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# Report on Exploratory Study into Honor Violence Measurement Methods

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Westat conducted a study on honor violence in the United States and prepared this report on its findings for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The introduction and overview section of this report provides a summary of findings, defines honor violence in detail, and provides statistics drawn from a variety of sources to estimate the prevalence of honor violence throughout the world and in the United States. The report also comments on the future of honor violence, including how the Internet is changing honor violence. The remainder of this report provides information on collecting data regarding the prevalence of honor violence in the United States based on the prevailing literature, interviews and discussions with experts, a review of relevant surveys, and searches through online and legal sources. The report concludes with recommendations for initial steps the government can take to collect data on honor violence.

## 1.1 Summary of Findings

As a result of the work done on this task, summary findings are as follows:

1. There is no reliable summary data available for the United States regarding the prevalence of honor violence. However, based on the literature review, interviews, and online searches conducted for this study, cases of any type of honor violence appear to be rare in comparison to other types of crime in the United States.
2. The Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) have one current research effort related to honor violence, and no earlier studies were identified. The current study is an exploratory, qualitative study on the relationship between forced marriage and domestic violence in a single South Asian community in the Washington, D.C., area.
3. Information about honor violence is held tightly within families. Victims or potential victims may not report victimization because of concern about an extremely negative family response. Moreover, victims may not report information because in their home cultures what has happened is not viewed as a crime.
4. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is inappropriate for collecting data on honor violence, in part because of the rare nature of these incidents, and in part because it collects data from all persons in the household. In honor violence, the household is the source of the threat. Additionally, because the NCVS involves

interviews with victims, it can only capture data on nonfatal violence and not on violence resulting in death.

5. The Uniform Crime Reporting Program Supplementary Homicide Reports collect some information that would be helpful in identifying fatal incidents of honor violence (i.e., information on the relationship between victim and perpetrator), but the reports do not capture sufficient information about motive. Moreover, such reporting relies on law enforcement assessment. Research for this report indicates that without training, law enforcement personnel in the United States are unlikely to recognize honor violence.
6. It is difficult for large surveys of the general population to gather a sample of interest large enough to make accurate and reliable estimates of the level of honor violence in the United States because of the small number of cases and populations in which it usually occurs.

## 1.2 Defining Honor Violence

To understand honor violence, one must first understand the concept of honor in cultures that use honor to justify violent behavior. Honor within these cultures is most often defined as the reputation or social standing of a family based on the behavior and morality of its female members (Brandon and Hafaz, 2010). Honor violence, in general, is a mechanism to maintain or regain a family's honor by punishing or eliminating girls and women whose actions invite rumors of sexual impropriety or disobedience. Boys and men may also be victims of honor violence if they violate sexual norms or defy patriarchal authority.

Honor cultures enforce a strict code of traditional gender roles that “dictates precedence and toughness for males, [while] norms for females stress modesty, shame, and the avoidance of behaviors that might threaten the good name of the family (e.g., adultery or sexual immodesty)” (Vandello and Cohen 2003, 998). Women are “viewed as weaker than, and owned and protected by men and restricted by male-dominated rules” (Isik 2008, 2). These cultures situate a man's honor in the chastity, purity, and modesty of his female relatives (Vandello and Cohen 2003, 998). They place high importance on family cohesion and control under the leadership of a man, such that the man will feel shame when that control is lost. They encourage and perpetuate male violence against women in order to “preserve the integrity of the man and the family”; not responding to perceived female misbehavior may bring additional shame (Vandello and Cohen 2003, 998). These cultures encourage participation by the larger community in “enhancing and controlling” shame. Such participation begins with the mother-in-law, acting as a proxy for the husband (Baker, Gregware, and Cassidy, 1999, 166). Examples of “cultures of honor” include Mediterranean societies such as

Greece, Italy, and Spain; Middle East and Arab cultures; Latin and South American cultures with Iberian roots; and the American South (Vandello and Cohen 2003, 998).

Honor violence is a form of family violence in that it is committed by family members against other family members. However, unlike “traditional” family or domestic violence, honor violence has a conspiratorial and less impulsive quality, evidenced by the systematic surveillance of the victim, involvement of one or more family members, and, in some instances, the family engagement of bounty hunters or assassins to find and kill victims.<sup>1</sup> Perpetrators of honor violence have a sense of honor rather than one of wrongdoing and feel that coercing, harming, or killing the victim is the only way to either prevent behavior that would bring dishonor to the family or restore the family’s damaged honor.

Researchers and practitioners differ as to how honor violence should be studied and addressed. In law enforcement, there may be a policy of immediate arrest for domestic violence regardless of the victim’s wishes, but such a policy when applied to an honor violence case can significantly escalate the situation.<sup>2</sup> Researchers emphasize different aspects of the situation. For example, Gill suggests that it must first and foremost be considered an act of violence against women (2009), while Walker holds out the concepts of honor and risk to the women as the most significant factors in the study of honor violence (2012).

The four types of honor violence discussed frequently are forced marriage, honor-based domestic violence, honor killing, and female genital mutilation (Brandon and Hafaz, 2010). Forced marriage and female genital mutilation are acts of violence in that they are acts of physical or emotional force that are intended to preserve or improve the family honor. Honor-based domestic violence and honor killing may be intended to repair or prevent further damage to a family’s honor. Any or all of the four types of honor violence may occur within a single family or be directed at a single victim.

Brief descriptions of each type are as follows:

- *Forced marriage* occurs when one party does not consent to an arranged marriage but the marriage occurs anyway. The lack of consent could be because of the age of a proposed marital partner (i.e., too young to legally marry), or because one partner is under some type of duress from the family to marry. The duress may include emotional abuse, physical abuse, and/or kidnapping. The marriage is forced using some kind of threat or violence because an intended marital partner’s refusal to enter into an arranged marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Nazir, Afal. 2014. Project Interview.

<sup>2</sup> Klemperer, Jane. 2014. Project Interview.

will cause a loss of honor. From a Western view, the consummation of a forced marriage would be rape.

- *Honor-based domestic violence* occurs when the family's honor is threatened by a member's behavior, such as defying parental authority, becoming too westernized, rejecting or abandoning a marriage, or abusing drugs or alcohol. This abuse can be physical or emotional. The goal of this violence is to protect the family's honor from future damage by forcing the victim or observing relatives to behave according to family expectations. According to many sources, honor violence is virtually always pre-planned (Brandon and Hafaz, 2010; Kulczycki and Windle, 2011; Janssen, 2009). The perpetrators of honor-based domestic violence can be intimate partners, parents, siblings, members of the extended family, or some combination of these family members.<sup>3</sup>
- *Honor killing* occurs when the family's honor has been damaged. Honor killings are pre-planned and may be carried out by parents, husbands, siblings, or extended family. An honor killing is perceived by the perpetrator to be a way to restore honor to the family in the face of perceived severe damage.
- *Female genital mutilation* occurs primarily in Africa and among immigrants from Africa, but it can occur in other honor-based cultures. It is a modification of a woman's genitalia for cultural or religious reasons (Brandon and Hafez, 2010). This mutilation is intended to maintain family honor by preserving the woman's virginity until marriage and controlling the woman's sexuality before and after marriage; the intended result is reduction of her libido in order to ensure that she will not be tempted to engage in premarital or extramarital sexual behavior.

