

<p>Institution: University of Roehampton</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Panel C, UoA 23 - Sociology</p>
<p>Title of case study: Preventing violence against women: Developing policy recommendations and best practice guidelines in the UK, Iraqi Kurdistan and India</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study focuses on Aisha Gill’s ground-breaking research on violence against women (VAW) in the UK, Iraqi Kurdistan and India as part of the Crucible Centre for Human Rights Research. Gill’s research has had a direct impact on local, national and international policy-making and professional practice, in particular, in relation to ‘honour’ based violence (HBV) and forced marriage (FM). This has underpinned her work as an academic commentator, with a strong media profile, her reports and policy briefings on VAW for UK and international public and third sector agencies, as well as an expert witness for the Crown Prosecution Service on HBV and FM cases.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Gill (University of Roehampton, 2003 to date) has led a number of studies on the framing of HBV and FM in media and policy discourses. Using an innovative intersectional approach, she has advanced current understandings of these forms of VAW. Collectively, her body of work offers a detailed critical understanding of the rationale behind various national and international attempts to address HBV and FM while simultaneously upholding constitutional commitments to multiculturalism. Gill’s rigorous scholarly research and practical insights, based on her experience on the frontline of efforts to tackle VAW, offer a unique perspective on tackling HBV and FM as forms of VAW. This action-oriented combination of theoretical and practice-based research provides a solid platform for developing proposals for how governments might respond more effectively to VAW across Europe, Iraqi Kurdistan and the Indian sub-continent in order to better support victims and prosecute perpetrators.</p> <p>For example, a major international study on “‘honour” killings and “honour” based violence research in the UK Kurdish community and Iraqi Kurdistan’, which drew on Gill’s decade of expertise in the field, was conducted between September 2008 and November 2010 by Professor Gill Hague (PI), Dr Aisha Gill (JI), and Dr Nazand Begikhani (JI). The research investigated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the nature and extent of HBV in Kurdish communities, 2. current HBV policy and practice, 3. how NGOs respond to HBV, 4. the experiences of victims and their families, and 5. media coverage of HBV. <p>In both Iraqi Kurdistan and the UK, there was a clear need for the government, the police and the criminal justice system to respond more effectively to HBV. The study found that policy discussions often fail to progress beyond abstract debates, ignoring core practical issues. For instance, insufficient recognition has been devoted to the fact that police protection is conditional: the nature and extent of the protection offered to victims depends on individual police officers’ perception of the incident(s) reported. Similarly, a longstanding criticism raised by prosecutors, women’s groups and victims alike, concerns the fact that officers routinely dismiss HBV as part of the culture of black and minority ethnic communities, stereotyping both victims and abusers. Consequently, some police officers do not take HBV seriously and so fail to protect victims from further abuse.</p> <p>Thus, one of the biggest areas of concern identified relates to variations in how effectively HBV and other forms of VAW are dealt with across – and even within – police forces. Inconsistencies between policy and practice complicate the issue. Many of the participants in the study linked these variations and inconsistencies to retrogressive understandings of the role of cultural factors. This problem was compounded by widespread ‘reverse racism’ among the police and other statutory agencies, leading to cultural rights being granted precedence over women’s rights. Awareness-raising activities (including Gill’s efforts, described in Evidence 5a) have helped to address these issues and advance initiatives to support victims and prosecute perpetrators.</p> <p>The study also found that HBV remains prevalent in Kurdish communities in Britain and Iraqi</p>

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Kurdistan. In both contexts individual cases exhibit similar parameters, similar underlying causal factors (e.g. in terms of patriarchal beliefs), and similar outcomes for victims, perpetrators and their families. These findings indicate that best practice guidelines and effective initiatives are broadly generalisable across diverse national settings. The UK-based part of the study, conducted by Gill, resulted in the creation of a number of best practice recommendations emphasising:

1. the lack of efficient information systems and consequent failures to record sufficient, accurate data on various types of VAW,
2. ineffective working relationships between the police and specialist VAW and HBV organisations in black and minority ethnic communities,
3. inconsistencies in police officers' knowledge and understanding of HBV and related issues, resulting in inconsistencies in police responses, and
4. the lack of specialist services in the UK, including safe shelters.

