized media, including viral social media movements such as #bringbackourgirls (Bring Back Our Girls 2014) and One Billion Rising (One Billion Rising 2015). The spread of information has contributed to reframing discussions around violence against women and even led to changes to laws in some settings (Denyer 2013). These examples illustrate how globalization plays a major role in shaping gendered institutions, norms and relations in rapid and sometimes unexpected ways (Moghadam 2009). But what other impact does globalization have on women's private lives in Asia?

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There is a small but robust body of research on family relationships and the nature of family violence in South and South-east Asian Muslim-majority settings (Ali et al. 2011; Fulu 2014; Fulu et al. 2013a; Koenig et al. 2003; Sambisa et al. 2011; Solotaroff and Pande 2014; Welchman and Hossain 2005). Simultaneously, feminists have long debated how globalization affects women's lives (Archer 2009; Freeman 2001), particularly women's engagement in the labor force (Feldman 1992; Moghadam 1999). However, fewer scholars explicitly map how globalized processes affect women's lives in ways that put them at higher risk of family violence (although see Fulu and Miedema 2015; Merry 2001; Radford and Tsutsumi 2004). It is these processes of globalization – and the implications for family relations and family violence – that we examine through this article. This exercise demonstrates the theoretical importance of globalization for contemporary feminist research on gender and the family.

This critical review focuses on the Muslim-majority societies of Asia to demonstrate the need to close the gap between the fields of globalization and family violence research. First, we review literature on globalization, women and gender in Muslim-majority Asian countries from a feminist globalization perspective. To do so, we discuss feminist orientations toward globalization and use this lens to map major global processes unfolding in Muslim-majority Asian societies. We turn then to the central focus of this article: a review of feminist literature on family relationships and family violence in Muslim-majority societies across the region. We frame and critique this body of research from a feminist globalization perspective, and assess how global forces shape family and gender systems in ways that enhance or minimize women's exposure to violence. We focus here on Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan. These four countries, although diverse, share some religious and cultural similarities. All four are Muslim-majority settings where Islamic doctrine (to varying extents) shapes social, economic and political institutions and practices (Othman 2006; Siapno 2002; Stivens 2006; Weiss 2014). As we discuss later, religiously oriented beliefs and norms around women's status and the family are largely consistent across the settings. However, the unique cultural characteristics of each society result in variations in Islamic interpretation and practice with regard to family issues (Hilsdon and Rozario 2006; Mittra and Kumar 2004). Through the lens of globalization, drawing from studies conducted in these settings, we demonstrate how global forces differentially and similarly affect gender norms in the family and society across all four settings.

Secondly, we discuss the issue of family violence as an exemplar through which to understand the impact of globalization on family and gender systems in Muslim-majority Asian cultures and implications for women's safety and security in the home. We use a case study of the Maldives – a small, Muslim-majority island nation in the Indian Ocean – to map the uniquely localized way in which family relationships are being affected by the "shifting terrain of globalizing processes" and the implications for family violence (Padilla et al. 2007, p. xii). We take the Maldives as a case study for how globalized socio-economic and political trends can alter the landscape of family and society in ways that retract women's rights and contribute to changes in their immediate environments that put women at risk of violence. We argue that family relationships and family violence can no longer be understood outside the processes of globalization and social change, and that the role of global forces must be integrated into feminist research on these issues.

For this review article, we gathered relevant literature through multiple methods, including culling major scholarly databases, accessing institutional publications and gathering materials from colleagues and partners across the region who work directly on these issues in the field.

Feminist Perspectives on Globalization

Globalization is a complex and gendered set of transnational processes that span economic, political, cultural and geographic spheres (Ferguson et al. 2008). In this article, the term 'sphere' encompasses a variety of meanings but critically implies a spatial concept – the social sites or arenas where meanings are articulated, distributed, and negotiated (Negt and Kluge 1993). It can refer to physical spaces like workplaces or the home; institutional spaces such as the United Nations; or virtual or discursive spaces that operate at different levels of society, such as policy discourse or transnational grassroots social movements. Although globalization scholarship writ large tends to emphasize the formal and public spheres of activity (Padilla et al. 2007), the informal spheres – the home, the body, the community – remain the sites from which these public spheres are constituted (Nagar et al. 2002). Furthermore, globalization is not neat and linear, but rather "contentious and messy," (Moghadam 2009, p. 207). Examining globalization from the top, from the vantage points of corporations, global institutions and global political discourses, misses the myriad complexities of how global forces play out on informal spheres of life (Ganguly-Scrase 2003; Nagar et al. 2002). The geographical spheres, or "scales" as Nagar et al. (2002, p. 260) refer to them because they are overlapping, through which to measure the processes of globalization should therefore range from the nation-state to the community, the household and the body (see for example Abaza 2001 and Featherstone 1998). For the purposes of this article we use the word "space" when referring to physical spaces, and the term "sphere" when referring to virtual or discursive spaces.

Extant feminist interpretations of how globalization affects women's lives vary along a spectrum from emancipatory to

discriminatory, and emphasize the complex ways in which globalization affects different groups of women (Jaggar 2001; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Moghadam 2009; Nagar et al. 2002). For example, Jaggar (2001) argues that globalization, while promising social, economic and cultural improvements for women, has instead created increased militarization, economic inequalities and privatization of national commodities, resulting in a system that is hostile to women. Others position globalization as an occasionally positive political force, helping women's rights groups to mobilize and hold governments accountable through forums and policy spaces, globally (Keck and Sikkink 1998) as well as in Islamic contexts (Evrard 2014; Moghadam 2009).