### 1.3 Demographics of Honor Violence Victims

The most commonly referenced estimate available for the number of honor killings worldwide is about 5,000 per year (United Nations, 2000). Using a method that applies U.S. demographic characteristics to another country's honor violence statistics, researchers estimate that between 23 and 27 honor killings occur annually in the United States (Curtis et al., unpublished). In comparison, Curtis et al., report an average of 13 honor killings per year in The Netherlands and 10-12 honor killings per year in the United Kingdom. About 3,000 forced marriages have been estimated to take place over a 2-year period in the United States, or 1,500 per year, based on data collected from a non-random survey of social service organizations (Tahirih, 2011). While neither U.S. estimate is

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<sup>3</sup> One form of violence that may be honor violence in some cases is acid attacks. These incidents occur around the world and are usually directed at women and children. They have been known to occur when a man attacks a woman with acid for refusing a forced marriage or for causing a sexual embarrassment. In this way, they are likely honor crimes. The project team did not encounter any discussion of acid attacks in general honor crime literature, and did not find any cases of honor-related acid attacks in the United States. (For more information, see <http://www.stopacidattacks.org>, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/10238174/Number-of-UK-attacks-involving-acid-and-other-corrosive-substances-soars.html>, and <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23631395>.)

completely reliable, these are the best estimates available at this time. (Section 2.1 describes the literature review methodology used to study honor violence and the sources of these estimates.). Expressed as a rate, honor killing occurs approximately 0.008 offenses per 100,000 persons and forced marriages about 0.5 per 100,000, compared with 4.7 for homicide, 27 for rape/sexual assault, and 113 for robbery in the United States. U.S. estimates of the number and rate of honor violence specifically related to abuse or female genital mutilation are not currently available.

Chesler (2014) analyzed 172 incidents and 230 victims of honor killings based primarily on information obtained from English-language media around the world, and reported the statements below about honor killings globally. This information covers the period from 1989-2009. Chesler's report is one of the few summary description of victims worldwide; the findings are in line with other case studies, project interviews, and the online and legal searches.

- The average age of honor killing victims worldwide is 23.
- Women constitute 93 percent of victims.
- Half of the victims are daughters and sisters of the perpetrator and a quarter are wives or girlfriends. The remaining victims are mothers, aunts, nieces, cousins, uncles, or non-relatives.
- There are two general populations of victims—younger females with an average age of 17, and older females with an average age of 36.
- Two-thirds of honor killings are perpetrated by some type of family collaboration.
- Murder by the family of origin is highest in Europe (72%) and lowest in North America (49%).
- 42 percent of honor killings involve multiple perpetrators.
- In North America, 91 percent of victims were murdered for being “too westernized,” and 43 percent of victims in Muslim countries were killed for this reason.
- In North America, fathers were involved 100 percent of the time when the daughter victim was 18 years or younger.
- In Europe, 96 percent of honor killings were committed by Muslims.

Although honor violence is most prevalent among people from Islamic regions of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, honor crimes are not condoned by Islamic law (Abu-Lughod, 2011; Irfan, 2008). Honor violence has also been documented among persons of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, and Christian faith (Standish, 2013).



## 1.4 Future of Honor Violence

Honor killings are thought to have increased significantly between 1989 and 2009 (Chesler, 2014). It is unclear whether this is because of increased reporting or increased incidents. One factor in this increase in incidents or reporting may be the Internet. Janssen et al. (2011) found that although discussion forums and online groups can provide outlets for youth in these very traditional settings, the rise of social networking has decreased anonymity and increased opportunities for inappropriate behavior to be identified by family members. The Internet can also be a means for controlling the victims (e.g., limiting access, online stalking, threats of the release of personal information, threats of violence) as well as a way to actually punish victims (e.g., online shaming).

This section provides a summary of the research literature concerning honor violence, information gathered from law enforcement materials pertaining to honor violence, and information gathered from other types of media. The review of these materials focused on the definition of honor violence used, the research methods, and the findings. An annotated bibliography is provided in Appendix A of this report.

## 2.1 Review of Research Literature

### ***Methods Currently Used or Relevant to the Study of Honor Violence***

Among the many articles and websites related to honor violence that were reviewed for this project, few presented strong empirical research. A published review of extant literature likewise noted serious questions about the reliability and validity of the data in many of the reviewed articles (Kulczyki and Windle, 2011). Data validity may have been compromised because information was obtained mainly from interviewed police, lawyers, government representatives, non-governmental organization workers, laypersons, and potential victims rather than victims. Data validity also may have been compromised by the unwillingness of threatened women, victims' families, the police, and other knowledgeable informants to share their true opinions with researchers. Data derived from case studies and small or non-representative samples may not yield reliable or generalizable results (Kulczyki and Windle, 2011). Of the articles reviewed, only one source was based on systematic contact with victims (Chantler et al., 2009). Chantler and colleagues conducted interviews with survivors of forced marriage. Other sources of information about honor violence in the literature include the following:

- Newspaper reports and case studies;
- Secondary analysis of police tracking data from Europe;
- Case reports to authorities and verbal autopsies;
- Memoirs and novels;

- Policy documents;
- Parliamentary debates;
- Public opinion studies;
- Interviews with representatives of social service providers, advocacy organizations, and other organizations who may encounter forced marriages;
- Laws; and
- Community-based interviews, surveys, and focus groups with individuals who have the potential to be victims or, infrequently, victims themselves.

The information reported in these sources is not always of rigorous scientific origin but is the best that is available for understanding the phenomena, because of the risk of the research to the victims and challenges associated with gaining access to victims and potential victims. Households where honor violence is most likely to occur “are the least likely to allow interviewers access to the teenage girls and young women who would be able to provide valid answers” (Khanum, 2009:21). Due to the challenges and risk associated with gaining access to victims, most existing research relies on secondary sources or primary sources other than victim reports. Qualitative methods such as verbal autopsies, case reviews, and media studies; quantitative studies of service providers; public opinion surveys; and anonymous surveys of targeted groups of men (e.g., the study of men in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, India, which did not record whether the men who reported experiences with honor violence were victims or perpetrators) provide information on topic without putting victims at risk.

