Gendered Narratives in British Immigration Policy: Forced Marriage Policy and the British South Asian Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Theories surrounding public policy, feminism, and neocolonialism intersect to produce an understanding of the gendered narratives used by politicians to advance their policy agendas.   This paper explores how the use of these gendered narratives in British immigration policy toward South Asians—by the government, activists, and the media—reinforces racial bias and co-opts issues of gender-based violence to promote alternate, sometimes racially charged, policy goals. Through a case study on forced marriage, this paper explores how stakeholders perpetuate gendered narratives in forced marriage, security, and immigration policy. This analysis concludes that using an intersectional intimate partner violence policy, rather than specific forced marriage or immigration policies, is a more culturally sensitive approach to addressing the issue. Considering alternate policy approaches to forced marriage demonstrates how gendered narratives subvert attention from issues of gender to those of other, often racialized, policy issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between South Asia and the United Kingdom is marked by colonial rule, exploitation of resources, and migration. Scholars have studied these phenomena through various lenses, including feminism, neocolonialism, and public policy. As the South Asian diaspora in the UK grows in both numbers and prominence, policies related to regulating and protecting South Asian communities throughout modern and colonial British history emerge. When policies toward minority communities are passed, particularly by a colonial power, underlying narratives and their implications become important in understanding race, gender, and other structures of power. This article will explain how gendered narratives in immigration policy perpetuate harmful perceptions of minority communities. In particular, these policy narratives are explored through an analysis of gendered narratives surrounding British immigration policy concerning the South Asian diaspora.

Two primary schools of thought influence the relationship between gender, narrative, and policy: feminist theory and scholarship on policymaking. Both theories provide necessary language for understanding the implication of British policies regarding the South Asian diaspora. They also complement competing explanations for the existence of specific policies. These explanations include the influence of neocolonialism—the modern power structures between former colonizer and colonized states—media rhetoric, and migrant exclusion. A review of select literature and a case study on forced marriage produce insight regarding these themes.

Forced marriage, as defined by the UK's Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and Home Office (2022), "is where one or both people do not… consent to the marriage as they are [pressured], or abuse is used, to force them to do so" and categorizes the practice as an issue of human rights or "domestic or child abuse." Around 400-1,000 cases of forced marriage occur annually, though this data varies among different government and nonprofit reports (Gill and Anitha 2009, 260). Forced marriage is a harmful practice rooted in gender-based violence; however, because the practice takes place in South Asian communities more frequently, perceptions of South Asian cultures, immigration patterns, and racial and colonial histories all permeate the policy discourse surrounding forced marriage. Stereotypes of and views on South Asians in the UK created gendered narratives that demonstrate that actions taken by the British government to curb forced marriage resulted in policies that promoted migrant exclusion and cultural othering. While the government uses criminal and civil consequences and immigration policies to stop forced marriage, treating the issue as one of intimate partner violence would be a more effective policy lens to prevent racist and gendered narratives about forced marriage from harming South Asian communities.

It is necessary to build upon a foundation of scholarship from policy, feminist, postcolonial, and neocolonial scholars to explain the various facets of gendered narratives and the forced marriage debate. This article will use this literature to analyze a case study of forced marriage policy that applies lessons from theory to a policy issue concerning the South Asian diaspora. This case study will provide an overview of the forced marriage debate by British politicians, examine the rhetoric in documents released by the government, explore various stakeholders that perpetuated gendered narratives, and look at other narratives that influence the forced marriage debate, such as concerns over terrorism and security. The case study on forced marriage concludes by asking why cultural identity remains central to combatting the harmful practice when policymakers can instead reform policies on intimate partner violence for a more intersectional and culturally conscious solution.

RELEVANT LITERATURE: SCHOLARSHIP ON PUBLIC POLICY, GENDER, AND NARRATIVE

The major schools of thought that influence the relationship between policy, gender, and narrative—scholarship applying narrative to policy and feminist theory—provide insight into gendered narratives in British immigration policy. The case study of forced marriage provides an illustrative example through which to explore these narratives, their purposes, and their consequences.