Feminist scholarship on globalization attends to the ways in which globalized social forces shape local meanings and practices, as well as how local resistance shapes global structures (Rege 2003; Xu 2009). Ganguly-Scrase (2003) calls for globalization theories grounded in ethnographic-based accounts of the contradictory ways in which globalized forces shape women's lives. Although Padilla et al. (2007) suggest that there is a gap in the literature in terms of examining the linkages between macro-structural trends of globalization and the subjective experiences and local meanings of actors in specific cultural settings, there are exceptions to this (see Abaza 2001; Featherstone 1998; Robertson 1990; Robertson and Khondker 1998). Illustratively, Moghadam (2009) argues that transnational movements are, in essence, the result of resistance and protest to processes of globalization throughout the world. Thus, globalization shapes the local, and localized resistance constitutes the globalization process (Rege 2003).

A Macro Framework: Contemporary Global Processes in Muslim-Majority Asian Societies

Before reviewing how global forces shape women's lives, we first reflect on three major contemporary globalization processes that are taking place at the macro level in the Asian region: Islamization, democratization, and economic globalization including migration. These three vectors will serve as a guiding framework to assess the influence of macro global forces on gender and family systems throughout the article.

A Politicized Global Islam

The interpretation and practice of Islam in Asia is highly diverse (Mittra and Kumar 2004), yet global forces of Islamization are consistently influencing local religious practices and beliefs across the region (Moghadam 2009; Othman 2006; Stivens 2006). Lindberg (2009, p. 86) uses the term *Islamization* to represent not a fixed ideology that is spreading across the world, but rather "a changing perception that strengthens religious and cultural values among people who consider themselves Muslim." From a social movements perspective, Moghadam (2009) sees global, political Islamization as a transnational movement for collective action toward global change, based on religious beliefs and interpretation. There are two critical elements of this phenomenon to discuss in relation to this article: the global nature and the gendered nature of Islamization.

First, Islamization is inherently globalized (Derichs and Fleschenberg 2010; Hilsdon and Rozario 2006; Moghadam 2009; Othman 2006; Rinaldo 2008). The increasing influence of transnational Islam from the Middle East, with its emphasis on piety and stricter adherence to religious practices (Rinaldo 2008) serves as a response to threat of changes that disrupt patterns of social behaviour as a result of global forces (Derichs and Fleschenberg 2010; Stivens 2006). At the same, the Islamization movement relies heavily on globalized technology and communication resources to mobilize support and spread its message (Moghadam 2009). This global conservative ideology promotes an Islamic social order through laws, institutions and civil consciousness, and shifts the local character of religion and social systems. As Othman (2006, p. 34) discusses, in the context of Malaysia, the rise of Islamization in the region is a struggle over "what is Islam and whose Islam is the right Islam"? Hilsdon and Rozario (2006, p. 332) clearly articulate this complexity, noting how "a new universal, international Islam, that of the so-called Islamist movements, is replacing the more varied local Islamic beliefs and practices found in different regional and cultural contexts." Interpretation – or *ijtihad* – therefore, takes on particular salience in settings where local customs are reconstituted in the context of a global, homogenous form of Islam, posing, as we will see, particular challenges to Muslim feminists.

Second, the structures and systems of Islamization are gendered (Gerami 2005; Moghadam 2009). Hegemonic versions of Islamist masculinity based on religious interpretation shape and define the movements' discourses and strategies (Moghadam 2009). Speaking of Islamic interpretation, founder of transnational feminist network Women Living Under Muslim Laws (http://www.wluml.org/), Helie-Lucas argues that "many local customs and traditions practiced in the name of Islam in one part of the world were in fact unheard of in others…[yet] not only are there varied and contradictory interpretations of the Koran…but [men] are the only ones so far who have defined the status of Muslim women" (quoted in Moghadam 2001, p. 74). Gerami (2005) suggests that new ideas of Islamist masculinity are a product of fundamentalist resistance movements, media and a resultant focus on reinstating an earlier, more pure, Islamic society. This increased leverage of religious fundamentalist groups affect women disproportionately (Othman 2006; Stivens 2006; Weiss 2014). Efforts to map the influence of multiple and contradictory elements of globalization using ethnographic evidence from

the ground will help to more clearly understand how women's lives are influenced by these forces in Muslim-majority Asian settings.

Democratization

The post-colonial period in Asia has seen a growth of democratic political systems emerging across the region, although not in all countries (Kinnvall and Jönsson 2002). These political forces continue to intersect with Islamic political ideologies described above (Fulu 2014; Othman 2006). Ironically, the parallel development of these two ideologies created two socio-political phenomena. One, democratization provided an opportunity for politicized Islamist groups to gain political power in settings where this had not been historically possible (Fulu 2014). Two, the Islamization agenda, with its greater emphasis on an Islamic social order, became a way to legitimize political parties with local constituencies (such as in Malaysia, see Othman 2006). The growing political strength of Islamist parties within democratic systems has resulted in some set backs for women's rights and personal status, in which the control of women becomes a way to gain political and religious legitimacy (such as in Pakistan, see Weiss 2014).

Economic Globalization and Migration

Economic globalization and rapid economic growth have contributed to changing labour markets and labour needs across Asia, and resulted in significant flows of people across borders, altering the social landscape of the region. Migration trajectories are diverse. Large populations migrate out of the region, particularly to the Arab Gulf States, for low-skill labour work. Migration within the region is also substantial. International Organization of Migration [IOM] (2014) estimated that 43 % of Asian migrants move to countries within the region. The past decades have also witnessed a feminization of migration, with women making up large proportions of transient populations moving for work outside and within Asia. In 2000, Asian women made up an estimated one-third of the six million labour migrants in the region (Piper and Yamanaka 2005). As Afsar (2005) notes, in the context of female migrants from Bangladesh to the Gulf States, migrant women defy widespread cultural beliefs and norms that restrict women's mobility through their engagement in transnational labour. As we will see, in the context of Muslim-majority settings in Asia, these trends have had considerable influence on women's movement and ability to occupy certain spaces within society, as well as created tension between women's expected social roles and their labour force participation, internally and internationally. Further, as Moghadam (2009, p. 47) aptly notes, "Islamism has been globalized through migration". The movement of women and men between Asia and the Gulf States has contributed to the globalized shift of Islamic discourse and practice within the region, with implications for women's rights and freedoms in Muslim-majority Asian societies.