### ***Methods Used to Study of Honor Violence***

Review of broader methodological literature on the study of violence toward women raises issues relevant to the measurement of honor violence, including the following:

- The measurement of violence is highly sensitive to the data collection methodology used. (See, for example, Garcia-Moreno and Jansen, 2009; Cantor and Lynch, 2000; Ellsberg and Heise, 2005; Abbey et al., 2013.)
- Behavioral wording rather than legal language may be more likely to lead women to report the details of a crime that are critically important to understanding the causes and consequences of the violent behavior. (See Cantor and Lynch, 2000, for a general discussion of these issues.)

- Larger, more general studies frequently lack the rapport-building and cuing that lead to accurate data on sensitive topics (Ellsberg et al., 2001). In a study assessing whether the use of large-scale demographic surveys (such as the Demographic and Health Survey [DHS]) yield lower estimates of the prevalence of violence than smaller, focused studies, Ellsberg and colleagues reported that, compared with studies dedicated to the issue of domestic violence, the prevalence of severe domestic violence was significantly lower in the DHS. This outcome occurred despite the use of similar survey instruments that included behavioral descriptors of violence.
- Most researchers on violence against women agree that, at a minimum, a survey must include measures to protect the safety of respondents and interviewers, crisis intervention and referrals to specialized services for respondents, and special training and emotional support for interviewers (Garcia-Moreno and Jansen, 2009: slide 10). Ellsberg and Heise (2005), Watts et al. (2001), and Garcia-Moreno and Jansen (2009) provide lists of considerations for studying women in violent situations. These considerations include interviewing only one woman per household, not informing the wider community that the survey includes questions on violence, not interviewing men about violence in the same households or clusters where women have been asked about violence, conducting interviews in complete privacy, using dummy questionnaires if others enter the room during the interview, using candy and games to distract children during interviews, using self-response questionnaires for some portions of the interview in literate populations, training interviewers to recognize and deal with a respondent's distress during the interview, and referring women requesting assistance to local services and sources of support or developing resources to provide such support.

These issues related to the measurement of violence toward women, in general, are also true for measuring honor violence directed at women. Measurement of honor violence directed at women involves unique factors also, including variation in cultural definitions of violence and the influence of the community on reporting of these crimes. The issue of participant risk is particularly important to the study of honor violence, which often involves lethal attacks. As one researcher reported, “Collecting data on ... violence against women that results in death (e.g., dowry-related deaths, honor killings, and female infanticide) is particularly challenging” (Friends, 2013:13).

In addition, women who are victims of honor violence often do not recognize that they are victims of violence, but rather “they interpret their treatment as an intrinsic part of their culture” (Gill, 2009:478). Weisz and colleagues (2000) note that “Islamic law supports husbands’ rights to use physical force against their wives,” while “[i]n Arab cultures, even a stereotypical rape may be viewed as an experience of promiscuity or infidelity, punishable by death” (Weisz et al., 2000:229). Any attempt to accurately measure honor violence will require an understanding of the cultural meaning of the violence to the victims. For this reason, incorporating questions about honor violence into a victimization survey that frames the questions in context of crime may fail to obtain a report of the

event or the details that are critically important for understanding the causes and consequences of the violent behavior.

Moreover, the reporting of honor violence may be in opposition to cultural norms for these women. “Family reputation, honor, and harmony are important considerations for women in many ethnic groups.... Similar values are likely to deter reporting in women with Asian heritage where family harmony is the woman’s responsibility.... Women may also be concerned about reporting on a family member’s behavior when communities are small, and most individuals know each other” (Weisz et al., 2000:229). The important role of the community in judging the strength of a family’s honor and, at times, in acting to maintain the honor makes reporting an honor crime more threatening than reporting other types of violence, even domestic violence.

Despite these substantial issues, some researchers have collected data on elements of honor violence through the use of modules or supplements to a larger study. Several studies on the prevalence of forced marriage and female genital mutilation have been conducted using population-based sampling; however, these studies primarily occur in countries with high national prevalence of honor violence rather than as a mechanism for estimating the prevalence among minority populations.

Honor violence in the United States and other western countries is concentrated among more recent immigrants of certain ethnic groups, including those from the Middle East, Southern Asia, and Africa. The small size of these immigrant populations in the United States makes sampling them very difficult in large population surveys. Often the samples of ethnic minorities are not large enough to allow statistical analysis. “Ethnic lumping” is a technique sometimes used to address this problem by grouping general categories of ethnic groups together. This grouping glosses over evidence of within-group diversity that may provide important lines of inquiry about honor violence (Malley-Morrison and Hines, 2007:959-960). Detection of honor violence might be difficult if such grouping omits information about the ethnic group and the length of time since immigration. For this reason, estimates of the prevalence of honor violence in Western countries most often come from social service provider surveys or from the population of social service provider clientele.

## 2.2 Review of Materials Directed at Law Enforcement

Materials reviewed for law enforcement professionals included a handbook created for the police force in The Netherlands and a law enforcement training package put together by the AHA Foundation<sup>4</sup> (pronounced “ah-ha foundation”). The AHA Foundation (<http://theahafoundation.org>) is a non-profit organization that “works to protect and defend the rights of women and girls in the West from oppression justified by religion and culture.” The AHA Foundation focuses on honor violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

These trainings recommend looking for “red flags” that will appear in honor violence cases. The guide for police in The Netherlands (Janssen, 2009) suggests that police officers investigating cases of family violence, especially in immigrant communities, should recognize that family honor may be involved and should look for evidence in a case that might represent damage to honor (e.g., insults, gossip, conflicts over sexual behavior). They should also look for evidence of attempts to restore honor (e.g., abuse, stalking, and removal to country of origin). Finally, police officers should listen for words that suggest that a code of honor is influential in the situation (e.g., use of words that mean or suggest honor, close ties with a community in which honor is important, and strong emotions such as fear or blind rage). The AHA Foundation’s curriculum for training law enforcement professionals about honor violence, which has been used to train more than 1,000 law enforcement personnel, describes a pattern of escalating systematic control over a victim as a marker for honor crimes (AHA, unpublished).

Law enforcement materials also provide information to aid in differentiating honor violence from domestic violence. The guide for police in The Netherlands suggests that while domestic violence and honor violence may overlap to some extent, the causes are very different and successful methods for responding to these situations are very different (Janssen, 2009). A quick public arrest may serve to stop a domestic violence case but may inflame an honor violence case even more by further damaging the family’s honor. The AHA Foundation’s training materials (AHA Foundation, unpublished) demonstrate the differences in these two types of crime more systematically. The AHA Foundation’s training materials highlight the following characteristics of these crimes:

- Honor violence focuses on the family while domestic violence is typically centered on an intimate relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> The New York-based AHA Foundation was founded by Ayaan Hirsi Ali in 2007 and gets its name from her initials. She is a Somali-born American writer and activist. Ali reports that she experienced female genital mutilation as a child and fled her family home to The Netherlands to avoid a forced marriage.