DEFINING AND RELATING NARRATIVE, POLICY, GENDER, AND NEO-COLONIALISM

The dictionary definition of narrative, which involves storytelling as a communication of morals or values, has been modified to apply to the field of public policy by scholars in two ways relevant to this discourse on forced marriage: the narrative policy framework and the concept of governing narratives (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, n.d.; Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway 2011, 375; Miller 2012, 3). The narrative policy framework is based on the idea that narrative can represent the sways of policy images and popular beliefs in which actors are cast as heroes and villains (Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway 2011, 374). This framework is an analytical tool that can demonstrate how to organize information, emotions, and thoughts into narratives that shape public opinion and facilitate policy processes (Veselková 2017, 4-5). Narrative can also be used to better understand policymaking through the concept of governing narratives: combinations of signs, ideographs, and stories that influence governing processes by creating shared goals and stories that politicians relay to the public (Miller 2012, 5-8). Both the policy narrative framework and governing narratives describe how policymakers garner support for the passage of certain policies. These concepts demonstrate how policymakers might use such frameworks to reform policies on intimate partner violence.

Policy narratives can be explicitly applied to gender. Gendered narratives abound in the policy space and can be double-edged swords. Gender itself is a term with an ever-changing and loaded normative meaning (Scott 1986, 1,075). Because social constructs of gender and gendered relationships have constantly changed throughout history, understanding the definition of gender as normative can aid us in defining the role of gender in policy narratives. Applying the narrative policy framework to gender can include casting politicians as "heroes" who protect "victims," often women, from a perceived "villain" (Shanahan, Mcbeth, and Hathaway 2011, 374). Applying this concept to forced marriage policy suggests that British politicians victimize South Asian women with British citizenship. Consequently, these narratives villainize South Asian men, contributing to harmful narratives on the relationship between terrorism and minority communities.

Feminist theorists, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, apply gendered narratives to intimate partner violence and battering (Crenshaw 1991, 1,245-1,250). Rooted in both Crenshaw's analysis of American legal structures and lessons from Black feminists in history, intersectionality describes the unique oppression faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities (Crenshaw 1991, 1,244). Intimate partner violence that affects immigrant women of color, including forced marriage, is an example of intersectional oppression due to overlapping concerns with language barriers and citizenship status, among other issues (Crenshaw 1991, 1,248). Intersectional feminism is one lens through which we can explore the policy issue of forced marriage to find a solution that removes focus from culture and identity.

Colonial narratives also define modern cultural relationships between South Asian and white-British communities. Edward Said writes in *Orientalism* about the importance to West-

ern nations for "European culture" to differentiate itself from Eastern cultures (Said 1978, 3). Said refers to Antonio Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony to construct the power relations between different cultures, and this point is central to understanding cultural relationships and differences in the UK (Said 1978, 7). Cultural hegemony influenced the South Asian and British relationship long before the forced marriage debate, for gendered narratives appear throughout the British colonial legacy. Neocolonial and imperialist scholars believe that the legacy of colonialism continues to perpetuate a system of power where former colonizer states maintain their influence over colonized communities (Achiume 2019, 1,519). The themes that neocolonial theorists discuss apply many of the lessons regarding subjective storytelling from postcolonial scholars and feminist historians to the modern relationship between former colonizer and colonized states. Neocolonialism is particularly relevant to modern understandings of migration and citizenship (Achiume 2019, 1,509).

IDENTIFYING FACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS THAT PRODUCE GENDERED NARRATIVES

British immigration policy utilizes gendered rhetoric and integration policies as tools of migrant exclusion when such policies may not be necessary to combat forced marriage effectively. When policies to combat forced marriage actively employ immigration restriction as a solution, this can be "viewed as a covert form of immigration control" that alienates South Asian communities from joining efforts to eradicate forced marriage (Phillips and Dustin 2004, 547). For example, Sara Wallace Goodman (2011) analyzes policies that enforce "mandatory language and country knowledge" tests and argues that these policies serve as instrumental tools for migrant exclusion (Goodman 2011, 235). These programs force migrants to bear the burden of preparing for exclusionary, often arbitrary, exams. Some policies target "regulating family-forming migration" (236). Gendered norms are pervasive in this area. Considering the inherent role of gender in heterosexual family formation begins to connect the rhetoric surrounding restricting family migration and perpetuating gendered narratives because of the inherent role of gender in such family structures.