These three vectors of globalization – Islamization, democratization and economic globalization and migration – serve as a guiding framework to assess the influence of global forces on gender and family systems. We use family violence as the exemplar through which to understand the consequences of these macro processes on local gendered family dynamics in Muslim-majority Asian societies.

Current Feminist Issues: The Impact of Globalization on Family Relationships and Violence in Muslim-Majority Asian Settings

We turn now to reviewing extant feminist literature on gender and the family in Muslim-majority settings across Asia. We do not attempt to conduct a comprehensive review of women in Islamic societies (see instead Joseph and Naǧmābādī 2003). Rather, we discuss common and contradictory patterns of women's lives across these societies, looking specifically at the effects of globalization on gender and family dynamics, and the implications for women's exposure to family violence.

Women's Status in Society

The status of women in Muslim-majority countries and the nature of their roles in society remain salient topics within feminist scholarship in Asia (Othman 2006; Stivens 2006; Weiss 2014). The diversity of Muslim practices, beliefs and structures across the region is reflective of the overall cultural diversity that characterizes the Asia region (Mittra and Kumar 2004). Yet, popular discourse of Muslim women across the region emphasizes religion-based narratives of obedience, duty and subordination to male relatives and husbands, and social roles that are defined by women's responsibilities in the family, as daughter, wife and mother (Fazalbhoy 2006; Othman 2006; Weiss 2014). Yet, as Hilsdon and Rozario (2006, p. 332) counter, the diversity of Muslim women's lives means that "while, like all major world religions, Islam has a strong patriarchal element, the way it is practiced and experienced by women does not depend on religion alone but on many other factors." Indeed, using ethnographic accounts of Muslim women in Aceh, Indonesia, Siapno (2002) shows how rural women play dominant roles in social functions and challenge narratives of Muslim women as subordinate or oppressed. At the same time, women's bodies do continue to serve as a symbol of cultural identity and control, particularly in the context of post-colonial Asia in which the Muslim woman becomes "a reassertion of 'an authentic cultural identity'…pitted against the influence of ideologies originating from the West" (Othman 2006, p. 343).

The growing salience of Islamist ideology across the region is shifting notions of women and the family, in ways that often retract human rights gains made by Muslim women in the post-colonial period (Othman 2006). The family serves as the locus for a purer version of Islam, and women, as bearers of children, become guardians of this future of envisioned social change. A uniform kind of veiling is but one visible symbol of these efforts to promote an Islamic social order (Moghadam 2009), as is an emphasis on virginity before marriage. Yet, ethnographic work from Muslim-majority Azerbaijan problematizes the associations between veiling and notions of *traditional* and *modern*, as the return to veiling among well-educated Muslim women has become a method of self-identification in the context of social upheaval, while simultaneously causing concern about the loss of gains in women's equal participation in society (Heyat 2006, p. 362). While the issue of veiling is complex and often ambiguous in terms of meaning-making (Smith-Hefner 2007), in places where it signals a larger social shift toward conservative gender ideology, it can have implications for women's exposure to violence. Evidence from Bangladesh suggests that more conservative social beliefs around women's role in society can put women at risk of violence, particularly when women transgress these dominant norms (Koenig et al. 2003), and that these beliefs can hinder women's help-seeking behaviours after experiencing abuse (Schuler et al. 2008).

Marriage, Divorce and Family Patterns

The significance of marriage for many women within Asian Muslim-majority societies has legal, social, economic and political implications for social organization (Stivens 2006). Women's identity is closely linked to her marital family, shaping social and legal practices of descent (i.e. passing on the family name), inheritance, as well as divorce customs (in Pakistan, see Weiss 2014). Marriage arrangements in South and South-east Asian Islamic countries tend to involve economic as well as social components (Siapno 2002; Suran et al. 2004; Weiss 2014). For example, in Bangladesh, dowry remains an integral element of marriage negotiations, although this is not a homogenous practice across all regional settings (Suran et al. 2004). Dowry is seen as the property a woman brings to her husband at the time of, and during, the marriage to compensate for the financial burden she places on her in-laws (Diwan 1990). Zaman (2005) argues that the demand for huge dowry can cause enormous psychological pressure on the prospective bride and her family. For example, disputes about dowry in parts of South Asia have been highlighted as instigating serious domestic violence incidents, including murder and suicide (Kulwicki 2002; Rastogi and Therly 2006; Umar 1998; Zaman 2005). Cross-sectional evidence from rural Bangladesh shows that women in marriages that involved dowry payments were at higher risk of experiencing abuse within their intimate partner relationship (Naved and Persson 2008).

Women's bodies and sexuality also play a key discursive role in marriage arrangements as well as women's position in Muslim-majority societies across the region. The notion of *izzat* or family honour is said to be a culturally specific patriarchal tool that is used to control female sexuality and protect women's virginity in parts of South Asia (Akpinar 2003; Bennett and Manderson 2003; Imam and Akhtar 2005). In her treatise on gender and nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia, Siapno (2002, p. 110) argues that "claims to be more 'authentic' or 'pure' Islam are enacted on ostensible 'immoral' activities, most of which has to do with restricting the movement of women being out alone in public, or having close relations with men other than their close kin or husband." In some countries, early marriage of girls is used as a method to prevent pre-marital sexual relationships that would have negative social consequences for the family and community (Schuler et al. 1998). Although this phenomenon is not restricted to Islamic settings (Solotaroff and Pande 2014), child marriage in Muslim-majority societies is often framed as a social outcome of religious interpretation and values (Weiss 2014). In this context, divorce is generally stigmatized, and the shame associated with divorce in Muslim-majority Asian countries often prevents women from leaving abusive relationships (Idrus and Bennett 2003; Shaikh 2007). However, there are examples of Muslim societies – such as the Maldives – where divorce practices remained relatively flexible until recently (Fulu 2014), which signals the diversity of beliefs and practices around marriage and divorce within Muslim communities across the region.