- In honor violence, more than one perpetrator is likely to be involved in planning or implementing the escalating control and violence. In domestic violence, a single perpetrator, most often the intimate partner, is usually responsible for the violence.
- The perception of criminality by the perpetrators differs in the two crimes. Typically, perpetrators of domestic violence recognize they have committed a crime, although they may attempt to justify their actions. Perpetrators of honor violence often view their actions as required by the code of honor rather than as criminal acts.
- Domestic abuse victims are typically treated sympathetically by family, friends, and community. Honor violence victims may be shunned by their families and communities.
- There is more often an element of religious coercion in honor violence than in domestic violence. Religious coercion may exist in traditional domestic violence (e.g., a religious argument may be used to coerce a wife to stay in an abusive marriage rather than obtaining a divorce) but the coercion typically does not extend to non-spouse victims of family abuse.

## 2.3 Review of Websites and Other Media Focusing on Honor Violence

The project team reviewed two types of media—websites and documentaries—in this study. First, the websites of foundations focusing on honor violence were reviewed to gather information about the activities of these organizations. (Representatives from two of these foundations were also queried about the work of their foundations. Section 3.3 of this report describes the results of these conversations.)

This review provided information about resources available online and from the foundations to learn more about honor violence and studies in process or completed. The website review also allowed connections to be made through employees at the foundations to experts in the field who ultimately provided valuable insights. Relevant websites that were reviewed included the AHA Foundation (<http://theahafoundation.org>), Honour Based Violence Awareness Network (<http://hbv-awareness.com>), Tahirih Justice Center (<http://www.tahirih.org>), Sauti Yetu (<http://www.sautiyetu.org>), and Karma Nirvana (<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk>). More information about each of these websites can be found in Appendix D.

In addition, at the recommendation of foundation representatives and law enforcement personnel, the project team watched three documentaries about honor violence: *Honor Diaries*, *Was Noor Alamaleki a Victim of an Honor Killing?*, and *Banaaz: A Love Story*. These documentaries provided insight into the experiences of honor violence victims and the police procedures used in the United States

and the United Kingdom in response to the crimes. More information about the documentaries, including story summaries and how to access them, can be found in Appendix D. Additional information about some of the cases described in these documentaries can be found in Appendix C.



## Expert Interviews and Discussions

# 3

The project team planned to interview law enforcement representatives and hold discussions with academic researchers working in the area of honor violence and representatives of foundations providing services in the area of honor violence. Originally, the goal was to interview representatives of five district attorneys' offices in the United States. However, the team was unable to arrange for these interviews. Public information officers at 10 district attorneys' offices (counting the U.S. Attorney in the District of Columbia) were contacted. Five of these offices did not return repeated efforts to contact them. The other five stated that they did not have staff familiar enough to discuss this topic or that they had no honor violence cases to discuss.

With the help of the AHA Foundation, the project team secured interviews with individuals working with honor violence victims in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The team also secured interviews, again with the help of the AHA Foundation, with detectives from Arizona who work with the AHA Foundation to train other law enforcement personnel, based on their personal professional experience with honor violence. These interviews provided useful information for understanding honor violence and the best methods for studying honor violence in the United States. Many of the main points were consistent across all interviews. The following sections provide summaries of the information gathered from these interviews.

### 3.1 Interviews with Law Enforcement Officials

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals involved in law enforcement:

- Detectives Chris Boughey and Jeff Balson of Peoria, Arizona, who investigated the Noor Almaleki case;
- Afal Nazir, Chief Prosecutor for Northern England, Crown Prosecution Services, United Kingdom;
- Dr. Janine Janssen, an anthropologist and leading consultant who helps to address honor violence for the state police in The Netherlands; and
- Constable Jane Klemperer of the London Metropolitan Police, who leads its Forced Marriage and Honor Violence Unit.

Each of these interviews provided insights into the ways that honor violence can manifest and be identified, measured, and prevented. The following common themes (or, as one agency terms them, “red flags”) were identified:

- Honor violence, in general, is an escalating phenomenon that can begin with verbal or emotional abuse and culminate in more serious actions. There may be many involvements with police and many requests for help, as the severity of the situation increases. Removing young women from this situation early in the cycle can protect them. It is a very difficult situation for them, because they must sever all ties to their families, and their siblings may continue to be at risk.
- Most victims are young females, though there are some male victims, often either homosexual or linked romantically with the female victim. Most perpetrators are male and usually the father or another family member of the victim.
- Acts of conspiracy by family or community members (both male and female) are nearly always involved in the commission of the acts, especially the more serious actions and in the cover-up of the actions. Families will not provide information to support law enforcement activities to solve these crimes or prosecute them. Interviewees indicated that the action of preserving or restoring honor is the critical driver of both the perpetrators’ actions and the family response. Those being interviewed talked about the importance of prosecuting those involved in the conspiracy as well as the actual perpetrators.
- These crimes and their aftermath may play out across countries. For example, a young woman may be taken to her home country to be forced into marriage, or perpetrators may escape to the home country where there is less threat of punishment.
- Motive is frequently stated by the perpetrators when they are apprehended.
- Many incidents involve forced marriage in some way. Refusal or abandonment of a forced marriage can trigger the beginning of severe violence.
- Law enforcement must respond differently to these actions than to more traditional domestic violence in order to protect the safety of the victim and, perhaps, the victim’s siblings. By reporting the abuse, the victim places herself at risk as well as other members of her family. This is also true in prosecuting these cases. Individuals from the family or community who testify or help the prosecution may remain at risk for long periods of time.

## 3.2 Discussions with Academic Researchers

In academic settings, the project team spoke with Andrzej Kulczycki (University of Alabama at Birmingham), who is a coauthor of a key review article on honor killings. Richard Curtis and Anthony Marcus (John Jay College, City University of New York), whose work with the AHA Foundation is often discussed, were also contacted. Finally, Colleen Owens and Meredith Dank from the Urban Institute, who have a grant about forced marriage from NIJ, were telephoned. According to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, this grant is the only one NIJ has made on any topic related to honor violence. The project team was unable to locate any other funding for research related to honor violence within the U.S. Department of Justice.

The grant to the Urban Institute is titled “Exploratory Research into the Intersection of Forced Marriage, Intimate Partner Violence, and Sexual Violence.” The study will examine several aspects of forced marriage, including its occurrence among young South Asian women and men in the Washington, DC, area. The goal of the study is to interview, using respondent-driven sampling, 300 youth who have been threatened with or subjected to forced marriage. In addition, the team will interview justice system stakeholders, education officials, and service providers concerning barriers to the identification of and assistance to forced marriage cases. At the time of this writing, the team has received Institutional Review Board clearance that includes numerous safety protocols for dealing with victims and has hired and trained their field interviewers.