Scholars also debate the role of media in policy narratives. Studies on media have analyzed the relationship between the effect of narratives and public familiarity (Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway 2011, 379, 385). In particular, scholars of the narrative policy framework conducted a quasi-experimental "media effects stud[y]" on the effect of American newspapers' reporting on "reader opinion" (Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway 2011, 382-383). This study concluded that newspapers could choose to perpetuate policy actors' narratives and that these choices did have "some influence on reader opinion" (Shanahan, McBeth, and Hathaway 2011, 390). While the nature of news coverage by British tabloids may differ from that of American newspapers, these findings on American print suggest that British media may have influenced immigration and forced marriage policies in the UK.

The work of scholars of narrative policy frameworks and feminist theorists gives proper context to the conversation about narrative, gender, and the UK's immigration policy toward South Asians. These scholars provide the foundations necessary to understand the definitions and implications of narrative, gender, and policy in creating immigration policy in the UK.

CASE STUDY: FORCED MARRIAGE POLICY IN THE UK

In order to regulate forced marriage in the UK, particularly within South Asian diaspora and immigrant communities, British policymakers developed a series of policies through various lenses and narratives. This section contains an overview and connection of historic gendered narratives to forced marriage policy. It then proceeds to provide a chronological account of the development of forced marriage policy. This section concludes by exploring the influence

of gendered narratives in media and securitization concerns on these policies.

A COLONIAL CASE OF GENDERED NARRATIVES IN BRITISH POLICY-MAKING TOWARD SOUTH ASIANS: SATI

The regulation of South Asian cultural or religious practices did not begin with forced marriage. Rather, a more historic example occurred during the British Raj with the regulation of the practice of sati: the ritual of widow immolation, or suicide by fire upon the death of a woman's husband. This article provides an assessment not of the practice itself but of the colonial and gendered narratives that emerged from British regulations of the practice. These narratives provide historical context for the contemporary use of gendered narratives in British policymaking.

Gendered narratives emerge from an analysis of the methods by which the British Raj banned the practice of sati in 1829. Lata Mani analyzes the language used by former British officials when addressing this practice and the implications of this discourse on South Asian culture and indigenous practices (Mani 1987, 119-122). Mani articulates how the British Raj's perspective on sati "institutionalize[d] their assumptions" and cultural biases against South Asian practices (Mani 1987, 119-122). Colonial rulers used various gendered narratives to ban sati. While proclaiming their actions benefited South Asian women, the British Raj's language and the discourse they perpetuated removed women's agency and consent from the debate (Mani 1987, 123-124).

One narrative used by the British included using the "indigenous male elite" to support the notion that sati violated fundamental cultural practices (Mani 1987, 145). Notably, the leadership of this advocacy excluded women (Mani 1987, 130). This reframing of the sati narrative focused on patriarchal and colonial prescriptions of women's behavior, thereby infantilizing women and removing their voices and agency from policymaking decisions. Walter Ewer, a British Raj official who proclaimed that sati was not an issue of religion, blamed the practice on South Asian cultural pressure (Mani 1987, 124). Ewer framed sati as a matter of widows' consent by blaming Indian cultures for victimizing women (Mani 1987, 126-127). The narrative of women's lack of consent and agency in their actions, allegedly stripped by the Indian community, fueled "colonial accounts" of the practice (Mani 1987, 130). This narrative remains consistent with the concept of the policy narrative framework. By villainizing and victimizing certain actors in the South Asian community, the British Raj perpetuated intentional narratives to pass the abolition of sati that failed to consider the voices of the women affected by this change. The concern here lies not in outlawing a harmful and lethal practice but in how the British Raj undermined women's autonomy to impose their own views of South Asian cultural practices.

A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF FORCED MARRIAGE POLICY IN THE UK

Throughout postcolonial history, the British government continued to utilize various narratives through racial and cultural frameworks to enact policies against the South Asian community in the UK (Wilson 2007). For example, the Brixton riots of 1981 evoked an era of "ethnicist policies" that treated cultures as monolithic (Wilson 2007, 30). Ethnicist policy frameworks claimed to incorporate the interests of diverse ethnic groups; however, such policies failed to account for intersectional issues, such as patriarchy or casteism, within the South Asian community (Wilson 2007, 30). Policy development on this issue demonstrates how clear narratives on forced marriage policy emerged from various stakeholders, including South Asian activists, British politicians, and the British media.

