

Examining the Impact of Gender on Young People's Views of Forced Marriage in Britain

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Abstract

This article examines survey and interview responses from British Asian youths, primarily Muslims, to consider (a) this group's perceptions of forced marriage (FM), along with their preconceptions around it, and (b) the ways in which they exercise their right not to marry. The findings suggest that learned discriminatory values and norms regarding gender roles remain integral to how marriage is perceived and how FM is perpetrated and experienced. Whereas women tend to be more compliant regarding their parents' and family's wishes, men are often motivated by a sense of pride and masculinity. Initiatives intended to understand FM, support the recovery of victims, and prevent the practice would benefit from incorporating a consciously gendered understanding, to actively challenge the socially constructed gender roles of affected communities.

Keywords

forced marriage, gender roles, harm, honor, inequality, right not to marry, violence

Introduction

Marriage remains the dominant type of long-term union between individuals despite a number of major changes over the last 30 years in terms of the ways in which families are organized. During the last decade and a half, forced marriage (FM) within Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities has become an increasing concern to both the

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U.K. government and the international community (Dauvergne & Millbank, 2010). The majority of reported cases of FM involve young people aged 17 to 25 (Forced Marriage Unit [FMU], 2013). However, there are indications that the number of cases involving younger people may be on the rise in Britain (Gill, 2015).

It is crucial to consider how the pressures creating these conditions are resisted and challenged by this group. This article therefore examines (a) the perceptions and pre-conceptions of British Asian¹ youths, primarily Muslims, around FM, and (b) the ways in which the members of this group exercise their right not to marry. The study underpinning this article used a mixed-methods approach to investigate young people's understanding of FM, with a consideration of gender differences and the different impressions the concept of "force" leaves. It also examined reactions to the proposal to make FM a criminal offense.

Findings drawn from the online survey and in-depth interviews suggest that learned discriminatory values and norms concerning gender roles continue to underpin how marriage is perceived and how FM is perpetrated and experienced. In terms of FM, responses indicated that, whereas women tend to be more compliant regarding their parents' and family's wishes, men are often motivated by a sense of pride and masculinity. The overall findings of this study have significant implications for prevention and protection initiatives aimed at ending FM. They also offer important insights into how best to formulate awareness-raising materials that will make it easier to reach and appeal to those at risk. Targeted efforts to understand FM, support the recovery of victims, and prevent the practice would benefit from incorporating a consciously gendered understanding, to actively challenge the socially constructed gender roles of affected communities.

FM and the U.K. Legislative Landscape

The discourse on FM appears to have reached a crossroads; European governments face the challenge of creating policies that protect and support victims, while cracking down on perpetrators and safeguarding their borders from abuse in relation to the obtaining of visas (Sabbe, Temmerman, Brems, & Leye, 2014). Attempts to address FM and create coherent policies that protect, support, and take action against abuse are contingent on effectively defining the problem. Here, it is important to draw a distinction between arranged marriage and FM. In an arranged marriage, the families of both prospective spouses take an active role, but the decision over whether or not to accept the arrangement lies with the bride and groom (Dauvergne & Millbank, 2010; Enright, 2009). In FM, one or both parties do not consent to the marriage, and some form of coercion is used to bring it about. The "force" referred to in the term may be physical and/or emotional. This can include emotional pressure, threats, or physical or psychological abuse (Seelinger, 2010).

In England and Wales, the Marriage Act 1949 and the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 together constitute the law on marriage. Section 12c of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 states that a marriage is void if "either party to the marriage did not validly consent to it, whether in consequence of duress, mistake, unsoundness of mind, or

otherwise” (Gill & Mitra-Kahn, 2012, p. 105). This reflects the core issue common to all definitions of FM: that an individual’s fundamental right to consent freely to marriage has been violated. On this basis, child and adolescent marriages can be described as FM, as minors are not deemed capable of providing informed consent (Anitha & Gill, 2011).

In the United Kingdom, FM is a problem that primarily affects women originating from the Indian subcontinent,² although it also impacts on those originating from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Somalia, as well as Irish traveler communities. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain, in part because of difficulty in distinguishing between coercion³ and consent. Research on BME⁴ communities in the United Kingdom indicates that, while most people perceive a difference between arranged marriage and FM, they also see a degree of overlap.⁵ As with all other forms of violence against women, the extent of FM is also hidden due to underreporting.

In a recent report, the U.K. government’s task force on FM stated,

Despite there being a number of mechanisms available to monitor this appalling practice, including help lines set up by NGOs within the UK, little is really known about how prevalent forced marriage is within the UK. In 2012, the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) provided advice or support in almost 1500 cases, however we know that this does not reflect the full scale of the abuse—many more cases are not reported as a large majority of victims are too intimidated to ask for further assistance.⁶

Moreover, disaggregated figures are often not available, hampering research and resulting in campaigners across the United Kingdom calling for more robust and thorough data collection. Indeed, since 2010, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has developed new procedures and introduced new categories for the data it collects. Prior to 2010, the MoJ recorded 101 applications for Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs)⁷ but did not gather any data as to whether, for example, the victim or the person at risk was male or female, or married or unmarried. The figures below regarding FMPOs ignore the 101 pre-2010 applications but reveal that the highest number of cases involved those between the ages of 18 and 25 (49%), while an alarming 35% are forced into marriage before the age of 18. These figures demonstrate that cases of FM are most common among those who are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian origin. FMU caseworkers themselves do not collect information on ethnicity and religious background on the basis that this has no bearing on the assistance given to victims and to those at risk. However, in 2012, the FMU as an organization did record data relating to the nationality of the victim/person at risk for every incoming call concerning FM. These results are also shown below (see Figures 1 and 2).

On July 26, 2007, the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (FMCPA) received Royal Assent as Part 4A of the Family Law Act 1996 and was implemented in England and Wales on November 25, 2008. By inserting a new part into the Family Law Act (within Part IV), the FMCPA enabled courts to issue FMPOs to protect persons facing the prospect of FM, as well as those already in FMs. FMPOs are a form of injunction made by a court to prohibit persons from performing particular acts that might lead to

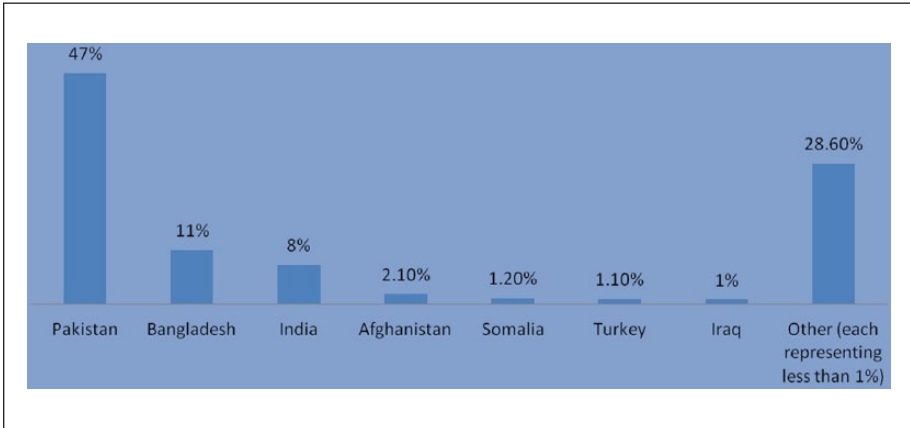


Figure 1. Percentage of victims/persons at risk by nationality, and percentage of total for incoming calls concerning FM to the FMU in 2012.

Source: FMU 2013.

Note: FM = forced marriage; FMU = Forced Marriage Unit.