The discussions with these academic researchers primarily focused on methodological topics. A key point from these discussions was that statistics on honor violence in the United States do not currently exist. The best available sources of information are vignettes or case histories. These researchers also told us:

- Honor violence is actually a continuum of violence that begins with threats and intimidation and escalates to forced marriage and physical violence. Ultimately, it may lead to death. It strongly involves the natal family, such that in many cases, when there is conflict with the male intimate partner (e.g., husband, planned husband), the “offending” woman is turned over to her own family for “correction.” Finally, these researchers argued that honor as a motivation is not enough; there must be some sort of conspiracy in the family.
- Cultural norms and beliefs may limit the reporting of honor violence acts. Honor violence differs from more common domestic violence in that a perpetrator, family, and even victim may not recognize this violence as a crime. For others who recognize this violence as a crime, the very act of reporting may be seen as dishonoring the family and further jeopardize the victim’s safety.

- Traditional data collection methodologies may not work for the following reasons:
  - Traditional surveys of victimization or other national surveys (e.g., NCVS) are based on nationally representative samples. The population primarily at risk—immigrants from countries or areas with a high incidence of honor violence (e.g., the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia)—is rare enough to make a significant representation in a national sample difficult. Moreover, honor-based violence may be so rare or occur once in a lifetime (forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honor-based killing), such that it would be nearly impossible to capture in a sample.
  - Dedicated, targeted victimization surveys would have difficulty identifying a sampling frame. Also, there may be ethical implications for targeting certain groups or communities for this type of survey. Information could possibly be collected through touchtone response, but that would still be dangerous to victims.
  - Specialized and focused domestic violence surveys typically have a better methodological model than general victimization surveys to capture such information. The methodology in domestic violence surveys is carefully developed to provide protection to victims, and the wording of questions does not frame them as a criminal offense. Focused domestic violence surveys would still have sampling frame problems.
  - Police records are a limited source of data. Police or court records will miss unreported, misclassified, or undetected honor-based crimes because of the following factors:
    1. The police are held with great disdain in these communities. Reporting is unlikely for that reason.
    2. The most severe crimes are more likely to be brought to public attention than those less severe.
    3. Police records have no standardized method for coding and identifying honor-violence incidents on official records. Information may not always be available or complete to distinguish honor violence from other forms of domestic violence.
    4. This phenomenon may be too rare for any one police jurisdiction to focus on it. If there were more cases, law enforcement would notice it and make a category for it in their records. It is not clear whether there are certain communities in which law enforcement would have reason, by virtue of frequency, to count honor crimes.
    5. Training of law enforcement personnel may help to identify more cases or could lead to over-counting. Some argue that the Dutch over-count because of their emphasis on tagging cases (Curtis et al, personal

communication)<sup>5</sup>. In actually reviewing records on homicides from police, the medical examiner, and the district attorney in one city in the United States, some of these researchers found it very difficult to identify the cases (Curtis et al., personal communications).<sup>6</sup>

- There may be other methods to identify victims:
  - Use literature to identify predictive factors to help identify possible victims.
  - Victims might be found through an educational system, social service agencies, and community organizations.
  - Respondent-driven sampling has been successful in identifying members of hidden or reticent populations.
  - Interviewing both men and women would be appropriate.
- Care must be taken when working with all respondents, even those who are not victims but are a part of the culture or community. Specific questions about these issues may cause respondents to stop participating out of discomfort or fear. Safety protocols for both psychological and physical support and protection should be in place for all respondents and will be required by Institutional Review Boards.

### 3.3 Discussions With Representatives of Foundations Focused on Honor Violence

Several conversations were held with a representative of the AHA Foundation. The communication director at AHA was critical to successful contact with the law enforcement personnel interviewed.

The AHA Foundation has engaged in research regarding victims through their affiliation with the John Jay College and has considered issues related to identification of victims and measurement of the phenomenon. Their suggestions include the following:

- Law enforcement could be a source of data if motive was more regularly recorded or if cases were flagged as honor violence. However, it is a significant challenge to implement

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<sup>5</sup> These topics were discussed during conversations with Dr. Richard Curtis, Dr. Anthony Marcus, and Ms. Sara Rivera from John Jay College, CUNY.

<sup>6</sup> These researchers also noted there had been an attempt in Germany to do a careful record review, and that records of potential honor cases required significant interpretation before they could be identified. In The Netherlands, this problem occurs in ongoing cases. They may use a subject matter expert to review cases to make final determinations if an actual honor crime has been committed. The project team was not able to locate a full English translation of the study.

a standardized method for capturing this information across 18,000 law enforcement agencies.

- Social service agencies, educational locations, or other community services that focus on related topics might help to identify a respondent-driven sample of victims. Victims may know of other victims, because honor crimes are not always committed solely to punish the “offending” woman. They are also used to send a message to the rest of the community that the behavior is not acceptable.
- Victims who do reach out may be very desperate or more independent. They may have been to school. School is the nexus of the cultural clash. Westernized behavior that is appropriate at school may not be appropriate at home.

Conversations were also held with representatives of the Tahirih Justice Center, a nonprofit organization that works to protect immigrant women and girls from violence through legal services, advocacy, and public education programs (<http://www.tahirih.org/mission/the-issues>).

The Tahirih Justice Center has developed an expertise concerning situations of forced marriage and has implemented its own survey of social service agencies concerning forced marriage. The representatives of this center indicated that its forced marriage initiative has worked with 130 clients in half the states in the United States. Its experience indicates that forced marriage, while more likely in immigrant families from the Middle East and South Asia, also occurs in Latino, East Asian, Orthodox Jewish, and Evangelical Christian families.

The center’s survey of social service organizations,<sup>7</sup> which included agency participants from across 47 U.S. states, indicated that there may have been at least 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage in the 2 years prior to 2011. Center representatives indicated that they believe a multi-sector involvement is required to adequately identify and respond to cases of forced marriage. These sectors would include education, mental health, and social service organizations, child protective services, victim advocates, and law enforcement.

Other foundations that the project team did not speak with but would be good sources of information include the Honour Based Violence Awareness Network (<http://hbv-awareness.com>), Sauti Yetu (<http://www.sautiyetu.org>), and Karma Nirvana (<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk>).

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<sup>7</sup> Survey results may be found at <http://www.tahirih.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/REPORT-Tahirih-Survey-on-Forced-Marriage-in-Immigrant-Communities-in-the-United-States-September-20115.pdf>

# Review of Existing Victimization Surveys and Other Data-Collection Mechanisms

# 4

Westat reviewed 19 survey instruments, reports, and databases that directly or peripherally addressed honor violence, forced marriage, or genital mutilation or that addressed sexual or intimate partner violence. Five kinds of surveys or databases were examined: (1) surveys of victims, (2) crime and homicide databases, (3) surveys of social service providers, (4) knowledge and opinion surveys, and (5) other related surveys. Appendix B provides the summary review of the survey instruments or databases.