British policy on forced marriage has not always been targeted based on race or community.

For example, "the Marriage Act 1949 and the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973" outlawed marriages in which one party did not consent without any mention of minority identity, with the consequence being a "decree of divorce" (Gill and Anitha 2009, 258). More recently, forced marriage has been the subject of various policies ranging from immigration to security policies. After the 1980s, policymakers focused more on women of color and identity-based policymaking (Gill and Anitha 2009, 257). This shift introduced a racialized element to forced marriage policy that exploited the gendered narrative surrounding the issue to implement policies designed to exclude South Asians from British society.

In 1999, with the launch of the forced marriage initiative, South Asian identity became a central component in the forced marriage debate. In deliberating this policy, some British lawmakers, such as former Member of Parliament Ann Cryer, espoused rhetoric "laden with colonial overtones" (Wilson 2007, 31). Cryer's language bore a similarity to Ewer's narrative regarding the regulation of sati. In a speech to the House of Commons on February 10, 1999, Cryer appealed to "'the leaders of the Asian Muslim [Sikh, and Hindu] communit[ies]' to: 'encourage their people to put their daughters' happiness, welfare and human rights first" (Hansard, 1999 quoted in Wilson 2007, 31). Cryer used gendered narratives to regulate South Asian communities and condemn broader cultural legitimacies by using forced marriage regulation initiatives as a morally righteous position.

In a similar vein, in 2000, the British Home Office produced the report *A Choice by Right: The Report of the Working Group on Forced Marriage* (Working Group on Forced Marriage 2000). This report acknowledges that the UK is a "multi-cultural, multi-faith society" yet asserts that "diversity and cultural sensitivity are not excuses for moral blindness" (Working Group on Forced Marriage 2000, 4). This distinction between respecting cultures and exerting moral values is central to the British government's narrative surrounding forced marriage. Furthermore, the section title, "Not just an 'Asian' issue," acknowledges diverse cultural practices, but placing quotation marks around 'Asian' can be interpreted as rhetorical othering (Working Group on Forced Marriage 2000, 12). This othering creates a narrative that presumes forced marriage is a cultural practice rather than an act of gender-based violence taken by individuals against members of their own communities.

The report's language pertaining to South Asian women is another component that contributes to the gendered narrative surrounding forced marriage. As written by Wilson (2007), the British government's intervention failed to acknowledge the full history of discussion on the issue by South Asian women. By denying the full scope of discourse on the issue from women themselves, the British government denied women's agency in finding solutions to forced marriage (Wilson 2007, 32).

These actions are situated within the discourse about sati and Cryer's narratives. Just as the British Raj and Cryer evoked the ethos of some South Asian community and religious leaders, *A Choice by Right* drew credibility from consultations with South Asian feminist organizations and other cultural experts to build a forced marriage policy. Like Ewer's narrative regarding the regulation of sati, this report framed forced marriage as an issue of consent (Working Group on Forced Marriage 2000, 4). Women's lack of agency is again used as an excuse for neocolonial intervention. The gendered narratives of politicians are at work. These commonalities between rhetoric from various British government officials created the gendered narrative that strips women of their autonomy and voice in policymaking processes and blames South Asian cultures for gender-based violence, thereby institutionalizing a cultural hierarchy.

Beyond *A Choice by Right*, Home Office leadership perpetuated racially biased rhetoric against the South Asian community. Former Home Secretary David Blunkett, who served from 2001 to 2004, condemned the use of non-English languages by Asian parents and the practice of marrying foreigners (Wilson 2007, 33). As evidenced by Blunkett's language,

actors and political leaders held biases against South Asians, creating gendered narratives in forced marriage policies. This racialized and gendered rhetoric influenced policymaker's decisions, whether consciously or not.

In 2005, the British government released the Community Liaison Unit report *Forced marriage: a wrong not a right consultation*, which summarized their findings from consultations with various South Asian feminist and community organizations (Gill and Mitra-Kahn 2009, 111). The report A Choice by Right also acknowledged community organizations (Working Group on Forced Marriage, 2000, 16). Drawing upon South Asian activists with lived experiences and advocacy on this issue marks a departure from the gendered narrative that failed to consider women's opinions. Upon further analysis, however, British policymakers seemed to uplift the select voices of those whose advocacies supported their legislation.