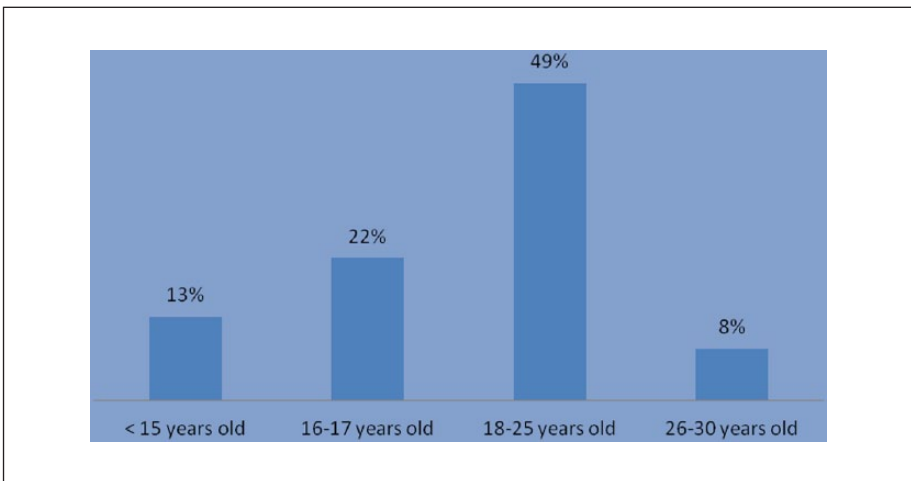


Figure 2. Percentage of victims/persons at risk by age, and percentage of total for incoming calls concerning FM to the FMU in 2012.

Source: FMU 2013.

Note: FM = forced marriage; FMU = Forced Marriage Unit.

a named individual being forced into marriage. The FMCPA expressly prohibits the practice, inducement, or aiding of FM, which is defined as (a) forcing, or attempting to force, another person to enter into a marriage, or a purported marriage, without that person's free and full consent; or (b) practicing deception for the purpose of causing

another person to enter into a marriage or a purported marriage, without that person's free and full consent (Gill & Van-Engeland, 2014). Despite the cautious optimism of women's groups such as the Southall Black Sisters about the FMCPA, in 2011 the eighth Home Affairs Select Committee report on FM criticized the efficacy of the legislation, arguing that there had been inadequate compliance with FMPOs and that effective action had not been taken to combat breaches. The report argued that it is "not at all clear that the Act is wholly effective as a tool in protecting individuals from forced marriage" (House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, 2011). It went on to maintain that criminalizing FM would send a clearer message to perpetrators worldwide (Gill & Van-Engeland, 2014).

In 2012, Britain's Coalition Government announced that it would pursue the criminalization of FM through new, specific legislation. Many women's groups, however, among them the Ashiana Project and the Southall Black Sisters, who are at the forefront of campaigns for the global eradication of FM and early marriage, were cautious about this news at the time. These women's groups saw the enhancement of existing civil and criminal legislation as a more effective way forward, as they argue this has proven to be the case with other related issues. For instance, in Afghanistan, Sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq, and rural China, traditional dowries for brides compel many poverty-stricken families to "marry off" daughters at a young age. To counteract this trend, women's groups campaigned for the introduction of a minimum age for marriage. Many countries, including Algeria, Bangladesh, Jordan, Iraq, Malaysia, Morocco, and Turkey, have now instituted new provisions or changed existing legislation to raise the minimum age for marriage (End Violence Against Women [EVAW], 2014). In most of these countries, the minimum age is now 18, as recommended in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. While these policy changes represent a significant step forward, more remains to be done and women's groups continue to stress the importance of the effective enforcement of all existing laws for tackling FM and related forms of violence against women and girls (EVAW, 2014).

On June 16, 2014, the coalition government introduced new criminal offenses relating to FM under Section 120/121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Forcing someone to marry now carries a maximum penalty of 7 years imprisonment, and breaching the terms of the civil-law FMPO has become a criminal offense, carrying a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison.

Since the criminalization of FM in the United Kingdom, however, only one individual has been convicted. In June 2015, a 34-year-old man was jailed for forcing a 25-year-old woman to marry him under duress. The Merthyr Crown Court in Wales heard that the man, who was already married to someone else, repeatedly raped his victim over a period of months, threatened to publish footage of her having a shower and told her that her parents would be killed unless she agreed to become his wife. The defendant was put on the sex offenders' register and sentenced to 16 years in custody, to be released under an extended license for another 5 years afterward. This important case raises questions about whether these offenses, including rape, voyeurism, and bigamy alongside FM, could have and should have been prosecuted under the existing

criminal law. Before FM was criminalized, the FMCPA 2007 enabled courts to issue protection orders against those who attempt or conspire to force someone into marriage. Between November 2008 (when the act came into force) and September 2014, 762 applications for FM protection orders were filed.

To date, much of the scholarship on FM has focused on policy and legislation, although a number of studies, multiagency guidance documents, and practical projects have addressed the issue of violence against South Asian women and children (Izzidien, 2008) and/or FM as a child protection issue (Kazimirski et al., 2009). Only a few small-scale practical projects run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have examined the ways in which young people from BME communities negotiate their right to choose whether to marry and whom to marry (FMU, 2013). These projects emphasize that many young people in minority ethnic communities experience difficulties in discussing and challenging FM with family members and other adults in their communities because of the prevailing culture of respect for one's elders. When young people attempt to raise the issue, their concerns are often dismissed. Peer-support projects, such as the Luton-based project *Changing Lives*, demonstrate that young people are more comfortable confiding in people of a similar age, even when they are uncertain about their peers' ability to help. Effective measures to tackle FM, including facilitating NGOs' efforts to help victims and those at risk, reporting their experiences to the relevant authorities, and providing them with appropriate support before, during, and after their reporting, must give due consideration to these nuanced dynamics.

FM and Gender

Gender is a complex sociocultural construct governing the expected behavior of men and women through polarized norms and values that are linked to ideas of masculinity and femininity. Through the imposition of interpersonal and social pressures, these norms and values influence power dynamics between the sexes from the domestic to the public realm. Socially constructed notions of gender and gender roles are reinforced through social institutions, interpersonal interactions, self-identification and categorization, work, parenting, and how individuals choose partners (Lorber, 1994). Butler (2004) frames the difficulty of understanding the individual actor within the social construction of gender, thus "the I that I am finds itself at once constituted by norms and dependent on them but also endeavours to live in ways that maintain a critical and transformative relation to them" (p. 3). Individuals, therefore, may act in accordance with, as well as against, gender norms, consciously and unconsciously experiencing them as (simultaneously) constraining and liberating structures.

Connell's (1995) seminal work on gender and masculinity centers on the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Described as "the most honoured way of being a man," it requires "all other men to position themselves in relation to it," simultaneously legitimizing "the global subordination of women to men" (p. 258). Connell (2009) defines gender as "the structure of social relations that centres on their productive arena and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes"

(p. 11). Here, she preserves the distinction between sex as biology and gender as a social construct related to, but separate from, biological sex differences. Thus, a biological male may enact femininity in his choice of clothes, friends, and occupation. He may also enact masculinity through engaging in behaviors associated with manliness, such as the way he cuts his hair, the way he walks, the car he drives, his choice of vocabulary, or the cadence of his speech. In every sociocultural context, there are behaviors commonly seen as “manly” and that are expected of those assigned the masculine gender, although individual men adhere to these behaviors to varying degrees. Expectations differ across communities, countries, and time. For example, the way in which a modern father is expected to act toward his children in contemporary Britain is very different from what was seen as fatherly behavior in Victorian times. The construction of gender is context-specific and subject to change, as individuals move from one situation to another and as time passes. As Butler (2004) argues,

Terms such as masculine and feminine are notoriously changeable; there are social histories for each term; their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom and for what purpose. (p. 10)

While gender roles and the norms that underpin them vary across historical, geographical, and cultural contexts, sexual discrimination against women permeates almost all societies. It takes different forms but is generally rooted in an ideal of hegemonic masculinity and the authority this asserts over women, an authority that is enforced by men regardless of whether or not they themselves live up to this ideal (Balzani, 2010; Connell, 1995).