Only two of the data collection mechanisms reviewed contained questions that directly address any form of honor violence with victims. These are the U.S. Agency for International Development's Demographics and Health Survey Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Module and the Sauti Yetu services screener. The DHS module directly asks about a respondent's experiences with FGM but has been implemented only outside the United States. The Sauti Yetu screener is used to identify those clients of the organization who have experienced forced marriage. Questions from either of these instruments could potentially be used to assess FGM or forced marriage in a newly developed and implemented survey.

The existing or past national surveys that focus on general victimization or intimate partner violence could all be adapted methodologically and in content to assess all components of honor violence, including FGM and forced marriage. The NCVS's hate crime series could most easily be modified or extended to ask the necessary questions. However, these surveys are not appropriate for such a study for a number of methodological reasons. As discussed previously in this report, there are many personal barriers to accurate reporting of these crimes by victims or potential victims. These barriers include concerns about personal risk, and family and community influences that work against any sort of participation. The difficulty in locating a sufficient number of respondents is well established. The methodological barriers of using a national survey challenge the reliability and validity of data collected through these surveys concerning actual honor crime victimization.

Agency protocols ensure that the Sauti Yetu screener maintains victim privacy and security. However, victims interviewed using such a screener within a social service agency are not necessarily representative of all honor violence victims. The other social service agency instruments reviewed collect information from social service providers, and none are based on scientific sampling. Surveys



of services providers do protect the victims and provides direct access to those who may be the first to deal with many aspects of honor violence. Police records (like those used in the United Kingdom and The Netherlands), U.S. death certificates, and the Uniform Crime Reporting Program Supplementary Homicide Reports could provide some data that might be used to tentatively identify some honor killings and other honor violence acts. According to experts contacted for this study, using these data sources without significant training for law enforcement or changes in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program would provide a very low and possible inaccurate baseline count. Honor cases are not always documented in ways that make their identification easy. Developing and implementing a standard method for documenting these crimes across law enforcement agencies would be difficult and costly.



## Review of Online and Legal Sources

# 5

Westat conducted a search of online and legal sources and compiled a comprehensive list of incidents or cases of honor violence/killing, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation that occurred in the United States between 1990 and 2014. (As noted earlier, the compilation of cases is presented in Appendix C of this report.) In order for a case to be included in the compilation, the incident or event must have occurred in the United States, been planned in the United States, and/or is somehow connected to people or events in the United States. The methodology for conducting the search and an overview of sources used are described below and are followed by an overview of the cases included in the compilation. Section 5 concludes with a noteworthy observation outside the scope of this effort that emerged during this research.

### **Overview of Case Search and Sources**

Westat conducted the search of online and legal sources to identify cases that meet the inclusion criteria in three primary stages: (1) online searches, (2) database searches of newspapers and periodicals, and (3) searches of legal sources. The first stage of the search was similar to the snowball sampling technique. Westat started by searching the web using Google and Google Scholar for information on the more well-known or highly publicized cases of honor violence in the United States, such as the killing of Noor Faleh Almalek in Peoria, Arizona, in which her father struck her with a truck, and the killings of Sarah and Amina Said in Irving, Texas, in which their father shot and killed them in his taxicab. The online sources about such cases often reference other instances of honor violence in the United States and served as a springboard for identifying additional cases. Westat also searched the web using keywords such as “honor violence,” “honor killing,” “honor crime,” “forced marriage,” and “female genital mutilation” to identify any incidents or cases specifically labeled as such by one or more web sources.

Most online sources were articles found on local and national news media outlets’ websites. Web-based sources also included information dissemination initiatives or programs that target Muslim domestic violence and honor violence specifically, such as Project Sakinah, which is an initiative against Muslim domestic violence and abuse, and MEMINI, which is an initiative to memorialize the

lives of women who have been murdered in honor killings. All cases identified through the online search and that met the inclusion criteria were added to the compilation.

During the second stage of the search, Westat's Information Resources Center (IRC) searched databases containing newspapers and periodicals for any mention of honor killing, honor violence, forced marriage, or female genital mutilation in the United States between 1990 and 2014. The specific databases the IRC searched include Gale Custom Newspapers (coverage includes more than 1,000 cover-to-cover titles including U.S. national, regional, and local newspapers and the leading titles from around the world); General OneFile (coverage includes 13,000 periodicals and newspapers since 1980 and National Public Radio transcripts and audio); National Newspapers Premier from ProQuest (coverage includes *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and two dozen other newspapers); and Nexis (i.e., the news side of Lexis-Nexis). Westat reviewed the results of these searches and added any case of honor violence that met the inclusion criteria to the compilation.

For the third and final stage of the search, Westat's IRC searched for legal cases involving honor violence in the United States between 1990 and 2014. Westat's IRC conducted this search in Fastcase, which is a legal research service consisting of a comprehensive national law library. Fastcase includes primary law from all 50 states, as well as Federal coverage, and includes cases, statutes, regulations, court rules, and constitutions. Westat reviewed the search results and included those cases that met the inclusion criteria in the compilation.

### **Overview of Honor Violence Cases**

The cases presented in Appendix C are separated into three primary categories: (1) honor violence/honor killing, (2) forced marriage, and (3) female genital mutilation. From 1990 through 2014 there were 18 cases identified for the first category: 14 honor killings, one suspected honor killing (i.e., cause of death was ruled accidental but incident strongly resembles honor killings), one threatened honor killing (i.e., honor killing did not actually take place), and two cases of honor violence. The number of cases identified in these searches does not appear to be consistent with the estimate by Curtis et al., (unpublished) that are cited earlier in this report. The Curtis et al. acknowledge that their estimate of 24-27 honor killings per year is based on several untested assumptions. However, as has been discussed, honor killings and honor violence are underreported, difficult to identify, and little known in the United

States. The cases reported in this section are only those that were identified by the press or legal system as honor cases. The true number of cases remains unknown.

Five cases fell into the second category: four cases of forced marriage and one case of threatened forced marriage (i.e., the forced marriage did not actually take place). For the third category, three cases of female genital mutilation and one case described as conspiracy to perform female genital mutilation was identified. When applicable, the following information is included for each case: event type, event date, event location, victim(s), perpetrator(s), relationships between victim(s) and perpetrator(s), family background/origin, mode (e.g., shooting, stabbing), circumstances surrounding the event, disposition of legal case if tried (e.g., guilty, acquittal), sentence (e.g., length of prison/jail term, probation), and, finally, links to online sources regarding the case. When information on one or more of these data elements was not available, “Unknown” is indicated.