Although the family continues to hold its dominant position in the social order of globalizing Muslim-majority societies in Asia, the revitalization of legal systems based on Islamist ideology have arguably detracted from women's rights, particularly as regards women's agency and autonomy to enter willingly into relationships and to leave harmful ones. New Islamist-oriented amendments and regulations at the national and community levels, for example in Malaysia and Pakistan, have reduced women's abilities to seek redress for abuse or abandonment (Aziz 2010; Othman 2006; Weiss 2014). In Malaysia, Othman (2006) finds that even when legal systems serve in their favour, women face discrimination and inequality from legal counsels or advisors who act within Sharia'ah court systems. Among Muslim communities in South India, women are experiencing greater isolation due to strengthening of religious dogmas, and men returning from working in the Gulf often enact a selective Islamization to legitimate patriarchal control (Lindberg 2009). In Malaysia, amendments to make many laws more gender equitable are denied to Muslim women, and many recent *fatwas* reduce Malay Muslim women's rights (Aziz 2010). Practices of gender segregation, introduced in certain districts of Malaysia, separated women and men in public spaces, even closing down unisex hair salons (Othman 2006).

As Othman (2006, p. 342) notes, these practices were "alien to traditional Malay Muslim culture…[and] protection of women was the main justification and rationale for such restrictive views and policies".

Furthermore, Islamist interpretations of marriage practices such as child marriage and polygamy also remain divisive social issues, reflecting tensions between religious ideology and globalized discourses around human and women's rights, in the site of the family. In Pakistan, long-standing debates over the legality of child marriage culminated in a 2014 ruling by the Council of Islamic Ideology that limitations on age of marriage (e.g. over 18) are un-Islamic, as child marriage is not forbidden in Islamic doctrine, although the Council emphasizes that sexual relations should not begin until puberty (The Nation 2014). Alongside the implications for social practices around child marriage, Weiss points out that this ruling impacts Pakistan's global image as they may be forced to retract their signatory status to international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, that prohibit child marriage (Weiss 2014, p. 153). Polygamy practices are another widely contested issue, with a global dimension, affecting women's rights and marriage relations in Muslim-majority Asian countries. Among South Asian Muslims in Tanzania, the expansion of transnational religious networks, discourse and institutions promoting Islamist ideology from Iran, alongside socio-economic shifts in Tanzania in the early 1990s, led to popularization and social validation of *mut'a* – or temporary marriage for men – that undermined women's health and safety within their marital relationships (Nagar 2000). Abraham (2000) has labelled this form of abuse as the use of the sexual other. Debates around child marriage and polygamy further serves as an example of how global pressure from international organizations and regional interpretations of religiously condoned practices affecting women's rights battle against one another in defining women's rights, and consequently their risk of experiencing violence, at the local level.

Mobility, Work and Economic Shifts

The nature of public and private spheres within Muslim societies, and the implications for women's active participation in society and the formal economy, is topical among feminist researchers (Feldman 1992; Ganguly-Scrase 2003; Stivens 2006). It is often assumed that women, particularly Muslim women, are exclusively associated with the private sphere of the home and reproductive work, and men are associated with public activity, including wage work. However, Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001) argue that, in the context of India, Islamic religion both limits the mobility of Muslim women in male public spaces and simultaneously provides the context, pretext, and opportunity for women to convene in female public spaces. Stivens, writing on the private and the public spheres in the context of Muslim-majority Malaysia, cautions that while the 'private' sphere tends to occupy political and moral space in the functioning of Islamic society, the way in which private and public space relate to women's lived experiences must be problematized and examined more closely, particularly in the context of (globalized) social change (2006, p. 357–358).

Feminist approaches to globalization have critically focused on the impact of economic globalization – the global flow of trade, capital and labor and associated economic policies and regulations – on the lives and well-being of women (Feldman 1992; Jaggar 2001; Moghadam 1999). In the Muslim-majority countries of Asia, economic globalization has contributed to women's increased labor-force participation, often in low-wage industries, and challenged notions of women's position outside the home and influenced family dynamics (Feldman 1992; Weiss 2014). These trends of women's labor migration have precedent in the Islamic countries of the Middle East, as noted earlier, a region with considerable cultural influence on South and South-east Asian Muslim-majority societies. As Moghadam (1999, p. 372) observes, this "proletarianization," and "professionalization," of women in the Middle East led to gender segregation within the workplace and increased veiling among women, which had repercussions through social and economic spaces within the country. Feldman's (1992) research in Bangladesh, demonstrates how national structural adjustment policies, driven by globalized institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), created new wage opportunities for women in a historical Islamic context in which women were secluded from public spaces. Yet, growing Islamization also contributed to the tension and negotiation between Islamic ideals for women and the demand for female labor. As women moved into the garment industry and other public sector employment opportunities, Feldman (1992, p. 121) notes, "it has not been unusual to see middle-class rural women wearing a burkha to and from work. They use the burkha, however, as a cultural adaptation to facilitate mobility and access to new resources and opportunities, not as an expression of subordination and oppression". Similar shifts around women's mobility, appearance and engagement in the workplace appear to be taking place in other Islamic settings of Asia. Using national data on contemporary attitudes and beliefs, Weiss (2014) found that most adults in Pakistan believe that women should be allowed to work outside the home, albeit under certain circumstances and conditions. The largest concern voiced through these surveys was the impact of mixed-gender working environments on women's purity and modesty, and veiling became a way to cope with these new economic conditions. Empirical evidence from Bangladesh on the integration of women into wage work shows inconsistent implications for empowerment and subsequent risk of partner violence, with

some studies finding positive and protective effects (Bates et al. 2004) and others finding increased risk of abuse (Schuler et al. 1998), particularly in more culturally conservative areas (Koenig et al. 2003). These patterns underscore the role of divergent cultural factors – alongside global forces – in shaping the contours of gender and family systems in a given setting.