Gender is an extremely important factor in instances of FM. More than 80% of reported cases of FM in England involve female victims (FMU, 2013), and although FM causes immediate and long-term harm to victims, whether male or female (British Medical Association, 2008), women and girls often face disproportionate harm. FM can significantly alter life chances, including access to education, employment, and financial and personal autonomy. Other potential risks for women and girls include sexual and physical violence, the denial of sexual and reproductive rights, and the risk of developing mental health issues such as self-harming behavior (Bhardwaj, 2001; Cooper, Murphy, & Webb, 2010; Howard, Trevillion, & Agnew-Davies, 2010). For these reasons, most research into FM has focused on women’s experiences. However, the concept of gender per se remains underexplored in the existing literature.

Not all victims are women. Service providers working with gay men and male victims of domestic violence acknowledge in their guidance documents that men may also be victims of FM (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2013). Nevertheless, research into this aspect of FM is sparse; to date, only one British study has focused on young male victims (Samad, 2010). Its findings revealed that sociocultural norms and values concerned with masculinity acted as a barrier to these victims seeking help. Furthermore, the misconception that only women are victims of FM discourages men from seeking help, and ensures that professionals may fail to identify male victims or provide due consideration when cases are reported.

Many of the young men in Samad's (2010) study found it hard to accept that they were victims of FM, let alone to disclose the fact to others. Samad ascribed this response to their sense of male pride and beliefs about masculinity and stressed the importance of helping male victims overcome the belief that seeking help would damage their social standing as men. In the belief that they will later be in a position to reject the woman they are being forced to marry, or be able to lead a double life with an extramarital partner of their own choosing, some young men may feel it is easier to proceed with an unwanted marriage to avoid family conflict. Samad's study also suggested that these views contribute to long-term emotional and mental health consequences for young male victims, consequences that differ from those observed in female victims. The findings of Samad's study have broad implications. For example, addressing the links between norms and values surrounding masculinity and instances of FM involving young men may help to challenge the tolerance and normalization of FM in general. Such a challenge may in turn help to build a broader, more united resistance to FM.

The Methodology of This Study

This study used a mixed-methods approach to investigate

- i. the understanding of FM among young people aged between 16 and 25,
- ii. how gender differences mean that FM affects men and women in different ways,
- iii. the concept of "force" and how this impacts on men and women, and
- iv. responses to the proposal to criminalize FM through the adoption of new legislation.

Concern about the role of gender arose from the observation that, although young men are also potentially at risk of FM, there is little help specifically targeted at them, which could lead them to find it more difficult to seek assistance. Although not the focus of the study, one of the subsidiary research objectives was to offer exploratory observations on different help-seeking behaviors, manifestations of harm and coping strategies in relation to victims, along with attention to perpetrators' motivations and tactics.

The initial research plan was to conduct two focus group discussions, one with a group of young men and the other with a group of young women. This presented, however, a range of difficulties. The researchers were concerned about the risks involved in bringing together a group of individuals to discuss sensitive topics and the potential of causing possible traumatic experiences in an environment where others might express hurtful views. In addition, group discussions could lead to further negative consequences if one participant disclosed sensitive information and another participant later breached confidentiality. To mitigate any potential risk to participants, the researchers opted to individualize participation and conducted a small number of semistructured interviews with individuals alongside an online survey that explored the views of a larger sample of participants.

The data were, therefore, drawn from the following two primary sources:

1. An online survey of young people
2. In-depth interviews with individuals living in affected communities.

An Online Survey of Young People

A survey was deemed the most resource-effective and time-efficient way to gather in-depth information from a large sample (Cohen, Aronson, & Steele, 2000). The use of open-ended questions allowed respondents to explore their ideas freely, reducing acquiescence bias (Cohen et al., 2000). The questionnaire was available from July to October 2013 on SurveyMonkey.com (an online response collection tool). The questions aimed to discover the views of young people aged between 16 and 25 about

- i. FM, including its prevalence;
- ii. the British Government's responses to FM and the extent to which current measures are both effective and in accordance with their own views;
- iii. whether FM is experienced differently or the same by men and women;
- iv. who or what is most culpable in enabling the perpetration of FM; and
- v. how FM could be tackled more effectively.

Two factors necessitate that the data collected in this survey be treated with caution. The first relates to the accuracy of measuring demographic information for the sample.

While the survey was directed at young people, the introduction stated that others who wished to respond were welcome to share their views, even if they did not fall within the sample criteria. Participants over the age of 25 were asked to declare that they were outside the target age group, and 10% of participants made such a declaration.

The second issue concerns the process of obtaining consent. It is not possible with SurveyMonkey to provide an oral explanation of the study or to receive oral consent, so all of the relevant information was given in the first "page" of the survey and in the email containing the link to the survey, which included information about the researchers, their contact details, the reason for conducting the survey, and the way in which the data were to be used. This initial information included warnings where the survey covered potentially sensitive issues, with sources of further support and information provided, and a declaration of the purpose of the study; explaining how privacy will be assured; and detailing with whom data will be shared and how it will be reported. This enabled informed consent to be obtained from respondents before they completed the survey.

There are difficulties in verifying identities and confirming the validity of responses when using SurveyMonkey. At least two interviewees had responded to the survey more than once. Rather than amalgamating survey and interview responses, therefore, the two sources were approached separately. Survey results acted as a backdrop against

Table 1. Interviewee's Ethnicity and Religion.

Gender	Ethnicity	Religion
Female	Indian	Hindu
Female	Iraqi Kurdish	Muslim
Female	Somali	Muslim
Female	Pakistani	Muslim
Female	Pakistani	Muslim
Female	Indian	Sikh
Male	Indian	Hindu
Male	Bangladeshi	Muslim
Male	Bangladeshi	Muslim
Male	Pakistani	Muslim
Male	Pakistani	Muslim

which qualitative findings were positioned, enabling a wider range of issues to be raised as well as the exploration of key areas through a larger sample.

While the survey sought the views of 16- to 25-year-olds, the researchers were wary of such arbitrary age limits. Researchers were aware too that there may be people outside the age bracket who wished to respond. Individuals and family and friendship networks who have been affected by FM but are outside this age range of course still have valid and informed perspectives to share and allowing these people to express their views provides a relevant outlet for them. In addition, we felt that admitting respondents outside the target age bracket for the research mitigated the risk of respondents pretending to be within the age bracket to complete the survey. The fact that a significant proportion of respondents declared themselves to be outside the primary age range that was sought would suggest, although of course this is not verifiable, that we can have some confidence in the actual ages of the respondents.

In-Depth Interviews With Individuals Living in Affected Communities

The U.K. media and the associated political perception of FM are dominated by an assumption that it is an issue concerning people of South Asian and/or particularly Muslim heritage. This study sought the views of young people on FM generally without limiting it to particular ethnic/religious groups perceived to be at a higher risk of FM. Although FM is known to affect a broader range of communities, both the networks that circulated information about this study and the self-selecting respondents were predominantly but not exclusively of South Asian heritage and Muslim, as shown in the data below in relation to interviewees (Table 1).