3. References to the research

Gill, A. (2009) "'Honour' Killings and the Quest for Justice in Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in the UK', *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 20(4): 475-494. DOI: 10.1177/0887403408329604

Anitha, S., Gill, A. (2009) 'Coercion, consent and the forced marriage debate in the UK', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 17(2): 165-184. DOI: 10.1007/s10691-009-9119-4

Gill, A., Anitha, S. (2011) 'Forced marriage legislation in the UK: A critique', in Gill, A. and Anitha, S. (eds) *Forced Marriage: Introducing a social justice and human rights perspective*, London: Zed Books.

Gill, A., Begikhani, N. and Hague, G. (2012) "'Honour"-based Violence in Kurdish Communities', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 35: 75-85. DOI: 10.1016/j.wsif.2012.02.001

Gill, A. (2013) 'Feminist reflections on researching so-called "honour" killings', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 21, 3. REF2.

Key research awards:

- Birmingham Women's Aid grant to design good practice standards to address forced marriage in Birmingham (PI, 2012-2013) (£5,000).
- British Academy Small Research grants to investigate so-called 'honour' killings in India. Awarded to Dr Aisha Gill (PI, 2011-2012) (£7,000).
- Kurdistan Regional Government grant for the project 'An Investigation into "Honour" based Violence (HBV) and "Honour"-based Killings in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurdish Diaspora in the UK: Contested debates on gendered violence, "honour", ethnicity, nation and the quest to eradicate HBV'. Awarded to Professor Gill Hague, Dr Aisha Gill (JI, 2008-2010) and Dr Nazand Begikhani. (£150,000).

4. Details of the impact

1. Gill provided advice and expertise on national policies on HBV, FM and domestic violence to national policy-makers in government, the Crown Prosecution Service and IPCC, contributing to enhanced service provision.

Gill's research has been used in the development of national policy relating to VAW, FM and HBV, including the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007) and the National Police Honour-Based Strategy and two-year action plan (2008-2010). On 26 May 2011, Gill was invited by the steering committee of the Forced Marriage Unit to produce an independent report on whether FM should be criminalised. Based in part on her recommendations, the Forced Marriage Unit concluded that criminalisation would be counterproductive: Gill's research demonstrates that the Crown Prosecution Service can already prosecute cases of FM under existing criminal offences, including rape, kidnap and assault. Instead, Gill argues that there is a far more urgent need for better training for professionals dealing with FM cases. She also recommended a comprehensive awareness-raising campaign aimed at affected communities and the wider population as a far more effective way to combat the problem. The Forced Marriage Unit used these key findings on

behalf of the UK Coalition Government in their response to the Eighth Report of the Home Affairs Committee (Session 2010, 12 HC 880) (Evidence 5a).

Gill's research has significantly contributed to the range of policies aimed at prevention of HBV and FM. The broad range of beneficiaries include the police, Crown Prosecution Service, local and national government bodies, programmes working with victims of violence, commissioners and funders of services, service referrers, children, and victims. In February 2009, a public meeting was held between the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation to discuss police failures to protect a young Kurdish woman, Banaz Mahmod, who had been murdered in a so-called 'honour' killing in January 2006. In July 2009, the IPCC adopted a number of the preventative strategies recommended in Gill's research publications (see Reference 3). As a result, the IPCC designed new preventative strategies to encourage informal, proactive community responses to HBV. Gill's research also highlights the need for a better understanding of the ways in which 'honour'-based communities interface with public institutions in order for support agencies to effectively confront perpetrators and also support and protect victims. Gill also recommended that expert panels be introduced to scrutinise IPCC inquiry reports in cases of police failures to protect victims of domestic violence and 'honour' killings. The IPCC introduced such panels in 2009.

Gill's research on 'honour' killings also led to positive collaborations with a number of individual IPCC Commissioners in connection with the policing failures that failed to prevent the murders of a number of women. In October 2012, Gill drew on her research when delivering IPCC training seminars for operational staff and investigators across England and Wales: this fostered an ongoing exchange of knowledge on domestic violence, HBV and FM as part of IPCC Continuous Professional Development days. In turn, in May 2013 this led to an invitation to join the small reference group assisting an IPCC Commissioner by providing recommendations regarding a case of domestic violence homicide where the victim (Mrs Susan Forster from Durham) was unwilling to press charges or co-operate with police action. Tragically, 27 days after this, Susan was attacked again by her husband and died. In this case Gill advised the IPCC against the use of restorative justice intervention in domestic violence cases. In July 2013, the IPCC recommended that Gill's position on restorative justice be codified and included in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) 'Guidelines on the use of Community Resolutions incorporating Restorative Justice'.