Migration and urbanization also affect the internal dynamics of the family. Economic necessity increasingly requires women to work outside the home, and global migration patterns result in women migrating for work outside the country. Afsar (2005) notes that migration provides women with autonomy and levels of decision-making higher than what they could otherwise expect. When women are migrants, their financial contribution allows them say in allocation of funds. When women's husbands are migrant workers, women are de-facto leaders of the household and hold control over spending and resource allocation. Yet, these trends toward more gender equitable distribution of financial power do not remain unchallenged. In Pakistan, there are concerns around the perception of women earning money for their families, and the assumption that her husband is unable to fulfill his social role as breadwinner (Weiss 2014). Class differences also serve as a critical lens through which to understand how economic change has shifted gender relations in the home. Among lower middle class Bengali families, Ganguly-Scrase (2003, p. 554) found that attempts to restrict women's access to education were perceived as "backward" and old-fashioned, whereas women's mobility symbolized modernity and contemporary gender relations. These social patterns stood in direct contrast to the socially validated restrictions on women's mobility of a few decades earlier. Similarly, urbanization appears to have contributed to increased mobility among certain classes of women in Pakistani cities, as women-only transport systems and other options for movement become more readily available, and women's engagement in the workplace becomes more commonplace (Weiss 2014). Comparatively, in Aceh, Siapno notes, "with urbanization, women's public roles and spaces have been eroded and women have become restricted to the domestic sphere" (2002, p. 108). This ethnographic evidence from Aceh illustrates how globalized economic forces such as urbanization can culminate in divergent impacts on the family the local level across cultural settings. Thus, while urbanization can foster economic opportunities for women, it may also contribute to greater social isolation among women, separating them from protective kinship networks and support systems (Warrington 2001), which can contribute to increased prevalence of partner abuse (Michalski 2004).

Women Rights Discourses

As Weiss (2014, p. 77) rightly observes, "women's rights in Muslim contexts is neither new nor an import from the West," and women in Muslim-majority countries have long championed for rights of equality and freedom. The era of contemporary globalization has witnessed a rise in transnational women's rights movements, connecting women's interests across a diverse range of situations and cultures (Moghadam 2001). New information technologies contributed to the development of a transnational feminist movement in the 1980s, as did the fostering environment provided by the UN and regional caucuses that brought national groups together. Muslim women contributed substantially to these processes. One predominant transnational feminist network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (http://www.wluml.org/), came together in the late 1980s to challenge rising fundamentalism and legal frameworks that discriminated against women and threatened women's rights and freedoms (Moghadam 2009). The presence of feminist-oriented social movements can serve to delegitimize intimate partner violence and the social inequalities that drive men's use of violence, in particular through the development of national legislation to criminalize partner violence perpetration (Htun and Weldon 2012).

In sum, a review of feminist literature on gender, family and violence in South and South-east Asian Muslim-majority countries, through the lens of globalization, demonstrates the ubiquitous role that global forces play in shaping key issues around gender and the family. We note that these processes play out differently across these diverse cultural settings, further underscoring the need for ethnographic feminist research on how globalization shapes the contours of local gender and family systems (Ganguly-Scrase 2003; Nagar et al. 2002). In that vein, we turn now to an ethnographic case study of intimate partner violence in the Maldives. We illustrate how globalized socio-economic and political trends in this island nation are changing the terrain of family and society. These social changes both advance and retract women's rights and contribute to their increased risk of family violence.

Case Study: Intimate Partner Violence in the Maldives

Violence Against Women in the Family

Violence against women can be understood as both a consequence of women's subordination and oppression as well as a tool used to maintain patriarchy (Dobash and Dobash 1980; Yllö 1983; Yllö 1993; Yllö and Bograd 1988). Given this, it serves as a useful lens through which to examine the ways in which the globalization process refracts onto gendered structures and systems. While the literature is limited, extant scholarship suggests that global processes are influencing family dynamics and women's exposure to family violence through a number of avenues. This case study from the Maldives serves

as a cultural exemplar to illustrate the complex and nuanced ways in which these processes of globalization play out on the ground.

The case study focuses on intimate partner violence against women because it is the most common form of violence against women around the world (Fulu et al. 2013b; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; UN General Assembly 2006; WHO 2002). Intimate partner violence is defined as "behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours" (Heise and Garcia-Moreno 2002, p. 89). The prevalence of partner violence varies widely across the Asia region. The *WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, a cross-sectional household survey of women aged 15–49, found a range of partner violence prevalence from 53 to 62 % in Bangladesh, 41–47 % in Thailand, 34 % in Vietnam, and 69 % in Kiribati (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005; Government of Viet Nam 2010; Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2010). In Muslim-majority, urban Pakistan, using the WHO methodology, a survey found 58 % of women reported any physical partner abuse in their lifetime and 55 % had experienced some form of sexual violence (Ali et al. 2011). Research suggests that in many other countries in South and South-east Asia domestic violence is considered a normal part of married life, and often justified as a form of discipline or admonition for women who transgress gender norms (Counts 1999; Fulu et al. 2013b; Hassan 1995; Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997; Schuler et al. 1996; Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2010).