Twelve individual semistructured interviews were conducted in addition to the survey. Because one individual was unable to address many of the key questions, only 11 interviews were analyzed for this article. The interview schedules and discussion

guides were designed by the co-author of this article who was based at EAVES, a housing charity for women fleeing violence (established in 1977 that delivers frontline support in addition to advocacy, campaigning, and research work).

The semi-structured discussion guides ensured consistent wording for the main questions and ideas for prompts. Interviewees were asked about their views on FM, the right not to marry, how people exercise this right in the face of FM, and their understanding of general attitudes toward marriage within their communities. Most of the interviews took place face to face in a location chosen by the interviewee, such as at their home, workplace, or a support organization office. In four cases, telephone interviews were undertaken at the participants' request because they were located in different parts of the country. At the outset, interviewees were provided with an information sheet explaining the study—including the data protection and anonymity measures that were in force—and they were given a consent form to sign. All data from interviews were anonymized and securely stored. As a token of appreciation for their contribution, all interviewees received a voucher with a value of £10. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and were audio-recorded, where possible. When recording could not take place, detailed notes were made during the interview, which were then transcribed afterward.

Sample Recruitment

Despite the fact that the study was widely publicized, recruiting young people for the survey and for the interviews posed a significant challenge.⁸ Information about the research was distributed to potential participants via email and on the social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook. In addition, flyers were delivered to a broad range of organizations and institutions, including schools, community facilities, youth groups, religious organizations, public libraries, NGOs, and public-sector services.

As stated, the research sought to explore the views of young people aged between 16 and 25 with some degree of personal exposure to FM, whether direct or indirect, including exposure to family, friends, and/or community members. Although FM occurs across a range of minority ethnic and religious groups in Britain, as we have seen, the majority of the interviewees in this study were South Asian. When asked to describe their parents' ethnicity and religion, five identified themselves as Muslim Pakistani, two as Muslim Bangladeshi, and one from each of the following backgrounds: Muslim Iraqi Kurdish, Muslim Somali, Sikh Indian, and Hindu Indian. Thus, the data set is consistent with the reality that a large proportion of reported cases of FM in Britain involve those who are South Asian or who have South Asian heritage. The interview sample included five men and six women whose ages were evenly spread between 16 and 25. The sample was geographically diverse, with participants from Sheffield, Leeds, Luton, Derby, and London. Eight participants identified as single, one as in a relationship, and two as married. One interviewee declared a disability.

In terms of the survey, a total of 101 participants responded but some did not respond to every question. 74% ($n = 65$) of the sample who responded to the question about age were in the 21 to 25 age bracket, 19% ($n = 17$) were aged 18 to 21, and 7%

($n = 6$) were aged 16 to 18. A further 10 individuals stated that they were outside the age limit, with seven aged between 26 and 32. Of the sample, 21% ($n = 21$) indicated they were male and 78% ($n = 76$) indicated that they were female, with one person preferring not to say; 91% ($n = 83$) were single, 7% ($n = 6$) were married, and 2% ($n = 2$) were widowed. A further eight described themselves as being in a relationship and one opted not to disclose this information. Respondents were also asked to explain whether they felt the issue was relevant to them or people they cared about. Of the 66 who responded to this question, 26% ($n = 17$) said it directly affected close friends, 6% ($n = 5$) said it affected family members, and 80% ($n = 53$) said it affected people in their neighborhood (for this question, percentages are not additive, as respondents were able to select more than one applicable category).

Using inductive thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012), the entire set of survey responses was reviewed to identify key themes. To uncover implicit and explicit themes and ideas, the approach extended beyond mere analysis of the content. Specifically, the application of inductive thematic analysis necessitated exploration of the respondents' intentions rather than the precise wording they used. As Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, and Marteau (1997) note, in qualitative research it is possible to aim for consistency in coding key themes while being aware that researchers will necessarily have their own interpretations. This concern entailed discussion of the researchers' respective methods of coding the responses; in doing so, we found general agreement on each emergent theme.

Results and Discussion

Young People's Views on FM and the Motivations Behind It

All interviewees agreed that young people form relationships in a wide range of ways. As Interviewee 008 (male) stated,

Kids hook up, kids go out with each other, arrange stuff online and chat, meet people at college, meet friends of family, get set up by mates, get set up by family—all sorts. There's no one size fits all. It's changing with the generations.

Irrespective of how they met their partners, interviewees wanted their parents to meet and approve of the person whom they decided to marry. Interviewees expressed various interpretations of arranged marriage. Some believed it meant allowing the young person to meet an individual or set of individuals recommended by their parents before deciding whether and with whom to proceed. However, there was recognition that the level of pressure from family members could be such that the young person might not be free to turn down the option(s) offered to him or her. One young man described an inverse approach: He brought a selection of girls home to meet his family to seek their help in identifying the most suitable match. Meanwhile, three interviewees had male acquaintances who wanted their parents to arrange a prospective marriage partner for them, provided they could eventually accept or reject the person themselves. For instance, Interviewee 005 (male) described how

a few mates said they want [their] parents to arrange something but they want to be the final decider. One of my mates—he said he wants someone quite traditional and that for the wife but that he'll have his girlfriends.

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that it was not always clear whether these interviewees were certain that the final choice was a genuine choice on the part of the young men involved or whether they felt pressured to proceed with their parents' marriage arrangements. If the latter was the case, planning to have extramarital relationships could be a coping mechanism for dealing with the situation without these men seeing themselves as victims who had succumbed to pressure. As Interviewee 005 (male) said,

It's embarrassing really, isn't it? . . . I know a couple of guys and I don't know if it was forced or not, but they went along with it and they're not happy but they'd never stand up and say "I was forced." You can't really as a bloke, can you?

This reflects Samad and Eade's (2003) findings that men's beliefs about masculinity and concepts of male pride often prevent them from seeking help when confronted with FM. One interviewee summarized these views with the question, "What kind of man are you to get forced into a marriage?" The interview data did not clarify whether men feel that, on one hand, help is not available to them because most assistance services are intended for or explicitly targeted at women or, on the other, whether their attitudes toward marriage and gender roles prevent them seeking help in the first place. It is arguable, based on this research, that both factors have an impact.

The interviewees who described themselves as more likely to go through with or indeed to actively seek a traditional arranged marriage were men. The data suggest that young men and women bring different and sometimes conflicting expectations to marriage. Indeed, many young women seem to seek a greater degree of freedom, choice, and autonomy in their plans for marriage. One interviewee (001, female) highlighted the difference between the genders even within a single family. She described how her parents had had no intention of arranging their children's marriages until her elder brother expressly requested that they do so for him. The parents found several potential spouses whom they introduced to the interviewee's brother, who then choose between them. She described the resulting marriage as a very happy one for her brother, his wife, and both families. She stressed that her parents had worked hard to find someone compatible with her brother. They had tried to find women who were not only prepared to have a traditional marriage but also had a reasonable level of education and spoke English. However, and in contrast, she was clear that she would not choose for her own marriage to be arranged, explaining,

It freaks me out, getting married to someone I hardly know even if they let me meet him and choose like he [her brother] did, but it's still weird to me. I want control of my life and that's my choice.

As with a number of other participants, this woman demonstrated a high level of trust toward parents in general, believing that they want what is best for their children.

She also discussed how parental involvement in arranging a marriage can relieve some of the pressure on young people to find a suitable partner. Moreover, she suggested that when difficulties arise in an arranged marriage, parents and other relatives are often more supportive and feel a greater responsibility to help resolve things positively.

Conversely, Interviewee 002 (female) was concerned that some parents perceive the act of coercing a child into marriage as benign or even part of their duty as good parents:

They just came to the UK for a better life . . . It's what they knew when they were young . . . elders did something for them and it was a weight off their shoulders and they must do the same.