Westat found far fewer cases of forced marriage and female genital mutilation in the United States compared to cases of honor violence/honor killings. However, there is no way to know if the number of cases found in the search for each category of honor violence represents the actual prevalence of each in the United States relative to one another because of the lack of data on the topic. Honor killings appear to be more highly publicized events than forced marriage or female genital mutilation, and when cases of forced marriage or female genital mutilation are “in the news,” the women and young girls are often not identified to preserve anonymity and protect them from future violence and threats to safety. Further, victims of forced marriage and female genital mutilation are usually children or adolescents and not identified publicly because of their age. It was particularly challenging to identify cases of female genital mutilation in the United States, most likely because the practice is highly secretive and may involve “vacation cutting” in which young girls are sent on “vacation” to Africa for the procedure and then returned to the United States once the procedure has been performed.<sup>8</sup>

The characteristics of the cases are consistent with descriptions of honor violence obtained from other sources. Many of the honor killing victims were women in their late teens and early 20s, although some women were in their 30s or 40s (e.g., Aasiya Zubair, 36; Fatima Abdallah, 48). Male victims of honor killings were often associated with a female who “dishonored” her family. For

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<sup>8</sup> In 2013, the Transport for Female Genital Mutilation Act was signed into law. It is an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, 4r 4310, section 1088: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr4310enr/pdf/BILLS-112hr4310enr.pdf>. The law prohibits knowingly transporting a girl out of the country for the purpose of undergoing female genital mutilation. It was designed to address the problem of “vacation cutting”, in which girls living in the United States are taken to their parents’ country of origin (typically during school breaks) to undergo the procedure. Under the new federal law, anyone found guilty of doing so may be sentenced to up to five years in prison.

The law is also referenced in this media report: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/us/a-fight-as-us-girls-face-genital-cutting-abroad.html>.

example, in 1996, Malik Rahmet Khan killed the husband, Shaukat Parvez, of his daughter, Rubina Malik, because Rubina first married Shaukat for love and then married a second man to whom Rubina's parents had promised her. Many of the victims are daughters, and the perpetrators are often either the victim's parents and/or close relatives. A smaller portion of the victims were wives or girlfriends of the perpetrators (e.g., in 2009, Muzzammil Hassan killed his wife, Aasiya Zubair, because she filed for divorce and obtained a restraining order).<sup>9</sup>

About half the cases also illustrate the fact that honor killings are often carried out by multiple perpetrators and/or involve family members conspiring to carry out the killings to restore the family's honor. There are also examples of conspiracies which take place across borders (e.g., Mohammed Ajmal Choudhry conspired with relatives in Pakistan from the United States to murder his daughter Amina's lover's father and sister in 2013) as well as cases in which female family members participated in honor violence. For example, in 2012, Aiya Altameemi's mother and sister tied her to the bed and, along with Aiya's father, participated in beating her.

Many of the honor killings were connected to a forced marriage—that is, the female victim either resisted or outright refused the marriage (e.g., Sarah Said refused an arranged marriage and had a boyfriend when she was killed by her father, Yaser Said, in 2008); tried to escape from a forced marriage (e.g., Amina Ajmal, who fled Pakistan to avoid a forced marriage); and/or filed for divorce from a forced marriage (e.g., Sandeela Kanwal filed for divorce from an forced marriage and was strangled to death by her father, Chaudry Rashid, in 2008). In some cases, victims of honor violence were killed for other reasons, including being “too westernized” (e.g., in 2009, Noor Faleh Almaleki's father ran over her with a truck, because he deemed her as “too westernized”) or “too Americanized” (e.g., in 2011, Jessica Mokdad was shot at point-blank range by her stepfather, because she was “too Americanized” and not following Islam).

### ***Final Observation***

Several legal cases were identified in which women sought asylum in the United States for fear of becoming honor killing victims in their native countries. In these cases, the immigration judge had to examine the fear of “potential” harm based on a cultural and societal practice that is not well

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<sup>9</sup> The Hassan case reinforces how difficult it is to correctly identify honor violence. A recent article by Terman suggests that this case was actually domestic violence because of Hassan's history of abuse of previous spouses. For this report, it remains a case of honor violence because of its classification by other sources. See Terman, Rochelle L. “To Specify or Single Out: Should We Use the Term ‘Honor Killing?’” *Muslim Journal of Human Rights*. Vol. 7, No. 1. 2010.

understood in America (see, for example, *Vellani v. U.S. Attorney General* and *Yaylacicegi v. Gonzales*). The women were not granted asylum in the two cases noted above. Because these cases did not involve events that occurred or were conspired within the United States, they are not included in the compilation of cases in Appendix C. The exclusion of the cases from this listing does not imply a recommendation that these and similar cases not be considered in future studies or policies concerning honor violence in the United States. For additional information on these cases, see Shapiro (2010).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Shapiro, S. T. (2010). She can do no wrong: Recent failures in America's immigration courts to provide women asylum from "honor crimes" abroad. *Journal of Gender, Social Policy, & The Law*, 18(2), 293-315.

# Review of U.S. Government Online Resources on Honor Violence

# 6

The U.S. Government's official response to honor violence has been limited. Searches for Federal sites and legislation yielded few documents or statements about honor violence in the United States. Below are references to what the searches yielded.

Jen Psaki, spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State, recently condemned a Pakistani honor killing that occurred in May 2014 by stating that "killing women in the name of honor and tradition is unjustifiable." The Department of State has also taken measures to combat gender-based violence (GBV) outside the United States, including the introduction of the GBV Emergency Response and Protection Initiative in the Middle East, Africa, South and Central Asia, and Latin America. The GBV Initiative aims to protect individuals targeted for violence based on their gender by offering financial assistance and increased advocacy. Among these individuals, the initiative includes victims facing harmful traditional practices, such as honor killings and female genital mutilation.

Recently, the U.S. Government passed legislation to combat forced marriage and female genital mutilation, both domestically and abroad. The Federal Government recently pledged nearly US\$5 million to counter child and forced marriages in seven developing countries. To combat female genital mutilation, legislation was passed in 1996 in the United States that criminalized parents who allowed their daughters to undergo female genital mutilation procedures. In early 2013, President Obama signed the Transport for Female Genital Mutilation Act, which prohibits the transportation of a child from the United States for the purpose of female genital mutilation. Most recently, in October 2014, mutilation the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services hosted a civil society listening session on the U.S. domestic response to female genital mutilating/cutting (Federal Register/Vol.79, No.184/Tuesday, September 23, 2014/Notices).

# What Does This Information Mean for the Study of Honor Violence in the United States?

# 7

This section summarizes the findings from the five types of research on honor violence conducted for this study. Recommendations for next steps are provided in Section 8.

## ***Literature Review***

The literature on honor violence raises the issue of how to successfully identify victims of these crimes in the United States. This issue has two components. First, how can victims of these crimes be identified to estimate the prevalence and characteristics of honor violence? Second, how can victims be identified by law enforcement or other agencies to provide appropriate remedial and preventive services?

To estimate the prevalence and characteristics of honor crimes and victims, it is necessary to have nationally representative data that can be used to identify characteristics of honor violence. Based on the definitions of honor crimes in the literature, necessary data fields include characteristics of the perpetrator and victim, and why the assault, murder, or marriage occurred. Given the cultural base of honor violence, it would be useful to know the country of origin of the victim's family, and the relationship between the victims and perpetrators. Motive is a topic generally not covered by victimization surveys, with the exception of hate crimes. Police records or social service agency records are a weak alternative to sample surveys or interview studies in gathering these data from a randomly selected population because they only capture victims who report violence to the police or seek social services.