In 2006, the forced marriage debate culminated in a Bill to criminalize the practice. During this time, Jasvinder Sanghera, an advocate against forced marriage who speaks about her own experiences with the harmful practice, consistently supported the criminalization of forced marriage and received media attention during this debate (Wilson 2007, 34-35). Other activists and groups argued that preventative measures for "abduction, kidnapping, and assault" already outlawed forced marriage or that, given the nature of forced marriage as an issue of domestic violence, victims might not sue their families to enact criminal penalties (Wilson 2007, 34). Many groups shared the broader concern that the British government designed forced marriage policies not to protect British South Asian women, as policy narratives held, but to police the South Asian community and delegitimize broader South Asian cultural practices in the UK. The diversity of opinion of South Asian activists, compared to the policies promoted by British politicians, raises the concern of whether the activism of women such as Sanghera truly upended the structural racism, patriarchy, and inequities faced by members of the South Asian community or if the British government co-opted her position on forced marriage to perpetuate the policing and exclusion of these communities.

Later in 2006, Lord Anthony Lester introduced the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Bill to the House of Lords to create civil rather than criminal consequences for forced marriage. In statements to the press regarding this Bill, Lester mentioned "efforts by the 'British Raj' to abolish sati and child marriages," evoking a narrative of colonial control (Wilson 2007, 35). Beyond situating into the established gendered and colonial narratives used by British politicians in the past, the debate surrounding this Bill also selectively promoted South Asian diaspora voices that supported making forced marriage a civil offense. The House of Lords, for example, prevented members of Imkaan, a Muslim nonprofit dedicated to intimate partner violence relief, from speaking on the floor against this Bill. Instead, Imkaan members met with Lester privately to voice their concerns. The nonprofit argued that this Bill would not eradicate forced marriage due to evidenced concerns over a lack of enforcement ability. Instead, Imkaan members warned that the Bill might further entrench cultural othering and racism against minority communities (Wilson 2007, 35).

In contrast, activists such as Sanghera and the Southall Black Sisters continued to support civil protection when Lester reintroduced the consequence in 2007. Sanghera published a memoir, entitled *Shame*, about her experiences with forced marriage, which became tied to the debate surrounding the civil protection Bill (Wilson 2007, 36, 38). Despite advancing essentialist beliefs on forced marriage and "feeding into anti-immigration agendas," the Bill ultimately received Royal Assent in June 2007 (Gill and Anitha 2009, 259, 261). Sanghera continued her advocacy against forced marriages after Lester's Bill was passed. She discussed her experiences and book with Homa Khaleeli for *The Guardian* in 2011 (Khaleeli 2011). Sanghera argued that forced marriage is a cultural practice survivors must dismantle by sharing their stories. She continued to support the criminalization of forced marriage and stressed the importance of empowering survivors and disseminating information on forced marriages to the public (Khaleeli 2011). Sanghera's voice and story are important in this con-

versation, however, attempts to address forced marriage by British policymakers could have more consciously included dissenting voices as well.

The "right to exit" is an alternative policy the government offered as a solution to forced marriage. The right to exit is the premise that a minority individual can leave their unsafe or oppressive community to avoid harm. The narrative of women's rights to exit encouraged minority women to leave their spouses, families, and communities to find comfort in a liberal society (Gill and Mitra-Kahn 2012, 116). The Forced Marriage Unit's 2007 report *A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step* consolidated this narrative. This report served to "[inform] women of their right to leave their community" (Gill and Mitra-Kahn 2012, 116). To propose leaving one's community as a solution to forced marriage is a narrative that separates women from their culture and integrates them into white, liberal British society (Gill and Mitra-Kahn 2012, 116).

MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GENDERED NARRATIVE ON FORCED MARRIAGE

Sanghera's story is not the only one that made headlines throughout the years of debate on forced marriage. British media outlets remain central to perpetuating the gendered narrative around the issue, sensationalizing tragic stories, and creating support for British policymakers' agendas. The dialogue surrounding forced marriages caught the public and politicians' attention in a few prominent cases, including those of Rukhsana Naz, Jack and Zena Briggs, and Humayra Abedin. These cases, which involved murder, interracial couples hiding from South Asian communities, and a woman "'rescued' from a forced marriage in December of 2008," respectively, all brought public attention to forced marriage through news coverage (Gill and Anitha 2009, 258). The media framed forced marriage as a cultural issue rather than one of violence against women (Gill and Anitha 2009, 262). This framing further contributes to the racialized gendered narrative that marked forced marriage reports and policies. British tabloids and news outlets exemplified the media's role in perpetuating panic, racism, and a gendered policy narrative surrounding forced marriage.

The murder of Rukhsana Naz illustrated the increasing issue salience of forced marriage in the media. In 1999, *The Evening Standard* called her a "martyr to a cruel and barbaric tradition" and espoused neocolonial rhetoric by comparing forced marriage to sati (Sewell 1999). Amanda Cable's 2006 piece for *The Daily Mail*, "A Forced Marriage? I'd Rather Kill Myself," evokes visceral emotion from the story of Ishana Jones after the government did not pass the criminalization Bill against forced marriage (Cable 2006). This article contrasts the horrors of Jones's experience with an attempted forced marriage with her marriage with her current husband, in which she was a "quintessential English bride" (Cable 2006). The language used by Cable conveys the message that Jones finds happiness in her marriage to a white British man, whereas her trauma resulted from the expectations of her Muslim community (Cable 2006). These divisive and emotionally charged media representations demonstrate how British media outlets conveyed forced marriage as an issue of cultural backwardness. By sensationalizing these stories through visceral coverage of forced marriage, British tabloids' reporting resulted in public outrage toward South Asian culture more broadly. Some organizations predicted this outcome and warned policymakers of their concerns, such as Imkaan in their meeting with Lester in 2007, where the organization evidenced concerns from South Asian women facing forced marriage "about the Bill's practicality," failure of similar bills on the issue, and racism that the Bill may cause to surface (Wilson 2007, 36).

Not all pieces in the media on this issue contained such racist undertones. In 2009, Rahila Gupta wrote in *The Guardian* about the differences in treatment of white and Asian couples when it came to marriages between UK citizens and international residents (Gupta 2009). Gupta (2009) highlights Britain's history with exclusionary migration policies related to mar-

riage, including virginity tests conducted on women set to immigrate to the UK for marriages in 1979 and 1980 and the Primary Purpose Rule, "an immigration law [from] 1983 to 1997," regulated marriages between British citizens and foreign nationals to ensure that these marriages were legitimate and were not simply tools for entry into the country (Hameed 2021). Gupta (2009) sought to demonstrate that policies surrounding immigration and gender had a history of racist and discriminatory behavior. Gupta's ultimate message coincides with that of many South Asian feminist activists who call for forced marriage regulation to be culturally conscious.

More recent media coverage on forced marriage continues to espouse similar gendered narratives to those in the late 1990s and early-to-mid 2000s. One example is from a 2018 piece from *The Daily Mail*— "The Agony of the British Girls Being Forced Illegally into Marriage: How 3,000 Reported Cases Have Led to Just Three Convictions – Because Authorities are Terrified of Causing Offence" (Rawstorne 2018). This article establishes a lack of effectiveness from the policy that criminalized forced marriage in 2014 and identifies the challenges of encouraging victims of forced marriage to press charges (Rawstorne 2018). Tom Rawstorne (2018) also uses women's stories of forced marriage and their perspectives in this piece. Still, however, the title of this article can be considered inflammatory in its assertion that the policy is ineffective because the police do not wish to be perceived as culturally insensitive for enforcing the policy. In this way, the government and the media serve complementary roles in perpetuating the gendered narrative around forced marriage.

THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM AND SECURITY ON IMMIGRATION POLICIES ADDRESSING FORCED MARRIAGE

As the forced marriage debate unfolded, a parallel strain of policy toward South Asians permeated British politics: terror and security policy. Terrorism concerns and political discourse added to the gendered narratives around South Asian immigrant communities. Gender penetrated security policy through "the construction of the 'Muslim' man…as fanatical, fundamentalist, [and] violent" (Wilson 2007, 31). This gendered securitization narrative enabled racism and Islamophobia. Furthermore, this tie created between Muslim men and terrorism fueled Western perceptions that their actions "confront[ed] 'Muslim' patriarchy" (Wilson 2007, 31).