There are multiple competing theoretical approaches to understanding women's experiences of violence within the home (Loseke et al. 2005). The many names of this violence – family violence, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence – reflect the theoretical evolution of research on this issue. Much of the research on and international activism against abuse grew out of the feminist movements of the 1970s and global women's solidarity movements (Pitanguy 2004; Portugal 2004). These early theoretical frames understood women's experiences of intimate partner violence as a consequence of patriarchal social systems and gender inequality (Dobash and Dobash 1980; Yllö 1983, 1993, 2005; Yllö and Bograd 1988). Since then, competing field-specific theories have proliferated, particularly in high-income settings, limiting researchers to the theoretical models of their disciplines (Fulu 2014, p. 13).

In the late 1990s, Heise popularized an interdisciplinary model of intimate partner violence against women that captured the interconnectivity of risk factors across multiple social levels associated with women's experiences of abuse (Heise 1998). The ecological model serves as a framework to examine key factors and how they operate at different levels of society – from individual and relationship levels to community and social levels (Heise 2011, 2012). Recent research from low-income settings calls for an additional level to the ecological model that would represent globalized trends and forces affecting factors across the model (Fulu and Miedema 2015). This most recent iteration of the ecological organizational framework theoretically guides this case study.

Case Study Methods

The Maldives case study draws upon a combination of ethnographic research and survey research conducted by the lead author, as well as historical and current literature on cultural aspects of the Maldives, including the Maldivian census (Fulu 2014). The ethnographic research including participant observation conducted during various field visits to the Maldives from 2004 to 2011. Field research included 15 informal and semi-structured interviews about gender relations and violence with key informants such as government ministry staff, police officers, magistrates, health care workers, activists, and UN workers; and 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with women who had experienced intimate partner violence. All in-depth interviews were conducted in *Dhivehi*, the official language of the Maldives, and the key informant interviews were conducted in English. All interviews were transcribed in the original language and translated from *Dhivehi* into English by a research assistant. For more information on the ethnographic methods, see Fulu 2014.

To explore the effect of globalization on women's experiences of violence, we also draw from data collected as part of the Maldives Survey on Domestic Violence and Women's Health (for which the lead author was Principle Investigator), referred to as the Maldives Survey from here. This was the first nationally representative household survey on violence against women in the Maldives, replicating the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. For more details of survey methods, see Fulu 2007.

The Maldives

The Maldives is located at a geopolitical border between South and South-east Asia, with elements of similarity to both regions. Importantly, rapid social transformation in the Maldives, which is similar to many other countries in Asia and globally, highlights that family relationships and family violence can no longer be understood outside the realities of globalization and social change.

The Maldives is a chain of approximately 1200 small coral islands in the Indian Ocean of which approximately 200 are inhabited (Republic of Maldives 2008). The population of 360,000 is highly dispersed. The Maldives is a Sunni Islamic state but has a Buddhist history and Hindu influences

(Bell 1940; Heyerdahl 1986). Traditionally, the Maldives was a seafaring nation and remained relatively isolated from the rest of the world until the 1980s when the tourism industry began to expand. The impact of economic development, internal migration and urbanization, Islamism and democratization has been particularly evident in shifting ideas and practices around gender and family relationships.

Marriage and Family Relationships

In contrast to other Islamic Asian societies described above, marriage, divorce and family relationship patterns in the Maldives have historically tended to allow for higher levels of autonomy on the part of the woman and equality between husband and wife (Fulu 2014). Social institutions and structures prioritized the importance of romantic love, allowed for flexibility in decisions around where the couple would reside and tolerated divorce and dissolution of marriages with little cultural stigma. Notions of honor and shame held little cultural value, and were rarely used as a means of controlling female sexuality or protecting virginity. To this day, arranged marriage and polygamy tends to be very rare. While early marriage used to be more common, the mean age for first marriage increased from 18 in 1985, to 23 in 2005 (Republic of Maldives 2008). Relatedly, dowry in the Maldives has long been requested by the bride herself and paid to her directly by her husband, and has become so small in value that it largely serves as a token gesture.

Divorce practices in the Maldives are relatively fluid. Pyrard (1619) recorded the phenomenon of common divorce in the Maldives in the seventeenth century and noted that some men married up to 100 times throughout their lives. Although divorce for women and men is common and acceptable, staying single is considered relatively undesirable and therefore remarriage is very common. Charrad (2001) suggests that procedures to terminate marriage, the legality of polygamy and the absence of communal property between husband and wife in Islamic law, serves to underplay the formation and continuity of independent and stable conjugal units.

Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence and Protective Factors

The prevalence of intimate partner violence is low in the Maldives compared to other settings in Asia and even globally. According to the *Maldives Survey on Domestic Violence and Women's Health*, which was the first nationally representative study on violence against women in the country, 20 % of women aged 15–49 reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime. Six percent reported that they had experienced such abuse in the last 12 months (Fulu 2007). Comparable estimates in Samoa, Ethiopia, Peru and New Zealand show much higher prevalence rates of partner violence, as high as 71 % in Ethiopia (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005). The prevalence in the Maldives is also low compared to other Asian settings as discussed above. Comparable surveys in Bangladesh found 62 % of women in the rural site and 53 % of women in the urban site who reported lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2005). A study conducted in six districts of Pakistan found that 75 % of women interviewed reported experiencing physical violence by their husband during marriage (Rutgers WPF 2013). Even compared to many industrialized countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, where the status of women is assumed to be higher and policies and programs to address violence against women have been in place for decades, the prevalence of intimate partner violence ranges from 26 to 30 % (Mouzos and Makkai 2004; Walby and Allen 2004; Wilt and Olson 1996).