Most interviewees agreed that parents had good intentions but that these intentions were expressed in different ways depending on (a) the degree to which parents wished to listen to their children's views, (b) their understanding of what constitutes coercion, and (c) the extent to which they view coercion as problematic.

In relation to the second point—understanding what constitutes coercion—while the interviewees agreed that FM does happen in Britain, they differed in their estimates of its prevalence and the degree of force necessary to deem a marriage truly “forced.” Four out of the six females interviewed volunteered with women's organizations and had encountered cases of FM. These interviewees believed that FM is widespread but often misunderstood. As Interviewee 009 (female) noted, “Forced marriage still happens . . . parents wanting complete control and thinking they know best . . . it is seen as a matter of honour.” According to Stewart (1994), honor codes depend on and generate respect for both individuals and the groups to which they belong, thereby conferring status.

In this study, we found that most of the male interviewees agreed that honor plays a key role in maintaining social relations in their families and communities, but often prescribes forms of behavior more strictly than any law. However, despite acknowledging the importance of honor in FM, the male interviewees believed it is uncommon and likely to decrease over time. For example, Interviewee 005 (male) asked, “Isn't it stopping a bit now? Like with generations and time and stuff?”

The interview extracts quoted above reveal fundamental differences between the male and female respondents' perceptions of FM. While the men tended to identify family honor as the key motivating influence on their actions around FM and their understanding of it, the women, by contrast, tended to see the problem as a more private one linked to the need to respect their family's wishes.

A key difference observed was that the female interviewees emphasized the role of respect, whereas the male interviewees focused more on honor. There are several reasons, linked to how the concept of honor functions in honor-based societies, that could explain such different emphases. In honor-based societies, men are defined as the head of the family and the defender of its honor. As such, they are expected to protect their family, particularly the female members, against any behavior that might be seen as

dishonorable or humiliating by the community (Cowburn, Gill, & Harrison, 2015). A family's honor or prestige is achieved and, importantly, maintained through the conduct, actions, and social performances of the women within it; consequently, family interests take precedence over individual ones.

Moreover, as honor relies on the behavior of women, it has been argued that the duty to safeguard the family's honor affords men the right to exercise control over women's bodies and behavior. Thus, men in South Asian cultures are often socialized to act as "controllers of women's sexuality" (Abraham, 1999, p. 597), which gives rise to a variety of social norms concerning women's sexuality and sexual practices. Coomaraswamy (2005), for example, argues that "women who fall in love, engage in extramarital relationships, seek a divorce or choose their own husbands are seen to transgress the boundaries of 'appropriate' (that is socially sanctioned) sexual behaviour" (p. xi). Although the interviewees' responses clearly demonstrated these different emphases, it was also clear, at least among the men, that they were not seen as a fixed feature of their community.

Despite both groups in this study acknowledging the importance of honor as a motivating factor for FM, the men were under the impression that there had been a decrease in concerns over it, even though such concerns did continue to play an important role.

The research for this article also echoes the findings of Samuel (2010), which suggest that views about marriage are an important part of identity construction within the British Asian community. These draw attention to the intersections between the various social identities that structure the lives of both men and women within that community. Marriage practices and gender norms play a central part in how the experiences of British Asian youth unfold within the context of the diaspora. They also play an important role in how their identities are constructed across social boundaries in relation to intergenerational views on both arranged marriage and FM, which intersect and impact on one another (Samuel, 2010).

Young People's Awareness of the Laws and Policies on FM

Guided by the questions, the majority of both interviewees and survey respondents focused on the criminalization of FM: the advantages and disadvantages of criminalization, government consultations about the merits of criminalization, and whether interviewees felt they could advise someone on the available legal remedies. Interviewees discussed a wide range of issues in response to questions about laws and policies regarding FM. Levels of knowledge of the issues involved differed considerably among participants, but all were aware of the proposal to criminalize FM.

The four female interviewees who volunteered for women's groups were the most well informed and confident when it came to discussing criminalization and related issues. Only one, however, had taken part in the government consultation on introducing criminal law on FM, and this was indirectly through her organization. The other three had participated in discussions in their workplaces but had not responded to the consultation independently. These three female interviewees, along with one other, stated that they might have participated if they had known about the consultation at the time.

The survey results revealed a similar pattern. Of the 85 people who responded to the relevant question, 51% ($n = 44$) were aware of the criminalization proposal while the government consultation process was open but only 5% ($n = 4$) took part. This suggests that the young people most affected by these issues need to be more informed to feel empowered and should be actively targeted as potential respondents to such policy initiatives, with consultations promoted through various means such as social media, schools, and local community workers.

Opinions about the merits of criminalization varied among the participants and demonstrated some marked gender differences. Survey respondents offered a range of arguments in favor of criminalization: 65% ($n = 55$) agreed that it sends a clear, forceful message that FM will not be tolerated; 54% ($n = 46$) identified criminalization as an additional argument for young people to use if their parents attempted to force them to marry; and 71% ($n = 60$) believed that it would help to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable while offering greater protection to victims. Across the survey results and interviews, participants unanimously agreed that FM was wrong and they understood the logic in support of criminalization. There was, however, significant disagreement between female and male interviewees as to whether or not criminalization is the most suitable solution. Five of the six female interviewees were confident that criminalization was the right step. Echoed by the other four female interviewees in favor of criminalization, Interviewee 002 (female) said,

I totally support criminalisation of forced marriage; it's fantastic and will serve many purposes . . . Confidence to come forward and report—that is the key thing. Criminalisation is the authority behind you and gives you the upper hand.

Only one of the female interviewees (011) expressed ambivalence about criminalization:

I think it's just too messy. Parents who are prepared to really force you will do it anyway, and I don't think this will stop it—there are things already you can do to try to stop it so . . . it doesn't feel like the right way to me.

While the female interviewees broadly agreed that criminalization represents a positive step in theory, most were less certain about the practical implications. For instance, Interviewee 004 (female) argued that “parents will keep trying different ways, they won't stop but you need some prosecutions to show them and deter them—prosecution is important.” Several interviewees discussed the possibility that criminalization might deter young people from coming forward, while others suggested that parents might simply change their tactics. Some of the female interviewees, notably those who worked for women's organizations, also echoed concerns expressed in previous studies. In general, women's groups in the United Kingdom have been apprehensive that criminalization might result in parents withdrawing children from school to send them abroad to marry at an earlier age (Enright, 2009). Although most of the interviewees supported the principles behind criminalization, many also felt that these

uncertainties demonstrated the need to closely monitor trends to enhance training for relevant professionals, allowing them to identify risks more effectively and provide tailored support for victims.

Conversely, the group of male interviewees held strong views against criminalization. They did not have strong opinions about the practical implications but were doubtful that the proposed legislation would be effective. While agreeing that the majority of parents would abide by the law—and, therefore, would potentially be deterred from involvement in FM—the male interviewees held the view that some parents in affected communities do not believe it is morally wrong to force a child into marriage. Critically, most male interviewees (four out of five) did not regard any kind of state intervention as positive. Instead, they focused on the importance of evasive action by those at risk; indeed, several ruminated on whether it was fair to blame the parents if an individual had just given in to pressure.

When asked about their ability to help or advise someone facing the prospect of FM, most of the male interviewees said they would respond by saying “just don’t do it” or “walk away.” The majority felt that they lacked the requisite knowledge to offer further advice and believed that doing so would be inappropriate in any case. For instance, Interviewee 005 (male) said, “It’s a family thing, you can’t interfere. Everyone’s got to find their way.” Thus, the male interviewees identified with the traditional South Asian view that family matters should be kept private and that it is shameful and inappropriate for them to be discussed or dealt with in public or by outsiders (Gill, 2015). Interviewee 010 (male) said, “It doesn’t make sense. You’re not going to want to chat [about] all that in public or, like, get your parents in trouble.” Interviewee 008 (male) took a similar stance: “It’s just wrong . . . and anyway it won’t work. How do you prove force? Who is going to testify in court and send their parents to the lock-up?”