Existing literature also provides guidelines on identifying victims of honor violence through those who provide them services. Victims of forced marriage or other forms of honor violence can be identified by social service agencies. Victims of female genital mutilation are often first identified at a medical visit. Victims of honor killings may have been killed outright, appear to have committed suicide, have been forced to commit suicide, or die from their injuries. These victims need to be identified by law enforcement, medical examiners, or verbal autopsies. As discussed above, identifying victims through social service or medical agencies requires the victim to come in; identifying victims through law enforcement or medical examiners requires the implementation of



system to capture the information needed for identification across nationwide; identifying victims through verbal autopsies is a stopgap measure at best because it relies on the analysis of current records. These are all less than perfect ways to identify victims who need support, and these sources cannot provide complete data on the prevalence of honor violence.

Identification of victims in the United States for either purpose is also complicated by the difficulty in finding this population. While the literature makes it clear that not every act of honor violence occurs to a woman from the Middle East, South Asia, or Africa, it is clear that collecting data from at-risk populations through a sample survey would be difficult because of the small size of the population. The potential risk of retribution to survey respondents further complicates ability to collect data from this population.

Given the findings of the literature, it appears that systematically and rigorously collecting survey data on the prevalence of honor violence in the United States will be difficult. Other possible sources of prevalence data are law enforcement records and records from social service organizations. Law enforcement tracking of honor violence is strong in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. But few law enforcement and social service agencies track honor-related crime in the United States, either because of lack of awareness or because there is no demand for such a classification. Honor violence cases may be difficult to identify in record abstraction if those agencies creating the records are not prepared to identify honor violence. Much of the literature that has been reviewed so far calls for further research on this topic.

### ***Expert Discussions***

Conversations with experts in the field highlighted the challenges of studying of honor violence. The nature of honor violence may be more subtle and difficult to clearly identify than originally thought. Identifying the motivation behind the violence and the perpetrator(s) also presents challenges. Additionally, because honor violence is an escalating phenomenon that can begin with verbal or emotional abuse and culminate in more serious actions, it is difficult to identify. Also, acts of conspiracy by family or community members are nearly always involved in the commission of the acts, especially the more serious actions, and in the cover-up of the action. Because of this, families will not provide information to support law enforcement activities to solve crimes or prosecute them. In addition, the police are held with great disdain in these communities.

Honor violence is a challenge to study, because it is not as readily reported or discussed as other types of crime. The perpetrator, family, and even the victim may not recognize this violence as a crime because of the role of honor in their culture. For others who do recognize this as a crime, the very act of reporting may be seen as dishonoring the family and further jeopardizing the victim's safety.

Other sources of related information recommended by these experts were the use of literature to identify predictive factors to help identify possible victims; education and social services to identify victims; respondent-driven sampling to identify members of this hidden or reticent population; and men as sources of information as well as women.

### ***Survey Review***

Our review of the surveys, databases, and reports and the general methodological literature revealed that nothing currently exists that provides the methodology and the content to collect data on honor violence that would be representative of the nation. In other countries, baseline data has primarily come from police records. In the United States, what little data that exists about victims has come from survey social service agencies. Other information, both in the United States and abroad, has come from public opinion surveys, social service surveys, and surveys of and interviews with people who might be victims or know victims. None of these sources do a very good job of representing the universe of victims.

Several national surveys could be modified to address these questions. However, survey research faces unresolved problems with regard to sampling designs that capture enough of the population at risk to ensure reliable estimates, as well as the impact of victim perception of risk on willingness to respond and to provide accurate responses. This study found no existing solution to the problem of collecting information on all types of honor violence in order to assess its prevalence in the United States.

### ***Online and Legal Sources***

In the search of online and legal sources for this study, few cases were identified. A total of 27 cases were identified over a period of 24 years. Of these, 14 cases were honor killings, one was a suspected

honor killing (i.e., cause of death was ruled accidental but incident strongly resembles honor killings), one a threatened honor killing (i.e., honor killing did not actually take place), and two were cases of honor violence. Four cases were forced marriages, and one case was a threatened forced marriage (i.e., the forced marriage did not actually take place). Four cases were related to female genital mutilation.

### ***Review of U.S. Government Sites***

The OVW and NIJ have a joint research effort in progress that is related to honor violence but no earlier studies. The current study is an exploratory, qualitative study on the issue of the relationship between forced marriage and domestic violence in the South Asian community in the Washington, D.C., area. The search of other available U.S. Government information did not indicate any other research activity concerning honor violence in the United States.

# Next Steps to Studying Honor Violence in the United States

# 8

Despite the identification of only a few cases through online and legal sources, the other aspects of this research support the value of continued study to better determine the actual prevalence of honor crimes. The following four steps are recommended based on the body of research summarized in this report.

1. Avoid any attempt to study honor violence in the United States through household surveys.
  - For any study that would put a potential or current victim at risk or that could alert a potential perpetrator that a study is being conducted with a family member, extensive protection systems need to be in place, and victim consent and confidentiality need to be taken very seriously.
  - Given the risk, the methodological barriers to studying honor violence through national household surveys are too great. The cost of finding the small number of victims in a nationally representative sample and the likelihood that, even if identified, victims will not respond or respond accurately, make this approach unacceptable.
2. Conduct a series of small, exploratory studies in line with what is being done by the OVW and NIJ to determine what information is currently available. These exploratory studies should examine the usefulness of the abstraction of police records in selected communities for the assessment of baseline prevalence of honor violence; the usefulness of survey or interview studies with social service providers of all types in selected communities to assess baseline prevalence of honor violence; and the use of snowball sampling to identify small groups of other types of victims than those in the current OVW–NIJ study and, if these victims are willing to participate, seek their knowledge on ways to locate and successfully and safely recruit other victims.
3. Conduct a series of trainings with selected police departments, educational systems, and social service agencies in the identification of honor violence to determine if taking the “European” approach to flagging cases will increase or improve data on honor violence. Steps 1 and 2 could be run in the same communities with a community-wide evaluation assessing the impact of training on the recognition of and response to acts of honor violence.
4. Use information gathered in Step 3 to determine if the work on identification and flagging of honor violence cases by law enforcement personnel and social service organizations should be expanded.

From a services' rather than a statistical perspective, DOJ may want to consider creating a national-level dissemination program that includes a website, informational materials, and webinars to address the apparent lack of knowledge of honor violence in the law enforcement community and the lack of information provided by the Federal Government about it. Targeted dissemination would be especially appropriate to at-risk communities if they can be identified. DOJ should also consider working with the foundation community to create a national referral hotline for victims and widely disseminate information on its availability.