The reasons for the low rate of violence in the Maldives have been attributed in part to the relatively high status of women in society, the unacceptability of violence, and flexible marriage and divorce practices (Fulu 2014). Yet, this constellation of factors protecting women from abuse has not remained static. Global forces are re-shaping family relationship patterns in the Maldives, predominantly through increasingly restrictive interpretations of Islam that curtail women's historical rights. Other global forces, including cultural exposure to classic Hollywood and Bollywood movies that promote happily ever after marriage discourses (Gopal 2011), and increasing urbanization in the densely populated capital of Malé, contribute to socio-cultural shifts around women's risk of exposure to abuse.

Islamic Revival in the Maldives

The Maldives has often been described as moderate or liberal in its practice of Islam, particularly with regards to women (Fulu 2014). Historical records indicate that women never wore headscarves, chose their own partners, and that marriage could be easily annulled if both parties so desired (Maloney 1980). However, there was an Islamic revival initiated by the former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who was in power from 1978 to 2008, reflecting the global movement of Islamic Awakening (a*l-Sahwa al-Islaamiyya*), which has spread around the Muslim world since the 1970s (Ahmed 2004; Hefner 1997; Mahmood 2005; Smith-Hefner 2007). In 1997 the Maldivian Constitution was changed, making Islam the official state religion, and designating the President as the supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam. President Gayoom used the discourse of resistance to Westernization and Christianity in the promotion of his Islamic revivalist policies and national unity (Ellis 1998). The increasingly fundamentalist Islamic movement in the

Maldives was further fostered by the lack of educational facilities during the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, many students went to study overseas in countries such as India and Pakistan and on their return introduced a more conservative Islamic interpretation than had previously been practiced in the Maldives (Fulu 2014).

Greater flows of information through media, satellite television and the Internet have increased the influence of international Islamic movements (Fealy 2005; Lahoud and Johns 2005; Pottenger 2005). Furthermore, funding from the Middle East to build mosques and madrasa has contributed to the spread of Wahhabism, a form of Islam that calls for a strict observance of the Shari'a, in the Maldives as in other countries (see Williams 2004).

In this context of increasing fundamentalism, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami then became a catalyst for a sudden shift in the practice of Islam in the Maldives. In the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, the Maldives was inundated by international agencies and funding accompanied by considerable pressure to establish democratic institutions, promote a multi-party system and allow free and fair elections. The introduction of a multi-party system in 2008 enabled the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), led by Mohamed Nasheed, to come out of exile in Sri Lanka and opened political space for other parties. Conservative religious groups formed political parties and the Adhaalath Party, in particular, rallied for popular support using Islam as its party platform. The MDP won the most votes but not an outright majority. They formed a coalition government that included the Adhaalath Party and appointed one of its members as Minister for Islamic Affairs, significantly increasing the Party's influence over Islamic discourse and practice in the country. A number of women in the Maldives have been critical of the process of democratization, which they believe has enabled fundamentalist Islamic discourses to spread in the Maldives through parties like Adhaalath (Fulu 2104).

From 2009 to 2012, President Nasheed's government struggled with a declining economy and a parliament dominated by opposition parties, leading to constitutional gridlock. Further tension arose when the then government attempted to reform a judiciary that was largely staffed by loyalists to the previous Gayoom government and which many regarded as corrupt (Aljazeera 2012; Bajaj 2012). On 7 February 2012, President Nasheed resigned under duress, or what he claimed to be a coup. Vice President, Dr. Mohammed Waheed, became acting President until elections were held again in 2013 and a coalition government led by Gayoom's brother-in-law came to power.

The recent evolution of Islam in the Maldives has led to shifts in women's rights and status in society, impacting women's risk of experiencing abuse and proactively dealing with family violence when it occurs. As part of the revivalism led by Gayoom in the 1990s, state and religious groups claimed that Maldivian families were in crisis due to the high divorce rate, children born out of wedlock, drugs, crime and sex work. In response to this so-called crisis, a new Family Law was enacted in 2001, to consciously and systematically bring down the divorce rate (Velezinee 2004). The new law proved successful in reducing the divorce rate, but in the process has made women particularly vulnerable to ongoing abuse. Wife-initiated petitions for divorce are denied by the courts (Velezinee 2004). Aishath Shujune, a senior staff member at the Ministry of Justice who was appointed as the first female magistrate in the Maldives said that under the new Family Law, magistrates often order couples to reconcile, particularly if the wife initiated the divorce:

> "It happens often that the judge orders the husband and wife to reconcile even if there has been violence. The male is asked not to hit her and the woman is asked to go back and live with the husband even if she has sought refuge with a friend or whatever and she goes back and most often it is worse. So long as they are not divorced they are supposed to live together," (quoted in Fulu 2014, p. 76).

The Maldives Survey found that violence is likely to be an important cause of marriage breakdown and therefore if accessing a divorce becomes more difficult, either because of social stigma or legal restrictions, women are more likely to be trapped in violent relationships (Fulu 2014).

Three years after the new Family Law was enacted, in the aftermath of the tsunami, women's bodies came under critique, with a number of people blaming the tragedy on women's failure to wear the *buruga* (Aniya 2007). Blaming women for the tsunami was not unique to the Maldives; examples from Aceh, Sri Lanka and Southern India indicate that similar representations of women's immorality were used to explain the tsunami (Abubakar 2006; Donnan 2006; Salim 2007; Williamson 2006).

For many years Gayoom tried to control the rise of Islamic extremism, which he saw as a threat to his leadership (Ellis 1998). Yet, this sudden growth of religious fundamentalism and conservative thinking continues to pose challenges for women and young girls. The government itself has reported an increase in home schooling and refusing vaccinations and other medical services for girls based on religious beliefs (Department of National Planning 2012). Concerns have been raised about a rise in the practices of early marriage and polygamy, for example from the United Nations Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 2007).