The narrative created regarding terrorism rendered South Asian cultures as "backward" while simultaneously victimizing South Asian women to justify acting against South Asian communities (Wilson 2007, 31). The narrative of the victimization of women reinforced policies that rendered men of the South Asian community as antagonists. In October of 2001, the British government justified its involvement in the American war on terror after the 9/11 attacks through the rhetoric of saving women of color from their male, supposedly extremist counterparts. While the British justified war efforts to "rescue" Afghan women, for example, the British were simultaneously deporting women to parts of Pakistan dominated by the Taliban (Wilson 2007, 29). The difference between politicians' rhetoric and actions highlights the hypocrisy of the British government's decisions regarding terrorism and protecting South Asian women. Using this gendered rhetoric victimized South Asian women to justify violence, war, and harmful policies when, in reality, these policies did not support all South Asian women.

Migration and multiculturalism also remain central components of the narratives created in immigration policy. Romain Garbaye and Vincent Latour (2016) explore the "security-integration nexus" concept regarding state control of migration (2). Throughout British history, the government has taken different approaches to this nexus, adopting various attitudes toward minority communities that included attempts to accept Britain's multicultural society and integrate minorities into British national identity (Garbaye and Latour 2016, 2). Gen-

dered rhetoric and the responses to the rise in terror by the British government reflect this shift toward a demand for assimilation.

Modern acts of terror, such as 9/11 and the 2005 London led British policymakers to regulate immigration and integration through policies such as the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (Garbaye and Latour 2016, 2-3). Narratives prominent in discussions of terrorism included vilifications of South Asian communities for "self-segregating" and failing to adopt British values (Garbaye and Latour 2016, 2). Thus, there are reactionary components to British policymaking in response to security threats that marginalize minority communities. British politicians also created reports on terrorism. Marked by conservative rhetoric, a White Paper from 2002, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, demonstrates the narratives created in response to terrorist attacks. In this paper, the Home Office argues that "disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley painted a vivid picture of fractured and divided communities" (Home Office 2001). The British government sought unity in response to unrest from South Asian immigrant communities, so politicians demanded assimilation by these groups. This reactionary response illustrates the British government's response to the unrest. In the name of security, the government chose an assimilation approach.

Efforts to regulate forced marriage can be specifically linked to British efforts to combat terrorism and extremism. Nazir Afzal, a director of the Crown Prosecution Service, noted in 2006 that the individuals studied by both the Forced Marriage Unit and the Special Branch of the Terrorist Unit are from the same region of the world (Wilson 2007, 26). This mentality within the British government indicates conventions of structural racism, racial bias, and neocolonial oppression that connect forced marriage policies to securitization policies. Gendered narratives use this correlation to frame securitization policy as justification for action against specific members of minority communities.

In more recent times, the forced marriage debate within the British government concerned marriages in which one party, usually a man from South Asia, married a British South Asian woman. Historically, however, immigration policies concerning marriage focused on women entering Britain for marriage. In the 1970s, officials at Heathrow Airport conducted virginity tests on South Asian women entering Britain for marriage (Smith and Marmo 2011, 147-148). With the shadow of this gendered practice looming over modern British immigration policy, concern over immigration underlies marriage intervention. The British government, "in their own words…were tackling 'the overseas dimension of forced marriage'" (Wilson 2007, 32). The implications of this debate, then, are gendered and politicized through immigration policy. These considerations also impact integration policies as a solution to "harmful traditional practices" (Hameed 2021). While Sadia Hameed, the Director of Gloucestershire Sisters—an organization that supports victims of "Harmful Traditional Practices"—defends the necessity of an integration policy such as the Primary Purpose Rule, others, such as writer and activist Amrit Wilson, challenge the implications of the design of integration-focused policies (Hameed 2021; Wilson 2007, 36). Wilson argues that immigration policies that the British government implements to regulate forced marriage "use…women's oppression to legitimize immigration control" (Wilson 2007, 26). Scholars and stakeholders may disagree on whether these policies are effective at curbing forced marriage, but these policies do link forced marriage to immigration.