Gill's research also offers perspectives for understanding VAW and FM to the police and the criminal justice system, aiding them in serving the victims and to prosecute perpetrators more effectively. For example, in October 2011, Gill was asked by the Crown Prosecution Service to provide expert evidence about so-called 'honour' killings and forced marriage in the Shafiea Ahmed case (*R v Ahmed and Ahmed 2012*). This contributed to the successful conviction of her parents for her murder in August 2012.

Gill's research findings about the problems of criminalisation of forced marriage were used by Helen Grant MP in the 8 March 2012 parliamentary debate on violence against women and girls in the House of Commons (Evidence 5b). Subsequently, Gill was asked to attend a meeting on 27th June 2013 with the Shadow Minister for Equalities, Kate Green MP. She discussed how the current legislation on FM is working and how the Government might increase the effectiveness of existing civil responses, before new forced marriage legislation is adopted in autumn 2013, that may make it harder to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.

2. Gill produced reports and other documents for NGOs, service providers and policy makers, that have informed good practice guidelines for supporting victims of HBV and FM.

The NHS, the Department for Education, and a range of third sector organisations have used Gill's research to produce good practice guidelines for supporting victims of HBV and FM. Professionals and voluntary sector workers have drawn upon this research for improving their engagement with perpetrators, victims and their families. For instance, between November 2012 and July 2013 Gill was commissioned to develop a safeguarding toolkit for Birmingham Women's Aid to help relevant professionals both to identify FM and to better assess risk factors in individual cases. The guide sets out the legal parameters of Forced Marriage Protection Orders in simple terms to enable victims to make more informed choices. Gill also delivered a number of training days about FM to teachers, police officers, lawyers and social workers in Birmingham to discuss the toolkit. In

addition, she ran training events with staff from Birmingham Women's Aid focused around sharing information about how best to meet the diverse needs of victims: these sessions explored existing legal provisions, measures, campaigns and initiatives from across the UK.

In May 2009, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa invited her to contribute to an Expert Group Meeting on developing legislation to address harmful cultural practices, she offered recommendations and commentary on examples of good practice in the UK and Europe regarding the design of effective legislative frameworks for addressing VAW committed in the name of 'honour'. In December 2011, Gill was part of a delegation of twenty-five international experts who met at the first international 'honour' killings conference in Canberra (Australia) to share and disseminate expertise about FM and HBV.

3. Gill's research has contributed to public discourse, and has raised awareness of VAW, HBV and FM amongst public audiences.

Gill has communicated her research to broad public audiences through both traditional and social media outlets, contributing to and shaping public discourse. She has appeared on Sky News, Al Jazeera and the BBC (including Crimewatch, Radio 4 Today, Breakfast, World Tonight, World Service, BBC Asian Network and the Politics Show) to present her work. This contribution to public discourse has impacted on the approach of different campaigns and individuals towards VAW and HBV. For example, the 'Ending Victimisation and Blame' campaign draws on Gill's media work. Gill has also taken part in a special Australian radio debate about researching 'honour' killings (see 'The Law Report': Evidence 5e), and in November 2012, contributed to a BBC Crimewatch documentary about the murder of Shafiea Ahmed (Evidence 5f).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- a) Forced Marriage Unit, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm81/8151/8151.pdf>; Reference to the research in the media: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jun/06/david-cameron-forced-marriage-law>
- b) Helen Grant, MP: House of Commons Hansard Debates for 8 March 2012 (pt 0002): <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120308/debtext/120308-0002.htm>
- c) United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Award, especially with regard to the Expert Group Summit on 'Developing Good Practices in Legislation to Address Harmful Practices', Addis Abba, Ethiopia, May 2009: <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/UNW-Legislation-Supplement-EN.pdf>
- d) Cheshire Police, in *R v Ahmed and Ahmed* 2012: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/aug/03/shafiea-ahmed-charity-honour-killings>
<http://video.sky.com/news/related/49328/1/Social%20Services%20Let%20Down%20Shafiea/tr>
[ue; http://www.politicshome.com/uk/story/28471/](http://www.politicshome.com/uk/story/28471/)
- e) The Law Report (Australia): <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lawreport/2012-02-07/3815586>
- f) BBC Crimewatch: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p011jm3b>

Testimonial Evidence:

- g) Commissioner with the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) [2003-2013].
- h) Detective Superintendent. Cheshire Police lead for Serious and Organised Crime, Public Protection and Senior Investigator for the Murder of Shafiea Ahmed.
- i) Lead Commissioner on domestic violence with the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) [2003-2013].
- j) Joint Head of the Forced Marriage Unit.