These statements reinforce the strong influence of gender on how individuals within these communities view and treat FM. While women focus on the effects of the legislation and criminalization of FM on the victim, men put more weight on how it affects general familial relations and reputation/honor. For this reason, to be effective, any effort to prevent this offense must take into account these gender-based differences.

Young People’s Views on the Role of Gender in FM

None of the interviewees declared ever having gone through FM, suggesting that they were not speaking from direct personal experience when discussing the role of gender in FM. Both male and female interview participants reported familiarity with few, if any, cases involving male victims. Moreover, it appeared that male interviewees had never discussed the topic with others in any detail before the interviews. At the end of the survey, a significant number of both male and female respondents reported that their participation had enhanced their understanding of how FM might affect male victims.

The majority of survey respondents agreed that gender plays a significant role in FM. Of the 69 respondents who answered the question, “Do you think forced marriage

is different for boys [young men] and for girls [young women]?”—57% ($n = 39$) felt FM was different for men and women, 30% ($n = 21$) were unsure, and 13% ($n = 9$) thought it was the same. Sixty-five survey respondents answered the question about whether gender impacted help-seeking behavior. Of these, 53% ($n = 34$) agreed that it was hard for men to ask for help, and 47% ($n = 34$) agreed that there are fewer services and less assistance available for men.

Survey respondents were offered a list of potential harm associated with FM that affected women specifically. Of the 85 who answered these questions, 93% ($n = 79$) identified assault, rape, curtailment of sexual and reproductive rights, and negative impacts on education, career, and financial autonomy as common. This contradicts the 43% ($n = 37$) of respondents who either thought FM was the same for men and women, or who were uncertain of the difference. Survey participants identified additional risks for men whose sexuality had been questioned, those with drug and/or alcohol problems and those who had been in trouble with the law.

Both the interview guide and the survey provided participants with a list of possible factors that might be particularly relevant for men forced into marriage. Three options were not chosen by any interviewee but were selected by a significant number of survey respondents; 58% ($n = 37$) of respondents agreed that male victims might already have chosen their own partner, 31% ($n = 20$) partially agreed, and 19% ($n = 12$) agreed that men might accept FM to ensure there was someone to look after their parents, illustrating highly conservative views about gendered responsibilities regarding care. On a similar note, 41% ($n = 26$) partially agreed and 43% ($n = 28$) agreed that it might be difficult for men who felt it was important to be seen to obey their elders and who did not want to set an example for younger siblings who might then also refuse a marriage their parents wished them to enter into. This suggests an urgent need to examine the role of brothers as perpetrators, as well as potential victims, of FM.

Male Interviewees' Perspectives on Gendered Harm

Male interviewees found it difficult to identify or empathize with the experience of FM. As a group, they were unable to easily conceive of a man being forced into marriage or at least admitting to being a victim. Interviewee 006 (male) argued, “For lads it’s a bit weird isn’t it? Being forced into a marriage . . . quite hard to own up to . . . it’s more a girls’ thing really.” The male interviewees agreed that men had little expectation of, or desire for, intervention from public authorities, stressing that marriage is a “family business” and not a matter for the courts or other outsiders.

While they saw FM as a female issue, all male interviewees did initially state that FM presented equal challenges for men and women, particularly in terms of the mental health implications and loss of autonomy. For instance, Interviewee 005 (male) suggested,

It must mess with your mind a bit—like you’re trying to be all responsible, happy families with wifey but really you hate her guts and you’re just trying to get by and have a good time and your own life.

Similarly, Interviewee 006 (male) mused that in a FM, “you have to try and live with this person you don’t like and doesn’t like you and everyone knows that and you’ve just got to pretend—that’s mental.” As the interviews progressed, however, gender differences emerged in attitudes toward both harm and coping strategies, a trend that was also observed in many of the survey responses. Several of the male interviewees acknowledged that women may be more vulnerable to potential harm, citing domestic violence, constraints on women’s lives, rape, and being trapped by childbirth as particularly likely. For instance, Interviewee 005 (male) suggested,

For the women . . . it’s a bad start, isn’t it? I could imagine it might be a pretty rotten marriage, like maybe violent and that. And, like, if you’re married and you hate the guy, well, I mean sex and stuff, that . . . well, suppose it’s a bit like rape, isn’t it?

Elaborating on the risks women encounter when attempting to flee FM, Interviewee 005 (male) argued that women should not go through with an unwanted marriage in the first place:

Once you’re in it you’re stuck really and running away, like, it’s quite a big thing with the girls that can be quite risky, like if your family has forced, actually, really forced you, then they’re going to try and make it stick. They might take it bad if a girl tries to walk away from it.

All the male interviewees believed that male victims might be more able than female victims to build a life outside their FM or get a divorce. This echoes Samad and Eade’s (2003) findings that, for men, “it’s an easier option just to say yes.” Interviewee 005’s (male) views were typical: “You’ve done it now and the family [are] all happy and that, so it’s easier to try and stick with it . . . just get on with it. And, like, divorce is getting lots easier now.” Similarly, the male interviewees also felt that female victims were more likely to feel trapped and constrained, particularly when children are involved. For instance, Interviewee 008 (male) said,

I suppose the girls get really caught up in it . . . babies and that . . . and it’s kind of the end for them. I mean, that’s it, you’re married, you’re stuck with him, you’re at home, kids, relatives, that’s your life.

Interviewee 010 (male) offered a similar view based on personal experience: “My sister went through with it, didn’t she, and she’s miserable. She wants a divorce but it’s not that easy . . . she’s got kids.”

Male interviewees identified emotional blackmail as a common strategy employed by parents to persuade young people to accept an unwanted marriage but felt that women were more likely to bow to this kind of pressure. Interviewee 005 (male) argued, “It’s the same sort of stuff really, all that emotional guilt-tripping stuff, but girls give in to that more easily.” Two male interviewees commented that pressure from parents for daughters to assume “traditional domestic roles,” act as selfless peacemakers who bind family members together through appeasement, and seek

approval from male relatives was a particularly common and effective way to coerce women into marriage. Interviewee 008 (male) not only shared these views but also acknowledged that parents themselves may be under pressure regarding a marriage: "Often they are under similar pressure themselves from back home and sometimes it's heavy, right, because it's like a promise and that's serious."

Female Interviewees' Perspectives on Gendered Harm

Like the male interviewees, a number of female interviewees initially stated that FM was the same for men and women, or perhaps even more challenging for men. For instance, Interviewee 001 (female) stated that it is

. . . hard to know where to turn [as a man] because most services are aimed at women, though of course this may reflect the majority of cases.

She continued,

. . . it's hard for them to ask for help as they are embarrassed . . . it's hard because they might not expect to be taken seriously or understood as most people associate it with women.

Similarly, Interviewee 002 (female) explained that "men are affected, though there are fewer cases, but the problem is the male ego, like they'd be afraid they may laugh at me, not take me seriously." Thus, male and female interviewees agreed that men were less likely to seek help, partly because "men aren't supposed to be pushed around like that" (Interviewee 007, female).