Women's Political Participation

At the same time, there are more positive trends being played out in Maldivian society with regards to women's political

participation, although there is accompanying backlash to women's increasingly visible role in politics. For example, while more women are wearing the veil and staying home, a large number of women are becoming more politically active in public spheres (Fulu 2104).

The tension around women's role in politics and religious discourse was evident with a proposal to introduce a quota for women in Parliament. The proposal was rejected and the debate in Parliament highlighted the influence of Islamism in changing expectations about gender relationships in the home. As reported in Adduvas magazine, Adam Zahir, the South Huvadhu Atoll Member said in Parliament:

> "I do object to having special seats for women … They are not supposed to go out and campaign and play an active role in politics or anything else. The Almighty asks them to stay home, bring up their children and serve their husbands well, and they can't evade these responsibilities. From a religious point of view women who take up seats here are offenders," (cf Adduvas 2006, p. 10).

Although new fundamentalist Islamic interpretations, derived from global politicized versions of Islam, continue to mold the social fabric of the country, other globalization-related trends are also affecting women's rights, and particularly their risk of violence, in the Maldives.

The New "Private" Sphere: Violence Behind "Closed Doors"

Family homes in the Maldives used to be spacious, open and accessible to everyone, and the shroud of secrecy surrounding domestic violence would have been difficult to maintain with the open nature of homes (Fulu 2014). Importantly, there used to be no clear divide between public and private in terms of women's roles in the Maldives. While women took primary responsibility for the home, they were also active in the public sphere. However, the process of economic development has been accompanied by massive internal migration and increasing urbanization in the capital of Malé. Physical space has become so scarce that the rent on a typical two bedroom apartment is approximately 4 times the average per capita income, forcing many people to share rooms and even sleep in shifts. Houses have become more closed with large walls and there is now a more clearly established distinction between public and private, insider and outsider. The privacy and seclusion of homes today may enable intimate partner violence to take place more easily than before, given that isolation tends to put women at increased risk of abuse as bystanders are less likely to witness abuse and intervene (Brown 1992; Warrington 2001).

The Rise of White Weddings: Changing Expectations of Marriage

Marriage is a central part of Maldivian life (Razee 2000). As discussed within the aspiration for marriage there has been a high degree of flexibility. However, the nature of marriage and divorce in the Maldives is becoming more restrictive, with ideologies of love and relationships being influenced by the global spread of Western-style white weddings and Bollywood love stories. With the introduction of cable television, imported DVDs, music and the Internet, Indian films have become the primary contemporary reference point for words, tunes, stories and images of love in South Asia (Dwyer 2006; Orsini 2006).

Modern-day wedding practices are useful in exploring changing expectations about marriage offering a visual shorthand for the different premises of matrimony (Kendall 1996). In the Maldives, weddings used to be low-key affairs. Anthropologist Maloney (1980) contrasts these low-key weddings in the Maldives to the elaborate affairs in other Muslim communities in South Asia. He argues that because divorce is so acceptable, marriage is hardly a rite of passage in the Maldives, and therefore an elaborate wedding ceremony would be dysfunctional. However, in recent years weddings have become much more elaborate and important – a place where love is demonstrated and consumed – in some sense reflecting a change in expectations about marriage. Many young people have embraced the fairytale romance of happily ever after encompassed by white weddings and Bollywood. The expectation that marriage should last forever, combined with conservative state and Islamic discourses and more restrictive Family Law, is challenging the flexible nature of marriage. As divorce becomes more difficult to access and more socially stigmatised this puts women at increased risk of being trapped in abusive relationships.

Conclusion

This article concludes with two key implications for global feminist activism, and feminist activism in South Asian Islamic countries in particular. First, the force of globalization is undeniably shaping and re-framing issues around women's rights in Islamic Asian settings. In order to find spaces of resistance and progress toward women's rights, it will be critical to recognize and engage with this constantly shifting globalized terrain. The case study from the Maldives offers a unique example of how globalization and the influx of discourses from the west and south have greatly impacted gender dynamics and family relationships. The complex and contradictory experience of globalization in the local context of the Maldives, offers an opportunity for both positive and negative readings of globalization on the ground. On the one hand,

transnational feminist practice has promoted women's rights and brought the issue of violence against women into the public domain. In the Maldives, it has contributed to economic development and much needed democratic reform. However, many of the fast-paced changes that have accompanied global flows of ideologies, media and discourses have led to more gender inequitable family relationships, a reconstruction of women as dependent wife and mother, and an erosion of the factors that historically protected women from violence in the home. Integrating a globalization perspective into research on women's rights in Asian Muslim-majority countries will help to establish greater understanding of how social change takes place in the context of an increasingly globalized world. This can further contribute to the support and fostering of women's rights movements within Muslim-majority settings.

This article reaffirms that feminist perspectives continue to be of vital importance to studies on globalization. As in the Maldives, globalization in Asia more broadly has led to a resurgence of various religiously defined fundamentalisms, partly in response to threat of outside values (Derichs and Fleschenberg 2010). There has been an increasing influence of transnational Islam from Middle East, with emphasis on piety and stricter adherence to religious practices (Rinaldo 2008). This increased leverage of religious fundamentalist groups affect women disproportionately. Kandiyoti (2007) rightly points out that democracy *by design* can legitimize social forces that are likely to resist gender equality.

The effects of globalization on women's lives have been multiple, contradictory, inclusionary and exclusionary. It remains challenging to rigorously map the interplay between macro-level trends with micro-level interactions and relationships. Nevertheless, globalization will not disappear, but merely gain strength. It is in our best interest, and the interest of feminist activists around the world, to structure our understanding of women's rights and issues pertaining to women, in a global framework.

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