Politicians claim that forced marriage policies aim to protect the most vulnerable, in this case, women forced into marriage. The policies that pass, however, target migrant exclusion and fail to protect immigrants forced into marriages with British nationals or citizens. This is seen in "the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act [that] imposed a duty on marriage registrars in the UK to report 'suspicious marriages' of foreign nationals" (Wilson 2007, 33). This rhetoric toward regulating marriage-based immigration implies suspicion and alienation of those entering the country. The 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act established permission levels for those subject to immigration control who sought to marry. The 2007 policy required En-

glish proficiency and "knowledge of life in the UK" tests after the two-year required waiting period for permanent residency (Wilson 2007, 33). Ultimately, these immigration policies reinforced the exclusion of South Asian migrants. Politicians used gendered narratives to victimize South Asian women and villainize South Asian communities to enact restrictive policies on an issue that did not require policy directly targeting South Asian cultures.

ALTERNATIVE POLICY DIRECTIONS TO ADDRESS FORCED MARRIAGE: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE POLICY REFORM

Each advocacy, report, and speech given by a British politician explored in this case study suggests that gendered narratives have been consistently used to promote a sense of moral superiority over minority cultures, silence dissenting women's voices, and perpetuate racist notions that link South Asian communities broadly to terrorism. The rhetorical othering in *A Choice by Right* perpetuates the notion that forced marriage is an issue of cultural malpractice rather than an act of intimate partner violence (Working Group on Forced Marriage 2000). By using a narrative on the 'helplessness' of South Asian women against their own culture instead of reforming intimate partner violence policies to address issues such as forced marriage, the British government succumbed to the biases articulated throughout this paper (Wilson 2007, 32).

The 2004 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, which targeted broader issues of violence against women without addressing the situations of women in different communities, is an example of how gender-based violence remains central to policy action without espousing a narrative condemning specific communities or cultural practices. (Gill and Anitha 2009, 257). Reforming intimate partner violence policies, such as this one, to better support women of color in their unique, intersectional struggles against gender-based violence can be a way to uplift women based on their cultural identities rather than ignore or condemn them for these identities.

Wilson connects the lack of support for gender-based issues due to underfunded welfare and nonprofit services to the challenges facing women of color in situations of gender-based violence (Wilson 2007, 28). She also cites organizations, such as the women's nonprofit Imkaan, that advocated for reform to bills such as "the 1996 Family Law Act and the Human Rights Act" instead of supporting criminalization and civil penalties for forced marriage (Wilson 2007, 35). These reforms to existing policies can be coupled with funding support for welfare and other systems to uplift marginalized women facing situations of gender-based violence such as forced marriage. Such changes can create a path forward marked by unity, solidarity, and respect for cultural differences.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPLORING GENDERED NARRATIVES IN BRITISH POLICYMAKING

As demonstrated through a case study on forced marriage policy, gendered and racial narratives in British policymaking toward South Asians can be used as tools to co-op problems such as gender-based violence to advance alternate policy agendas. Various stakeholders, such as current and colonial British politicians, government offices and reports, activists and organizers, and the media played roles in creating and perpetuating gendered narratives in this case study. When developing public policy solutions to address a challenge, it is important to consider how   race, cultural difference, and alternate policy concerns shape narratives and create momentum for paths forward.

Forced marriage, an act of gender-based violence often perpetuated by individuals and families, is an issue that warrants policy solutions that target the problem itself in a culturally conscious manner. In the case of policies to criminalize forced marriage, alternate

concerns about South Asian culture, terrorism, and security infiltrate the debate. Media outlets create sensational stories from individual tragedies, and South Asian activists' voices are selectively uplifted to support the government's gendered narrative on the subject. Reforming existing laws on intimate partner violence is an alternative to culturally insensitive policies that blame entire cultures for acts of gender-based violence. While it will take communities time to address these issues, forcing action through colonial scripts that perpetuate notions of cultural inferiority may not successfully create change.

We can imagine a policy approach free of the constraints discussed throughout this paper. South Asian immigrants, policymakers could have reformed existing laws on intimate partner violence, kidnapping, or murder. Furthermore, immigration policies could have protected immigrants brought to the UK for forced marriage rather than focusing on migrant exclusion. Such considerations suggest that British politicians create gendered narratives to address their broader concerns with the presence of South Asian communities in the country rather than truly trying to upend the practice of forced marriage.

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