Most of the female interviewees focused on the mental health implications of FM, which they felt were either the same for men and women, or worse for men. Key themes were the crippling effect of a complete loss of autonomy and the impact on a victim's sense of self. As Interviewee 002 (female) argued, "You lose your own identity, lose what you are; you can never ever be the same again or find the person you were once. That is very, very hard." Several spoke of lasting detrimental effects on mental health for men who find themselves living a double life, echoing the views of male interviewees. For instance, Interviewee 004 (female) commented that "it's still horrible to go back to a house to a person supposed to be your wife who doesn't love you and you don't love her and everyone knows." Mirroring points raised by the male respondents, Interviewee 007 (female) said,

It would mess with anyone's mind . . . I suppose men might feel more able to try and get a divorce, or they might try and just live with it but build an alternative life out of the marriage.

Like the male interviewees, the female interviewees also gradually acknowledged gender-specific harm, as well as differences both in parental strategies of coercion toward men and women and in men's and women's differing coping mechanisms. The

female interviewees recognized that for women, FM might also involve rape, domestic violence, honor-based violence, and an end to freedoms and choices.

It is notable that among the interviewees, most of the women and all of the men avoided the word “rape,” using euphemisms or describing sex in a FM as “like rape.” As with the male interviewees, female interviewees broadly agreed that male victims would be able to continue with their studies, employment, and social activities without undue interference. Thus, both female and male interviewees concluded by implicitly expressing the view that women may face greater and more complex harm as a result of FM.

Most female participants (survey participants and interviewees) believed that parental strategies to force an unwanted marriage, such as guilt and emotional blackmail, remained constant whether the victim was male or female. In agreement with male interviewees and survey respondents, however, female participants identified women as particularly vulnerable to such tactics. Interviewee 002 (female) suggested that parental strategies

might be sometimes a bit different . . . to get men is like, “you are the man of the family, you have to,” that sense of responsibility and grown-up adulthood so he feels older and responsible, whereas with women it’s, “you don’t know how it will make us feel.”

This interviewee shared her observations that her male cousins were eager to be treated as adults, because they felt that adulthood enhanced their status as men deserving of respect and power. She argued that parents appeal to young men by manipulating their eagerness to gain power and respect through stressing the adult and responsible nature of accepting a suitable marriage. Interviewee 009 (female) reaffirmed the majority view:

It’s . . . maybe more about the honour and shame of him . . . the duty as a man . . . that sort of thing. Playing on that macho thing, whereas with us girls I think it’s more about family and selfishness and letting people down.

Overall, female interviewees had more to say about the role of gender and had clearly given the issue much greater consideration. However, only one interviewee articulated her views using the term “gender discrimination,” while another two referenced feminism. One of these women suggested that working in a voluntary capacity with these issues had developed her tendency to apply a feminist lens and both women appeared to feel a need to apologize for their views: “I wasn’t a feminist, I saw males as superior really but I have increasingly become feminist . . . but sorry if I sound too much on the women’s side” (Interviewee 001, female). As FM is a form of gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women, it is surprising that so few of the participants applied a gendered analysis in framing their views.

Taken as a whole, these findings imply that more work is needed to explore how young men’s expectations about gender roles and their ideas about masculinity are used to coerce them into marriage, especially in terms of devising effective responses and prevention initiatives.

Young People's Views on Addressing FM

The majority of interviewees and survey respondents put at least some of the blame for the continuation of FM on parents and by extension on the wider family and the community, both in the United Kingdom and “back home.” However, a wide range of other causes and motivations were also identified. In the survey, respondents were offered a list of possible causal factors derived from the Foreign Office’s guidance on FM (FMU, 2013). Sixty-nine percent ($n = 47$) felt that pressure from relatives in the parents’ home country was key, whereas 78% ($n = 53$) said that perpetrators often believe tradition, religion, custom, or honor requires FM. Furthermore 45% ($n = 19$) agreed that some parents do not realize that FM is no longer tolerated. Interviewees shared similar concerns. For instance, Interviewee 008 (male) argued that his parents “came over here, I don’t know, fifties, sixties? And they judge everything by how it was then.”

Across the interviews and survey responses, a number of participants mentioned that their parents did not socialize beyond their immediate family and mosque, rarely mixing with people outside their community, and that this meant that ideas about FM largely went unchallenged. Two interviewees felt this was partly due to their parents having experienced racism in wider (British) society and partly due to their own fear and ignorance of Western culture. This is particularly important in light of concerns in some quarters that government policies on FM are underpinned by anti-immigration and anti-Muslim agendas (Holgan & Haltinner, 2015; Qureshi, Charsley, & Shaw, 2012). For instance, Interviewee 008 (male) felt that the drive to create new criminal legislation concerning FM was motivated more by racism than by a concern for victims:

I heard they [the Government] want to make it [FM] a crime but I don’t think they are doing that because they care about forced marriage. I think it’s just another thing to have a go at Muslims and Asians for. It’s all about race and immigration and terrorism and all that. They’re obsessed.

A number of survey respondents also mentioned racism in this context. When given the opportunity to select important arguments against criminalization, 41% ($n = 29$) chose the option “it might lead to increased racial stereotyping.” A number of interviewees believed that these concerns, combined with a desire to hold on to the traditions of their country of origin, sometimes put parents at odds not just with British values but also with British laws. As Interviewee 007 (female) argued,

I think they are frightened of the West and of losing control and they might not mean any harm; I mean, they might think they are doing the right thing to look after their daughters but it’s wrong. I think it’s ignorance and it’s fear and I think they aren’t challenged enough.

As seen above, however, male interviewees were more likely to stress that it is the responsibility of young people to stand up to their parents. As Interviewee 006 (male) said,

It's up to us as well—we've got to stand up to them and tell them it's not on, it's not going to work, there's no point trying, we're not going along with it. No matter what they say, they can't force us, not really.

Meanwhile, female interviewees were more likely to mention the role of marriage, especially marriage involving immigration to the United Kingdom, as a means of helping family members to escape poverty or access new opportunities. For instance, Interviewee 001 (female) noted,

You know life back home, it's very hard, and so it's true that it can be a route out of poverty, provide opportunities for development or for a better life. And sometimes that's a promise or an agreement you have to honour. Pakistani families think it's better to marry in the family.

This kind of comment suggests a higher degree of empathy with parents' motivations among women, a factor that may render them especially vulnerable to emotional pressure. It is these sorts of insights that offer professionals more nuanced ways of persuading victims and those at risk to seek help. Indeed, one survey respondent commented that "education is vital. Making it [forced marriage] a crime doesn't address the underlying reasons why forced marriage happens, it is just a deterrent which some people will ignore."

When asked how approaches to tackling FM might be enhanced, interviewees and survey respondents overwhelmingly called for more publicity and the raising of awareness. Survey respondents

- i. underscored the need for thorough training of public-sector professionals, and
- ii. called for a greater investment of resources to support specialist women's organizations.

Meanwhile, interviewees recommended

- i. helping parents develop more diverse social networks,
- ii. providing additional funding for specialist units dealing with violence against women and girls,
- iii. developing peer-support networks, and
- iv. shifting the government's focus from legislation and immigration toward victims' needs and prevention efforts.

With regard to peer support, interviewees agreed that it is often easier to talk to peers, a finding reflected in Hemmings and Khalifa's (2013) recent study.

In terms of measures aimed at their parents' generation, some interviewees emphasized the importance of government attempts to reach out to older people in affected communities via institutions that their generation views as holding moral authority. However, others warned against placing too much responsibility in the hands of community institutions. In particular, some respondents called for a ban on Shari'ah courts

and warned that unless they were carefully selected for specific roles, the involvement of elders and religious leaders might exacerbate the problem. This is a major dilemma for policy makers. It is often difficult to know “from the outside” which elders and religious leaders can be relied upon to challenge the traditional values and norms that contribute to the problem of FM (Bano, 2012).

Conclusion

Collectively, the interview and survey data confirm the existence of a number of gender-specific differences in the ways in which FM is perpetrated and experienced within affected communities. In discussing their thoughts around FM, several male participants couched the problem in terms of the “honor” of the family, while female respondents spoke of “respect” for the family’s wishes. This gendered difference suggests that men are aware of and subject to a pressure to actively protect familial social status, while women expect their role to be one of passive acceptance.

Both male and female respondents highlighted “emotional blackmail” as the means by which young people are coerced. However, it was notable that this tactic was applied in different ways to men and women. In particular, several respondents noted that while FM could be used as a means to pressurize men into assuming the greater responsibilities associated with adulthood, parents were more likely to appeal to young women’s sense of empathy, and to ask them to conform to their parents’ wishes to avoid causing embarrassment to the family or to help improve the situation of poorer relatives in their parents’ country of origin. Gender differences also influenced victims’ help-seeking and coping mechanisms. Men were less likely to seek help because admitting to having been coerced may be seen as “unmanly.” They were more likely to cope through focusing on their extramarital life: friends, girlfriends, and other opportunities, outlets that may not be available to female victims.

Views on the criminalization of FM were also mixed. While all respondents recognized the perpetration of FM as problematic, there were marked differences in the ways in which male and female respondents viewed legal intervention. Several female respondents saw a new stand-alone prohibition as a potential tool to help young women resist coercion by their parents, while the majority of male respondents thought the law was unlikely to be effective because parents’ determination to see such marriages through, along with children’s unwillingness to criminalize their parents, would undermine its effectiveness. Perceptions that marriage was a private, family business, combined with a mistrust of government motivations (which some participants felt were tied up with an anti-immigration or anti-Muslim agenda), were also factors cited by male respondents as reasons for not supporting the criminalization of FM. It was evident that even though women suffer the most under hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, men also suffer. Children of migrants negotiating the norms of British hegemonic masculinity can find themselves constantly struggling to emulate these norms within their own communities. Yet, if they conform too closely to their diasporic communities’ norms, they risk being ostracized by the wider society. On the surface, male respondents seemed more likely to accept the conservative

norms of their communities. Their comments suggested that many were unwilling to oppose FM or seek help on the grounds that resistance would place them in the position of “victim,” creating an uncomfortable situation for them in relation to socially constructed perceptions of masculinity. Meanwhile, it appears that “positive” traits associated with socially constructed femininity—such as empathy, gentleness, obedience, respect, and putting the needs of others above one’s own selfish desires—are exploited to pressure young women into accepting their parents’ choice of marriage partner.

Indeed, learned discriminatory gender roles underpin how FM is both perpetrated and experienced. FM is often so normalized in affected communities that there is little recognition on the part of victims and their families that it is morally wrong, let alone illegal. While participants agreed that consent is the primary distinction between FM and arranged marriage, emotional pressure may blur the distinctions between them. These findings confirm those of other recent studies, including that of Hemmings and Khalifa (2013), which found that it is especially difficult for young people to confront and challenge the views of their parents when a culture of respect for elders prevails.

Men may acquiesce to an unwanted marriage because it is seen as possible for them both to marry as their families wish and to have a “second” life outside the marriage and family. The consequences for the mental health of the men are clear yet we know very little in terms of the potential for harm to the wives of such men. This is an area where further research is needed. It is possible that men in such situations may become husbands who abuse, neglect, or otherwise cause harm to their wives. The risks for women who marry men who are entering an unwanted marriage may well be greater than those for women who enter into marriages to which both partners freely consent. Being coerced against their will into an unwanted marriage may also provide insights into how some men deal with FM and why in that uncomfortable/denied position they turn from being victims into victimizers of their partners.

The findings of this study overall have significant implications for prevention and protection initiatives aimed at ending FM and offer important insights into how best to formulate awareness-raising materials to reach and appeal to those at risk. Responses from participants suggest that a two-pronged strategy is needed. First, a consciously gendered approach would improve the efficacy of targeted initiatives to protect those at risk, prosecute those who perpetrate FM, and enhance gender equality in general. For women, this approach might involve attempts to improve awareness of their rights and offer them better legal recourse and stronger support organizations; for men, it might involve more opportunities to discuss the issues and having safe spaces in which to question their ideas of manliness and not being a victim as these concepts form an important theme in this article. Furthermore, a consciously gendered approach could challenge and attempt to resolve cultural conflicts and raise awareness of FM as a matter that affects the human rights of both males and females who are pressured to enter into FM. Second, to combat this practice in the longer term, it is essential to find ways to work with community elders and institutions, not just to create awareness of the legal threats but also to debate how sociocultural attitudes toward marriage and the rights of young people can be harmoniously adapted to fit within Britain’s heterogeneous society.

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Notes

1. Strictly, this label applies to anyone who originates from the Asian continent. In practice, this term is used in the United Kingdom to mean people with ancestors from the Indian subcontinent (Bhopal, 2003).
2. Residents in England with ethnic origins in India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. See Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2013).
3. See Home Office (2013). The new definition of domestic violence and abuse now covers “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.” The definition goes on to clarify: “This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional. Controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour constitutes an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.” See Crown Prosecution Service (2013).
4. In the United Kingdom, the term “Black and minority ethnic” (BME) is used to refer to members of the population who are of non-White descent. There is significant variability regarding race/ethnicity within the umbrella terms of BME. We use this term to describe people from a cultural or ethnic minority in the United Kingdom. This group is not homogeneous, and differences exist even between the members of each ethnic group.
5. See Anitha and Gill (2009). This article provides some case law examples of the differences between coercion and consent (e.g., *Hirani v. Hirani*, 1983; *Mahmood v. Mahmood*, 1993; *Mahmud v. Mahmud*, 1994; *Sohrab v. Khan*, 2002).
6. Information received by author 1 (Aisha K. Gill) in an email communication, August 2013.
7. See Ministry of Justice (2013). Data provided by Ministry of Justice Analytical Services.
8. Recruitment of interviewees largely involved them self-selecting but nonetheless arguably reflects the following factors:
 - a. The context of the study is one specifically associated with Muslims, along with South Asians, and these are the cases most commonly captured by the media. This may reflect racial and religious stereotypes and prejudices, as well as population

demographics resulting in second- and third-generation families where forced marriage (FM) dynamics have surfaced.

- b. Individuals are more likely to engage with this issue if they feel it has some direct relevance to their lives. This could include personal or family experiences, an awareness of laws that target them or working in the sector. Given, as noted above, that the majority of recorded and reported cases come from South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds, along with the prevalence of specialist BME groups, it is likely that this demographic will have the organized structures in place to organize around these issues. It therefore makes sense that these groups are more likely to hear of and engage in this work.
- c. Recruitment entailed public posts on Twitter and private emails to schools and colleges, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), youth projects, local authorities, and domestic violence organizations. It also involved the posting of fliers in surgeries, libraries, and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, contacting individuals who worked with the Children's Society, Missing Children, the The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and Barnardo's on projects related to FM, and contacts who worked with BME women's issues, notably in the area of gender-based violence. Existing networks and contacts included projects both inside and outside London. This recruitment elicited more cases of participants of South Asian origin, and there are many good reasons for this:
 - i. There are more second- and third-generation British people of South Asian heritage and therefore of marriageable age where the issue has surfaced.
 - ii. To the extent that specialist BME women's support groups are well established (in the face of cuts and closure), there has been a preponderance serving South Asian populations.
 - iii. There has been widespread media coverage of cases that are South Asian so the issue has become associated with that specific population.
 - iv. The most widely publicized state-based action on FM has come from either the Foreign Office intervening in cases and having a heavy predominance of South Asian cases or from the Home Office and an immigration, law enforcement, and terrorism agenda that homes in on Muslim populations.

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